

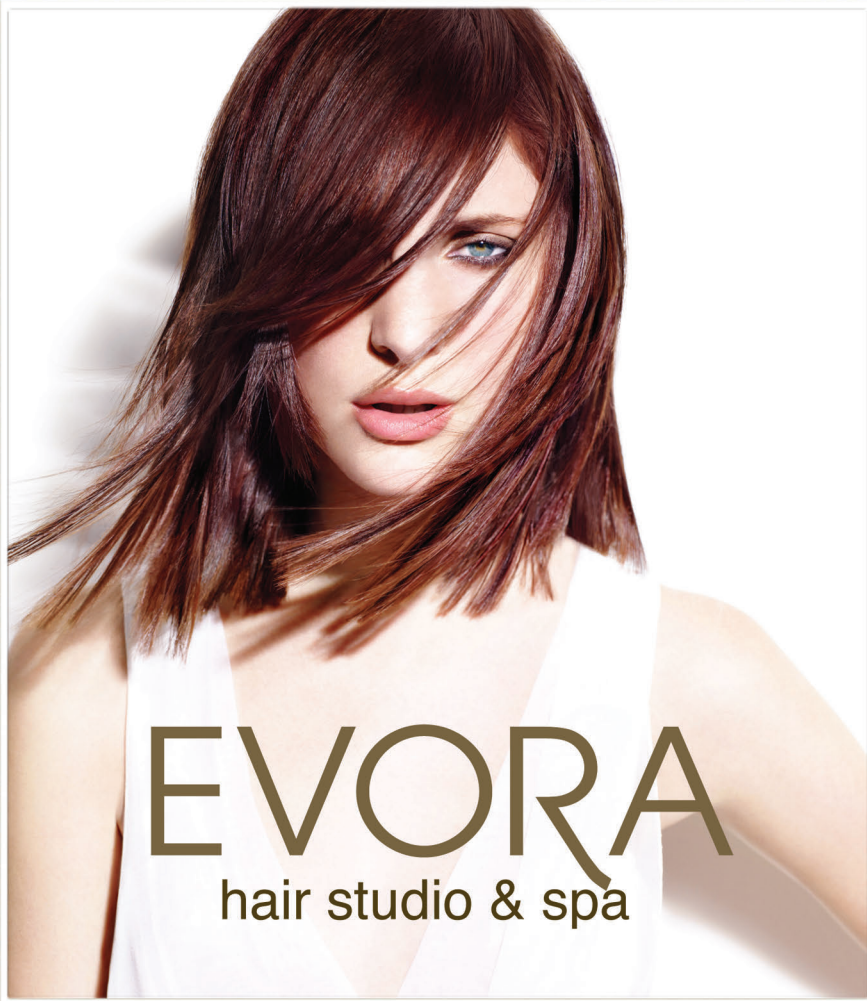
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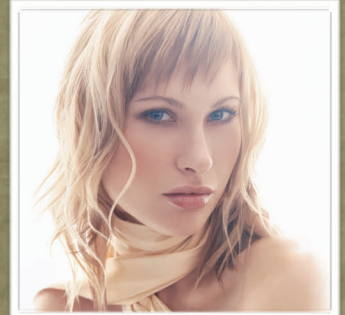
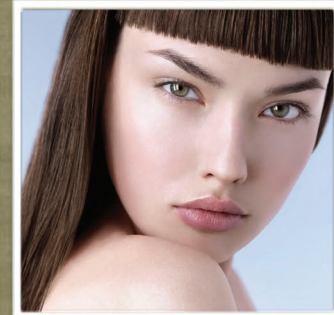
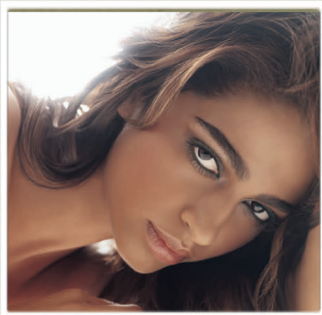






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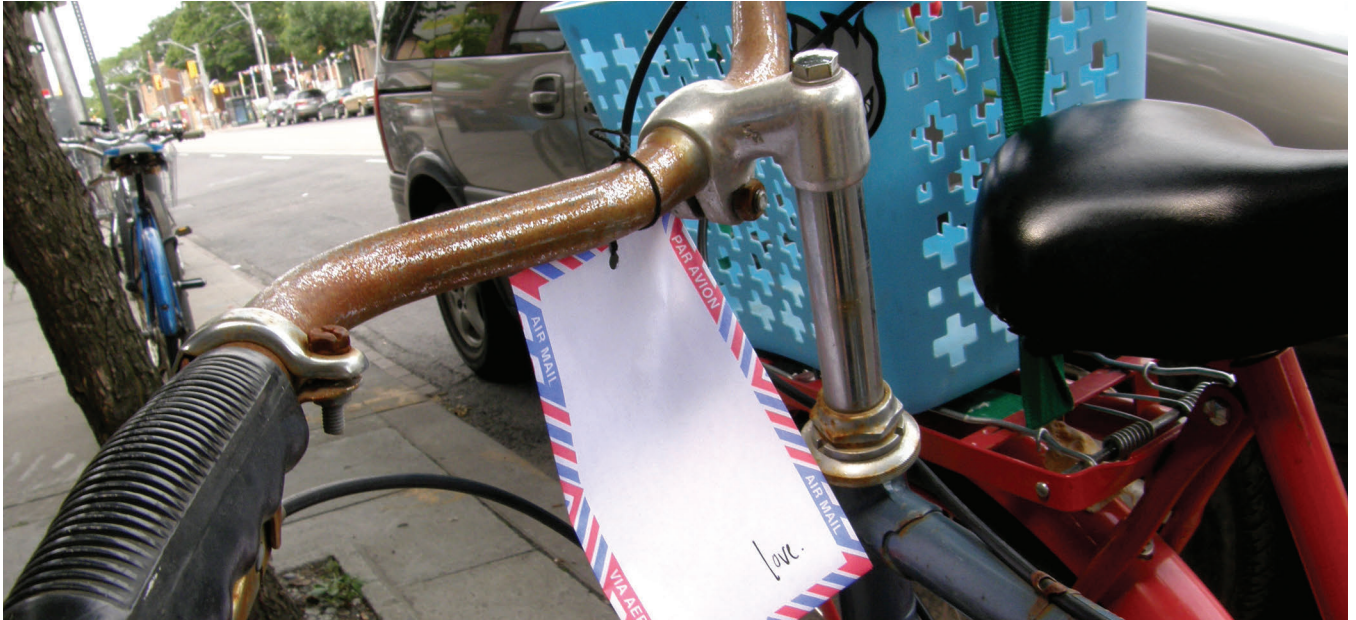
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# TADDLE CREEK

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# THE CONTRIBUTORS

James Lindsay (“Day Room,” p. 9) lives in Parkdale. He is the co-owner of Pleasence Records. His poetry and short fiction have appeared in *Prairie Fire* and *Pilot*.

Joe Ollmann (“Personal Space,” p. 14) lives in Montreal. He is a much-beloved, aged, semi-alcoholic cartoonist who has laboured in ink-stained, penurious obscurity for most of his working life. Since winning the Doug Wright Award for best book in 2007, all of this has changed, of course. His fourth book, *Mid-Life*, a barely disguised document of his pathetic, bourgeois angst, was published recently by Drawn and Quarterly.

Thomas Blanchard (photograph, p. 17) is a photographer living in Rua Açores. His previous photos for *Taddle Creek* were nominated for a National Magazine Award.

Jacqueline Nelson (“Secret Admirer,” p. 20) lives in Yorkville. She is the associate editor of *Canadian Business* magazine, where she writes about everything from investing to biomedicine to waterless washing machines.

Chris Chambers (“Visit to Queen’s Park,” p. 24) lives in Niagara. He is the author of *Lake Where No One Swims* (Pedlar, 1999) and co-author, with Derek McCormack, of *Wild Mouse* (Pedlar, 1998). As of this issue, he holds the record for most contributions to *Taddle Creek*.

Damian Rogers (“The New Monuments,” p. 27) lives in Beaconsfield. Born and raised in suburban Detroit, her first book of poetry, *Paper Radio*, was published in 2009 by ECW.

Recently transplanted from Halifax, Peter Norman (“Everything Has a Reason,” p. 29) lives in Bloorcourt, where he works as a freelance editor. His first book of poetry, *At the Gates of the Theme Park*, was published in 2010 by Mansfield.

Jackie Linton (“Concrete Forest,” p. 34) recently left Toronto to complete the master of science in publishing program at New York University. She is also the publisher of the independent arts and culture quarterly *Bad Day*.

Julie Hartley (“Home Address,” p. 45) lives in York. Her poetry has appeared in the *Antigonish Review*, *CV2*, *This Magazine*, and *Event*, and she was a 2010 winner of the Leeds Peace Poetry competition, in England. She also runs the Centauri Summer Arts Camp.

Brett Lamb (The Spots) lives in Leslieville. He is a freelance cartoonist and graphic designer for film and television. He contributes regularly to the *Annex Gleaner* and *Torontoist*, and his cartoons have appeared on *How I Met Your Mother* and *Tosh.0*.

Matthew Daley (the illustrator) lives in Liberty Village. His work has appeared in *Broken Pencil*, *Exclaim!*, *Spacing*, *This Magazine*, *Cottage Life*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

Jack Dylan (The Cover) lives in Trinity Bellwoods. His work has been featured regularly in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Walrus*, and *Toronto Life*. He also creates poster designs for artists and bands, as well as his own series of fine art prints, and illustrates for print advertising.

# TADDLE CREEK

## THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Conan Tobias

## THE GUEST EDITORS

Alex Boyd, Jessica Westhead

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## THE DESIGNER

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## THE CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

John Montgomery

## THE ILLUSTRATOR

Matthew Daley

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# T H E M A I L

Um, "Funny." Yes . . .

I recently received the Taddle Creek Impersonal Form-Rejection Slip. It was the best kind of rejection one could hope for, so terribly funny in its ruthlessness. Having to send out rejection letters myself, I completely understand your categories. Often I have sat pondering how exactly to tell a poet that his work is very bad, without actually saying those words. Maybe instead of my version of charitable falsehoods, I should be unflinching when presenting my opinion.

DAWN KRESAN  
Kingsville, Ontario

*Once again, Taddle Creek leads where others dare not follow. The magazine is glad you enjoyed its ruthless rejection of your work, Dawn. Unfortunately, only those who submit to Taddle Creek by post receive the Taddle Creek Impersonal Form-Rejection Slip. The magazine should create an E-mailable version so more writers can experience the sting of Taddle Creek's literary intolerance.*

## Where's That Rejection Slip?

Although messing about with a journal currently reviewing one of my submissions is probably ill-advised, chalk up my following comments to writerly naïveté, my apolitical nature, and an overzealousness for making pedantic interpretations of creative content.

On your Web site's About page, in the section entitled Catching Up With *Taddle Creek*, you say, "Proving there's more to the Internet than pornography and eBay, *Taddle Creek* is proud to make available...."

You might consider revising and modernizing this section. I think pornography is about the only safe example you could leave on this page without having to review it every year, which obviously is a level of dedication and commitment the remainder of *Taddle Creek* receives regularly enough.

DOUGLAS GUNN  
Toronto

## Nice Try

From your submission guidelines: "*Taddle Creek* accepts only submissions of fiction and poetry, only from authors currently residing in the city of Toronto."

From your most recent issue: "Amy Jones lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario."

Odd that.

STEVEN SNELL  
Calgary

*Not at all, Steven, especially if you've read any issue since Christmas, 2002, in particular the past two, where this issue was addressed in detail. Don't worry, you're not alone. Taddle Creek gets a version of this "gotcha" letter frequently. As a result, the magazine has decided to address this and other frequently asked questions in this issue's Ephemera column, on page 5, which hopefully will clear up your confusion.*

---

*Letters should include the writer's name, address, and phone number and/or E-mail address for confirmation purposes. The magazine reserves the right to mock any nasty or especially silly letters. Due to the volume of mail received, Taddle Creek should have no problem responding to all letters in a timely fashion.*



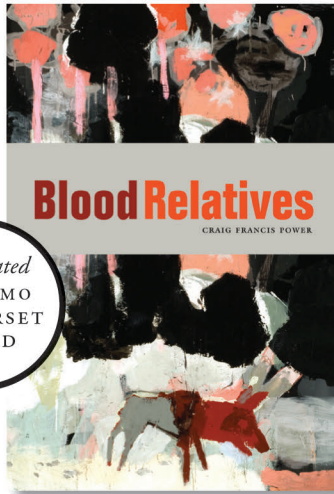
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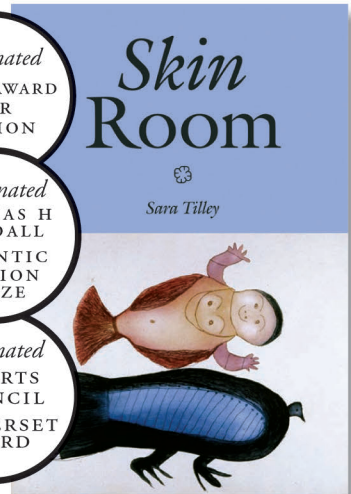
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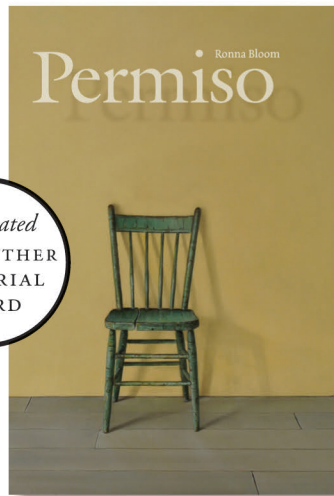
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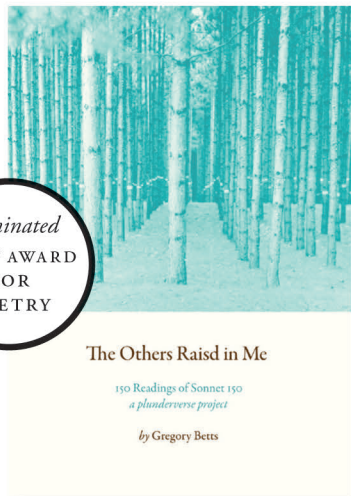
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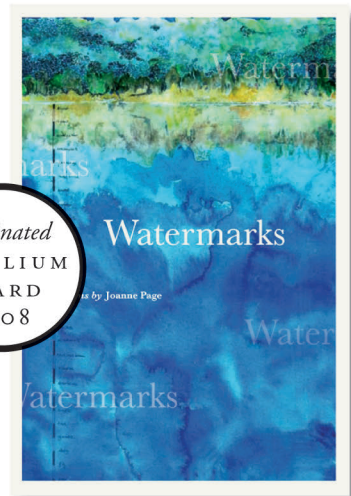
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# T H E E P H E M E R A

## Since You Asked

**T***addle Creek* loves meeting its public, and is happy it gets the chance to do so often, if not at its semi-annual launch parties, then at various press fairs, such as Canzine, Word on the Street, and the like. *Taddle Creek* has noticed, however, that it gets asked many of the same questions year after year. This can get a bit redundant. And so, in the interest of freeing up time for the discussion of more interesting topics, the magazine presents the Taddle Creek List of Frequently Asked Questions—actual queries from current, future, and lost readers.

1. Do you know there's a real Taddle Creek?

A: This may shock you, but it is no coincidence a magazine based in Toronto shares the name of a creek in said city. Yes, of course the magazine knows there is a "real" Taddle Creek. (For the record, both Taddle Creek and *Taddle Creek* are real.)

2. Do you know the real Taddle Creek runs right through here/over there/the Annex/Queen's Park/police headquarters/Hart House/*et al.*?

