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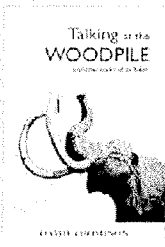
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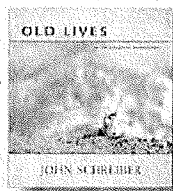
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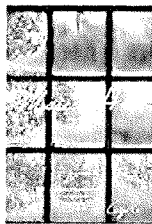
"blood sport." But to his credit, he applauds readers' instinct to hold the press to account. Printed, posted and broadcast material comprises much of the public record, so "the correction is, in essence, a form of update." And why not view all of this conversation as—well, conversation? For Silverman, the goal is not a perfect news piece, but a lively intellectual life in a democratic society.

Read an excerpt from Silverman's book on page 31 of this issue, and visit his website, regrettheerror.com.

BUTCH STORIES

Daniel Zomparelli

There is something unique about Ivan E. Coyote's writing that *Missed Her* (Arsenal Pulp Press) brings to the reader's attention. Yes, she can bring you to tears with her stories, and yes, the beauty in the unexpected is there, but Coyote's new collection raises the question of identity that is affecting the queer community today. Coyote and her cohorts come to life as they discuss the differences between butch and femme, gay and straight, dyke and lipstick lesbian. By being themselves,



these characters challenge the limiting nature of such definitions and terms. When we have become integrated into the mainstream there is less need to define, less need to unify with terms such as butch and femme. But anyone who steps outside of those definitions is ostracized. The narrator deals with this subject over and over again. Because she is allergic to gluten, she can't order a beer at the bar and instead orders cranberry and vodka, which brings mockery from her friend. The narrator feels the pressure of not being butch enough, and feels the label slipping through her fingers—a label that has come

to define her, her whole life. The stories had me repeating my favourite quote from Christopher Nealon's book of poetry, *Phummet*: "I'm not gay, I'm from the future."

THE OTHER STORY

Carrie Villeneuve

In November a friend handed me a freshly minted post-Giller Prize copy of *The Sentimentalists* by Johanna Skibsrud (Douglas & McIntyre). The story about this book—how a debut novel from Gaspereau Press, an independent publisher and print shop, won the Giller Prize and survived—has very nearly overshadowed the story in the book. Or rather stories, as this is less a novel with a single plot than the stories of three characters and their layered, intersecting identities. The narrator is a wounded lover and a daughter trying to understand her father, a derelict dad and a dying man seeking solace from his friend; the friend, Henry, is a surrogate father to the narrator, a



touchstone for both, and a gatekeeper of sorts for the man-made lake that submerged his town. I didn't love this book—there are passages that are more poetry than prose, the characters at times are caricatures rather than people, and the symbol (¶) at the start of every paragraph is beyond annoying, but I enjoyed it, and I recommend it for the book it is rather than the story it's become.

THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION

Stephen Osborne

Too much of the good stuff in Canadian history remains hidden away in dusty corners—perhaps because so much of the story of this country belongs to

ENDNOTES

the history of imperialism and is too often considered to be a mere error of the past. The story of the Canadian invasion of Siberia in 1919 is known to almost no one today, yet it was known to everyone in the country when the troops selected for the invading army (eventually totaling 4,200) mutinied on the main street in Victoria and had to be whipped and beaten onto the ships that set out for Vladivostok in December 1918 and January 1919. The cause that our reluctant forces were defending by taking “freedom” to Siberia was the British Empire, that ineluctable force of colonialism. After thrashing around in Siberia for four months, the troops were brought home. Within two more months the Royal Bank of Canada and the Canadian Trade Commissioner closed down their carpetbag-



ging operations and fled back across the Pacific. Canadian forces suffered nineteen casualties during the expedition: two by accident, sixteen by disease and one by suicide. Eighteen Canadian horses belonging to the Mounties (along with “two White Russian soldiers”) were killed by Bolshevik gunfire during an attack on a train. It seems odd today to read of the Mounties in a military invasion, but then we remind ourselves that the Mounties are a paramilitary organization and only secondarily a police force. (I recall seeing a photograph in the Mountie Museum (official name: RCMP Heritage Centre) in Regina, showing a battalion of Mounties sitting on a dock in Vladivostok, where, according to the caption, they “succeeded in achieving an advanced state of preparedness”). The Vladivostok fiasco belongs to the story of the Red Scare described last year by Daniel Francis in his book *Seeing Reds* (see an excerpt at geist.com). Now the Vladivostok story can be known in detail from

the excellent research of Benjamin Isitt, in his new book **From Victoria to Vladivostok: Canada’s Siberian Expedition, 1917–19** (UBC Press), a fascinating and wide-ranging account.

In one of the many adventures in **The Possessed: Adventures with Russian Books and the People Who Read Them** (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), Elif Batuman spends four days without her luggage at a Tolstoy conference at Yasna-ya Polyana, where Leo Tolstoy was born and buried and where he wrote *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Throughout the conference Batuman is forced to wear the sleeping clothes that she wore on the flight—flip-flops, flannel shirt and sweatpants—causing the International Tolstoy Scholars to mistake her for a traditional Tolstoyian sworn to poverty and peasant dress. When she calls Aeroflot, the luggage clerk says to her, “Are you familiar with our Russian phrase, *resignation of the soul?*” At breakfast, a historian studying the marginalia in Tolstoy’s copy of Kant announces that Tolstoy “didn’t write anything in the margins at all. But the book fell open to certain pages!” Finally, on the last night, her luggage arrives and she



is able to change her clothes for the banquet, and a “White Russian from Paris” shakes her hand and advises her to change her clothes three times during the evening, “to make up for lost time.” Through her stay at the Tolstoy estate, Batuman develops an elaborate hypothesis: that Tolstoy was murdered with henbane, also known as Stinking Nightshade, administered by his wife Sonya or another member of the household. The argument that Tolstoy was eighty-two years old when he died and had suffered several strokes, she points out, is “exactly what would make it a perfect crime.” In support

ISSUE 170 SUMMER 2011

Food

Profiles
MARK GUNTBERG
 on FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY and EL BULLI
NICOLE CARUTH
 on A RECIPE for DISASTER
SWARNA TAMHANE
 on THE ROOTS of PERFORMANCE-BASED
 WORK in INDIA
 AND
LEAH MUDIGLIANI
 on AN AESTHETICS of the IMPOSSIBLE

Reviews
KAREN AZOULAY
MARCHE DIZAMA
JESSICA EATON
SEAN MARTINDALE
JOHN MONTITH
BRUCE NAUMAN
CADY NOLAN and DIANE ARBUS
DOUG SCHOLLS
 AND
HIDE/SEEK, DIFFERENCE and DESIRE
 in AMERICAN PORTRAITURE

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