

Issue 7: Spring 2016

First Printing

Copyright © 2016 by *The Warren Undergraduate Review*. Copyright of the individual works are retained by the authors. All rights reserved. Under no circumstances may any part of this publication be reproduced without the consent of the author(s) and editors.

The Warren Undergraduate Review is an annual publication assembled by undergraduates at the University of Victoria. Submissions are accepted internationally and blind-read by the editors. For more information on the journal and submission process, please see the website at thewarren.uvic.ca. All inquiries may be sent to warrenexec@gmail.com.

Journal design by Caitlin Baird, Sarah Grindlay, and Keiko Hart.

Journal layout by Brett Derouin.

Warren logo design by Hannah Golding.

(i) June in Bath by Keenan Mittag-Degala.

The Warren Undergraduate Review would like to humbly acknowledge that this publication is assembled, printed, and disseminated on unceded Coast and Straits Salish Territories (particularly those of the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples). We strive to incorporate a decolonizing and inclusive approach, but recognize that we have much to learn. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about decolonization, inclusivity, or related topics, please email us at warrengender-studies@gmail.com.

the **WARREN**
UNDERGRADUATE REVIEW

Editor-in-Chief Caitlin Baird

Vice Editor-in-Chief Rachael Kearley

Executive Editors Brett Derouin
Kat Taddei
Joey Takeda

Events Coordinator Roxanne Daskarev

Director of Submissions Richelle Atkin

Poetry Editor Darian Selander

Fiction Editor Carson Redden

Creative Nonfiction Editor Petter Ness

Drama Editor Colette Habel

Visual Arts Editor Keiko Hart

Criticism Editor Kristina Holm

Philosophy Editor Sean Vriesen

Gender Studies Editor Aaron El Sabrout

Events Photographer Danielle Aftias



Editorial Staff

Not pictured: Petter Ness, Darian Selander, Kat Taddei, and Sean Vriesen

SERAFINA APPEL



CONTENTS

Serafina Appel	iii	<i>Found 8</i>
Emma Gammans	1	From <i>Conversations with Van Gogh</i>
Katherine Goertz	3	<i>Deforming the Oregon Trail</i>
Emma Brooks	7	<i>54 Pours</i>
Mary Chen	9	妹妹
Leone Brander	11	<i>The Snatcher</i>
Keenan Mittag-Degala	16	<i>Lady in the Park</i>
Serafina Appel	17	<i>Found 1</i>
Thomas V. Christie	18	<i>I can't tell you what to say</i>
	19	Contributors
	20	Works Cited

from *Conversations With Van Gogh*

In August, Manoush dreams of Van Gogh. They sit together in Van Gogh's bedroom, in Arles, and discuss the many sad faces worn by depressed men. They agree that depression is an encroaching beast, malevolent by nature. Van Gogh tells Manoush that he has painted the room. See, he says, *the wood of the bed and chairs is the yellow of fresh butter, the sheets and pillows very light greenish-citron*. The room is warped and Manoush's head aches. Van Gogh carries on. *The broad lines of the furniture again must express inviolable rest. Portraits on the walls, and a mirror and a towel and some clothes*. Manoush sits in the chair below Van Gogh's window. The window panes are stained a yellowish emerald and light tumbles through them. Manoush pours himself a glass of water from a jug on the bedside table. As it settles in the bottom of the glass, he notes that it is not water at all. Rather, his glass is filled with cobalt paint and when he stares into it, small stars swirl and the blue deepens. I painted that too, says Van Gogh, perched on the edge of his bed. He is smoothing a scarlet coverlet. There are many paintings hanging in the bedroom. Above the headboard is an oak tree, and to the side, a portrait of a man named Eugene Boch. The man's head is the shape of a light bulb. His chin is narrow and his hairline recedes, like a large wave, toward the crown of his head. Look, says Van Gogh and Manoush turns his head. A third portrait of Van Gogh's friend, the second lieutenant of the Zouaves, stares into Manoush's eyes. The man in the third portrait, rather unlike Boch, wears a soldier's cap and his skin is the colour of chestnuts. Manoush listens as Van Gogh recounts a day in Montmajour with the second lieutenant... the size of the fig trees and the hundred-year-old cypresses! It sounds lovely. But something is rather strange. Is it not? Manoush has wondered this already, but his head throbs with the steady thump of a drum and he pushes the thought aside before taking a sip from the glass of cobalt paint. I would like to paint you, says Van

Gogh. He wanders from the room and returns with a palette. The colours are of the most spectacular array, blends of ochre and chartreuse and saffron, violets and sea-foam greens. Van Gogh dips his brush into a dark goldenrod paint and approaches Manoush. He drags the tip of the brush along Manoush's jaw. It is cold. The bristles are rough and straw-like and Manoush stares into Van Gogh's eyes. He has never seen eyes that are still as stones, that are hard and cold and ready to drown. Why do you wish to paint me in such a way? Manoush asks. Because, says Van Gogh, now using a thinner brush. He dabs Manoush's eyelids until they are green. Because the sadness will last forever, he says, and now, so will you.