A: (Again with the "real.") *Taddle Creek* is actually something of an authority on Taddle Creek and its path, as evidenced by the very first story ever run in the magazine, which has been available on the magazine's Web site since 2000 ([www.taddlecreekmag.com/stream\\_1](http://www.taddlecreekmag.com/stream_1)).

3. What's *Taddle Creek*?

A: The magazine or the creek? *Taddle Creek*, the magazine, is a semi-annual, general-interest literary magazine. Taddle Creek, the creek, is a stream that once

ran through the city, from Wychwood Park to Lake Ontario via the Annex and other neighbourhoods. See the above-mentioned essay for more information on the latter.

4. How many submissions do you receive each issue?

A: It varies, but anywhere from around fifty to one hundred. And just to head off your follow-up question: the vast majority of submissions are received via E-mail these days.

5. How many unsolicited submissions do you publish each issue?

A: Next to none. One to two on average. The rest are solicited.

6. I wish I could submit, but I don't live in the Annex.

A: That isn't a question, but let *Taddle Creek* ask you a question: Have you read any issue of the magazine published after 1999? That was when *Taddle Creek* stopped being an Annex-specific journal.

7. I wrote a story/poem that mentions the real Taddle Creek. Will you publish it?

A: *Taddle Creek* cannot stress enough that it, too, is "real." In any case, the magazine suspects your actual question is: "Will the fact that I've mentioned your namesake in my story/poem in any way help me to get published if you don't like the piece otherwise?" No.

8. Does my story/poem have to take place in Toronto?

A: No, of course not.

9. Your submission guidelines say you don't accept submissions from authors

residing outside Toronto, but there's an author in your latest issue who lives [somewhere outside Toronto]. I've caught you in a lie, haven't I?

A: The magazine appreciates your taking the time to read its submission guidelines. Few do. Why not take the next logical step and read the magazine too, as *Taddle Creek* has addressed this question before. You are right on both counts: *Taddle Creek* does not accept submissions from authors who do not live in Toronto, and there are also frequent stories in the magazine by or about those residing in other cities. In fact, there has been at least one per issue since Christmas, 2002. This section is called the Out-of-Towner. The summer, 2010, issue was even devoted entirely to Out-of-Towners. In any case, these stories that have you riled are not submitted; they are solicited. Referencing the answer to Question 5, reading hundreds more submissions each year for these two slots would not be a productive use of *Taddle Creek*'s time, so it simply solicits stories for this section from writers it knows or has read work by. The practice has nothing to do with *Taddle Creek* hating writers living outside Toronto, or hating you personally. *Taddle Creek* loves writers of all civic affiliations.

10. Why do you have so many ads in your magazine?

A: Because you don't subscribe.

*Taddle Creek* hopes the above questions can now be retired from the press-fair circuit. But just in case, the magazine will post this F.A.Q. on its Web site and at all of its future events, to ensure no one ever has need to ask them again.

—TADDLE CREEK



# The Many Faces of Montgomery Clift

BY GRACE O'CONNELL

Lewin was named after his drunken grandfather and Micah was named for the Old Testament prophet who said, "Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend," because Micah's mother had been both converting and going through a bad time while pregnant. Her mother thought it was a girl's name when she saw it in the table of contents; she was new to the whole Bible thing, and it was an innocent mistake. But most people at John Huss Christian High School were named Joy or Stacey or Matthew, and being a Micah meant there was a slight blurring around her, the smallest mark of strangeness that was sometimes enough to leave Micah feeling like there was a tiny satellite delay between herself and everyone around her, that she was isolated one half-second ahead in time.

So she was intrigued to hear that a Lewin was transferring in. She had never heard the name before, and she pictured someone tall and thin, with a mean-looking mouth and tired eyes. When she saw Lewin for the first time, at his father's funeral, he looked just like the picture in her head, so much so Micah thought she had, to a certain extent, invented him.

At the funeral, her mother told her to go and speak to him, to say she was sorry for his loss and that she looked forward to having him in her class. She did this, and told Lewin about Bible Challenge, the Bible trivia competition that John Huss participated in along with the other Independent Christian schools in the region.

"It's really fun," she said. "We get to go away for tournaments. One of my teammates graduated, so maybe you can be on my team."

If this was an inappropriate conversa-

tion for a funeral, Micah didn't know, having never been to one. She hadn't known Lewin's father, but because Lewin was soon to be a student at John Huss, Principal Garmash had activated the telephone prayer chain, and everyone had been told to go.

Lewin was examining a crustless cucumber-and-cream-cheese sandwich while Micah talked.

"I've already started studying," she said. "We're doing James first. It's short. But there's this one verse about the double-minded man that I know they'll have a ton of questions on."

Lewin didn't respond, but he moved his gaze from the sandwich to Micah, so she went on.

"He looks in the mirror and forgets his own face. That's the verse."

Lewin said, "He has two faces?"

"No, he's double-minded, not double-faced."

But even as she said this, Micah was thinking she had gotten the same wrong impression while reading—that she had pictured the double-minded man as having one face on the front, the regular one that he looked at in the mirror, and another, forgotten one on the back of his head. And the one on the back wasn't a face at all, just blankness.

"Could you come with me for a minute?" Lewin said.

The sentence hung together all wrong, it sounded corporate and suspicious and formal all at once. Micah went with him and they entered a broom closet near the washrooms, Micah going in first while Lewin held the door. There was a bottle of white wine on the shelf. Lewin unscrewed it and offered Micah the first sip. It was warm and slightly oily, almost carbonated in its sweetness. Micah could feel her tongue all the way around her mouth, more than usual.

Usually it just sat there. She had never had a drink before.

Lewin said, "I really didn't want to leave my old school," and Micah said, "I'm so sorry for your loss."

Because she was trying to be polite, Micah hadn't told Lewin she was the top-ranked player in Bible Challenge, certainly at John Huss and sometimes in the whole region. When he was assigned to her team, she was conciliatory and patient. She explained that instead of hand-held buzzers, the teams sat on chairs that had sensors on them, and to attempt an answer, they had to spring to their feet to release the sensor. They spent some hours practising this, leaping forward and giving answers, over and over.

"So basically, we have to move our asses?" said Lewin.

All the Joys and Staceys and Matthews in the room stared at him.

"Basically," said Micah.

By the time the winter tournament arrived, Lewin and Micah were neck and neck in the region. They both had excellent short-term memories and they would sit together in the drama room before practice, cramming. They leaned up against one another, back to back, and Micah could feel the knobs of Lewin's spine pressing against her.

There was a minister's son from Wiar-ton who had a photographic memory. His finger would trace along in the air while he read words only he could see. They were determined one of them would beat him at the spring competition. All of the tournaments were held in small towns or sad suburbs, places like Mississauga or Stoney Creek or North Bay, with cinder-block basements where the paint was an inch thick on the walls.







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There were dusty tins of Orange Crush and Dodge minivans. For the weekends away, Lewin would dress up in a green mechanic's jumpsuit or plaid pants and tuxedo shirts. He bleached his black hair and Micah helped him spray it so it stuck straight up from his head.

Back at home on Sunday nights, they loafed together in his room, and Lewin would carefully make his face up with cosmetics from the drugstore, his hands steady and light. His skin was bad then, and the medication he was on made it flake off, even from his lips. He looked raw all the time. With the makeup it was both less and more noticeable. Lining his lips in warm sienna, he told her, "It's important to line the mouth you have, not the mouth you want. Everyone can tell the difference." Then he went into the bathroom alone to wash up, and Micah waited, the house quiet, and she thought about what might happen if someone broke in with an axe, with long whispery coils of white rope. With a gun. When Lewin came back, the skin on his face was damp and angry-looking, but his expression was serene.

Micah's ex-boyfriend has been on the Bible Challenge team before he graduated. He had a guitar and cracked his knuckles and his handwriting was scattered with pinpricks because he pushed too hard with the pen. He wrote in capitals. Lewin said only serial killers wrote in capitals. After Micah took top honours at the Alliston tournament, in April, Lewin convinced her to burn all the love letters her ex-boyfriend had written her.

They went to the park near Lewin's house and burned the letters at dusk near home plate. Micah pushed the ashes into the gravel with the toe of her sneaker and hated Lewin for making her do it. But they walked home hand-in-hand to his empty house. His mother had been gone for some weeks, with a widower from the church who had introduced himself to Lewin as "Uncle Don." He said Lewin was the man of the house now and he could probably have all sorts of fun on his own for a little while. He said Lewin's mother needed cheering up. The house was big and new and the walk home from the park was pleasant.

While they walked, they pointed out the cars they would buy when they were older and married. Sometimes Lewin

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# Day Room

The Day Room is a solar cell,  
pure science, stored-up light kept captive  
in the quietest of solariums.

A room made of windows; outside, a swarm  
of snowflakes are miniscule flotsam from  
an exploded star, raining all around

behind the clear glass. A terrarium  
with commercial-grade carpet and wheelchairs  
in rows at the start line of the slowest race.

A field of silence punctuated by  
coughs, potholes roughing up the terrain.  
Photons feel like tryptophan,

filling the residents with a great weight. The air  
is thick here, makes moving thick. Nothing without  
effort. Sleep creeps around the room touching one

patient, then the next, juvenile games of narcoleptic  
exchange. Noon news illuminates like a controlled  
burn, makes sure they all stare in the same direction:

toward the television and into the light.

—JAMES LINDSAY

would put his hands over Micah's eyes and quiz her on the models of the cars. They memorized the makes and years the way they memorized verses and chapters. There never seemed to be anyone else walking around in Lewin's neighbourhood, just the polished cars sliding silently in and out, like sharks in the cool glow of the street lamps.

At the house, Lewin and Micah went out back to the trampoline, the way they always did whenever it was warm enough. There was a hot tub too, under a fleshy leather cover.

When they were tired of bouncing, they lay down and Lewin realigned Micah's spine by grabbing onto her head and pulling it until something in her neck popped.

"I learned that from a real chiropractor," he said. "But they're not doctors, technically. Neither are therapists. Psychiatrists are. They can prescribe drugs."

"Why would anyone be a therapist then?" said Micah, lacing her fingers together behind her neck, which now felt

loose and boneless.

Lewin went to see a psychiatrist two days a week. They had both decided they would be psychiatrists in the future. Lewin's psychiatrist drove a Mercedes S500.

They lay there sipping diluted whisky from an unbreakable Nalgene bottle, feeling warm. The bottle was scuffed and scraped from their repeated attempts to break it.

Another day after school, while the sun was still up, Lewin's mother and Uncle Don came through the sliding door into the backyard.

Uncle Don said, "Hello, Micah," because he recognized her from church and because someone needed to say something.

Micah and Lewin were sitting in the hot tub, and her legs were wavy shapes

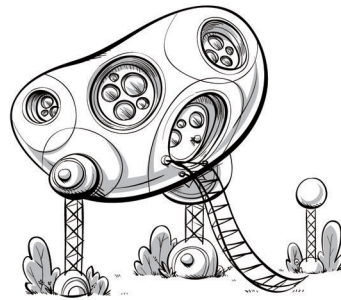
stretched over his lap. Their skin was slippery under the water and rubbery above. Micah had her hand on Lewin's arm, which was ringed with dried blood and scars. The fresh ones felt like tree bark.

Lewin said, "So you're back," and his mother said, very quiet, "Sorry I was gone so long."

They all had dinner at a restaurant that night, Lewin and Micah and Lewin's mother and Uncle Don, and Uncle Don's daughter, who slipped off her tennis shoe and slid her sock foot up Lewin's pant leg during garlic bread. A week later, before the summer tournament, Lewin dropped out of Bible Challenge. Micah stayed on at first. She even had the brief sharp thought that it would be easier to win without him there, not just because he was competition, but because he distracted her, his bright outfits flashing at the edge of her line of vision, the dark roots of his hair clanging against the white tips. She lasted a week without him. After she dropped out, the minister's son from Warton won the whole regional competition, and then the provincial one too.

Micah and Lewin went to football games, where the boy Micah had a crush on played corner. They brought the Nalgene bottle. Lewin told Micah that when they grew up and got married

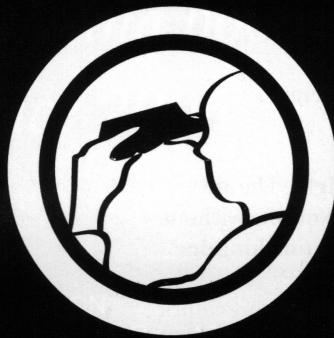
they would have a rose garden the size of a football field. They talked that way all the time, even though they both knew, in some unspoken animal way, that they would never be married to each other, for reasons no one at John Huss spoke about. Still, they sat



together, watching the boys in their slithery polyester uniforms, Lewin leaning forward now and then as if in pain. He'd let his hair grow out after he quit Bible Challenge. The natural colour was too dark, and his raw skin seemed thinner than skin ought to be. When the game was over, Micah's crush would sometimes come to the stands and say hello, looking back and forth between her and Lewin, who had his long, flaking face pressed against Micah's shoulder.



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And on the trampoline in the evening, Lewin ran his fingers through her hair, messing it up, and she ran hers through his, making it neater. Sometimes he put his hands around her neck and squeezed.

"I could break your neck," he said one night, and she nodded. Then he said, "Do you really pray? Like really really?" and she nodded again. His hand was loose on her neck, as if he'd forgotten it was there.

The Grade 12 summer retreat was the last thing they ever did with the John Huss youth group. While the others canoed or water-skied, Lewin and Micah flopped luxuriously on worn armchairs, watching *From Here to Eternity*. They talked about Montgomery Clift and how no one had appreciated him and how he drank himself to death. They would have appreciated him. They couldn't room together, but they met in the dining hall after everyone else was asleep. The first night, Micah had to wait in the dark, sitting on the stage with the huge antlers and dead fireplace behind her head like a dark sun. The next night, Lewin got there first and she saw him from the hallway, one eye painted over in the gloom and one shining wetly, waiting.

They sat beside each other, facing forward. His eyes were always watering, his

eyelids inflamed from the pills, along with the rest of his face. If he had dark eyes it wouldn't have looked as bad. He accused her of being late, of not wanting to come. Lewin smacked his palm against the pitted wood of the stage and the sound was like a gunshot. They both jumped. Lewin's mother had moved Uncle Don and his daughter into the house. Lewin put his head down between his knees and Micah stroked the back of his head. The hair was soft, slightly fly-away, charged with static.

On the last day of the retreat the youth minister told them to pray with a friend, to join hands. Micah sat crossed-legged looking at her own hands, limp in her lap. Lewin came across the floor, which had an orange carpet with a red swirl so bright it felt like someone snapping their fingers in Micah's face. Lewin took her hands out of her lap and sat in front of her, his face passive, dark spots on his lips where he'd bitten them.

They'd only been apart overnight, but she'd forgotten how tall he was. She closed her eyes. He breathed out and it was ragged, uneven. He said, "God, let us stay friends." Micah opened her eyes and looked at him. She felt like her throat was made of wood and someone was knocking from the inside. After a minute or two, Lewin

dropped her hands and stood up.

She found him later, standing in shallow water down near the dock. The neatly folded cuffs of his shorts were wet.

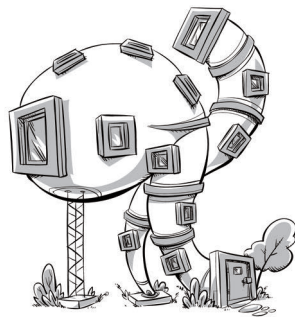
"What kind of car do you think we'll get when we're married?" she asked. She stood back from him. "There are so many good ones."

He said, "Remember that wine, at the funeral?" In the sunlight, his skin didn't look as bad. "I heard the caterer yelling at a girl about it. About the missing bottle. The one we took."

