“My Name’s Alberta, and I’m an Addict”

The province has a real problem with oil and needs to admit it.
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Alberta needs to recognize that it has a problem with oil. In fact, it’s more than just a problem; it’s an addiction—and one that threatens to consume us if we don’t address it.

Perhaps now more than ever it’s possible to feel how intractably entwined oil is in our lives. A global economic crisis caused by low oil prices has reverberated from the largest down to the smallest parts of society. Low pump prices and uncertain national and provincial budgets are just harmonic tones to the sad melody.

At the University of Lethbridge, students have questioned the salary of the president and vice-chancellor, Mike Mahon. The Canadian Association of University Teachers in its 2014-2015 Almanac of Post-Secondary Education lists his 2012 salary plus benefits as $420,000. Global recently reported his total compensation to be worth $588,000, though they don’t say from where they got this number. Regardless, his income is large.

But it’s not news. The Almanac is published yearly, and all the information is freely and publicly available. The fact that Mahon’s income is only now drawing attention speaks to the climate in which we live. While oil prices were good, a big paycheck didn’t draw attention. But once oil dropped, the fantasy of plenty shattered, and everything became suspicious.

Don’t be mistaken. This is no defence of Mahon’s salary. Rather it’s a simple plea. Students, don’t draw up a straw-figure of Mahon, a symbolic embodiment of excess and misplaced priorities, and target it as the source of our problems. If we train our anger only on an image, then we’ve circumscribed our own effectiveness. Even if Mahon gives up his entire salary, the money wouldn’t cover what will be cut.

Rather, let us refine our agitation, our dissatisfaction over tuition and presidential salaries, and address the system of which both are mere elements, posts to the frame. Addressing addiction requires a change in behaviour, not a treatment of symptoms.

Rhys Kesselman, Canada Research Chair in Public Finance with the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University showed in an article for Maclean’s, published January 22, that implementing a tax system with multiple brackets would bring in extra revenue while protecting low-income earners. Even at a rate of 15 per cent, someone with a total income between $180,000-$200,000 would only see a $1,200 increase—but the province would take in an additional $1.3 billion.

Considerations like this should be the first step to a comprehensive change. But if we simply increase taxes and wait for oil prices to return, we’ve failed to learn anything. We’ll remain blind to our addiction, and as vulnerable to the next inevitable crash.

We must take revenue generated through a new tax and quickly invest in new industry. We must ween ourselves off oil. Even if oil prices quickly return after this particular crash, we must finally admit the obvious—that oil is a finite resource. The world must eventually come to terms with this and find alternatives. We can either shape ourselves to be the pioneers of the future, or stubbornly remain the sole inhabitant of an obsolete past.

As students, it’s our responsibility to believe in the future. We must strive to learn from the past, to recognize our own mistakes, to take responsibility for them and to discover novel solutions to what had been insurmountable problems.

While we exercise our creativity, attempt to imagine a world that as of yet doesn’t exist, we require support. The university produced this statement in its Destination 2020 literature: “We are committed to the individual student as a person of ultimate worth.” That comes from the time of plenty. Will the university continue to commit in scarcity?

When budget cuts come, as they must, let the university leaders prove their belief in the student. Before any firing of professors, increases in class size, reductions to services—anything that will affect a student’s education—make a sacrifice. Inspire us. Offer up your own salary, and from there ask us to face the remaining challenges together.

—Ryan Macfarlane, Editor-in-Chief
ROBERT’S BIO

Robert de Gruchy is the father of six children. He works for the University of Lethbridge Security Services, but also publishes editorial cartoons under the pen name Grooch. He’s a member of ACEC (the Association of Editorial Cartoonist of Canada), and has been published across the country. Born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, Robert graduated from John Abbott College studying fine art.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Motivated and inspired by his admiration for cartoonists throughout North America, Robert spends his free time wielding a pencil, sharp wit and an arsenal of ink and watercolours to draw focus to local, national and world issues that concern Canadians. In a nutshell, it’s all about provoking conversation, exposing the truth and finding humour amidst the day-to-day grind.

ON HIS WORK

“Spending 40 hours each week working at the University of Lethbridge, my mandate requires that I observe, report and help preserve the interests of the campus. At the end of the day, I have superiors I answer to, but supporting the goals and well-being of the students of the U of L will always be my first priority.”

— 6
A three per cent cut in provincial funding for the U of L doesn’t sound serious, but it threatens to have a profound effect on the education received by every student here.

