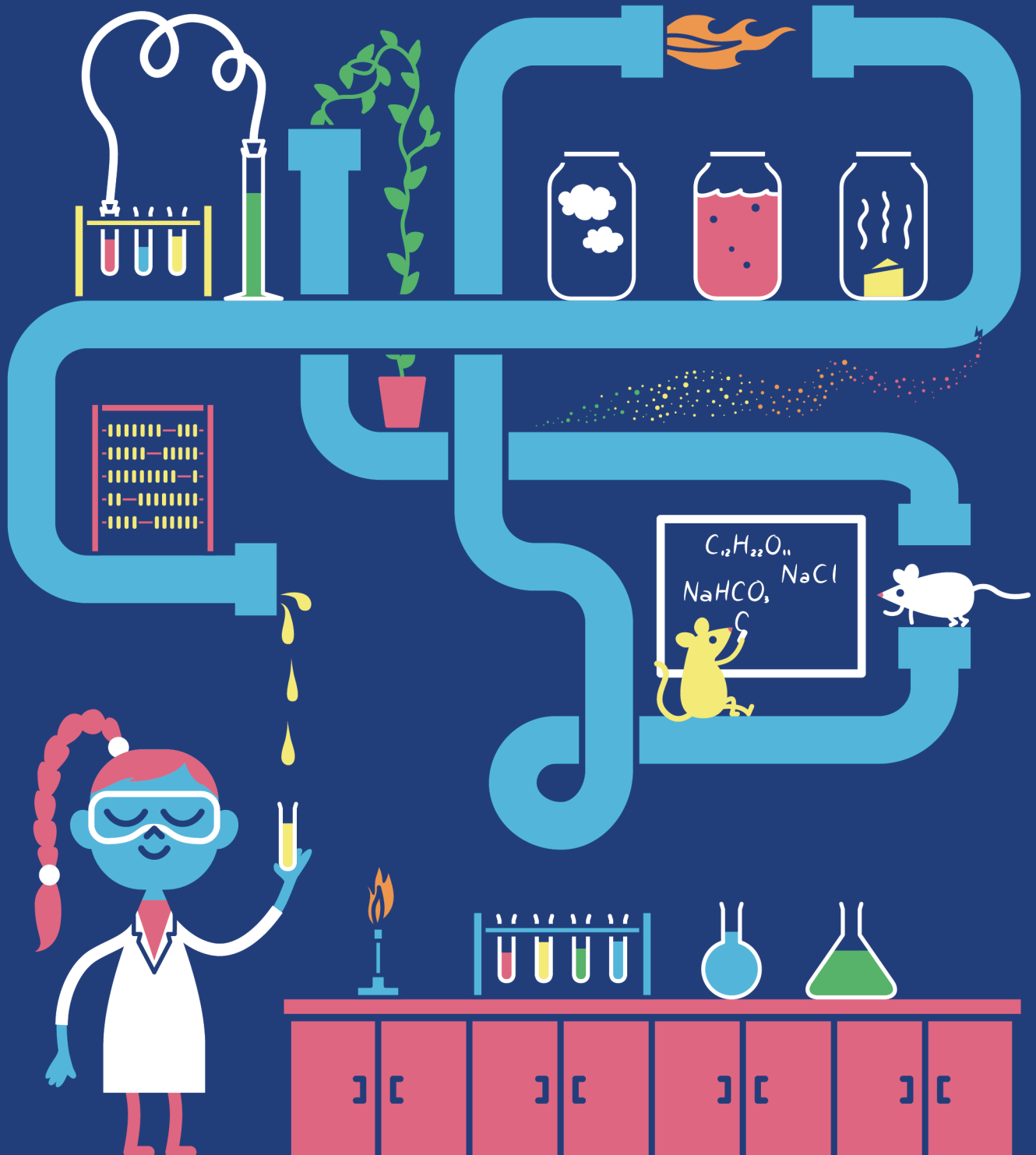


The broken

C I
T Y



“a series of tubes”

ISSN 1916-3304

The broken



Winter 2018 Issue 23

The Broken City, ISSN 1916-3304, is published semiannually out of Toronto, Canada, appearing sporadically in print, but always at: www.thebrokencitymag.com. Rights to individual works published in *The Broken City* remain the property of the author and cannot be reproduced without their consent. All other materials © 2018. All rights reserved. All wrongs reversed.