The italicized excerpts have been taken from letters written by Van Gogh himself, as he describes to his brother Theo his various stylistic approaches.

Deforming the Oregon Trail

The popular computer game *Oregon Trail* was created by three Minnesota student teachers in 1971 and has been touted as one of the earliest “edutainment” computer programs (Miller). Like other educational material of the era, *Oregon Trail* privileges settler narratives and, through repetition, erases Indigenous perspectives from North American history. Inspired by Thomas King’s retelling of history in *The Inconvenient Indian*, I have created a modified version of *Oregon Trail* that challenges the settler’s historical narrative. My version draws from Ian Bogost’s discussion of “procedural rhetoric,” or persuasive processes within videogames, and Jerome McGann and Lisa Samuels’ works of “deformance,” which critically engage with a text by altering it.

Oregon Trail recapitulates two key problems with North American historical narratives: the centrality of settler ideology and the erasure of Indigenous history in North America. Thomas King argues that North American history narratives focus primarily on settler perspectives and only represent indigenous peoples as simplistic tropes. He argues that, “North America no longer sees Indians. What it sees are war bonnets, beaded shirts, fringed deerskin...bits of cultural debris” (King 53-54). Designed to educate students about the history of American settlement, *Oregon Trail* constructs a history of the American West that rehashes the colonial tropes of Indigenous people and relies on the erasure of Indigenous lives and histories. In the original game, players choose from three different characters, “a banker from Boston,” “a carpenter from Ohio,” or “a farmer from Illinois.” The player then traces the footsteps of early American settlers as they attempt to survive the journey from Independence, Missouri to Willamette Valley, Oregon. Like contemporary textbooks that appealed to colonial tropes (Furniss 58), *Oregon Trail* rarely represents Indigenous people as anything but an endangered community. Rarely, an Indigenous person



speaks, but solely to highlight their threatened existence: an “Arapaho Indian” explains that “[white men] crowd the trail in great numbers” and a “Shoshoni Indian” remarks that “... there are too many white men and too little land for grazing.” Indigenous characters also appear as a threat. Players can encounter “a young mother” within the game who will explain their “fear of Indians.”

Oregon Trail's settler perspective and cliché Indigenous representations make very specific claims about North American history. One of the game's primary arguments is its defense of the progress myth. The player is encouraged to follow the early settler's movement westward in order to win the game. Similarly, the constant repetition of place names effectively erases any history that preexisted Western contact. According to Ian Bogost's *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames* (2010), “Procedural Rhetoric is the practice of using processes persuasively” (28-29). In the case of *Oregon Trail*, the movement of the player along the trail, and the use of settler place names, present the settler perspective of American history as fact for its players.

My modified *Oregon Trail* map rejects the settler's historical narrative of dominion over the land. King highlights the difference between settler views of land domination and the relationship with the land that many Indigenous communities held prior to Western contact. According to King, “[l]and has always been a defining ele-

ment of aboriginal culture. Land contains the languages, the stories, and the histories of a people. It provides water, air, shelter, and food. Land participates in the ceremonies and the songs. And land is home... For non-Natives, land is primarily a commodity” (218). While the original game map represents place names and borders imposed by settler governments, the modified version of the game attempts to erase these impositions. As the player advances in the modified game, they move backwards, from Oregon to Missouri, erasing the Western place names as they go. Without any names or borders, my modified map appeals to the indigenous understanding of land (as described by King) to resist the colonial practice that effaces Indigenous thought and histories.

In his retelling of North American history, King not only undermines the settler ideology of land ownership, he also reinserts the names of indigenous figures back into the national narrative. When he retells the story of early explorers, for example, King lists the names of indigenous women, like “Washakie, Standing Bear, Ely Parker, Carlos Montezuma, Osceola, and Jane Schoolcraft” (19) who helped European explorers survive. This modified version of *Oregon Trail* attempts to follow King’s example by inserting the names of the many different nations who were affected by the settlers’ movement along the Oregon Trail.