Consider some hard facts. First, the budget shortfall is estimated at 1.5 million dollars. Second, this financial blow comes after a number of years in which enrolment increases have far outstripped increases in government funding, reducing the money spent on most students’ education. When past inflation is considered, the situation looks even worse.

Finally, 85 per cent of university expenses go to salaries and benefits, with the vast majority of that going to faculty members. Thus the most obvious and effective source of savings entails of reducing the salaries or the number of academic personnel. Both options would place the academic quality of the university at risk.

A reduction in faculty salaries could provide some short term budget relief. But if we became uncompetitive in the market for academic personnel, we would be discouraging qualified academics from replacing them. Salary reductions would quickly lead to a serious deterioration in the quality of our university.

The other option is to reduce the number of faculty members here. The most vulnerable professors are those who have term contracts rather than tenure with the U of L. Their contracts vary in length; some end this year, others have a few more years to run.

Most departments have at least one contract professor, especially “high traffic” departments such as English and History. Although they don’t have the job security that their tenured counterparts possess, contract faculty members make significant and vital contributions to their departments and to the university. Last year the History department received a petition signed by hundreds of students protesting the decision not to rehire a contract professor. The recent funding cuts threaten to make such layoffs much more common.

Any decision to reduce the number of faculty members will have immediate repercussions for all students. Most of the departments in the university are quite small, so the elimination of even one professor would mean the loss of between 8 per cent (Psychology) and 25 per cent (Anthropology) of the academic staff. Whole fields within the department would be ignored, leaving gaping holes in the education of students majoring in the department. Imagine being a history major and finding the only professor teaching Modern European history has been cut.

Acting President Kenyon has already stated that some programs and services will have to be eliminated, leading to the previously inconceivable possibility that whole departments may be phased out. Few people would be impressed by a Philosophy degree granted by an institution which no longer offers courses in the subject.

The loss of faculty members would also inflict less obvious but more insidious damage to the education of students not majoring in the departments affected. Courses would be offered less often, increasing competition for the remaining courses. Already the vast majority of students have experienced the frustration of being unable to get into their preferred courses, and being forced to enroll in courses for which they have no interest. Fulfilling the breadth requirements, which can already be a bad dream, may soon become a nightmare.

Class sizes will inevitably increase, causing faculty workloads to rise and teaching quality to fall. The university philosophy of offering degrees based on a liberal education in areas of interest and low faculty/student ratios is in serious danger of becoming, once again, only a dream.

The administrators and leaders at the U of L are aware of the threat that the deceptive 3 per cent cut poses. But fighting against the odds in the political battle for funding, our representatives have up to now failed. It is time for every student to join in the fight. Individually we must each express our concerns to the Premier, the Provincial Treasurer, and the Minister of Advanced Education. Their addresses are listed below.

As a group we must make the government understand better the unwarranted damage it is doing to this institution. This issue should be the priority of the Students’ Union. A town hall meeting should be convened immediately to coordinate student action. As well plans to combat the cutback should be part of the platform for any presidential or vice-presidential candidate in the upcoming student elections.

Make no mistake about it. The responsibility for the quality of education at the U of L has fallen on the shoulders of every student. If you have never written to a politician before, now is the time.

Your future is at stake.

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From the February 12, 1987 issue of the Meliorist. In 1980, oil hit a peak of over $35 per barrel (around $100 after inflation) before crashing to under $10 per barrel (around $20 after inflation) in 1986. As Alberta’s economy has historically been tied to the price of oil, fluctuations in its global price affect the province heavily. Here, we see how when the price of oil fell in 1986, Alberta post-secondary education faced cuts. This article was published alongside a table that listed the number of full-time teaching staff at the U of A, U of C and U of L. It is available through the Meliorist archives, found on the U of L Library website.
For years, television has been becoming more like a movie. And paradoxically, movies are also becoming more like television.

It used to be that stories were told in one sitting. People were even willing to sit through a four hour movie if it meant viewing a full story, and all they needed was an intermission.

Television used to be self-contained. You can still watch any episode of *The Simpsons* without knowing a thing about the series. And like different television episodes, movie sequels were also self-contained. For example, *The Empire Strikes Back* filled in viewers on past events with scrolling text before the movie.

When the final *Harry Potter* movie was split into two parts that told one story, most of us willingly accepted. After all, *Deathly Hallows* was over 500 pages long. It would have been extremely difficult to adapt it into a film less than three hours.

