TADDLE CREEK

SUMMER, 2006
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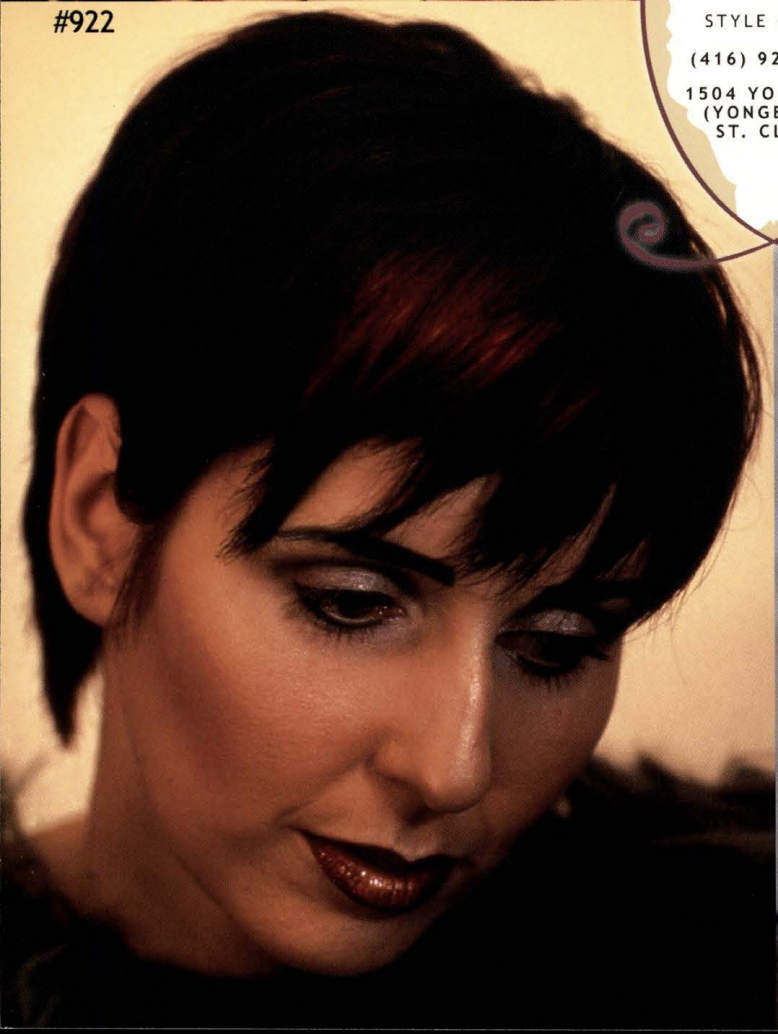

#0085

TADDLE CREEK

VOL. IX, NO. 2 • SUMMER, 2006

•BUNK•

FACT FOR FICTION

Why, oh why, don't more authors and editors see the importance and nobility surrounding the art of fact-checking fiction? Your Derek McCormacks find it exasperating, your John Degens believe it to be somewhat humourous, and a vast majority of others are simply indifferent. The failure of so many literary journals and book publishers to fact-check has resulted in a plethora of factually inaccurate novels and short stories being published each year.

Keeping a clean magazine is fun—really it is. *Taddle Creek's* fine team of editors, fact checkers, copy editors, and proofreaders relish every opportunity to employ their godlike dedication to the sanctity of the printed word by correcting a grammatical error or righting a factual wrong. *Taddle Creek* uses some of the same spelling and grammar guides as many other publications do, namely the *Oxford English Dictionary* (and, more commonly, its abridgement the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*), *The Chicago Manual of Style, A Dictionary of Modern English Usage,* by H. W. Fowler, and, most importantly, *The Taddle Creek Guidebook to Editorial Style and Its Usage.* But while these reference books alone make editing a joy, it's another in-house guide that really makes finding mistakes in writers' copy more like a trip to the ice-cream stand than a job: *The Taddle Creek Guidebook to Fact-checking Fiction.*

"I see your point in regards to checking *non*-fiction," you may be saying, "but *fiction?* Isn't fiction fictional?" Yes, of course it is, *Taddle Creek* may be answering, but that's no excuse for it to be inaccurate.

Take "Spring Poem," by Mr. Chris Chambers, found elsewhere in this issue. A man about the neighbourhood such as Chris knows full well that the Red Rose serves aloo gobi, but suppose he'd been wrong, and the Red Rose served only Mexican food. Red Rose regulars reading his poem would certainly be distracted by this inaccuracy, hindering their enjoyment of Chris's fine, fine work.

Taddle Creek's editor would have flown into a blinding rage if the New Brunswick city of Saint John had somehow appeared spelled as "St. John" in Leanna McLennan's "Chained for Life."