The modified version of *Oregon Trail* draws these names from Aaron Carapella’s map of the Oregon Trail, since his maps “use Tribal Nation’s original Indigenous names for themselves, and show where Tribes were just before contact with outsiders” (Carapella). In his map, Carapella is careful to privilege the names the communities call themselves, rather than using the often incorrect names that the settler governments applied to these groups.

The deformed version of *Oregon Trail* not only forces the player to acknowledge the many Nations that preexisted North American settlement, but it also complicates seemingly natural elements of gameplay. As Samuels and McGann highlight in their work on deformance and interpretation, “[d]eformance sends both reader and work through the textual looking glass. On that other side customary rules are not completely short-circuited, but they are held in abeyance, to be chosen among (there are many systems of rules), to be followed or not as one decides” (36). The modified version of *Oregon Trail* moves the character backwards along the trail to imitate the deformative criticism of Dickinson’s backward reading, with the intention of bringing the reader, or in this case, the player, to the position where they can “imagine things about the text that [they] didn’t and perhaps couldn’t otherwise know” (36). In particular, the backwards motion provokes the player to question the nature of linear motion as progress. The modified game also follows Samuels and McGann’s example of altered poetry by swapping out the colonial names of places for names of Indigenous communities. However, these alterations are made to critically engage with innate cultural biases in education material, rather than interpret poetic meaning.

This modified version of *Oregon Trail*, which has been stripped down to its most basic elements, attempts to address the problems with how North American history has been taught. According to the registered charity, People for Education, there continues to be a “knowledge gap” that prevents many teachers and students from understanding the full impact of colonialism on Aboriginal students (Gunn et al. 3). Educational tools like *Oregon Trail* contribute to this gap by affirming the centrality of the settler and framing indigenous characters as other. My modified version of *Oregon Trail* strives to follow King’s example in *The Inconvenient Indian* by troubling the settler narrative and reinserting an Indigenous presence in the stories told about North American history.

You can download and play this modified version of Oregon Trail at <https://github.com/katherineanne/OTmod>



EMMA BROOKS



EMMA BROOKS



妹妹

This gleam in your bone, it's due to an aberration
In your genetic make-up, the configuration of how
Each piece of you interlocks,
To form a body so ready to be crushed inside the mouth
Is that right?

So you drag yourself to the cooking pot
Cover your eyes and
Lie back to let this 146 degree touch come
Boiling around you, corn syrup raising thick bubbles
All over you. are you seeing a sweeter self
When those white arms lock around you?

No, little one – I don't. explain to me again how this can be so:
Are you not a living body,
Sloshing blood, churning bile,
Like I am? When I touch my hand to yours,
Tell me –
What is it that I am feeling then?

妹妹

Yes, I know you are milk-skinned
Like White Rabbit,
But White Rabbit doesn't cry
When peeled apart by sharp teeth, does it?

You are mistaking craving for kindness.
He wants to crack you open,
And it is not for sugar's sake

MARY CHEN

The Snatcher

April

Meena squeezes organic lemons onto bowls of arugula. She watches Collin, her husband, survey the backyard of their acreage from the dining room table. He holds a mug with a picture of Niagara Falls, though neither of them has been there. He drinks red wine from the mug because tonight they celebrate two months since he left his job at the ad agency. Let go would be a more accurate term, but Collin uses the word left.

“Ordered the lumber yet?” she says.

Collin swirls the mug of wine and brings it to his lips, drinks from the falls. “Can’t decide between pine and cedar.” He clears a stack of DIY landscaping magazines from the dining room table and joins Meena at the kitchen counter. He stands behind her and kneads the nape of her neck. He assures her he’ll order it by the end of the week.

The backyard renovation had been Meena’s idea—a long overdue project that Collin could finish while he took time away from work. The yard, all three acres of it, had grown unkempt since the family inherited it from Collin’s mother some three years ago. Collin, with his ever practical waste-not-want-not logic, hadn’t changed a thing. They watch the Food Network on his mother’s couch, eat off his mother’s dishes, and make love in his mother’s bed.

Meena guts black olives with a paring knife and shells out their pits with her thumbnail. “Do you get the same kind for everything?” Collin finalized his plans two weeks ago, designed a gazebo, garden boxes, and included a swingset for their seven-year-old daughter, Nora.