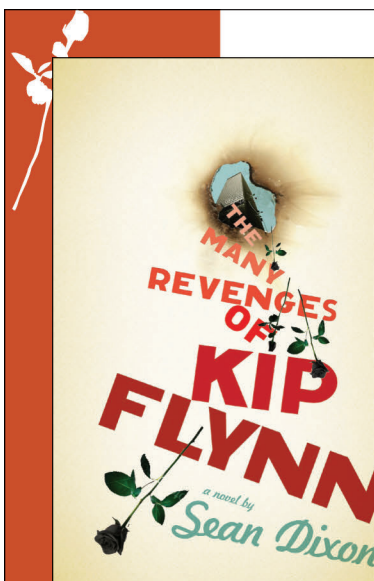
Micah nodded. She didn't say, "What do you mean 'we'?"

Lewin asked, "Do you think we would have won Bible Challenge if we hadn't quit?" And then, "When you pray, is it inside you or outside or both?"

Lewin turned away again, looking out over the water. Micah slipped off her sandals and walked in beside him, studying the back of his head, the face that wasn't there. She could feel her own head float upward, her neck popping, and she wanted to leap forward with an answer for him. ▽



*Grace O'Connell lives near the Queen Street West area. She is a past winner of the This Magazine Great Canadian Literary Hunt, and was a finalist for the R.B.C. Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers. Her work recently appeared in Eye Weekly and the Walrus. Her first novel will be published in spring, 2012, by Knopf as part of the New Face of Fiction program.*



## 'REVENGE IS SWEET AND NOT FATTENING.'

— ALFRED HITCHCOCK

Sean Dixon's second novel, *The Many Revenges of Kip Flynn*, begins with Kip Flynn standing beside her dead boyfriend and agreeing to take a large sum of money from the young man's father to keep quiet. And so begins a rising-stakes vendetta between a young rose seller and a building developer, spiralling outward to envelop family, lovers, friends, landlords, wormpickers, window cleaners, Vietnamese gangsters, stand-up bass players and tour-bus guides, involving subway accidents, arson, drainpipes, buried rivers, backhoe wars, stretch limos, ultrasound technicians, poorly fitted windows and an aubergine Saab.



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# Unfaithful

BY ALEXANDRA LEGGAT

Last night I drank wine and thought of Idaho. Remember Idaho? I know, who remembers Idaho. It was just a thought. Something about watching Richard Gere, drinking wine, this particular film—not the plot, the hue. It was filmed in an off-white, almost yellow, a bit like Idaho. Driving across it I remember gazing out the window and thinking it’s almost yellow. You don’t remember that do you? Not everyone sees things the way I do.

Honey, you home?

I’m here, yes.

He kisses the top of my head. I’ve become accustomed to the sweetness of it. I’m starting to wonder if it’s like getting accustomed to pain. I talked to the doctor about it. I said, I have a high pain tolerance, and she said that’s not good. I hadn’t realized that I’d said it like it was something to be proud of. Then I said I’m getting used to the pain—accustomed to it. She shook her head and inserted needles up and down my spine.

I don’t remember when the kisses left my lips and began being planted on my head. When does a husband become like a father, how long after they turn broth-

erly, then your best friend. It’s a blur, off-white, almost yellow. I wonder about that night. Not because I’d ever think of going back or finding out if it was the night or you or Idaho. I don’t know. It’s hard to ever know. My brother, my real brother, said you should always be prepared for these things and though it sounded like good advice, how does one prepare for the unexpected. Isn’t the fact it is unexpected what makes it so wonderful.

You look pale.

I’m in pain.

Still? What did the doctor say?

That it’s not good to get used to it.

He rubs my shoulder. Smiles.

She said it’s working itself out, that I’m responding well.

Hard day.

Me? Or you?

Me, I had a rough day. Rough. We should get away.

Sure.

He heads into the kitchen, pours himself wine. Although it’s a different colour than mine I wonder if it will have the same effect on him it’s having on me. What will he make of Richard Gere, the

yellow hue, and Diane Lane in black lingerie? It’s not even the black lingerie that makes her sexy, it’s her perfectly tousled hair and the way she chews gum. I think she chewed gum the same way in *Rumble Fish*, with the same zest.

Do you like Diane Lane?

Who?

He tells me he has work to do. I wonder how he can come home from work to work. Richard Gere’s lovely to his wife in this role, to Diane Lane. He loves her and it shows. I should have been an actress. What do you think of that? I could be anyone, live in Idaho. My Own Private Idaho. Idaho. Of all places to meet someone like you. ♪

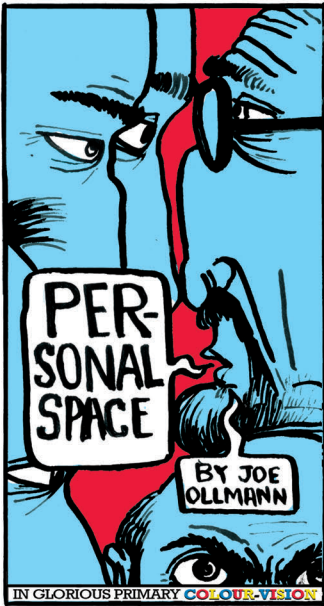
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*Alexandra Leggat lives in Riverdale. She is the author of the short story collections *Animal* (Anvil, 2009)—which was short-listed for the Trillium Book Award—*Meet Me in the Parking Lot* (Insomniac, 2004), and *Pull Gently, Tear Here* (Insomniac, 2001). She is a freelance writer and editor, and teaches creative writing at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies.*

MATTHEW DALEY









SO, I HAVE CHANGED TACTICS. I'VE BECOME A CRUSADER FOR POLITENESS. AND I CRUSADE FOR POLITENESS USING THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE: VIOLENCE.



I'VE STOPPED GIVING WAY ON THE SIDEWALK AND SMASH INTO PEOPLE WITH MY SHOULDER. I BARGE THROUGH SIDEWALK BLOCKERS FROM BEHIND. I'M PROVIDING A SERVICE!



WHEN PEOPLE STAND TOO CLOSE ON THE METRO, I QUIETLY, AND IN A MENACINGLY ROBOTIC VOICE, REPEAT: "PERSONAL SPACE, PERSONAL SPACE." THEY ALWAYS BACK OFF.



I INFORM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC-SLASH-DOUCHE BAGS WHEN THEIR IPODS ARE TOO LOUD.



MY CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENT, RUDE POLITENESS PROCEEDS, BUT DOES ANYONE APPRECIATE MY PUBLIC SERVICE? SADLY, THEY DO NOT.



WHEN I ENTERED A CROWDED BUS THE OTHER DAY, MY ACCESS WAS TYPICALLY BLOCKED BY TWO PEOPLE WITH TANDEM BACKPACKS ENTIRELY BARRING ENTRANCE TO THE REST OF THE BUS.



I ATTEMPTED TO EXCUSE MYSELF IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, EVEN TAPPED THEM ON THEIR OBLIVIOUS FUCKING SHOULDERS. "SCUZE..." "SCUZE ME..."



THERE'S LITERALLY TWO INCHES BETWEEN THEIR GODDAMN BACKPACKS AND I GENUINELY TRY TO CAREFULLY SQUEEZE MY FAT, AGED CARCASS BETWEEN THEM.



THOUGH I WASN'T ACTIVELY PUSHING THIS TIME, THE TWO PASSENGERS WERE SLIGHTLY JOSTLED. I APOLOGIZED AND ATTEMPTED TO MOVE ON, BUT NO, ONE OF THEM IS ALL IN MY FACE.



I ATTEMPTED TO GET YOUR ATTENTION, EXCUSED MYSELF, AND SLIGHTLY JOSTLING YOU, I APOLOGIZED. WHAT MORE EXACTLY DO YOU WANT?



I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW OBLIVIOUS YOU ARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS. YOU WERE COMPLETELY BLOCKING ACCESS TO THE BUS. YOU NEED TO BE MORE CONSCIOUS OF HOW YOU OCCUPY THE SPACE AROUND YOU. YOU NEED TO THINK OF OTHERS!



I TURNED AROUND, CONVINCED I HAD WON THE CROWD OVER, LIKE A JIMMY STEWART FILM. BUT THEY GAPED AT ME LIKE I WAS MR. HYDE, CLUBBING A STREET URCHIN! JEEZ, A PROPHET IS NEVER BLAH, BLAH, ETC., EH?





# A Change of Direction

The poet Evie Christie discusses her first novel and trying her hand at writing for the stage.

BY MEAGHAN STRIMAS

Evie Christie is the author of the poetry collection *Gutted* and the novel *The Bourgeois Empire*. This June, the Necessary Angel Theatre Company will stage her adaptation of Jean Racine's *Andromache*, as part of Luminato. She discussed her debut novel and the play recently with the poet Meaghan Strimas.

*Meaghan Strimas: One of the things I noticed as I was reading The Bourgeois Empire is that you wrote the book in the second person. That's something risky, and not done often in literature. And coupled with that there's a real density to the text because there's very little dialogue. Why did you decide to write the book in that way?*

Evie Christie: I didn't set out to write it any particular way. There was no strategy. I was just writing the way I thought Jules [the book's central protagonist] would think or speak. He presets himself as a character in sort of a natural way. So there was no outside thought about how I was going to write it—it presented itself that way, and that's how I wrote it. And I don't know if that's something that adds to the reader's interaction with Jules, or the way they feel about him, but I think, in a certain way, I didn't want to be somebody who was judging what he did. I didn't want to feel like I was narrating Jules' life. That sounds funny, but I wanted Jules to present himself and present his case. And the reader sort of has that relationship with him, and also with not excusing the things that I'm writing about. It's pretty direct from the beginning, and I'm not cloaking the monstrous things he does.

As for dialogue, I hadn't really thought about it. Jules is in his head so much that dialogue didn't come up very often. He's so self-centred, and most of the book revolves around what he's thinking and

things that he fears and memories. So dialogue didn't seem important to me throughout the text in the same way it might in another text.

*M.S.: Jules is all kinds of things that we should abhor. I mean, he's a drunk, a pill popper, and all those illustrious evils. He's a pedophile, right? And not that I want to emphasize that about his character, because he's so much more, but he's a crappy husband, an absent father, and completely self-absorbed. He has built this life of comfort for himself, but basically wants to dismantle it, even though he doesn't even have any clue about what his vision of happiness would be. When you have a central character that has the potential to be so avidly disliked, how did you navigate that? How did you make it so that the reader simply doesn't turn off and say, 'Enough is enough. I'm not going to continue on'? Readers are compelled to follow Jules on this sad journey, and we still feel sympathy for this character we might otherwise be compelled to dislike.*

E.C.: While I was writing the book, I was at home with my daughter, and one of her favourite movies was *La belle et la bête*. And there was a line in it that could be a throwaway line where the Beast says, "I have a good heart, but I am a monster." And I thought so much about that line. I saw the movie a million times—kids are obsessed with repetition—and I thought that sort of summed up a lot of how I felt about being a person myself. I thought a lot about the people I love and the men I love and these monstrous things that we do. The bad father thing is something that . . . you know, we don't want to be bad parents, but we're going to be. We're going to find out that even these seemingly

great things that we have done in raising our children maybe aren't perfect. We all have crutches, and we're all probably bad at being partners and being friends in a lot of ways in our lives.

I was also thinking about how much agency we have in our lives, in what we're doing, and not to excuse Jules in any way, but how much we can control those things we want and things we think we need. We have a character, the girl Charlie—she's not a stupid person, and I know that I've been a Charlie myself. I think she's a smart girl, and I think she's sexually aware, and I think maybe she's more savvy and manipulative than I would have been coming from a small town.

But I don't know if I made Jules likable to the reader. I think that's good. He's human. He's human in the way we all are—and we're all weird, and we all do bad things, and we're all perverse, and those things to me are fine. I can love somebody who has all of those faults. I don't think he's likable to everybody.

*M.S.: Let's talk a little bit about Jules and the mid-life crisis. We have a character here who is going through one, whether or not you think that such a crisis can be a path to redemption and feeling alive. There's this certain idea in the book, I think, that comfort can be equated with a stasis and lack of growth in character. Is it a shakeup like Jules' dismantling of comforts that can lead a person to a kind of "real" life—the actual feeling as if you're existing and being human rather than mulling through day to day.*

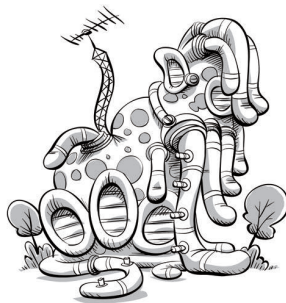
E.C.: The mid-life crisis gets mentioned a lot, and I think I even wrote the term into the book, but I wasn't fully aware that he was having a mid-life crisis, even though he obviously is. I think probably I've had so many of these moments





of existential failure where you're not feeling alive and you do things you probably shouldn't do.

I sort of thought of Jules as a brave character because he had a lot to lose and he wasn't completely aware that he was going to lose these things. And when he finds himself free, it's a much worse state than he could have imagined, but I think it's a brave thing to follow that course and to find out what your ideas on really being in love are, or really living life. It's definitely braver than staying in a marriage you're not happy with, or a job you're not happy in. So I guess I do think that these crises . . . they're not meaningful in any objective way, and they're not going to have a good end result. I think about so many things we do in our lives, we make these changes, or breakups, and there's no good result, no good end, but they're either the right thing to do, or just being true to who you are.



*M.S.: I read a National Post review of your book, by Alex Good, and one of the things he noted is that in a sense this story is Jules' wife Nadine's story. At first I didn't buy that at all, and in a way I still don't, but I think maybe what he was getting at is the fact that while Jules is going through all this turmoil and striking out against this life of middle-class comfort he's built for himself, Nadine seems comfortable and is thriving in it. He's perplexed that this is O.K. for her—this sort of unhappy existence, in a*

*sense. I guess maybe what we uncover through the brief conversation at the end is that all along she's been fully self-aware. She's been making the best of a bad lot. So in the end she outfoxes him, and has had the upper hand the whole time. I wanted you to talk a bit about Nadine, seen through Jules' perspective the entire time.*

*E.C.:* I think all of the characters in the book are smart people, and I wasn't

smarter than them or morally better than any of them. I think the funny thing is that we want to say "poor Nadine" when we read Jules, but the great thing is that we don't have to say "poor Nadine." That's what I think is so good about her as a character. "Poor Jules," I would say in a way. We never feel empathy for these bastards because we think they're sort of living the life, but Nadine found the life she wanted and Jules is in the life he didn't want, so I do kind of feel for people who get themselves in those situations. I don't know about whether it's her story. I think she's a strong character, I think she's what we'd want to be as women. She's very relaxed and content and the bourgeois person people aspire to be, but probably won't be.

*M.S.:* In your poetry and your prose you write a lot about love, or the lack of it. And at one point in the novel the narrator says love makes you sick and socially retarded. But love, at least at the beginning, does make you sick. I think when we're falling in love with someone there's a sort of nervous craziness as we try to be exactly what we think that person wants



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us to be. Does all love eventually kind of dry up, and that's why we have to move on or shake things up to feel like we're still alive?

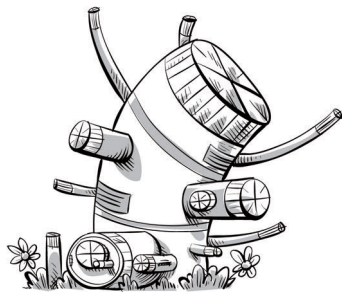
E.C.: Love is kind of a psychosis and what we do in love is not normal. I think love is a term I haven't pinned down myself. I don't know what we're talking about when we're talking about love yet. I think Jules' problem is my problem. You asked before, can you stay true to one person or do you need to move on in order to experience life. I don't know. I have no idea if you can stay true to someone.

M.S.: Do you think Jules actually loved Charlie, or is it the idea of her that he loved?