On the Web:

www.thebrokencitymag.com

On mobile devices:

issuu.com/thebrokencity

Submission Guidelines:

www.thebrokencitymag.com/submissions.html

Correspondence:

thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com

On Twitter:

@brokencitymag

In this issue:



Welcome to *The Broken City's* science/technology issue, "a series of tubes" (see quote from Ted Stevens). Our writers waver between the grand and the infinitesimal in this one—from Turing to telomeres, solar flares to X-rays. Don your lab coats!

Cover Art:

Mouki K. Butt is a freelance illustrator who currently lives on Vancouver Island. Her childhood was highly influenced by science, thanks to her brother and his favourite TV shows (*Mr. Wizard's World* and *Newton's Apple*). moukikbutt.com

Contents:

Poetry

James B. Nicola 3

Donna J. Gelagotis Lee 4

Brent Raycroft 6

Fiction

Anita Goveas 7

Ruth Brandt 8

Photography

William C. Crawford 5

The Broken City is currently accepting submissions for its summer 2019 edition: **The social animal**.

That's right, selfie stickers, the magazine is running an issue on social media and the malaise of modernity. We're looking for fact or fiction that touches on human communication in the Information Age.

Send your poetry, fiction, essays, illustrations and photography to thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com.

Deadline is: May 1, 2019. Submitters will be contacted after that date, with news of acceptance or rejection.

What We Have Found

James B. Nicola

Most objects, we could not identify,
scorched as they were and from a culture strange
to us. It helped to find things meant for cooking
near things that issued artificial fire
called Stove and Oven; things for grooming, near
devices that made artificial rivers
called Sink and Bathtub. We learned these words,
and the language, from the later excavation
of several thick books, known as Catalog,
far from the explosion's point of origin
and now believe it might have been a culture
of love, most corpses found to have been buried
near other corpses; and some vanity,
for shiny surfaces called Mirror, shattered
and reconstructed, were found near objects
called Razor, Tweezer, Brush, Comb, Depilatory,
contrived to help adjust the body's hair
into shapes and patterns suited for a Photograph
and plastic tubes, half-rolled, inside of which
were traces of Creams, complex compounds that
our scientists spent years on in the lab:
Some clean teeth, some remove unwanted growths,
some keep hair stiff so that it can be sculpted.
Likewise the use of metal cylinders
with nozzles that turn liquids into mists,
of myriad purposes we're only now
learning about: heavily scented, for
the most part, which suggests the species had
a sensitive, developed sense of smell.
Certain devices with metal strings called Wire
connected to cones and boxes might have been

for sounds; some implements were found on ears
and in them: this suggests that natural noise
left this species sad, or unsatisfied.
The culture had discovered the arts of weaving
and textiles; many fabrics found were soft,
so touch, too, must have been of some importance.
And taste, which we are only now pursuing:
some of the Catalogs had formulas
for artificial foods called Recipe.
And millions of images, hard to discern,
on walls and on cloth tarps in frames, tell us
what things might have looked like, or felt like, to
the bipeds of this world before the blast—
the cause of which is unconfirmed: Though near
the point of origin sat a male youth,
hands held as if caught in the middle
of mixing something, with a strange grin
frozen on his face. In front of him,
a hinged metal box containing powders
of assorted colors and densities
in glass containers of various shapes and sizes,
some still with lids and labels on them.
And on the metal box, the figures "GI__RT
CH____Y S_T," which we cross-referenced to a Catalog
as "Gilbert," that's the manufacturer,
then "Chemistry Set." We think this was a toy
for young males plagued by gross imaginations,
and this one had just happened to concoct
a compound that had previously been
unknown, whose power was unimaginable.

James B. Nicola's poems have appeared in the Antioch, Southwest and Atlanta Reviews among many other journals. His collections are Manhattan Plaza (2014), Stage to Page (2016), Wind in the Cave (2017) and Out of Nothing: Poems of Art and Artists (2018). He has received a Dana Literary Award, two Willow Review awards, six Pushcart Prize nominations, and Storyteller's People's Choice award. His nonfiction book Playing the Audience won a Choice magazine award. sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola

Are Telomeres Like Shoelaces?