Does Jim's Restaurant, on Queen Street East, really claim to offer "the best westerns," as immortalized in Adrienne Weiss's poem "Augusta Could Be a Woman the Driver is Trying to Find," or does it more modestly offer "pretty good westerns"? (It's the former, and they are.)

Fans of Julie Delpy would surely never pick up the magazine again had Kevin Connolly misspelled her name in "Plenty." (For the record, he didn't, and *Taddle Creek* is in no danger of losing this delightful, albeit odd, subsection of its readership.)

And what if Lucy, the female lead of Suzanne Alyssa Andrew's "Extreme Ironing," had transferred from the orange line to the blue line of Montreal's metro not at Jean-Talon station, but at Rosemont? Montreal readers surely would have thought the magazine mad.

Some of the above examples may seem petty and unimportant, but it's the attention to the little details that separates the good magazines from the sloppy. That's why *Taddle Creek* is proud to announce that *The Taddle Creek Guidebook to Fact-checking Fiction* is now available outside the walls of Taddle Creek World Headquarters for the first time. Any literary magazine or literary book publisher may request a copy of this handsome, sixteen-page chapbook by writing to P.O. Box 611, Station P, Toronto, Ont. M5S 2Y4, or E-mailing to editor@taddlecreekmag.com. The book is free, though, if you would like to send a couple of dollars to cover postage, it will not be refused. (If you reside outside of Canada, the magazine must insist on you sending five, in U.S. currency.) Please—don't let the noble art of fact-checking fiction die.

TADDLE CREEK

"Forge ahead."

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TADDLE CREEK (ISSN 1480-2481) is published semi-annually, in June and December, by Vitalis Publishing, P.O. Box 611, Station P, Toronto, Ont. M5S 2Y4 Canada. Vol. IX, No. 2, Whole Number 16, Summer Number, 2006. Submissions of short fiction and poetry may be sent to the above address, provided author resides in the city of Toronto. Please view guidelines at www.taddlecreekmag.com/submit.shtml before submitting. Annual subscription rates: In Canada, $7. In U.S., $7 (U.S. funds). Overseas, $16 (U.S. funds). Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40708524. PAP Registration No. 10688. The magazine acknowledges the financial assistance of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program, toward its mailing costs, and the Canada Magazine Fund. The magazine also acknowledges the financial support of the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. *Taddle Creek* is a member of Magazines Canada and is indexed by the Canadian Literary Periodicals Index. Printed in Canada, by PointOne Graphics.

To inquire about advertising, circulation, subscriptions, submissions, and single and back issues, write to the above address, telephone (416) 324-9075, E-mail to editor@taddlecreekmag.com, or visit the magazine's Web site at www.taddlecreekmag.com.

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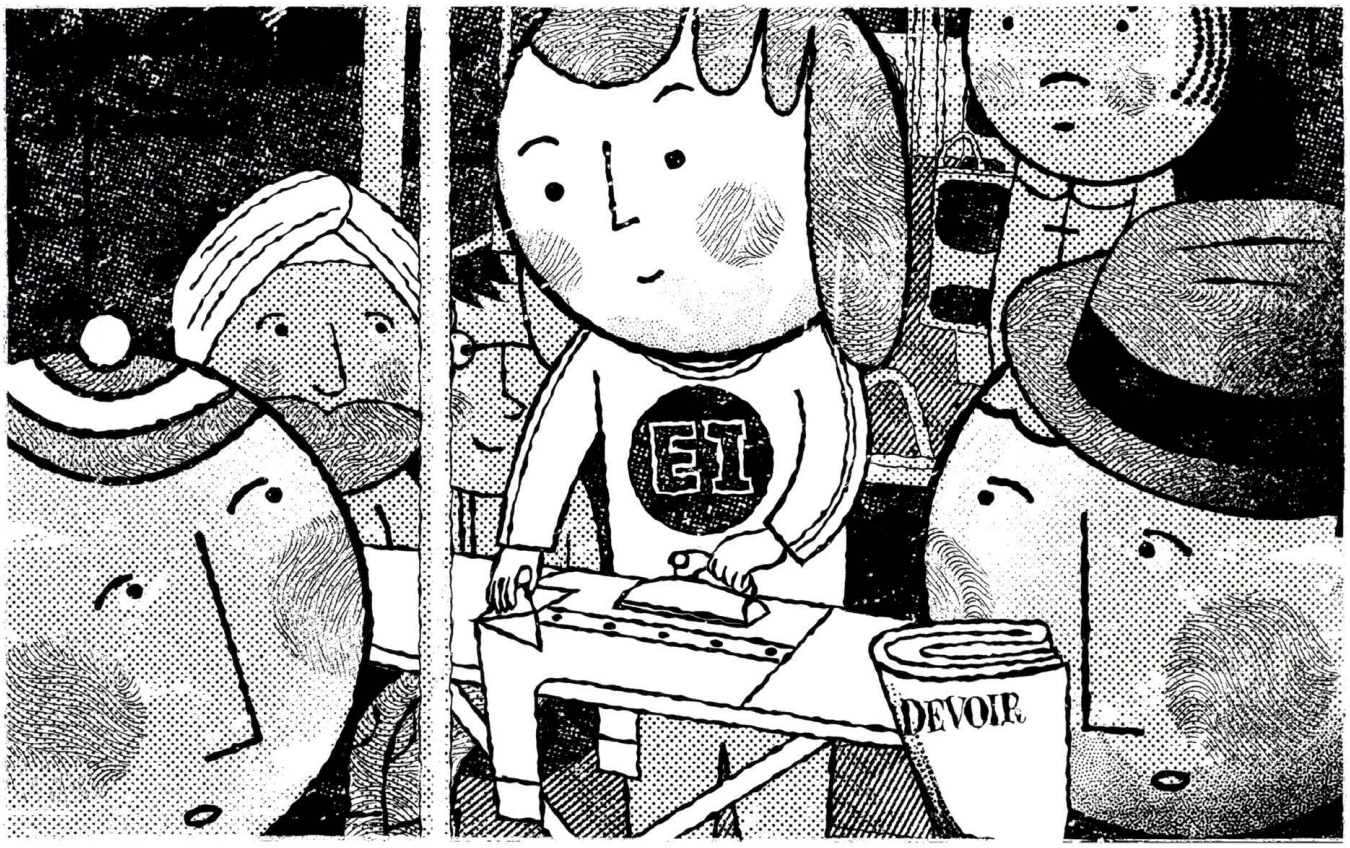