E.C.: I don't know. I think Jules loves Charlie, if love is what he thinks it is. And I think he knows he's fond of her and it's a good thing while they're together. In that way, he does love her. And it's arguable that he also loves Nadine. He feels good things for her, and he's attracted to her, and he stays with her for a long time. If love means being able to be in a hotel room with someone for three days and not go crazy, then he's in love with Charlie. It's a difficult question.

M.S.: You've said that your transition from writing poetry to writing prose was natural for you as a parent, and I just want you to elaborate on why you felt the writing of prose was something more doable for you in your daughter's early stages.

E.C.: I think it's fair to say children are fairly relentless creatures that need all of you all the time for a certain amount of their lives. It's difficult to sit around watching YouTube videos. It's difficult to waste a day staring and thinking and eventually getting to writing, and also a lot of the time when I'm writing poetry, I think a lot of people experience the calm that comes to you over time while you're doing things like walking, or menial daily tasks. I didn't have that time to be in my own head. So, when I went and sat down to write, I didn't have those stored images, words, and lines that I wanted to go to, and I started writing prose just sort of naturally.



M.S.: Is it easier to inhabit another character's head?

E.C.: Yes, exactly. You have that sort of relentless inner dialogue going on when you're in that position.

M.S.: So, you've written this novel, and you're now working in the world of theatre. You've written an adaptation of Racine's *Andromache* for Toronto's Necessary Angel Theatre Company. I just wanted to wrap up by asking you about making that shift from working in a solitary environment to working and collaborating with a whole crew of actors. What was it like? What did you find beneficial about collaborating with many people?

E.C.: First of all, I didn't intentionally go from poetry to a novella to a play. I was approached with the opportunity to work on the play with Graham McLaren, who's the director, and it sort of worked out that we worked well together. I'm sure anyone around me at the time would tell you I felt sick about it. I was nervous and worried. But being in the presence of Graham and those actors—people like Steven McCarthy, Gord Rand, and Christopher Morris—just really smart people, it made it easier. They are funny and professional and brilliant. The interesting thing about working in a collaborative environment is that you share moments

with others that make you rethink everything you've done and the way you thought about what you've been writing. There's no pretense. The director really sets up this environment where people feel free to express their ideas. Graham taught me how to adapt

the play. It wasn't a natural step for me. That collaboration has been incredibly helpful. ▽

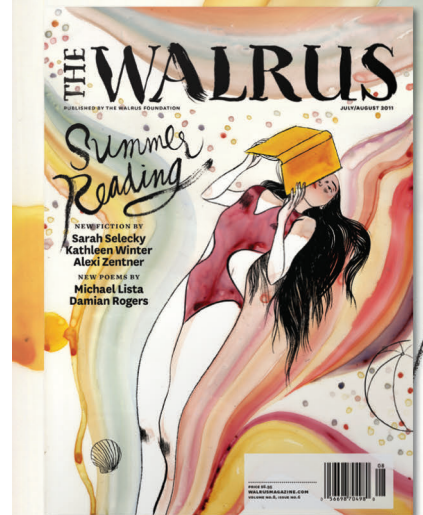
Meaghan Strimas lives in Davenport. She works for Quill & Quire and the University of Guelph's creative writing master-of-fine-arts program. She is the editor of *The Selected Gwendolyn MacEwen (Exile, 2008)*, and the author of two collections of poetry, *Junkman's Daughter (Exile, 2004)* and *A Good Time Had by All (Exile, 2010)*. She is currently at work on a novel.

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# Secret Admirer

How one poet spreads the love.

BY JACQUELINE NELSON

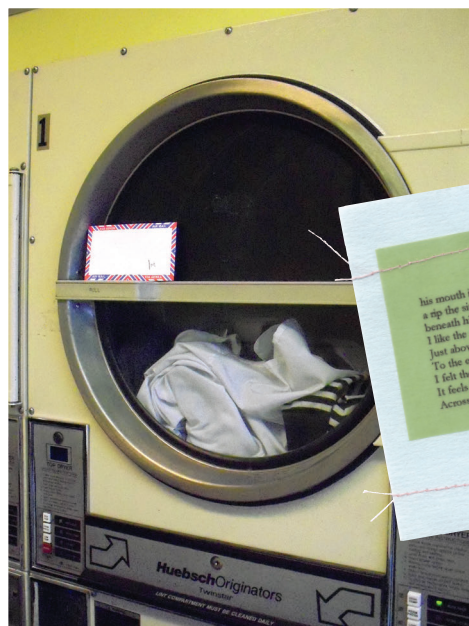
Lindsay Zier-Vogel isn't a mail carrier, but each year she delivers dozens of letters to unsuspecting Torontonians. The letters aren't placed in mailboxes, but scattered around the city—one year in phone booths and grocers' cherry bins, another tied to strangers' bicycles—each tucked in an airmail envelope addressed with only one word: "love."

Zier-Vogel, a writer and arts educator, is the guerrilla artist behind the Love Lettering Project. Since 2004, she has been writing and creating hand-collaged love poems and distributing them anonymously. "When I'm taking the love letters around, I just beam," she says. "It's ridiculous how happy I get from that."

The project was born out of a writing collective Zier-Vogel and a friend formed several years ago. The group met weekly, with members often exchanging poems amongst themselves. One day, they left a few poems in the branches of a tree, which gave Zier-Vogel the idea for a larger project. "I was doing a lot of craft shows and press fairs," she says. "This was a good way to put my words out into the world without sitting behind a table, or having a financial exchange."

After Zier-Vogel places a love letter in its resting spot, she leaves, never staying to see a recipient find an envelope sitting on a park bench or tucked into a library book. The secrecy allows her to write for pure pleasure. "When they're gone, they're gone," she says.

This summer, Zier-Vogel plans to leave five hundred poems dedicated to Toronto—a big jump from the hundred she normally composes—in one large tree in Trinity Bellwoods Park. "There are so many words in front of us that we read every day, and, let's be serious, most of them aren't full of love," she says. Once a year, Zier-Vogel tries to change that. One letter at a time. ♪









# Melt

BY AMELIA KAHANEY

I have this fantasy about the drivers. It goes like this.

There's a long skinny pale one who calls himself Tex. As a child, Tex was enormously fat, which is why he's into deprivation. He brings me to his mother's house and I tie him to the kitchen chair. It takes a really long time to do the knots tight enough around his wrists and ankles, and when he starts whimpering, I stuff a ball of pantyhose in his mouth and seal it with a big square of duct tape. By the time I'm finished I've worked up an appetite, so what I do next is take everything out of his mother's fridge and go to town.

He sits there, eyes wide, gurgling and twisting, the legs of the chair digging chunks out of his mother's linoleum, as I polish off half a lasagna and two pork chops, a bowl of spinach dip, and a big gluey pile of mashed potatoes. He bucks like a pony when I pull out a fat slice of German chocolate cake. I watch him squirm, crossing and uncrossing my legs as I poke the cake with the tip of my fork. I really shouldn't, I say, I'm so full! I give Tex a doubting, frowning look. Tex widens his teary eyes and grunts, and it sounds like eee eh, eee eh, but I know what he's actually saying is, Eat it, eat it. Because I am obedient, I break off tiny morsels and roll them into dense little chocolate balls. I chew each of them with agonizing slowness. When everything's been eaten, I rip the duct tape off and he says, Kathy, Kathy, you're so fricking hot. I stare at the red swollen rectangle the tape has left around his mouth, at the little droplets of blood pooling in his pores, and I think, Here is someone who knows how to suffer.

Then we do it in his mother's bedroom, and when he falls asleep his body is a thin white line I do not want to disturb.

I sneak back down to the kitchen and

put on a frilly little apron and some lemon-yellow dish gloves. I wipe down the cabinets, the table, the counters, until there is not a trace of me left anywhere. I buff the stovetop to a creamy shine.

Just when I start to get that empty after-sex feeling, I hear a series of noises coming from outside: plywood snapping, a dull thud, a man's voice saying, Oof. I look out the window, but all I see is an azalea bush trembling in the breeze, so I unlatch the screen door and slip outside to the backyard.

Yoo-hoo, I say, anyone there? I go around to the side of the house and see an enormous man at the foot of a ladder under the bedroom window. It's Leo. He's another driver, lantern-jawed and inarticulate. His work boots glisten with fresh mud.

He looks at me and says, Hey, Kathy, and I can tell he likes what he sees. My body gleams in the watery Portland light, muscular and unblemished and young, like I'm twenty-nine again. The apron flutters over my thighs; my hair is matted into a wild, irresistible swirl; the dish gloves are just this side of trampy.

Were you watching us through the window? I ask. I put my hands on my hips, pretending to be furious. I wonder if Tex is awake and listening, if maybe the two of them planned the whole thing.

Yeah, he says, hanging his head. He clenches his jaw rhythmically, and I take this as a sign of submission.

Well, Leo, I say. You've misbehaved. I'm going to have to do something about it. I press two gloved fingers against his cheek, hard enough to leave a nubbly indentation. He reaches out for me and murmurs, Oh baby, but I swat his hand away. The heady smell of fresh fertilizer hangs thick all around us.

Now get on your knees, I say, and he kneels down in front of me. His neck is

almost the width of my waist, and I reach down and take hold of the back of it. I stand there, my legs planted in the wet grass, listening to the whoosh of traffic going by. I push Leo's face into the lap of my apron and decide what I want to happen next.

It's never like that with the real drivers. They fuck mechanically, eyes focused on the empty space above your head. They like it quick and ordinary in the bathroom of the North Star Tavern after only one drink so they can still cart Mr. Stevenson over to Saint Luke's for his 2 P.M. colonoscopy.

Even so, a girl can dress up and dream.

The new guy is waiting for us in the van at the bottom of the driveway, motor running. I'm wearing a tight, twat-flashing little dress I just bought. Black vinyl—it squeaks when I walk. I've got a lot of makeup on, Betty Boop eyes and lips, because I like for them to see me as a walking, talking cartoon girl. I need a lot of makeup anyway, but for doctor day I go above and beyond. The drivers think I'm ten years younger than I am. It would be a shame to let them down.

Mom's all gussied up too—I like her to look good for the doctors. She's wearing the purple velour track suit I bought her, and she hasn't pawed off her lipstick yet, which I count as a sign she is in some way pleased with her appearance. Mom, you look just beautiful, I tell her, and beauty always gets rewarded. I really have found that to be true, I add. I have to converse with myself because Mom doesn't keep up her end of the conversation. If she did, she might have a few things to say about the way I look.

We all have to work with our assets, I continue, giving her a pointed look as if to imply that she is actively throwing her assets away and it is only with my help





that her full beauty potential can be realized. Which is sort of true. In Mom's case, her assets are her crooked lips, still pouty and full, and what's left of her hair—springy ash-grey curls that I've tied with a sweet lavender bow. In my case, it's the whole package.

Let's say goodbye to Daddy, I say, and give Daddy's handsome military portrait a little air-kiss as I open the front door. Mom hates that I put his picture up, hates to be reminded of what she once had. But I want to look at Daddy when I come in and out of the house. I've hung his picture where she can't reach it, way up high by the ceiling, so Daddy is staying right where he is, looking out at us, chin thrust out like a good strong Marine, looking like he's just uttered his favorite expression: Use it or lose it.

We're using it, Daddy.

Wheeling Mom outside, I see that the old people who live across the street have hobbled down to the bottom of their driveway, arrogantly rattling their walkers as they go. They shout at the driver in voices like rusted hinges. There is no way they're taking our cripple van, I think. This driver is mine.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the O'Shaughnesseys, I say to Mom, bending down so she can hear me and so Mr. Van Driver can get an eyeful of the rack I'm sporting. Look how they're waving their walkers around, all that Irish vim and vigor! They are such fakes! Look at the colour in their cheeks! You can't wave your cane around that way, Mom, can you? I don't think so, no, you can't. You can barely get your cane off the ground to jab it at me!

Mom gives me one of her classic blank stares, her jaw clicking the way it does now, her tongue moving inside her mouth, a blind mollusc unfurling.

Lately, Mom has been doing this thing where she slides down her chair toward the ground. Not because she's weak, but because she is willful. If I didn't know better, I'd say she was embarrassed about us taking our rightful van, that she would rather just give it to the O'Shaughnesseys. I tell her: This is our van! It's doctor day, remember?

Now don't melt on me, I say in a stern whisper. Straighten up, Mother. I don't want Mr. Van Driver to know our business. Him knowing our business is not the way doctor day works.

He comes around the side of the van,

## Visit to Queen's Park

with puny pretty daughter,  
cicadas  
and, common the summer of her birth,  
threat of rain.

We're here to visit Al Purdy,  
who sits, posed in bronze, on a chunk  
of bronze Canadian Shield  
looking over his left shoulder  
with a well-thumbed book in his hand,  
notebook and pen in breast pocket.

Who will be the poet  
immortalized in Queen's Park  
fifty years from now?

I'd like us to return home on foot—  
trek through the U. of T. campus  
(we sit across the street from the E. J. Pratt Library),  
trek past the summer-course students,  
and the cheap frat-house room renters  
who remain in the city for the summer.

Just now the subway thunders from below,  
ants above carry out their business,  
and Lily stirs in her stroller  
the world's most compelling yawner.

I'd like us to continue through the campus  
down bpNichol Lane,  
past the Coach House coach house  
(always threatened in its way by rain)  
continue rolling into the Annex  
past the last three used bookstores  
in the city—  
in the world.

which says "HANDICAB" on the side of it to let everyone know there's a cripple in the back, and stands there. He's nothing like Jimbo or Ray or the recently fired Steve. They're halfwits, slow-moving simpletons with cheesy thighs and nervous, guilty smiles. The new guy does not smile. He's got a layer of acne on his cheeks and pockmarks underneath that. His eyes are brown, round as walnuts, ringed by thick black lashes that remind me in a bad way of Shirley Temple, but he's got these twitchy lips pressed tight against each other and they are all man to me. He sort of vibrates, bouncing up and down on the

balls of his feet like he really needs to get going, like he might launch himself at us if we don't shake a leg.

I take it in stride. I like a cruel streak.

She ready to go? he says with his slit mouth.

By the way, I say, I'm Clarissa. Because why should I tell him my real name? And this—I point to Mom, who's jabbing her cane in my direction like she's got a major bee in her bonnet—is Mavis, which I'm sure it says on your roster. He looks at the two of us, rocking back on his heels a little, and I can see he's wondering if we're related or if I'm

I'd like to run into Dennis Lee—  
*man* would I like to run into Dennis Lee!—  
and show off my four-week-old daughter  
(wrapped like a burrito in pink blanket  
and white toque).

I'd like to show her off to him  
and partner Susan  
(Beautiful Couple!)—  
and remind him of the night before  
one of his many comebacks  
in the middle nineteen-nineties.

I was returning to Book City  
as the bars were closing  
to retrieve my bicycle  
and he was standing  
lost in thought,  
stressed out  
or just plain insomniac—staring  
into the window at the books.

I swear he was wearing sneakers,  
pyjamas, a long brown coat,  
perhaps a housecoat, and smoking a pipe—  
and I was in the state that you might guess,  
returning to the store as the bars were closing.

He lifted his head  
and our states of mind moved lazily enough  
toward each other's—  
just enough for us both to be  
as lovely and polite as we always are  
with each other.

“Good luck tomorrow,” I said to him.  
“Hmm?” he said to me,  
“Oh yes, Chris, thanks.”

—CHRIS CHAMBERS

just a decked-out nurse from the agency.

Oh, kay, he says, really slow like he  
thinks I'm stupid. Hello, *Clarissa*. Hi  
there, Mavis. You ready to go?

We three watch the EZ Glide platform  
descend from the back of the van with  
all the gravitas it deserves.

Name's Dennis, he finally mutters.

I know, I say, it's on your name tag.  
And the other guys told me about you.

Yeah, he says, they told me about you too.

Oh really, I say, leaning in. There's a  
faint chemical whiff of dandruff sham-  
poo and under that a musky smell of un-  
washed jeans. Well, I wouldn't believe  
everything you hear.