Donna J. Gelagotis Lee

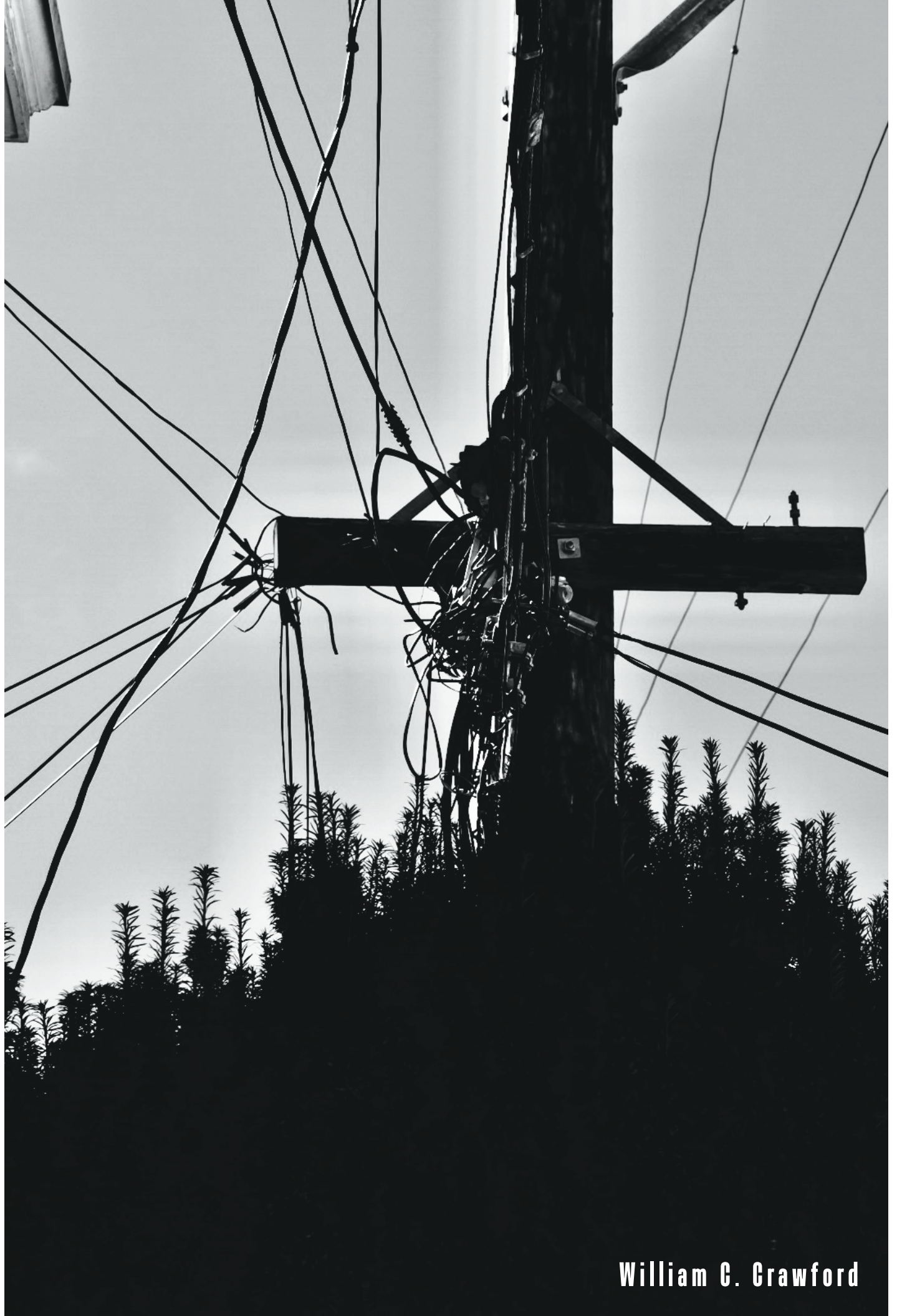
I think my telomeres are shortening,
on the basis of science I've read—how
dread and other stressors can not only fray
the nerves figuratively but also wear down
the caps protecting the chromosomes. I see
the signs in my aging body—in the inflamed
joints and other chronic ailments. Seems
that's not a good sign, as cells' lives
are on a time clock and the telomeres tell time.