Collin shuffles through the cutlery drawer to grab the good silverware at the bottom. “Any preference?”

“Doesn’t matter to me,” says Meena. She scrapes the olives into two equal piles and arranges them on top of each salad to make oily black flowers. She sets them at either end of the table while Collin refills his mug. “I’ll just be glad to have something that’s ours.”

May

In truth, I might enjoy teaching summer classes. More liberties with the curriculum, smaller classes, lighter marking. Collin forgot to pick Nora up from daycare yesterday, he didn’t mean to, he was distracted with the yard, but she seemed to take offence.

She keeps telling me about the monster in the backyard. She said he’s called the Snatcher and lives in the pit where the gazebo will be. She said he is boney and grey-skinned with a long black ponytail just like her. I told her I believe her, a technique I read about in Cynthia Perry’s “Stones to Stars: How to Foster Your Child’s Creativity.” I told her not to worry.

June

Collin strains his neck to watch the television. The DVD yoga instructor demonstrates the downward dog, a position Collin achieves with moderate success, heels almost to the floor. From between his legs, he watches Meena fumble to pin Nora’s hair into a bun. Fleetwood Mac’s “Go Your Own Way” plays from Collin’s laptop. He insists that Stevie Nicks is crucial to finding his inner balance.

Collin spends most days practicing yoga. He tells Meena he needs to get in shape and limber up before moving forward with any heavy lifting. Meena spends her days trying to make fifteen-year-olds care about Shakespeare and then drives home and tries to make her husband care about the ornamental crab apple trees.

“Did anything get planted today?” she says. Saplings and shrubs slump against the back shed in a row. Collin and Meena purchased them three weeks ago.

“Look at this, I’m almost to the floor,” says Collin. Beads of sweat drip from his chin to forehead, absorb into his scalp.

Meena looks up. “Very nice, honey.” She only calls him honey in times of great stress. Collin clammers to his feet, pauses his yoga DVD, and slams his laptop. He strides across the open living area and into the kitchen where he takes the bobby pins from Meena’s hands in silence. He twists their daughter’s hair into a knot and pins it to the back of her head in a single smooth motion.

“When will the hole in the yard be gone?” says Nora.

“Soon,” says Collin.

“The Snatcher says it will never be done.”

“Did you see him today?” Collin continues to strategically slide bobby pins into Nora’s hair.

“He said he needs new clothes for winter.”

Meena and Collin share a smirk. “Well what does he wear in the summer?” says Meena.

“He’s naked. That’s why he stays in the hole.” Nora says this matter-of-factly, as if her parents should’ve known this already. She passes her father a black hairnet and he winds it around her bun one, two, three times.

“Hurry and get your shoes,” says Meena. Her brows form a deep V on her otherwise slack face. Collin wears the same expression.

July

The backyard is off-limits unless Collin or I am there, which is rarely and poor little Nora has no place to play but inside. Not that it matters, she refuses to venture back there anymore. She says the Snatcher wants to snatch the hair right off her head, says he wants to wear it as a coat. That’s why he keeps his nails so long. She won’t even go out to fill the bird feeder, not that it’s ever needed filling. We’ve suffered a strange lack of birds this year.

August

Nora stands in the yard riddled with holes and lumber scraps. The row of young trees droops leafless and naked, the shrubs shrivelled into tufts of brown. Mounds of dirt had sat untouched so long they now sprout grass and weeds. Sawdust litters the ground. Her father’s snores come muted from the other side of the sliding glass doors, where he naps on the couch. He naps there often.

In one hand, Nora clutches a bulging grocery bag. She filled it with dishrags, her mother’s scarves, bits of yarn from her craft drawer. She scuffles towards the gazebo pit. She can hear him, the Snatcher, breathe deep uneven breaths, like he’s inhaling the gravel. Seven feet from the hole, Nora stops. With her free arm, she grabs a handful from her bag. She squints, aims, and throws the yarns and threads at the hole. The handful, a bright tangle of strings and flaps, soars up, up into the air. It weighed almost nothing in her hand, and lands only steps from her toes. The Snatcher hisses.