He snorts, I think in a good way, and  
then he's all business, wheeling Mavis  
onto the platform and launching her  
heavenward, strapping her in with the  
regulation fifteen or twenty different  
straps. He's not used to women like me  
talking to him, I think. Probably makes  
him nervous.

In the van on the way to His Holiness  
the Dalai Lama Ambulatory Care Cen-  
ter, I see him glance at the little heart  
I've drawn on my chest in lip pencil.  
That's my little heart, I say. Do you like  
it? And then I shimmy in my seat to let  
him know I am up for anything he can  
think of, even if his ass is flat and unin-

spiring and his arms, now that I'm point-  
ing out problem areas, seem too short  
for his body.

Yeah, he says, smirking in a way I don't  
much care for. *Sure*.

He turns onto Stark, and I look out  
the window at the morning dew sparkling  
on the lawns, one of which features a  
lemon tree with an unseemly amount of  
fruit dangling from the branches, like  
shiny yellow testicles. I wonder what bar  
Dennis Van Driver will want to go to and  
whether I'll decide to drink Scotch or  
beer. Scotch, probably, because it's a  
crisp and Scotchy sort of day. Mom, in  
her better years, drank gin.

Mom is holding her own in the back,  
sliding around in her wheelchair when  
we turn corners. She periodically bangs  
on the bottom of the van with her cane,  
which you'd think was a butcher knife  
the way she tries to stab you with it. My  
mother is really violent for a cripple.  
That's the way we do it, Mavis, I say, fill-  
ing up the space in front of me with words  
not pertaining to Dennis Van Driver. I  
turn around and flash a big gleaming  
smile for Mom.

Sometimes, and now is one of them,  
I'll be going along thinking nothing's  
getting through to her, and then she'll  
go and give me this one particular look  
that proves she's still in there, wishing  
she could just spit the words out: Kathy,  
you are a very troubled girl.

**A**t Dalai Lama, everything goes ac-  
cording to plan. After Mom is low-  
ered down on the platform, blinking  
and dazed like the prize ewe at a live-  
stock auction, I sidle up to Dennis Van  
Driver and whisper in a hot buttery  
voice, Give me five minutes.

Then I'm cruising down the catwalk,  
wheeling Mom through the hospital  
lobby and down the corridor on the  
fourth floor, toward the heavy ma-  
hogony doors of the neurologist's of-  
fice, my heels clicking, my tits jiggling  
inside their vinyl casing. I make eye con-  
tact with every single one of the silent-  
shoed nurses in their hideous flower-  
printed scrubs, stare into the smug  
faces of the doctors with their pharma-  
ceutical freebie pens poised above their  
clipboards. They all can't help but look  
back at me. The big black orderlies are  
the only ones who smile, shaking their  
heads like they've seen my type a mil-  
lion times. I hold my head up and walk



with one foot curving around in front of the other, a movie star glamour walk, and in my head I say, That's right, assholes, I've still got the *je ne sais quoi* coursing through my veins, even as Mom here slides down into her wheelchair like a bag of chicken parts! Thanks for asking!

Before I know it, we arrive at the waiting room of Dr. Masinovsky, and it all goes smoothly when I lean on the Formica counter and say hi to Shirl, the receptionist. From there, it's only another minute before Deedee, Mom's favourite nurse, comes out and calls Mom's name and says, Hi, Kathy, and I slip five twenties into her waiting hand and she says, See you in a few hours then, and I say, Great, thanks, Deedee. Cute shoes, and then I am free, free, free.

Deedee will make sure Mom gets poked and prodded by Portland's finest medical practitioners for the next five, six hours. Deedee doesn't make trouble, because she understands about the unknowns. Because she knows there is a point where you don't know how long it has been or how long it will be, and there's no telling where you will end up before it's over.

So, what should we do now? I say. We're sitting in the van, staring out the window at the hospital parking lot. Dennis Van Driver's face is in

constant, unreadable motion.

He says, We?

Yeah, you know. Us two.

Instead of answering, he snorts.

Something funny? I ask. This is not normal, not the usual response at all.

I guess you want to go do pickups with me, he says, staring straight ahead, sort of smiling and cringing in this weird way.

That'd be great, I say. You can look at me, I won't bite!

I let out a little giggle that comes out sounding like a cough. Let's

drive around picking up the old people together, I say. Won't that be a nice first date?

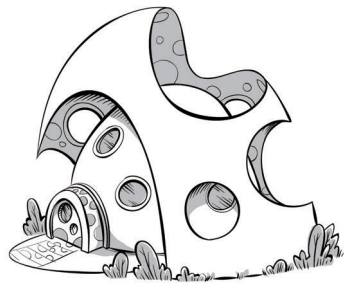
Not really, he says. Nope, can't say that it would.

Huh, I say. O.K., well, what if I told you I'm writing an article for the *Oregonian* about cripples and old people, a day-in-the-life kind of thing?

Bull crap, he says, turning to look me right in the breasts. I pull his hand toward them, looking him in his vibrating cow eyes. He's not as excited about it as he should be, since his hand barely grazes my dress before he snatches it back.

Trying again, I say, I'm really good with the old people.

Oh God, he says. Fine. But I am not having relations with you in this van. I am not on that wavelength. There are things I have to take care of.



Are you a homo, Dennis Van Driver? You can tell me if you are. It's not a foreign concept to me.

He sighs dramatically. Then he says, You want to get out or not?

I look back toward the centre, the towering white monstrosity of it in the clear blue sky. They're running the incinerator today and it belches out a thick white smoke. The place is like Buchenwald to me.

No, I'll stay, I say. Just drive.

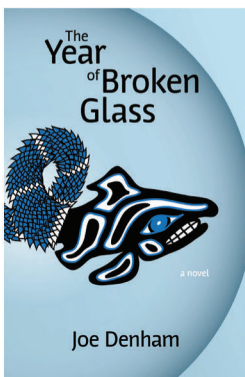
When we turn onto M.L.K. to pick up the next person on the list, I'm in the middle of telling Dennis Van Driver about a Korean movie I saw on cable. This woman, a midwife, has hundreds of cats she feeds in an alley behind her apartment, and all of a sudden her patients all start giving birth to litters of kittens instead of babies. It was really graphic, I say, and I'm so glad I didn't have babies and that Hammy, my hamster, isn't free to go around breeding in alleys, and right when I'm getting to the climax of the movie he interrupts me and tells me to open the glove compartment.

You have pot? I ask.

Better. He pulls out a little baggie of brown dust and starts opening it. Crank, he says. Only the best for the toiling classes.

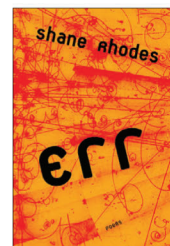
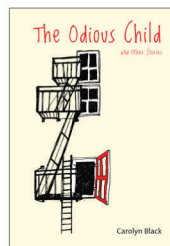
I am not a member of the toiling classes, I want to say. I am rich, or at least richer than a driver of cripple vans, and if I knew how to drive I would have a Mercedes S550 and you would eat my dust. I can afford to buy drugs that are not the colour and consistency of sawdust.

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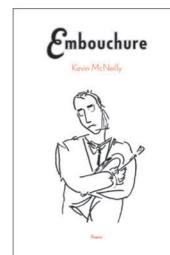
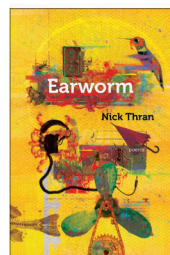
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# The New Monuments

Dear People of Parkdale, why do you pave over your plots with patio brick?

I was born with the head of an owl and the eyes of a cat.

The ninth abandoned palace of the marquise was like a velvet-lined meth lab.

I learned later she wasn't real royalty, just an out-of-work actress.

I'm not used to living with so little sleep. Sleep is what keeps me from seeing things straight.

I don't want to go on forever, exactly like this, always a Damian.

Where is the better party you are going to now?

Maybe there will be no grandchildren playing in the long grass.

If you insist on standing up there, at least remove that marble hat.

—DAMIAN ROGERS

But I say nothing, I just look out the window at an obese woman in a yellow muumuu who has a shiny dark smear where her forehead should be.

Maybe we should take that fat woman to the hospital, I say. Since we're going that way anyway, I mean.

Only the people on this list go to the hospital! he yells.

O.K., fine, sheesh, I say. No need to get angry. I think of how it would be if we pulled over and he pushed me up against the side of the van, the warm metal buckling under my back. I survey the crappy neighbourhood we're in: crumbling row houses, a potato-chip bag swirling in the gutter, some empty soda bottles knocking around a weedy driveway. It would be all right out here, I think. It's not all that different from a bar.

You snort it, he says. Watch. He picks up a key from the dash, dips it in the powder, sticks it in his nostril, and sniffs hard, shuddering a little with the force of it.

Have some, he says.

And then we're high, and everything is clean and purposeful and solid, with sharp edges and smooth black outlines. At a stoplight, Dennis Van Driver puts his hand back on my breast and squeezes and my nipple mushrooms up to meet his palm, and then he leans over into me and puts his tongue between my teeth. His

other hand is up my skirt and clawing at my panties, all knuckles and fingernails, and I'm trying to feel attached to the seat, to stay in the moment, but my skin is starting to crawl a little and it's hard to concentrate. Still, it's not all bad.

I thought you didn't want to have relations, I say, and Dennis Van Driver lets out a big contemptuous snort. Then the cars behind us start to honk and Dennis Van Driver is back on his side of the van, shifting gears and laughing.

Soon we are picking up Chester Mills, and I am ringing the doorbell and looking sideways at Dennis Van Driver, who is one long ugly string of tensed muscles. He seems to be struggling to keep down that malicious laugh of his.

Chester's wife comes to the door, and she only has what looks like three teeth in her mouth. I hate her immediately.

He don't want to go, she says, air whistling past the teeth. She's wearing a pink polyester robe that makes me wonder when the last time was that Chester put a hand in there, put a hand anywhere near her. I want to reach out and yank the sash that's keeping her body such a goddamned secret.

Chester, get out here, she calls to the recesses of the house, and we stand there blinking at each other. I know just

how she feels, but any pity I might have had is replaced with a pure, glowing hate. It's coming out of my eyeballs, filling up the stoop. I stand there a long time wearing a little grin, watching Chester's wife scratch her scalp with elaborate finger motions, as though she's playing the harp.

Finally, the man of the hour comes scraping down the hall and clumps on over to where the wife and me are having our faceoff.

Well? he says. We going or what?

The wife stays behind. She shuts the door before Chester is even in the chair we've brought, arranging himself and his legs and his arms just so, putting feet in the foot holders and arms on the armrests and pointing his scraggly chin straight ahead of him with a set expression as if to say, Bring on the next humiliation. Then he gets to looking at me and clears his throat like he has something important he's getting ready to say, a gem of wisdom.

You are like a living doll, he says, and I can hear the phlegm collected in his throat scratching at the words. Dennis is wheeling him toward the van and he laughs when he hears this, a silent shaking kind of laugh, until there are tears leaking from the corners of his eyes. He's just a less-wrinkled version of mouldy old Chester, I think. If Chester could unzip his sagging flesh and toss away his old-man's resignation, angry little Dennis Van Driver would be what emerged.

Why, thank you, Chester. That's nice of you to say. And it's nice to meet a man with manners.

I mean, you supposed to look like some kind of fairy tale thing?

I don't know, I say, putting my hands on my shiny black hips. Do I look like a fairy tale thing?

Something, yeah, he says, falling silent as Dennis Van Driver hoists him up on the platform.

Chester's in the back not saying a word, and Dennis Van Driver is turning down a bunch of little streets instead of getting back on the freeway. Just need to pick something up, he whispers. And that's when I realize we're off doing a drug deal, and I say oh, kay in an icy voice and start thinking about how good it would feel to get Dennis Van Driver fired, how easy it would be, and how maybe I could get Jimbo and Ray fired, too, and it could be a whole new group of drivers and



we could all sit around together in a parking lot somewhere and drink malt liquor.

When we pull up to a pink stucco box the size of a pool house, Dennis Van Driver takes the keys and tells me to stay there, he'll be back in a minute. He is a scrawny little insect man running across the dead lawn to buy some crappy brown meth, and I am his de facto girlfriend. Someone in the little house opens the screen door and Dennis Van Driver goes inside and is gone. That's when I notice I'm now unbelievably itchy.

Chester and I sit there in the driveway a while, making conversation.

I would like to get the hell out of this van, he says. You're taking me someplace bad.

Oh, we'll get to your doctor's appointment in a few minutes, you just sit tight, I say, scratching my chest and thighs, everywhere the dress touches, making long red stripes on my skin.

I'm getting out of here, he says. This is not the doctor's office!

I don't really care what you do, Chester, I say, be my guest. The itch is unbearable, and I peel away part of the dress so I can stick my hand down it. The old man mutters for a few minutes before he

actually does it. He gets out of the chair and makes his way to the back of the van, jiggling the door handles for a while before pushing them open with a surprised grunt and climbing out onto the street like it's a jailbreak. He turns around and gives me a little wave.

Bye, Chester, I say, and just like that he's gone, clumping up the street, his greasy white hair blowing in the breeze as he heads back to where he came from. The van doors swing open and the blue out there is wide as anything, as life itself.

And then I wait and wait and wait.

I think of my bookkeeping job, the windowless little room I sit in adding up columns of numbers. All those zeros imprinted on the insides of my eyelids, stuck there even when I'm sleeping. I think about how Dennis Van Driver is going to come out of the drug house and have a heart attack when he sees Chester halfway down the block. The itch is making it impossible to keep sitting folded up in my seat. I stare at the drug house until it looks wobbly and alive, and finally I think, Fuck it. I dip into the bag one more time with the corner of one of the Handicab business cards and

take another burning, eye-watering snort, then I shove my feet back inside my shoes and get myself out of there. Because Dennis Van Driver is nothing to me.

I walk along the sidewalk and feel the sun beating down on my scalp, melting my makeup. I notice there's a sweaty residue building up between me and the vinyl getup. I turn a few corners and find my way back to M.L.K., and who should be at the bus stop but the fat woman in the muumuu, the one with the shiny gash on her head.

This bus go to Dalai Lama? I ask her. She turns to me and says, Yes, yes, oh yes it does, and what a coincidence because she's heading there herself. That's a nice dress, she says next, which makes me laugh, and we spend some minutes talking about fashion and I hear my voice rising and falling in excited waves, tripping over my own thoughts. I can't get them out fast enough, and she is nodding, nodding, nodding because I am so utterly right about it all.

I get out two stops before the hospital and head over to a sorry-looking row of shops. By now there are angry red bumps forming where my skin meets the edges

## BOOKS BY DAVE LAPP FROM CONUNDRUM PRESS



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Originally serialized in Western University's *The Gazette*, then weekly in Vancouver's *Georgia Straight* newspaper from 1998-2003, *Children of the Atom* is like a Samuel Beckett play in comic strip form. The two characters Franklin-Boy and Jim-Jam Girl live in an absurdist world of their own making, exchanging philosophies, dancing around any possible love story. Influenced by the comics of Mark Beyer, Lynda Barry, and George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, Lapp has created his own tightly conceived but loosely rendered world through poetic language, simple lines and shapes, and surreal settings.



A DOUG WRIGHT AWARD NOMINEE  
AN IGNATZ AWARD NOMINEE

"*Drop-in* is defined by tension and anxiety, attained through assembling peculiar moments perched on a razor's edge between awkward and actual danger... The stories — of broken families, senseless violence, and simple pleasures — are bizarre and nuanced, born of the author's long, intimate contact with these kids." — Toronto Star

"There's tension in these small slice of life pieces but also a dream like quality, and that combination somehow captures life's oddness. An impressive debut." — Chester Brown

# Everything Has a Reason

but nothing conforms  
to the reason it has.

Think of a baseball skinned  
and nailed to a post  
as a warning  
to the unwelcome few.