Of course, you'd need a microscope. But do you
really want to look? There's no putting back the past.
Or is there? What if I make my telomeres grow back
as in that mouse study? Healthier young things
all of the sudden. I could use some of that fun.
Plump up my layers so that I look like a babe.
Give me back a hop in my stride. Give me back
my stride! Can I bend over and tie my shoelaces?
Can I smooth / soothe the ends of my DNA?

Donna J. Gelagotis Lee is the author of On the Altar of Greece, winner of the Gival Press Poetry Award and recipient of a 2007 Eric Hoffer Book Award: Notable for Art Category. Her book Intersection on Neptune, winner of the Prize Americana for Poetry 2018, is forthcoming from The Poetry Press of Press Americana. Her poetry has appeared in journals internationally, including The Dalhousie Review, Existere, Feminist Studies, The Massachusetts Review, and Vallum. www.donnajgelagotislee.com

Opposite page: Wired!

William C. Crawford is a writer & photographer based in Winston-Salem, NC. He was a combat photojournalist in Vietnam. He has published extensively in various formats including fiction, creative nonfiction, memoirs, book reviews, and essays. His latest book, Forensic Foraging: Photography to Unlock the Unseen, is available now. He had a parallel career as a social worker and community organizer and is known as Crawdaddy to his yellow Lab, Scout.



Every Point is a Source, Every Source is an Image

Brent Raycroft

There was an astrophysicist
whose family used to visit us.
His wife went to college with my mom.

In the big cathedral space
of our empty wooden barn one day
the astrophysicist explained

that the scattered discs of light
on the cardboard wall below the hay mow
were pictures of the sun.

“Each hole in the tin
lets more than light in. That speck
is a solar flare the size of North America.”

We said it was a spider’s shadow.
He said “No, it’s not. For in every circle, look:
The spider stands in the same spot.”

Brent Raycroft’s poetry has appeared in a variety of magazines, literary journals and anthologies, including The Walrus, The Broken City, Queen’s Quarterly, and The Best of the Best Canadian Poetry in English: The Tenth Anniversary Edition. He has also published reviews and (in a previous life) academic articles. He lives north of Kingston Ontario.

Frau Roentgen's left hand

Anita Goveas

The thumb is indistinct, mid-sized and slender. If it were a tree limb, it would reveal I was fifty years old. It can't sense I have twenty-eight years before I die of intestinal cancer. It is doubtful the powerful rays had lasting impact. On me, not on history. But in the future, there will be more protections.

The forefinger contains the minerals that show the people who study these things that I was born in Zurich, lived in Vienna, ate well. But not yet. At this moment, the electrons exploding from the cathode ray tube show the outline, not the context. In the translucent flesh, there are other molecules lurking. Mine are only passed down through my beloved niece, who I adopted. There will be many kinds of invisible light.

The middle finger has the callus from writing that changed the shape of the top joint. All the odes I copied for my uncle, the poet. All the orders I recorded for my father, the café owner. All the records I transcribed for my husband, the pioneer. All the letters I wrote for myself.

The fourth finger is dominated by the rings, the social contract. We met in my father's café, he was a gentleman. I never asked his hobbies. When he said to me "Anna, I need your help," I did so willingly. While I stood for an hour with my hand on the photographic plate, we discussed images and luminescence. It repelled me. To be allowed to see what was usually revealed only by death.

The little finger holds the tiny mark from stabbing myself with a sewing needle. I always made my lace myself. I will make the dress I wear when William is awarded the first Nobel prize, for this first X-ray we capture. The award for realising this exposure of my inner self will save lives.

The whole is surrounded by shadows of flesh and cloth. The granite-like bones could belong to my mother. They could belong to Queen Victoria. They could belong to Sarah Bernhardt.

The glow of this process brings out similarities, singularities. In the shadows, the wives of science provide tools and structure, but stay hidden.

Anita Goveas is British-Asian, based in London, and fueled by strong coffee and paneer jalfrezi. She was first published in the 2016 London Short Story Prize Anthology, most recently in Lost Balloon, Terse and JMW. She's on the editorial team at Flashback Fiction, a reader for Bare Fiction and tweets erratically @coffeeandpaneer. "Frau Roentgen's left hand" was previously published by Flashback Fiction.