Nora scoops up the fallen ammunition, fingers white and trembling. She stuffs it back into the bag and

shuffles to the edge of the hole. Eyes to the sky, she raises the bag over her head and pours her offerings into the pit. Cloth cascades down from her arms. Bag emptied, she peeks over the edge of the hole. Fabrics and fibers coat the bottom of the pit. She smiles at the bright colours that now fill the hole, and then something moves. A black thing. Something long and swishing, thick as a ponytail. Nora screams and loses her footing. She topples into the hole. Her hands claw at the flat earth above but cannot grip it. She might hear the Snatcher hiss once more, but her cries flood it out. The Snatcher grabs her ankle. His fingernails dig into the thin skin above her heel. Then her hands find another pair of hands, grasp on and connect like magnets. Her father pulls her out of the pit and onto the ground. He pulls the snake from her leg, writhing and twisting, and slams it on the ground by the tail. Once. Twice. Three times. Four. He stops well after the snake became some lifeless thing, as loose and relaxed as a jump-rope.

September

Nora refuses to leave the house without her hair pinned into a ballet-bun. She says the Snatcher talks more and more about making a winter coat, that he's getting colder and colder. Collin and I must wear hats whenever we go to the backyard. This is an unquestioned rule now.

October

Pickling season arrives. Meena spends a weekend jamming vegetables into jars. She boils batches of brine in her dented stock-pot to pour over carrots and cucumbers and beets. She and Nora plucked them at a pick-your-own farm three days prior. Collin steals spoonfuls of pickle juice when she turns her back.

“At this rate we won't have any left for winter,” she says to him.

“True, but there's this thing called a grocery store,” he says.

“Not the same.”

“I'm beat.” Collin squeezes his wife's shoulder and starts up the stairs. The clock reads only eight o'clock, but night has already arrived, Nora lays in bed, and most nights Collin subscribes to the same bedtime.

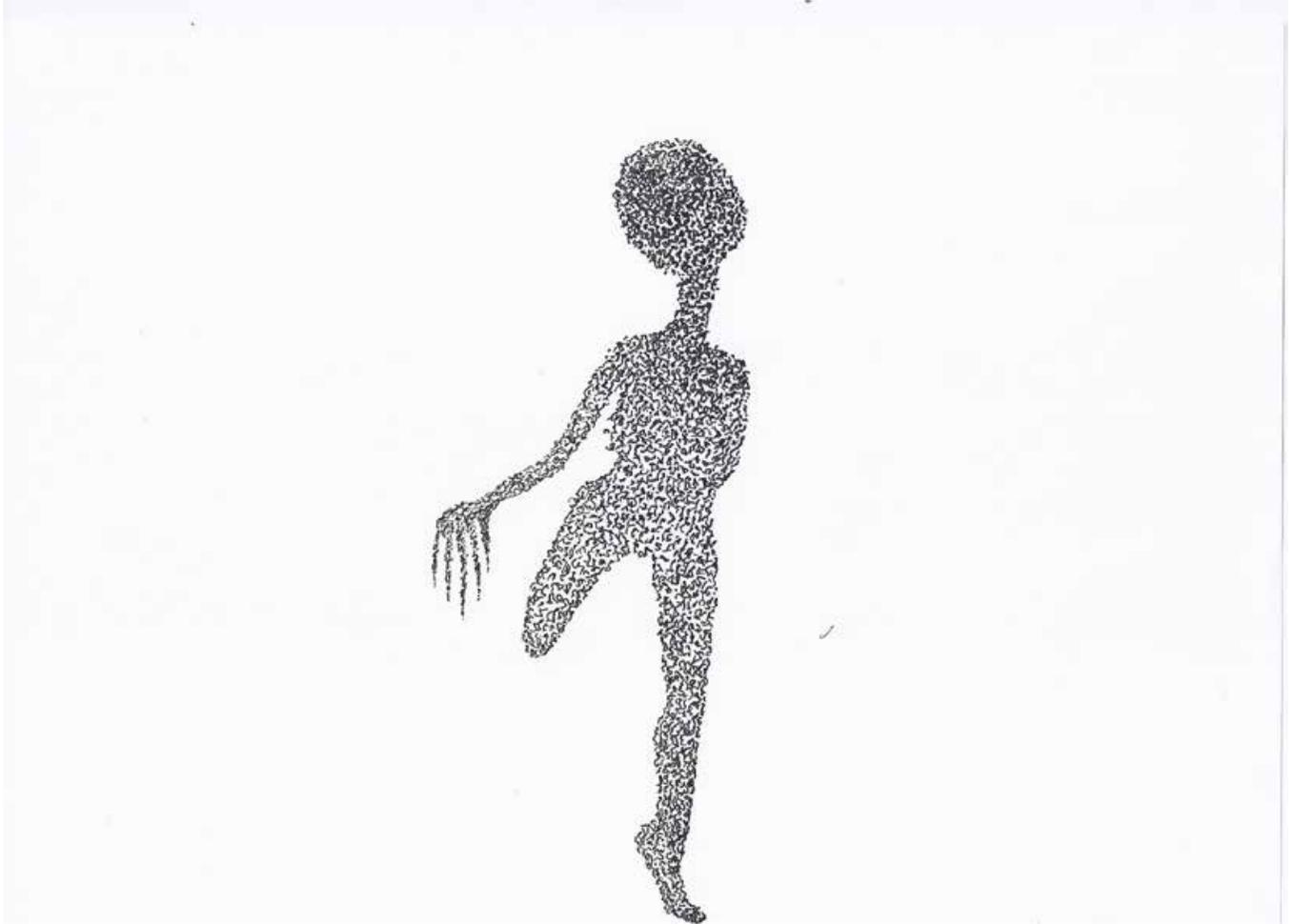
“Wait up for me?”