Think of a leather belt.

You have knitted my mouth  
at the lip. Your clacking needles  
and goat-hair wool.  
You promised a scarf.

I will sing with words half-formed.  
My breath will be an anguish to your ear.  
I will eat through the tips of my fingers.

—PETER NORMAN

of the dress. I'm going to get a new outfit and surprise Mom, I decide. I feel very important striding down the sidewalk, squeaking along like nobody in the history of downtown Portland has ever had to perform such a vital errand. I wonder if anyone will notice if I take off the dress right here and now and keep walking in my panties and bra. Someone would probably run out and cover me with a blanket and call the police, and I think of how nice it would be to have a stranger cover me with a blanket, a red plaid throw they wrap around themselves when the store's chilly in the morning. Like someone saying, Hey, it's O.K., we all have off days where we end up walking in our panties on the sidewalk, and here's this blanket which is the first part of the solution.

I spot a little used clothing store and go inside, breathless with anticipation. They've got classical music playing and I hum along as I look through racks and racks of musty old clothes, shoving the hangers along the metal bars. Everything

is all wrong until, all the way in the back, the last thing I lay eyes on is the absolute right thing, a perfectly soft white cotton dress with a blue boat pattern going all around it. On the deck of each boat is a tiny blue woman, waving farewell with an even tinier blue handkerchief. It's got a frill at the bottom that flounces when I twirl.



The saleswoman is charmingly frumpy in cat's-eye glasses and carrot-coloured hair. She has a possibly-fake-but-lovable-all-the-same British accent, so I go ahead and buy a wide-brimmed blue straw hat she shows me

and an electric blue purse she calls a clutch, which I like the sound of because it's so clear about what it is.

I burst out of the store in my new outfit, running my fingernails up and down along my red bumpy rash, and the next logical thing is a drink. Just next door is a diner, and when I peek my head in there is a waitress looking back at me. She smiles, and she is pretty in the way I want to be pretty, with a tiny, old-fashioned waist and a big round ass below it you

can tell looks great on a bicycle. And her face! You could eat her face off it's that good, high forehead and two green eyes under real eyebrows—not a stitch of makeup anywhere. Underneath her skin are shades of blue and gold, evidence of beating blood, of health. She guides me almost wordlessly to a big red booth in the corner, and cars are going by and the sun is twinkling behind me somewhere and because of the way the light is reflected, all of a sudden my face is illuminated in the window and I see it's the face of a bat, all pinched, with something way off around the eyes, dark pits under and above them. My bat face says a lot of things that are not good, and I think what a shame it is I'll never get my face back, even when Mom is long gone and everything isn't up at a tilt the way it is. This will still be my face—even if I get implants and injections and they cut some of the skin away, everything will still show somehow because that's the way I'm made.

I order a beer and a slice of chocolate cake from the pretty waitress and begin the process of balling it up, but I don't eat it. I arrange the balls along the table edge in two even lines like chess pieces, and I sit there for a while making sure each ball has precisely the same texture and shape. When I'm tired of that, I slump down into the booth to try to feel what it's like not to have any bones or muscles, to feel what it's like to melt. I slide down lower and lower until I'm lying flat on the booth, staring up at the water stains on the ceiling.

I lie there until the light changes, until my limbs feel heavy and thick. My feet seem impossibly far away in their little shoes at the other end of the booth. I reach in their direction—Hello, feet!—and lift the hem of my new dress up until I feel a soft tickle of air on my thighs. The fabric puffs up and slowly settles, the blue boats rustling there in the white cotton water, sailing silently away. ∇

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*Amelia Kahaney lives in Brooklyn. Her short stories have appeared in such journals as One Story and Crazyhorse, and the anthology Best American Nonrequired Reading 2009 (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). She has ghostwritten three young adult novels and taught creative writing and other classes at Brooklyn College and Parsons the New School for Design. Her story "Fire Season" was recently optioned for film.*



# Peeling Back the Layers

Toronto has bigger parks, even better parks, but few work as hard as Taddle Creek Park.

BY ALFRED HOLDEN

Taddle Creek Park, on this cold, March morning, is a frozen, dug-up pit. Tree roots stick out from the sides of berms, where retaining walls once held back dirt. At the rear of the small midtown Toronto park, two pieces of heavy equipment sit abandoned beside a locked-up portable site office. In the park's centre are piles of gravel and other rubble, covered in a thin layer of fresh snow. A beat-up bench, the last remnant of infrastructure from the park's original 1978 incarnation, can be seen in the debris, and the once-popular (if modest) fountain that was the park's centrepiece has been bulldozed. Wire fencing surrounds individual trees and the site's perimeter. Fastened to the fencing are various metal signs warning, "DANGER DUE TO CONSTRUCTION," "DANGER DUE TO MOVING EQUIPMENT," and, oddly, "TRAIL CLOSED." Trail? Well, there *was* a diagonal walk, heavily used, crossing through the half-acre green space here at Bedford Road and Lowther Avenue, just steps north of Bloor Street West in the Annex. The path took you past a large, old beech, a small playground, the fountain, and a mulberry tree that, in season, dropped messy, staining fruit on a seat beneath it.

In recent years, Taddle Creek Park had become especially threadbare from decades of hard use, and its current reconstruction, which began in November, 2010, was the fruition of years of community lobbying for improvement. Toronto is home to older parks, bigger parks, and better parks. Taddle Creek Park's role is best described as a working park—busy doing its job, something not all the more well-known parks can claim.

That March morning I met at the park with Josh Fullan, an Annex resident and a teacher at the nearby University of Toronto Schools. Fullan worked the park's

renewal process into a civics lesson for his high-school students, who, in May, 2010, used Taddle Creek and two other nearby parks to conduct a Jane's Walk—one of a series of tours aimed at connecting people to their neighbourhoods, named after the author and urban thinker Jane Jacobs. Fullan and I surveyed the debris. At one point he pulled out a picture of a commodious-looking home, once located at 46 Bedford Road.

"Professor Frederick Grant Banting, 38, of the University of Toronto, proceeded from his home in Bedford Road, Toronto, a warmish morning last week," *Time* reported in its September 29, 1930, issue. "His University this morning . . . was going to dedicate his splendidly-equipped Banting Medical Institute." Banting's institute still stands on College Street, east of University Avenue, part of that area's great medical complex. His home, the same 46 Bedford Road, is gone. Banting had built the house after winning the Nobel Prize in medicine, in 1923, for co-developing insulin. Today, its former location is part of the site of Taddle Creek Park.

Rich McAvan, the landscape architect in charge of the park's redesign, told me engineers working late in 2010 were surprised to discover house foundations as they dug. "You're doing directional boring to put your electrical cable in," he said, "and boom—you hit a wall." A closer look at the piles of muck and debris reveals an assortment of yellow and red bricks, of the type once used to build our houses in Toronto. Viewed on a bright March day, it was close-at-hand evidence of now-remote times and lives.

It's unusual for houses to become parks. Fullan alluded to "tensions" being a vital current in Taddle Creek Park, "tensions between what it was,

what it almost was, and what it's going to be." In 1962, Tadeusz (Ted) Lempicki, a former officer in the Polish army who'd come to Canada in 1948 and eventually founded a construction company, began buying up homes along Prince Arthur Avenue, Bedford, and Lowther, with a plan to build apartment houses. With surprise and some regret, he discovered while going over old mortgage documents that he'd probably set up his office in Frederick Banting's own study. He mentioned it to university and medical friends, but, he said later, "Nobody seemed too excited."

Old houses weren't Lempicki's thing. The land acquisition for his project had been complicated, and he didn't feel like starting over. The loss of Banting's house may have been inauspicious, but it was a watershed moment for Taddle Creek Park—physically because the land it now occupies would be cleared, and figuratively in that the idea of a park on this site would now take hold.

By 1964, at a time when it was hard to get approval for dense high-rise development in the Annex, Lempicki sought out the progressive architect Irving Grossman to design his apartment block. "When I saw the drawings I said: 'Irving, you are crazy,'" Lempicki told Frank Jones, of the *Toronto Telegram*, the following year. Grossman's plan, according to Jones, included "the carrot to encourage ratepayer support. A half-acre park, complete with playground equipment would be provided for the public in an area notably starved of parkland."

Lempicki proposed a deal in which he'd donate the land for the park in exchange for the city's blessing to build two twenty-three-storey apartment houses—a somewhat bigger complex than zoning then permitted—to be known as Prince Arthur Square. One alderman called the idea "a



*Frederick Banting built his house at 46 Bedford Road after winning the Nobel Prize. Today, it is the site of Taddle Creek Park.*

little bit of candy” (i.e., a bribe), telling the *Globe and Mail*, “If he wants to throw in the park after the development committee [has approved rezoning] then we can accept it.” The deal didn’t go through. In the end, a single nineteen-storey building was constructed at 50 Prince Arthur, with lots of room around it.

Jim Lemon, a longtime Annex resident who lives on Walmer Road, remembers seeing hoarding around the would-be parkland for years. “Our youngest daughter went to the daycare at the Quaker meeting house [at the corner of Lowther and Bedford],” he said, “and I remember going over there, facing that fence every day.” Lempicki went on to build a handsome high-rise, 190 St. George Street, one of Toronto’s earliest condominiums, a block west of the park, in 1971. But then he disappeared from the scene, with the site at Bedford and Lowther still empty.

Paradoxically, the developer’s idea of having a park on the lot stuck, and in 1973 Annex residents began urging the city to buy the land. The Bedford-Lowther Park Committee, made up of interested members of the community, was formed in 1976 and soon the site of Frederick Banting’s mansion, that hadn’t been turned into a high-rise after all, was city property. Paul Martel, a landscape architect who lives on Admiral Road and sat on the park committee, supplied a design to meet the group’s criteria: “The park should have 12 month use. . . . Trees should be used on the perimeter. . . . There should be water to look at, for noise and to walk through.” With its diagonal pathway that served as a shortcut to the subway from Admiral Road and the densely populated St. George Street apartment houses, and its small playground, Tad-

dle Creek Park worked hard, shaping the neighbourhood. At a bench in its west corner, teenagers met in privacy. Annex parents, or their nannies, made use of the playground. I met my spouse at the fountain, both of us having come to soak our feet in the pool during the hot summer of 1988.

As Fullan and I walked from Taddle Creek Park past 1 Bedford Road, the tall new condominium at the corner of Bedford and Bloor, he mentioned the irony that a deal with that building’s developer, made under Section 37 of Ontario’s Planning Act, is now paying the cost of fixing up Taddle Creek Park in 2011. Such arrangements, known as “let’s-make-a-deal planning,” may have rattled aldermen in 1965, but today they are commonplace, and the best way to get a shot of infrastructure when the city is short on tax dollars.



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Renewing a park is a convoluted process, involving committees, citizen input, and general bureaucracy. Mayor Rob Ford's gravy train is a partisan fabrication. In reality, the workings of municipal government are plodding, penny-pinching, a tad paranoid. Toronto "really struggles to maintain and look after its parks," says Fullan. He adds that his students "couldn't believe the glacial progress of these things. They could have come to high school and left and never seen anything done to the park."

Prior to receiving the Section 37 money, an ad-hoc committee of local residents had worked up a no-frills plan for the park—a freshening of what was already there, including new playground equipment, fresh landscaping, and something to replace the rotting railroad-tie retaining walls along the outer edges. "We were pretty sure we could raise that money," says Frank Cunningham, of Admiral Road, a University of Toronto philosophy and political science professor and co-chair of the Annex Residents' Association's planning and zoning committee. But suddenly, with money from 1 Bedford, a diversion in the plans for Taddle Creek Park began. A noted landscape architect was hired by the city to come up with a new design. Cunningham recalls plans for "trees surrounded by cement doughnuts where people would sit, a terrific park for people on a lunch break." Some liked its echoes of the nearby Yorkville's acclaimed, self-consciously artsy park, much used by office workers at lunch that also, as a matter of fact, boasted pine trees in the middle of cement doughnuts. "The overwhelming majority of people didn't like it," says Cunningham. "I thought it was horrendous. [So the city] dusted off the old neighbourhood plan. And they liked that plan."

Over coffee, Rich McAvan walked me through the drawings for the new Taddle Creek Park, the paper already dog-eared and mud-stained. A cheerful man in his thirties, with salt-and-pepper hair, McAvan calls himself "a meat-and-potatoes" kind of landscape architect, which makes him a fitting choice to design such a hard-working space. The familiar park—the cracking fountain, the worn-out benches, the interlocking pavement—is there, on paper. We turn a page, and it's gone. Peeling

down the layers, staggering amounts of technical data appear covering everything from grading to water management. When the park re-emerges, many sheets down, it is the familiar one in new clothes—the same layout, now with square and rectangle block paving, plantings of dark red and yellow spireas, an army of evergreens, and no annual flowers.

The only thing to survive from the rejected avant-garde scheme is the park's new centrepiece, *The Vessel*, a sculpture by Ilan Sandler, a Nova Scotia-based artist whose design won a city-run juried competition. "Here I think [opinion] was more evenly divided" than on the park design as a whole, Cunningham says. The sculpture took a large part of the park's budget, he complains, but won advocates on Admiral Road and around the park. The work consists of stainless-steel rods that have been welded into the shape of a 5.7-metre-high jug. Water will be pumped to the rim, where it will be released to splash down the rods. One imagines it all translucent-seeming and sparkling in the sun, with wet children cavorting around the semi-circular benches at its base. According to the artist, the four kilometres of tubing used reflects approximately the distance Taddle Creek once flowed from this spot in the Annex to Lake Ontario. Cunningham mocks the subtle reference as "ludicrous," though I remind him allusion is the artist's stock-in-trade.

McAvan thinks the public's first impression of *The Vessel* will be, "That doesn't belong here." But he predicts people will get used to it. One planned feature is to collect the water in an underground tank, and use it to irrigate the park's grass, flowers, and trees, another allusion to the real Taddle Creek, whose meandering waters nourished the primeval forest that once stood here.

By mid-April, during a wintry spring, work began again in Taddle Creek Park, with construction progressing at a breakneck speed. Soil was backfilled into the new retaining walls, baby evergreens went in on the slopes of the berms, and wooden forms appeared for the base of the new playground, which had already arrived and sat partly assembled inside the fence.

In the mind's eye, parks are idyllic places, an absence of city, or relief from it. Cunningham foresees "a better park





from this,” but muses about a “tragedy of the commons” circumstance, whereby those whose money restored it, the residents of 1 Bedford, by their sheer numbers put the little park in peril. Fullan, who walks by the park every day going to and from work, spun it the other way. “It’s not a bad place for a high-rise,” he said to me, about 1 Bedford, showing an increasingly sophisticated acceptance of dense urbanity in neighbourhood-centric Toronto. The park will be used as before—heavily. Taddle Creek Park, finally, is not a dreamy Frederick Law Olmsted, or a Warhol-era Michael Hough, who landscaped such brutalist landmarks as the University of Toronto’s Scarborough campus, or a Yorkville-esque boutique park. It is a hard-working, inhabited pad of grass, cement, and trees. “There’s tension,” Fullan says again. “Between our desire to build the city vertically and yet protect things like green space, heritage properties, and streetscape integrity. But it’s a very interesting tension.” ▮

PAUL MARTEL; ALFRED HOLDEN

*Alfred Holden lives in the Annex. He is a contributing editor with Taddle Creek, and an editor with the Toronto Star.*



*Top: the original Taddle Creek Park and its fountain, circa 1979. Above: Ilan Sandler’s Vessel, the park’s new jury-chosen centrepiece, days after its May installation.*



## Concrete Forest

Animal Effigy lets city dwellers become virtual *coureurs de bois*.