Stop all the Clocks

Ruth Brandt

It's mid-March and Turing appears at the door of the Masters' Common Room in his shirtsleeves, damp marks clearly visible. I am surprised by his arrival.

'Is Mr Eperson here?' he pants. No, Good evening, Sir, or Hello.

'I believe Mr Eperson will be back shortly,' I tell the boy, however I do not share with him that Donald has spent the past half hour with the headmaster discussing the prize that Morcom's mother is intending to establish in her son's name, nor do I inform him that I am lingering here, waiting upon Donald's return.

I glance at the clock, as though I am caught up in some activity, purposefully indicating to Turing that he is not welcome. Yet, the boy does not excuse himself or make any effort to depart.

'Was it something to do with the gramophone society?' I ask, concerning Donald's noble effort to show the boys that there are higher considerations than those that normally consume their extracurricular time.

'No,' he says and as usual he stares boldly at my chest.

If any of the other boys stared so, I would not be disquieted. But with Turing I cross my arms, challenging him to become cognisant of his unsociable gaze and to remedy

it by raising his eyes to my face, as any seventeen year old surely should be able to.

'You've been running,' I say to distract him.

Turing has never been noted as a sportsman, neither here at Sherborne nor at his previous school. Indeed, he is a boy who has been inclined to watch the daisies grow rather than to pay attention to a game of cricket. Yet recently he has been seen running everywhere, as though to walk is wasting time.

'It helps me think,' he says. And then he adds, 'And not think.'

I find I cannot have any objection to his statement, and yet its boldness irritates me. I wait for him to either explain his presence or leave, but he does neither.

'If it's not concerning the gramophone society,' I say. 'Would it not be more appropriate to seek out your house master?' For really, it is quite impossible for boys to demand masters' time in this way, particularly this wilful, impudent boy who somehow gets away without paying suitable attention to his book work. Except in Donald's classes, of course, where he appears to be indulged by being set problems that he cannot solve by the light of nature. Donald refers to Turing's solutions to these puzzles as clumsy or

cumbersome, judgements which please me for they demonstrate the need for rigorous, disciplined learning. However, to my discontent, Donald very occasionally declares Turing's work to be brilliant.

'I need to speak to Don,' he replies.

I clear my throat at the use of a master's Christian name, and a diminutive at that.

'I've been thinking, you see,' he continues. 'About time and the mind. It's all quite fresh in my head.'

He raises his eyes to me for the first time and I see the sadness, and even though I cannot respect this boy with his hopeless obsession with science and mathematics, and his rejection of the classics, I am touched by his situation.

'Perhaps you would like to wait,' I say, relenting, and I let him in to the Common Room.

He makes straight for the chess board that Donald has been poring over for the past few days.

'I see you're looking at the game,' I say as I clear out my pipe out into the ashtray and unroll my tobacco pouch. 'You will be interested to know that it's one played at last month's international chess tournament in San Remo.'

I know this from listening

to the remarks Donald made as he worked through the game, standing beside him until I detected my presence might have become disconcerting, even no longer welcome, at which point I retreated to the chair in which I now sit. Turing nods and I begin to stuff my pipe, satisfied that in this area, in which he believes himself to be a specialist, I know more than he does.

But then he says, 'I believe white wins in twelve moves.'

How he can know that by simply looking at the board I do not know. My instinct is to doubt he is correct and to tell him he is being preposterous, speaking well outside his knowledge. I stand, regretting that I invited him in and that when Donald returns, this boy's presence will prevent any possible mention of the Tchaikovsky recording I recently purchased in the hope that Donald might care to listen to it with me.

'Your tie,' I say.

I had not intended commenting on it since I suspected its use was purely to illicit such attention. He glances down to where his tie is threaded round the top of his trousers.

'It is not a belt,' I say, reminding him of the purpose of both belt and tie.

'It performs the function of a belt quite adequately,' he

replies, leaving it where it is.

I hold my lighter to my pipe and suck in the smoke.

'Really?' I say as though completely disinterested in the subject, and I pick up a copy of the Iliad left by some other master and sit to read.

As Turing leans over the chess board I cannot help but glance surreptitiously every once in a while, as I have done earlier today with Donald, and I find I am comparing the boy unfavourably with Morcom, who paid diligent attention to neat work and learning, and who never shared Turing's stupid attitude to the sane discussion of the New Testament in my classes. Morcom's interest in the chess game would not have seen him slouching so over the board, and I find that I am deeply regretting the loss of the boy destined to take up a scholarship at Cambridge. I turn a page in the book.