“No promises.” His answer comes muffled by the walls, the heater running, the laundry machines, the sounds of an old house.

Meena counts her jars, writes a log of each variety on a notepad. She always makes just enough to last the family through the winter, this year would be no exception. She stacks the jars in milk crates to haul to the base-

ment. Through the window, the sky sleeps starless, the earth blank, the horizon imperceptible. The light from the kitchen spills into the yard, edging up to the rim of the pit. Meena sits and watches that spot for a long time. Long enough for Collin to fall asleep, long enough for house to quiet down. The first snowflakes of the year begin to fall. They look like flecks of gold leaf when they catch the light. In a few minutes they will flurry, in half an hour they will storm, and by midnight, after Meena is asleep next to Collin, the snow will coat the yard six inches deep, and anything left alive will freeze solid.

KEENAN MITTAG-DEGALA



SERAFINA APPEL



I can't tell when you say,
«ça va»
if it's alright
or translated

SERAFINA APPEL is a student of philosophy but unfortunately is less concerned with the sexy part of it than with the dry politics of it.

LEONE BRANDER is a third year writing student studying fiction and CNE. Most days she can be found eating avocados and watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

EMMA BROOKS is a visual artist born in Toronto currently based out of Victoria. She is working on completing her bachelor's of fine arts from the University of Victoria. Emma explores the somewhat deluded notion of caring for works that are not alive. While they can be watched, she refuses to manipulate their movement process. They will fall and die when they are ready.

MARY CHEN is a young writer and artist who has grown up in the cradle of unceded Coast Salish land. She spends most of her time outside of class reading comic books and chasing after her rascal dog.

THOMAS V. CHRISTIE is a Montréal-based musician, installation artist, student, and writer.

EMMA GAMMANS is a third year writing student with an interest in history, travel, and art.

KATHERINE GOERTZ is currently finishing up her English Honours undergrad at the University of Victoria. Next, she plans to pursue a post-degree in teaching, then go on to use her English training by building lego towers with Kindergarten kids.

KEENAN MITTAG-DEGALA is an artist from Danville, CA. He currently lives in Victoria, BC where he studies music at UVic.

From *Deforming the Oregon Trail*

Bogost, Ian. "Procedural Rhetoric." *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Video Games*. The MIT Press: Cambridge. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

Carapella, Aaron. "About." *Tribal Nations Maps*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

Furniss, Elizabeth. *The Burden of History*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999. Print.

Galloway, Alexander. "Gamic Action, Four Moments." *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2006. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

King, Thomas. *The Inconvenient Indian*. Canada: Anchor Canada, 2013. Print.

Miller, Leslie. "25 years of learning on the 'Oregon Trail'." *USA TODAY*. (October 31, 1996 , Thursday,): 888 words. LexisNexis Academic. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

"Oregon Trail Emulator." *The Internet Archives*. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

Samuels, Lisa and Jerome McGann. "Deformance and Interpretation". *New Literary History*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Poetry & Poetics (Winter, 1999), pp. 25-56. Web. 14 Apr. 2015.

From *Conversations with Van Gogh*

"Van Gogh's Bedroom at Arles [*Le Chambre De Van Gogh à Arles*] 1889." National Gallery of Australia - Home. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.

the **WARREN**
UNDERGRADUATE REVIEW

Serafina Appel

Leone Brander

Emma Brooks

Mary Chen

Thomas V. Christie

Emma Gammans

Katherine Goertz

Keenan Mittag-Degala