PHOTOS BY DANI COUTURE

Among the urban populace, not much attention is paid to the presence of wildlife, or its lack thereof, in our everyday lives, and yet various means of effigy abound. Ubiquitous examples can be seen in trades of porcelain sculpture, affordable bottles of wine, and ironic T-shirts featuring bears, rabbits, and fish. From a set of antique deer horns appearing in a rustic new restaurant to a penguin endorsement on a dry cleaner's signage, effigies often appear in city life, but seldom are recognized.

For the writer Dani Couture, this observation created an entry point to view her surroundings more critically. Her blog, *Animal Effigy*, which she recently wrapped up after two and a half years, catalogues hundreds of examples and dozens of species spotted among urban life. The project was inspired, in part, during a reading by the poet and play-

wright George Elliott Clarke, who described a particular nostalgia for the woods and the North as a part of the Canadian psyche, especially among writers. We all want to be *coureurs de bois*, he said, yet most of us live in cities. This is true especially for Couture, whose writings and prose often evoke natural settings, as she finds herself seeking traces of wildlife in the city, an effigy-owner in plenty. From the time she started the site [animaleffigy.com](http://animaleffigy.com), in 2008, the project began to reveal itself to her. "I couldn't walk five steps without taking a photo of a logo, or a store display, or someone's jacket, or a tattoo," she says. "It was everywhere. And at times it was overwhelming."

From a childhood spent moving around southern Ontario, landing mostly near woods and water, seeing genuine animal habitat was not uncommon for Couture, but it amuses her to note urbanites who

have long forgotten their relationship to flora and fauna, catching themselves off balance in instances where the two worlds collide: bewilderment when a deer shows up on King Street, or the feeling of horror when a skunk is found living in their garden. Despite our urge to bring the natural world back to us, we often view the countless raccoons, the mice in the subway, and the cooing of pigeons as nothing more than disagreeable, an unnatural break from our regular routine.

These gaps in awareness aside, our effigies only grow in number and continue to enter our homes by way of decorative pillows, books, and gift cards. Our longing for the natural world exists in a different, more commercial way in the paraphernalia all around us, and digitally, with one effigy further, it lives in this on-line archive.

—JACKIE LINTON





Cat, Queen Street West.





*Rabbit, Playa del Carmen, Mexico.*



*Fox, Queen Street West.*



*Chickadee, Queen Street East.*



*Giraffe, C.N.E. grounds.*



*Lion, Gerrard Square.*



*Bear, Gerrard Street East.*



*Rooster, Drummondville, Quebec.*



*Dog, Queen Street East.*



*Bird, Pape Avenue.*





*Monkey, east end.*



*Flamingoes, east end.*



# A Fog

BY DAVID ROSS

There was a cigarette butt floating in the toilet bowl. Soggy, truncated, the orange paper at the tip and the black of the ash clarified under the water. If the stray flecks of ash composed a message in code, it read: Dad was smoking again.

The sole reason I'd been in my parents' bathroom in the first place was because it had been a decadent thing to do when they weren't home (even the shade of paint—pale apricot—in contrast to the vulgar, yellow, fingerprint-smudged walls of the bathroom I shared with my sister seemed to say, Here is a place where one *bathes*). Finding the butt was a surprise because Dad was supposed to have quit weeks ago, but it didn't faze me. I lowered the lid and left the room, not feeling happy and not feeling sad.

I was twelve when this happened, when my mother requested, half-flirtatiously, that my father quit smoking by the weekend of their big anniversary party. I didn't know how long ago he'd started. I knew that in our old house Mom had been more lenient, even at the dinner table, where we ate scalloped potatoes and peas under a veil of smoke. I knew that when I wore Dad's bomber jacket to school (I liked how the sleeves fully swallowed my arms and hands) the girls in my class would tell me I smelled like cigarettes. I couldn't tell because I was immune to it by then. It seemed impressive to me, that they could identify the scent at their age.

It was around this time that my sister, Ainsley, took up smoking, although it's possible she'd been doing it for months without my knowing. She was older by five years, and the age gap between us—unusual among our friends, whose parents had the foresight to stagger their children at two-year intervals—was a source of anxiety for me. I under-

stood that in the coming years certain distractions (college applications, mall jobs, guys with facial hair—all of which were more alluring than me) meant our relationship was probably doomed.

Ainsley had a friend named Shan, who was skinny and had big eyes. Shan was, given my limited social net, the prettiest girl I knew. When she came over I was always very nice to her, and sometimes, arbitrarily it seemed, she was nice back. Other times, she ignored me completely. Both Shan and Ainsley were especially good at pretending not to notice someone for no particular reason.

I'd seen Shan smoking before, in an empty parking lot where feathery weeds stuck out of cracks in the cement. I'd watched her to see how she was doing it—something I'd never done with my dad, who seemed to smoke purely out of necessity. Employing deliberate, seductive flourish, Shan would elongate her neck in front of the boys and tilt her head skyward as she exhaled. The first time I saw this I made a silent promise to take up smoking if a girl asked me to.

Sometimes I would go with Ainsley and Shan to a coffee shop in town where you could get a custard tart or a chocolate-coconut doughnut for a quarter. Riding in Shan's car was one of my earliest adolescent thrills, even though the girls changed radio stations and sang pop songs with more enthusiasm than they ever reserved for me. They would buy milky coffees and slide into a vinyl-upholstered booth—their booth—with such authority, marking their territory with packs of menthol cigarettes, stickered lighters, nail polish, and ballpoint pens without caps.

Usually, Ainsley and Shan ignored me on such excursions, encircling me with a strip of imaginary hazard tape. When they did address me it was to suggest I

get another doughnut, allowing them a snatch of privacy. I went, of course, because as long as I obeyed I didn't feel guilty for being there. When I returned, I lapsed into my private habit of studying Shan as if it were my job to catalogue her every teenage-girl tic.

"Can I help you?" she said once she noticed.

I didn't answer.

"Leave him alone," Ainsley said. "He's not going to say anything."

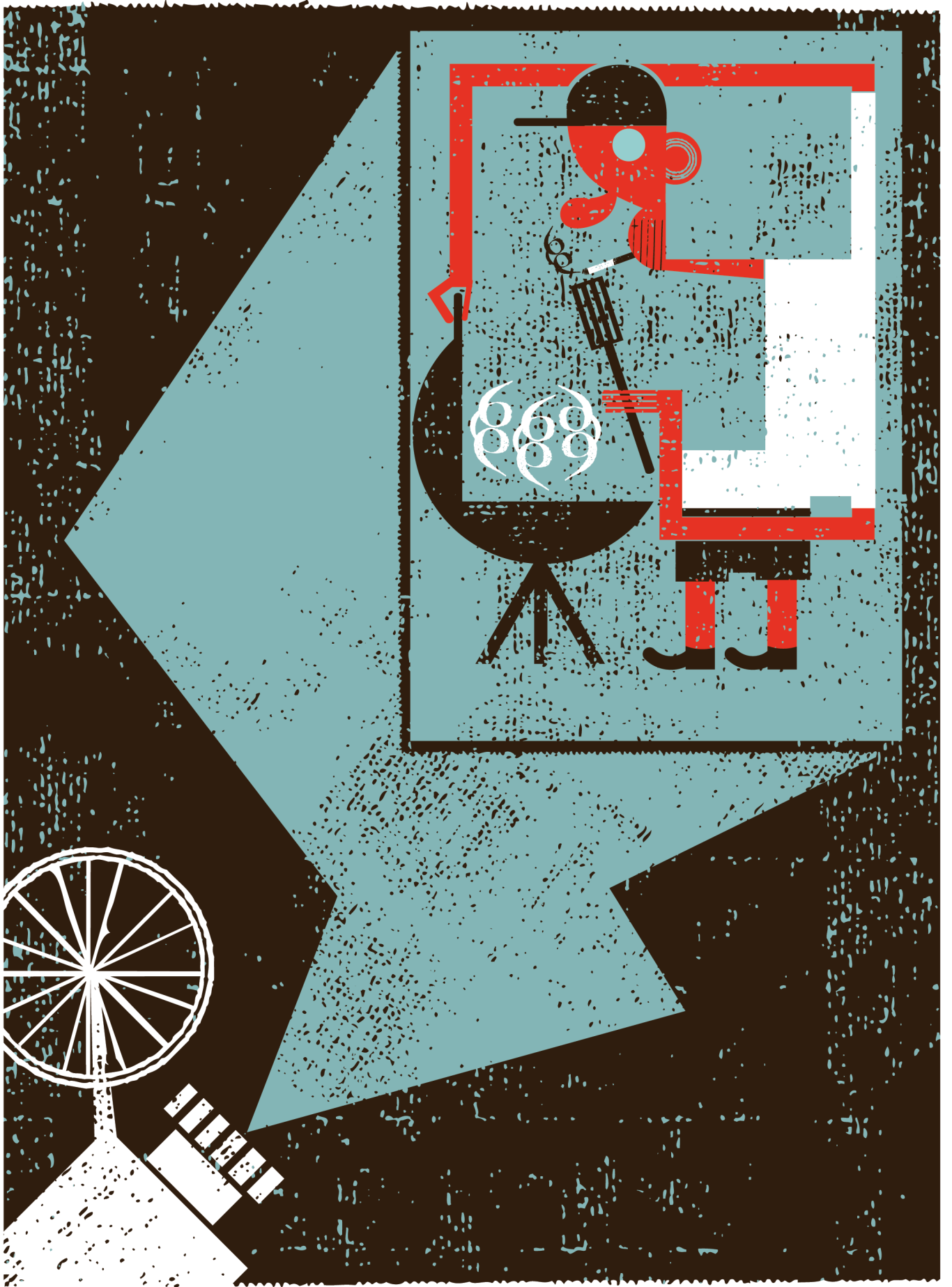
"I just think it's weird," Shan laughed, then said to Ainsley, "Why don't you get a doughnut?" She had a way of sounding like she was challenging you.

"Because I don't *want* a doughnut," Ainsley said.

A couple weeks later, Ainsley began acting strange. I noticed that she wasn't going to school. She often said she was sick, but evidence of this—the hot water bottle, throat lozenges, crumpled tissue balls—was conspicuously absent. Ainsley was always one to complain of phantom aches, to stop doing things that required her to stand for too long, but this time seemed more selfish and more serious than the others.

There were new laws governing our household—each more mysterious and unspoken. Ainsley didn't have to eat meals with us. She didn't wake up until the afternoon, and it was rare to see her applying lipstick in the hallway mirror before school like she used to. I didn't say anything to her, and I didn't say anything to my parents. We didn't talk about it—that was the most strict law of all.

I worried more about what Ainsley's teachers thought about her missing so much class than I did about her health, because her symptoms were invisible to me. She just seemed like she couldn't bring herself to do anything—iron a shirt,







# Carousel

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boil an egg, leave the house.

One morning I woke with the flu. Mom was working days at the time, so Dad stayed home. I was in bed with a cool facecloth on my forehead when I heard him yelling at Ainsley. Then things started banging on the kitchen table. I got out of bed and sat at the top of the stairs in my pyjamas. Dad was pulling things out of the refrigerator one at a time and calling out their names like they were what he was mad at.

“Pickles! Macaroni! Bean Salad! Salami! There’s plenty in here! I’m looking at it!”

Ainsley wasn’t saying anything. Dad was using the same booming voice he’d used on us when we were much younger, one that provoked instant, frightened submission. I don’t think he’d yet learned how to make teenagers obey him. Ainsley, shrunken on the couch, seemed more impatient than intimidated.

“Cottage cheese!” he said, as the tub vibrated on the counter. “Plums!” His voice was starting to crack, sounding desperate, almost pathetic. “Come on now,” he pleaded with my sister. “Eat something.”

Eventually Ainsley agreed to eat a banana. I watched as she placed it delicately on the coffee table in front of her then did nothing. The freckled banana just lay there, frowning back at her. Dad put everything else back into the fridge.

“You’re going to eat that,” he declared, pointing his finger. “And I know you’re smoking. You better cut that out too.”

I remembered the cigarette butt I’d found in the toilet. My instinct was to stick up for Ainsley, even though I didn’t understand why she was being punished. But I guess I didn’t have the courage to snitch on a grown-up.

“Yes, Dad,” Ainsley whispered. Once he’d left her alone she peeled the banana and bit off a quarter of it. Her cheeks puffed up, and after swallowing she took the remaining portion and threw it against the wall as hard as she could. I think she knew I was watching. The peel dropped lamely to the ground and little bits flew everywhere, as if a custard tart had burst.

By the week of Mom and Dad’s anniversary, things had settled down, although there was no staged reconciliation. It’s possible Mom had just told everyone to be nice, as practice for when

# Home Address

I come from Brixham summers: jellied eels on the beach,  
swingboats, donkeys, knickerbockers glories.  
I come from a steelworks belching out fire and  
ten brave neighbours molten metal dead.  
I come from Sunday drives in the Scimitar,  
homemade skirts we princess-spread on seats.  
I come from the fat-crackle of Mabel's fish 'n' chips  
ordered with our chins on the greasy counter and  
eaten bare-kneed beside hairy aunts in the sun.  
I come from unsuccessful pets: howling setters,  
biting rabbits, budgies found feet-up, baby birds  
roasting in the rear window on a July afternoon.  
I come from a joyful getting lost on Haworth Moor  
waist-high in purple heather, every time we  
did those hikes and afterward, Heinz baked beans  
and Marmite thick-spread on a Hovis loaf.  
I come from raging earache, deafness needle-sharp,  
a whip-scarred father, endless twilight longing,  
Romany persecution and five transplanted miners,  
set down in a far-off minefield, sepia-photo dead.

—JULIE HARTLEY

company came over. Still, Ainsley seldom went to class, but she was eating again. Everyone was making sure of it. (One night she'd theatrically eaten an entire chicken wing in one bite, pulling out the clean, grey bone for her finale.) There was a fog of mutual embarrassment around the dinner table. I think she ate only out of duty—not for sustenance or pleasure.

Dad had started smoking again, officially. This failure didn't cause much of a stir. Mom busied herself with preparations for the anniversary party, vacuuming corners and ledges and crevices, retrieving jars of pickled asparagus and frozen meats from the cellar.

On Thursday morning before the party, Mom had given me a short grocery list of things to pick up for Saturday: two loaves of bread, sweet relish, plain potato chips (so as not to offend anyone's particular potato-chip tastes). On my way to the store I saw Shan alone on a quiet street. She was walking on the narrow curb, her arms outstretched to steady herself, a stubby cigarette between her knuckles.

"Shan!" I said.

"Oh."

She turned slowly, the expression on

her face glazed and neutral.

"Hey," she said. Maybe she'd forgotten my name.

"Hey," I said. It suddenly occurred to me that Shan had not been to our house in a while—in fact, she hadn't visited Ainsley since she'd gotten sick.

We walked a bit in silence.

"How's your sister?" she asked, finally acknowledging she knew who I was. She took a drag on her cigarette and I felt powerful beside her.

"She's fine," I said.

Shan nodded as if she knew that already.

"I'm just going to the grocery store. My mom asked me to pick some things up for Saturday."

"What's Saturday?"

Foolishly, I'd assumed everyone knew what Saturday was. I'd given away how small my life was.

"My parents' anniversary party," I said. "Their twentieth," I added, hoping in vain to convey its importance.

"Hmm," she said. "I see."

We walked in silence a little farther.

We were heading in the opposite direction of the store, though I didn't say anything. We came to a strip of grass that seemed to have no purpose, an expansive front lawn belonging to no one in particular. Shan sat down on the grass. Her bra strap was showing and her eyes were glassy. She butted her cigarette in the soil and crossed her legs, then did something she'd probably never done before—she took a long, greedy look at me.

The feeling of being looked at like that was unlike anything I'd ever felt. It awakened insecurities I never knew existed, let alone had the chance to consciously suppress—the fact that in places I was still doughy with baby fat, the feminine way I threw a baseball or Frisbee. Suddenly my skin was alive with the knowledge that people could be nasty toward me, that I could be the target of some cruel, private joke long before I had the tools to notice it.

"What's your sister's problem, anyway?" she said, spitting on the grass.