And then Turing is up, pacing the room in a manner that makes it impossible for me to pretend to ignore him.

'If one could travel at the speed of light,' he says, 'then one would never appear to age to a static observer.' He pauses. 'In non-accelerating conditions, of course.'

The speed of light? Non-accelerating? What is this boy

talking about?

'Time would appear to stand still for the observed; stop all together. Do you think that is what death is?'

'There is one place you will find the answer, Turing,' I say, referring to the Bible, as I do so often in class.

'But then, as Einstein said, travelling at the speed of light is impossible, so it can't be.'

The arrogance of the child to presume to comment on such matters.

'What I want to ask Don is whether he thinks Chris might have moved to a frame of reference where he is travelling at almost the speed of light relative to ours,' he persists, 'so that for us observers, Chris will barely age over the duration of our lifetimes.'

I stand and tap my pipe on the edge of the fireplace while I think how to stop this nonsense.

'I long to understand what has become of him,' he says.

That much is apparent.

'Christopher Morcom died of bovine tuberculosis,' I answer bluntly.

'Yes,' Turing replies. 'But what has become of his mind? You see, there is still work for us to do together. I must not let him down now that I am left to do it alone. I feel sure we will meet again somewhere and I will need to

account to him.'

I do not know how to reply to this. The obsession Turing had for Morcom in life—sharing books with him in the library; passing notes unashamedly in class; staring quite unabashed at him during the gramophone society meetings, according to the giggling of the other boys—seems to have taken a queer route now that Morcom is dead.

'We cannot tell why Morcom should have suffered such a death.' I retreat to the safety of the lines the boys were told a month ago. 'But there was a reason. Maybe to save him from pain and illness, or maybe to help you boys in some way, for a friend can often by his death do more to influence others than even in his life.'

'Exactly,' Turing says and for a moment I think I might have made myself understood by this boy for once. 'But I would like to know what has become of his mind. You see, if the mind could be considered to be a series of logical thoughts, perhaps Chris might in some way live on.'

The idea is ludicrous. I suspect the leniency accorded to Turing by some of the staff has allowed his brain to overheat.

'More prayer,' I state.

'I have this idea that the mind's processes could be captured in some way—that simple mental operations might be performed in a mind machine. Maybe even perform the complex task of playing chess.' He waves towards the board. 'I should very much like to have been able to discuss this with Chris. I shall not find anywhere a companion so brilliant and yet so charming and unconceited.'

Turing's constant references to Morcom have become grating, alarming even. Then he adds, 'Have you ever had a friend like Chris?'

I turn to the fireplace to tap my pipe and avoid his gaze. Even though this boy is seventeen years old, he speaks in the unguarded way of a child. Unworldly, and yet his innocence is confusingly beguiling.

'Morcom is dead.' I know I say this harshly. I pull my shoulders back and turn to face him as any master should be able to with a boy. 'To go on like this serves no purpose, Turing. None at all.'

For a moment he smiles, then I realise that it is not a smile at all; his mouth and eyes tighten as though about to cry, and as I attempt to check any possible tears by clearing my throat, the clock chimes half past.

'See,' I say, demonstrating that time ticks regularly and eternally on.

But with the passing of another half hour I wonder whether Donald might not have headed straight back to his lodgings, whether I have waited here in vain.

'I worshiped the ground he walked on,' he adds.

'Enough,' I say. 'You must put a stop to this, to these unnatural passions right now.'

'Excuse me, Sir,' Turing says. 'I didn't mean to upset you.'

And as I turn back to the fire I hear the study door open and the click of his heels in the corridor hastening as he reaches the main door, where he sets off running, running, always running.

Ruth Brandt's short stories have appeared in anthologies and magazines, including the Bridport Prize 2018, Litro, Into the Void and The London Reader. She won the Kingston University MFA Creative Writing Prize 2017 and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She is Writer in Residence at the Surrey Wildlife Trust. "Stop all the Clocks" was first published in Take Tea With Turing, an anthology inspired by the life and legacy of Alan Turing.



The Broken City - Issue 23
www.thebrokencitymag.com
thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com