But then, *The Hobbit*, a novel less than 300 pages in length, was adapted into a three-part movie. This was achieved by stretching out sequences and adding extra material not originally in the novel.

And why a studio would choose to do this is no mystery; more movies means more money. But why hasn’t the multi-part movie happened until now? Why wasn’t *Lawrence of Arabia* or *Gone with the Wind* split into two parts when there was more than enough material from the sources?

The answer is that television now tells its stories over the course of a season.

Even though Peter Jackson apologists must begrudgingly admit that *The Hobbit* should have only been two parts, at maximum, the fact that so many people accepted a three-part split illustrates how the tastes of audiences have changed. If *Deathly Hallows* had been made in the ‘60s it would have undoubtedly been a single four hour movie.

Now people will spend years following a storyline. The *Harry Potter* series lasted a good decade. And while the first movies were relatively independent of each other, by *Order of the Phoenix* it became apparent that you had to see all the movies to understand the plot.

Storytelling has evolved over the years. Simple stories that can be told in one movie or one episode have started to become cliché—like the return of the evil twin in soap operas. But audiences still enjoy highly conventional genre films and sitcoms; so innovative storytelling techniques, prolonged and fragmented story structures, aren’t all pervasive.

Digital technology, though, has made consuming entertainment easier than ever before. Services like Netflix and video on demand allow people to catch up on movies or television they’ve missed. Binge watching has blurred the lines between watching a television show or even a series of movies.

In short, it has become significantly easier to keep up with television shows and movie franchises. People can now easily invest in a storyline that used to require years of viewing. That kind of consumption used to be reserved for comic book fans and soap opera enthusiasts.

But now it’s trendy to be a devotee of a fictional world, like the Marvel Cinematic Universe and Middle Earth, because it’s easier to keep up with the series. You don’t have to obsessively tune in each week when you have Netflix.

Whether serialization is a good thing or not is up for debate. While it felt more aesthetically necessary to turn *Deathly Hallows* into two movies, I think *The Hobbit* could have benefited from being a single, tight three hour movie. Besides, I have a life.

Some people don’t want to spend years following a story that could have been adequately told in one movie. If this trend persists, casual viewing may become a thing of the past.
In his work, Sam focuses on graphic design and typography. He’s currently in his final year and preparing for graduation. In 2013 he started working with a group called aftermodern.lab, whose site describes the group as an “award winning—Toronto based communication design studio.” They have a pretty extensive list of clients, one of which was TIFF. Sam did some work on that project.

But, Sam got his start with the Meliorist and says that what he did here has influenced where he’s gone since. So featuring his work is kind of like a reunion.

Artwork by Sam Loewen
Photography by Kjel Erickson
I.
The ocean is a middle-aged woman,
the years rippling around her paper mouth.
She sits politely—for what I don’t know
mirrors have nothing to offer
and the gulls only chatter
about the run in her stocking
that wasn’t there the night before

II.
The ocean is an old man
walking toward Jerusalem,
silent and flat-footed.
He has walked since the sea
was forty years of desert
and is surprise to see the tide
rolling back the years he thought
were lost forever

III.
The ocean is a nun
lifting back years of habit—
for what is sloth to a girl, what is spite?:
A collection of halved oysters
catching the pearls of her tears
like holy water.

— 13

poems
By Lucía Staveig

LIGHTNING

There are
poets who
who learn to train
God to the
ground, and
then there
‘re poets who
sit—talent
failing in
the wind—
waiting
for lightning
to
strike
If you’ve had any kind of contact with the university’s drama department, there’s a very good chance you’re familiar with Nicholas Hanson. Maybe you took Drama 1000 with him, or if you’re something of a veteran drama student, you may have worked with him to create theatre for younger audiences. Regardless, he’s an important part of the department. This semester he stepped back into the role of director to work on *Afterimage*, which runs February 10-14.

*Afterimage* is pretty new to the stage. It’s a home-grown work written by Newfoundland playwright Robert Chafe, who adapted it from a short story by fellow Newfoundlander Michael Crummey. The popular Newfoundland-based theatre company, Artistic Fraud, orchestrated the original production. This is the only other staging so far.

Hanson provided a brief synopsis of the show: “In a Newfoundland town, a woman develops the mysterious ability to see flashes of the future. The truth is hard to hide from other people, especially within her own family. When shocking secrets are revealed, danger looms not only on the horizon but also in the home. Winner of the Governor General’s Award, *Afterimage* features a suspenseful story as well as a heartbreaking perspective on the bonds and boundaries of love.”