"I don't know," I said, genuinely confused.

"She never calls me back. I called her twenty times, probably."

"She's been sick."

"Yeah, sure," she said. "Too sick to pick up a phone."

She lit another cigarette and I avoided her large eyes. Did she think Ainsley was lying?

"You want one?" she asked.

I got the sense, as the smoke curled out of her mouth, that this was another one of her challenges.

"No," I said. "No, thanks."

That's how brittle my promises to myself were back then. Suddenly I felt like I was in the presence of some predator.

"I have to go to the store now," I said. I pivoted and walked away.

On the way home I tried to think if I'd seen Ainsley pick up the telephone in the past month. I tried pic-

turing her lifting the receiver, hanging it up, lifting it off the hook again. I imagined her dialing a number really fast, letting the cord coil around her fingers. I couldn't remember any of that happening.

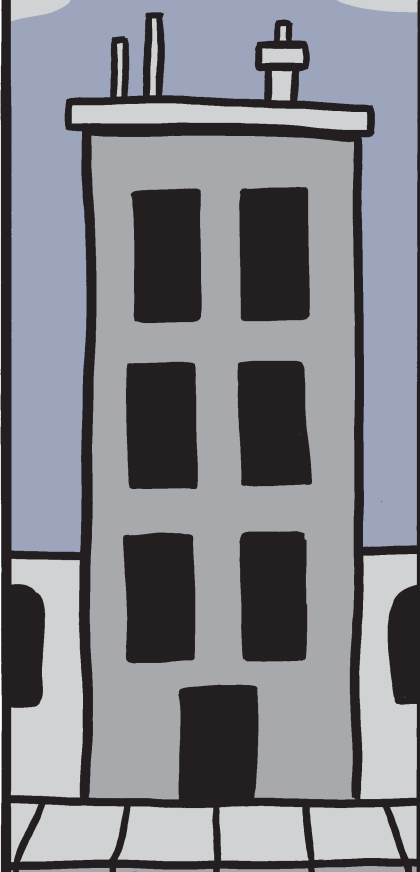




# THE RABBLE OF DOWNTOWN TORONTO BY JASON KIEFFER

"A NASTY  
LITTLE  
BOOK..."

- JOE FIORITO,  
TORONTO STAR



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When I got home my father was setting up the projector and swearing every ten seconds. During its assembly Dad would allow himself to swear in front of us, as if dealing with technology gave him some kind of immunity. Mom was sitting on the couch with her arm around Ainsley. The cleaning tools had been abandoned in various spots around the house: the vacuum cleaner leaning against the panelled wall, the feather duster on the edge of the bureau, an orphaned sponge on the linoleum floor. It seemed like the first time all week Mom wasn't motoring around the house, asking me to perform some tedious, inconsequential task.

Once Dad got the projector running we all hushed. The only noise was the hum of the machine, which sounded like a baseball card in bicycle spokes. The picture had a violet wash over it. People cluttered the backyard—grandparents, uncles, cousins. Every once in a while I zoomed into the shot, riding in circles on my toy motorcycle. This was at our old house, before the patio got covered up by the deck, and the patio tiles were big, flat squares, pink and beige. There were family members we hadn't seen in a while—versions of them with darker hair, narrower waists.

"There you are with Lois," Dad said, "*splitting a beer.*"

He laughed. In the shot Mom and her sister were passing a big silvery-blue can back and forth.

"As if splitting a beer made any difference when you did it all night long!"

In the film Dad was standing at the grill with a Minnesota Vikings apron on, a cigarette jutting from his lips, barbecue tongs in his hand. He took a drag and then flicked the butt onto the ground in what seemed a practised gesture, stamping it out with a foot he'd evidently forgotten was bare. We laughed at the sight of this—Dad hopping around on one foot, his face knotted with pain. I continued motoring around, gathering speed, while everyone else stopped to see what had happened. My uncle Bill passed the camera to Lois so that he could fetch the garden hose.

The next scene was indoors. A big chocolate cake was being ferried out for Ainsley's birthday. We all sang "Happy Birthday To You," our faces lit from below by candles. Afterward, Grandma could be seen squawking, "Who wants cake?" and, "Who wants ice cream?" and people were scurrying around, setting serviettes out and swishing the ice cream scoop in a jar of warm water. When the camera settled on Ainsley she squealed, "Dad, stop!" (Watching this,

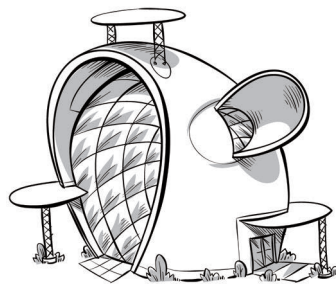
Ainsley groaned. Not much had changed.) But we all laughed when she appeared on the screen because Ainsley had indeed changed. She looked so different then: her hair—crinkly and sculpted with mousse—resembled a waterfall, and the chubbiness of her cheeks

and neck struck me as altogether foreign. I think I'd forgotten she ever looked like that.

The camera lingered on her, though she no longer seemed to notice. She made the first cut in the cake, as was tradition, and after the first generous slice was flopped onto a paper plate she took the knife and, without anyone noticing, licked the chocolate icing clean off the blade. Watching this we all shrieked and laughed, except for Ainsley. When I looked over at her, she was not laughing. Maybe for a second, to look like a good sport. But a second and no longer.

The film ended. In the moment that followed, before the lights came back on, I was overcome with the feeling that I had a secret—a feeling of burden and pleasure and isolation. But everyone knew by then Dad was smoking again, so it couldn't have been that. And I didn't want to tell Ainsley about seeing Shan, at least not yet. The moment passed. Mom got up to resume cleaning and Dad sighed at the thought of disassembling the projector. Ainsley made herself disappear. I didn't move right away. I stayed where I was and let the secret float inside me. ♪

*David Ross lives in the Church-Wellesley Village. He works as a production editor for Penguin Canada. His fiction has appeared on the Web zine Joyland.*





# T H E M I S C E L L A N Y

## The Production Notes

- If you plan to be in the Burlington, Vermont, area this summer, be sure to pop in to the Fletcher Free Library, 235 College Street, for a rare glimpse of Alfred Holden's city of Beaver, which will be on display beginning in July (check Fletcher's Web site for exact dates). Beaver, as regular readers will know, is the cardboard city Alfred built with his brother and cousins during their New England summers. (His personal essay on the history of Beaver ran in *Taddle Creek*'s summer, 2006, issue, and can be viewed on-line at [www.taddlecreek-mag.com/beaver](http://www.taddlecreek-mag.com/beaver).) Beaver has been on public display twice since debuting in 2006 at the Design Exchange, in Toronto, but the Burlington show will be the first time since 1976 that the city will appear in its proper layout, thanks to Alfred's recent unearthing of the long-lost key map to Beaver (much to the joy of the editor, who regrets ever having asked, "What's that cardboard building?" every time he is coerced into helping assemble the city for display). A number of other newly rediscovered artifacts will be on view as well, including Beaver's "final" building, a set-back skyscraper, completed, but never before assembled. Alfred plans to be on hand opening day. If you can't make it to Burlington, you can see some photos of Beaver's 2008 Waterloo, Ontario, co-presentation with the cardboard city of Dominion in issue twenty of Seth's *Palookaville*.

- In its Christmas issue, *Taddle Creek* ran a story titled "Hey! It's For Horses" about Peter Josselyn, the head of the Saint John Society for the Preservation

of Horse Troughs and Water Fountains, in Saint John, New Brunswick. Accompanying the story was a reproduction of a vintage postcard depicting the fountain that once sat in the city's Haymarket Square. Originally, *Taddle Creek* had requested a scan of the postcard from the New Brunswick Museum. Aside from a perfectly acceptable scanning fee, the museum wanted to know the magazine's distribution numbers, as it charges for usage based on circulation, despite the fact it does not own the rights to this public-domain artwork. Peter searched eBay on *Taddle Creek*'s behalf, bought a copy for three dollars, scanned it, and that is what the magazine used instead. Copies of the scan will be sent to any reader who wants one, free of charge. A side note: since the above-mentioned piece ran, Peter's local weekly, *Here*, listed him among its non-qualified "Top 20 Under 30." No coincidence, *Taddle Creek* thinks.

## The Books

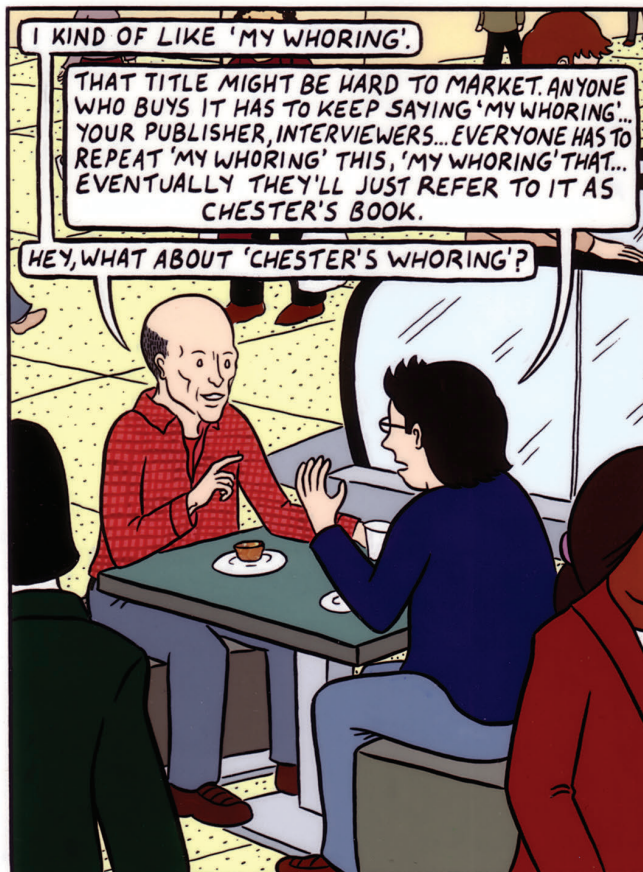
New books by *Taddle Creek* contributors abound. Bucking the supposed industry "wisdom" that no one wants to buy a book of short stories, Jessica Westhead presents her debut collection, *And Also Sharks* (Cormorant, \$21), while Hal Niedzviecki proves short on story, long on title with *Look Down, This is Where It Must Have Happened* (City Lights, \$17.95). Michael Christie takes a safer route with his debut, *The Beggar's Garden* (HarperCollins, \$24.99), burying the word "Stories" on the cover in such a way that you'll fall in love with the book long before you realize you're supposed to hate it. Bucking this trend,

longtime short story writer Stuart Ross releases his long-awaited first novel, *Snowball, Dragonfly, Jew* (ECW, \$19.95). And for those who find even short story collections too long, Zach Worton and Joe Ollmann both have new graphic novels on the shelves with *The Klondike* (Drawn & Quarterly, \$25.95) and *Mid-Life* (Drawn & Quarterly, \$20.95), respectively. If that's still too many words for you, perhaps Rose Hunter's debut poetry collection, *To the River* (Artistically Declined, \$9), or George Murray's self-explanatory *Glimpse: Selected Aphorisms* (ECW, \$16.95) will suit your short attention span. Finally, if it's thrills you're looking for, Andrew Pyper's *The Guardians* (Doubleday, \$29.95) and Tony Burgess's *Idaho Winter* (ECW, \$16.95) surely won't disappoint.

## The (Unofficial) Corrections

*Taddle Creek* usually does not run corrections for errors made solely on its Web site, but a tweeter recently gave the magazine such an interesting E-shaming that *Taddle Creek* just had to share it with those of you who, rightly or wrongly, do not follow the magazine on Twitter. The editor-in-chief's on-line biographical note long has pointed to his one-time association with the *Acta Victoriana* literary magazine, "the oldest magazine still publishing in Canada." This "fact" was derived from a discussion among several industry veterans who couldn't name a current magazine founded before 1878. As Bret Dawson points out, the still-active *United Church Observer* was founded in 1829, making it older than the *Acta* by a fact-breaking forty-nine years. *Taddle Creek* E-regrets the error.





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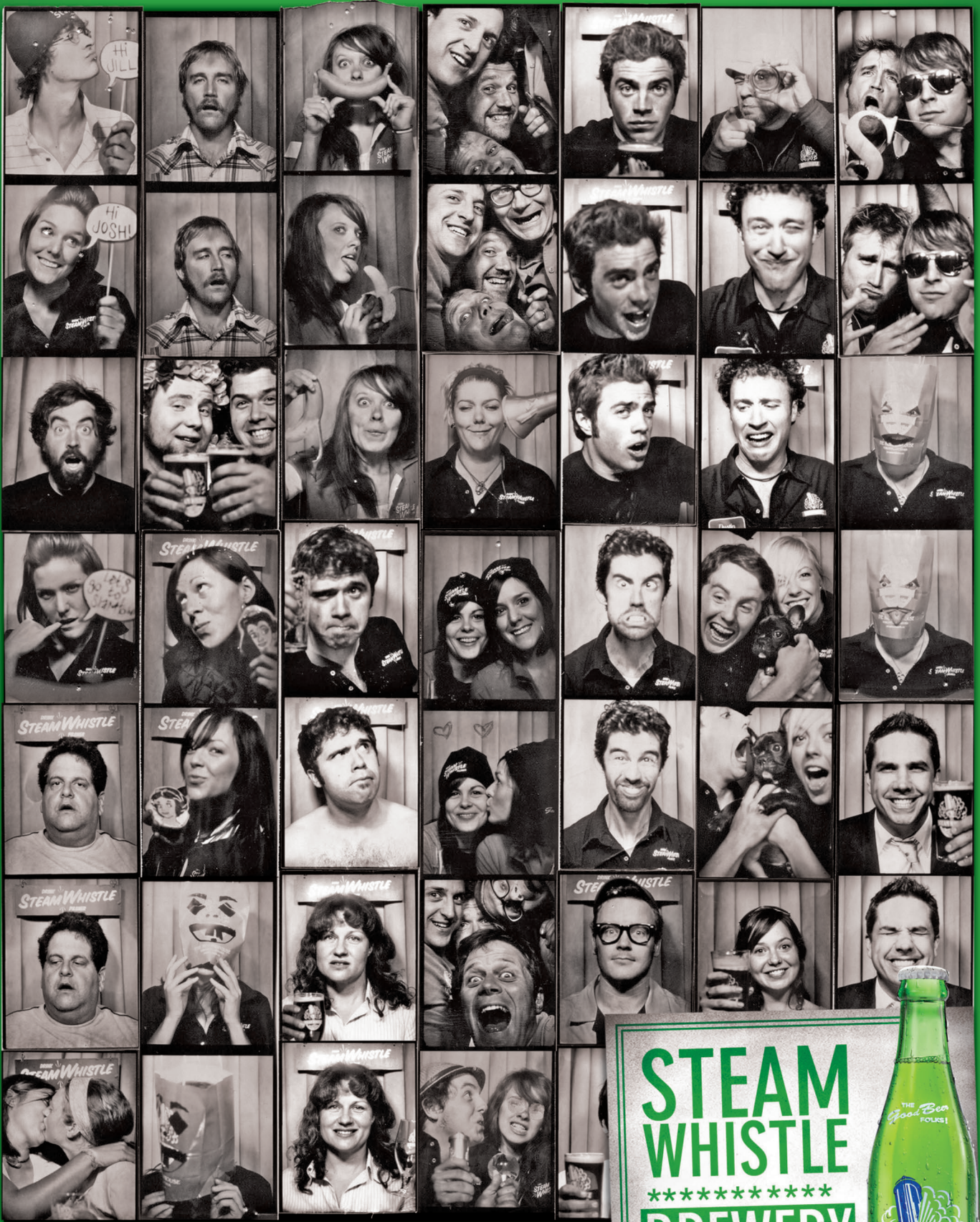
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