THE PLAY IN ACTION

I’m sitting in on a rehearsal for *Afterimage*. At this point, the show is still in its early stages and the rehearsals are informal.

The scene they’re working on today involves an emotionally charged argument between husband and wife about one of their children. As is so often the case with marital spats, though, some underlying issues rise to the surface.
The first few takes have the two actors simply standing in space, as they work on the inflection of their lines. Hanson reminds them that this scene precedes another, even more dramatic scene, and so they have to be careful not to overshadow it. He makes many small alterations, none I would have thought could make a major impact on the final scene. Yet somehow it’s already different. Instead of “cut,” Hanson ends each take with a joke to help keep things relaxed.

Later, a table and some chairs are introduced into the scene. They’re boxy rehearsal pieces, just for blocking; the final production will feature much nicer pieces.

That starts a group discussion about design choices, like whether to use chairs or stools, and how to light the scene—a single lamp on the table, perhaps? Everything that could possibly be changed is played with, and the differences between each take surprise me.

A few days later, I sat down with Hanson. What follows is an edited selection of our conversation.

McKenzie Bohn: What’s the process behind choosing a script for a main stage production?

Nicholas Hanson: Usually, the process starts about 18 months in advance, often because faculty members are selecting shows that they’re really passionate about and will also dovetail with the classes they teach and the type of creative projects they’re interested in. We also try to make sure that there are lots of roles for students to be onstage, backstage and working in the shops. It takes some time to put all those puzzle pieces together.

MB: What’s the casting process like?

NH: Casting usually happens about two months before each play because we’re usually trying to create opportunities for new students, either first-years or transfers. It depends sometimes on the specific play. Sometimes they prepare a monologue, or if it’s for a musical they might sing or do a dance. Depending on the show, there might be a callback processes where you try and put people together. We try and create shows that have different levels of opportunity. Sauce for the Goose in the fall had, I think, 32 actors in it, which is one of the largest shows we’ve done in years. A show like that is really great for introducing many students to the process of putting on a show at the University of Lethbridge.

MB: So, this is a more contemporary work as compared to, say, Sauce for the Goose?

NH: Yeah, Afterimage is a new play. The first production was 2010, and this is only the second ever production of the play, which is a really exciting opportunity for our students. It’s a great opportunity to try and make a script come to life with almost no reference of how it’s been done elsewhere. With a play like Hamlet, that’s literally been done a thousand times, you can do a quick Google search and see images and videos of many different ways it’s been done. A newer production forces our students to use their imaginations to really think about how we can interpret some of these ideas.

MB: I understand there are some supernatural elements in Afterimage. Is that hard to present believably? Is anyone struggling with that?

NH: It’s complicated. We’re so accustomed to movies that spend $50 million on CGI effects to make Superman fly and to make Guardians of the Galaxy have these fantastic characters who are being voiced in the studio after the fact. To try and create all of that on stage has been very difficult, but the exciting thing is that difficulties provide great learning opportunities for students. There are a few moments in the show that feature pyrotechnic effects—things explode, there are fires on stage. Thinking about ways to do that safely—and thinking about ways to make that cool, to be honest—has been a great learning experience for everyone: students, faculty and staff.

MB: Is there anything challenging about working with students as actors?

NH: I think that any time you work on a show at a university you have patience with students who are still developing their techniques, whether that’s onstage, backstage or in any other regard. We have to be conscious of these people who are still in the process and developing these abilities. But that said, students often bring a type of enthusiasm and passion that sometimes gets diminished in the professional world. University productions are often these really vibrant communities of people coming together with incredible enthusiasm and commitment—and that’s really what I’ve experienced in this production.

MB: As a closing question: your university profile lists ice cream as an interest. What’s your favourite flavour?

NH: I love ice cream. I’ve had ice cream all over the world, in all the countries I’ve visited, and I think my favourite flavour of ice cream is one that has candy canes crushed up in it that you would only eat in December. I love minty things.
Family is more than blood. We now have a larger vision of family than just the biologic. Because of shifting family dynamics, single-parent homes, divorce and blended families, there is a nearly endless variety of family types. And popular fiction not only reflects but shapes this.

I grew up absorbing the adventures of characters like Percy Jackson, Harry Potter and Alex Rider. I read these books because in each there was something unique and spectacular about the protagonists. Invariably that something spectacular came from a parental figure, who would later disappear. They were heroes without bonds.

Without bonds, these solitary heroes rely on their intuition and learn to build relationships that transcend the nuclear family they never had anyway. Older characters become role models, taking on parental roles for a time, teaching morals and promoting growth.

For example, Eragon from the Inheritance series is raised by his uncle alongside his cousin. He ends up learning about his special calling as a dragon rider from a man later revealed to be his father. Or in The Book Thief, Leisel Meminger witnesses the death of her younger brother and is later adopted by a German couple, Hans and Rosa Hubermann, when her mother abandons her.

While parental figures are important in their absence, they never completely disappear. Modern characters are redefining what family means. They’re creating more extensive networks with a more inclusive idea of family.

Readers who come from a broken family see themselves in the solitary hero, who like them no longer hold a biologic family as the most important relationship in the lives. These characters, with whom we see parallels, help us make sense of family as the people who play vital roles in our lives. It is from a story that we gain insight into our own unusual family. The meaning of family is changing and fiction both informs and reflects the change.
EXHAUSTING PHRASES 1

By Colby Stolson
She walks in the room in a pink dress with cheetah print accents and flawlessly curled hair. The room’s eyes turn in her direction. She sits down at the bar and orders a Harvey Wallbanger, her drink of choice. This is Meghan MacWhirter. 

words by: Corbin Chenger
Her self-proclaimed inspirations are the likes of Audrey Hepburn and Dita Von Teese, whose style she emanates while adding her own flair. Meghan studies art and management, and practices feminist activism. She has a passion for things vintage. One look at her art, and this is clear.

Her pieces combine old magazine cut outs with watercolor, while others are acrylic paintings with a unique caricature style. Her photography is nostalgic for a simpler time on the prairies, and captures aged signs and logos.

Recently, her work was featured as an exhibition at Blueprint Records. She also retails some of her work through Society6 and maintains a personal blog where she collects her thoughts.
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UNIT SNAKES SHE
MONARCHIES ACER
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METALS WEBBED
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HARRIS RUGOSE
ARGON METERS
GAIN HAVERSACKS
GUN BETELS DROP
ADAMANTLY HOURI
RETRACES ORDER
DRESSER ESSAY
AN AMERICAN-STYLE CROSSWORD

Across
1. Young salmon
6. Kisser
10. Droops
14. Lowest point
15. ___ believer
16. Small gull
17. 1952 novel, with The
20. Split
21. Rowboat adjunct
22. Not too brainy
25. ___ Rebellion of 1857-59
26. Twisted
30. Hoodlum
32. Fuse
35. Sniff out
41. Author of 17 and 63
43. ___ Housing
44. Broad view
45. Square
46. ___ housing
47. ___ degree
48. Item with a ladder
49. Irritated
50. ___ housing
51. Kind of pool
52. “Give It To You” rapper
53. ___ degree
54. Illuminated
55. ___ degree
56. Wheels for mom
57. ___ Degree
59. ___ Housing
60. “Iliad” warrior
61. Blue books?
62. See
63. 1929 novel
64. Go horizontal
65. Directed
66. ___ Degree
67. Ashtabula’s lake
68. Exhaust
69. Deuce topper
70. Turned blue, maybe
71. Interesting

Down
1. Prig
2. French Sudan, today
3. Betting data
4. Beer garnish
5. ___ Housing
6. “Harper Valley ___”
7. Ashes holder
8. Logic game
9. “La Scala di ___” (Rossini opera)
10. Inscribed stone
11. Greek moralist
12. Artist, with El
13. Sinuous
18. ___ Degree
19. “48___”
23. Yen
24. Sang like a canary
26. Scores high
27. Do the trick
28. Doctor Who villainess, with The
29. Big bang matter
31. Beam
33. Sixth sense
34. Peeper problem
36. “Walking on Thin Ice” singer
37. Shrek, e.g.
38. Holiday opener
39. Weak
40. Young falcon
42. Lots
45. Napa Valley area
46. “Harper Valley ___” (Rossini opera)
48. Sting
49. Certain inmate
50. Empty
51. Kind of pool
52. “Give It To You” rapper
54. Illuminated
55. Muzzle
57. Blown away
59. Hombre’s home
60. “Iliad” warrior
61. Blue books?
62. See
64. Go horizontal
65. Directed
NATION

you notice everything else in dreams

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