EXTREME IRONING

BY SUZANNE ALYSSA ANDREW

Montreal, 8:30 A.M. The height of the morning commute. The Berri-UQAM station is packed shoulder to meticulously dressed shoulder. I stride across the tile, iron in one hand, my board, Simone de Boardoir, in the other. I have twelve white shirts, twelve hangers, and a bungee cord in my red backpack.

The metro rumbles into the station. I hang back as the doors open, bolting in at the last moment. I'll have just enough space in the standing-only area near the exit. A tall man in a suit hangs onto the support bar with one hand, reads *Le Devoir* with the other. I clip the bungee cord between two supports, flip Simone's legs down, unzip the upper pouch of my pack. Twenty-five seconds. My portable electric iron has been warming up since I came down the escalator. I pull a shirt from my bag and focus on the ironing.

Shirt 1: Pressed in thirty seconds. I hang it up on the bungee cord line.

Shirt 2: People are staring. I ignore them.

Shirt 4: I'm jostled, but maintain my balance.

Shirt 8: I hear people asking questions. ("Hey, what is she doing?" "*Qu'est-ce qu'elle fait là?*")

Shirt 9: A guy in a T-shirt and jeans holds up a camera phone. I hold the shirt in front of my face.

Shirt 12: Done. Jean-Talon station comes into view. Simone folds, the bungee cord comes down, shirts hook onto the back of the board, iron switched to Off.

I'm the first person to leave the train. I push my way to the elevator no one uses, disappear.

IRON MAIDEN BAFFLES METRO RIDERS

An unidentified woman, bearing the logo "EI" on her jersey, for "Extreme Ironing," appeared on the metro yesterday, ironing a reported two dozen white shirts on the orange line, between Berri-UQAM and Jean-Talon stations, before disappearing. Conflicting reports suggest the woman either transferred to the blue line or fled up the escalator.

A spokesperson for the London-based Extreme Ironing Bureau, who calls herself "Gertrude Steam," said extreme ironing is an emerging sport, practised by an estimated 1,500 participants around the world. It is judged on the merits of danger, ironing quality and speed.

Extreme ironing has no known connection to any terrorist organization.

"I saw the ironing woman this morning on my way to work," said Monique LaFlamme, a retail sales manager. "She ironed so fast I knew she wasn't doing last-minute laundry. It was skill."

Others were more skeptical.

"This is the kind of arty thing that happens in Montreal all the time," said Joey Tremblay, a McGill University student. Tremblay tried to snap a cellphone photo of the woman ironing, but she hid behind a pressed shirt.

"Why the anonymity?" said Tremblay. "This woman should identify herself and do this in a gallery."

IAN PHILLIPS

Citing the right to privacy of its competitors, representatives from the Extreme Ironing Bureau declined to comment on the woman's motives or identity.

Transit authorities investigating the incident declined comment.

—*Montreal Gazette.*

MY LAPEL

After John Ashbery.

I

I lose my horoscope.
My horoscope speaks to me.
I, its mother, swim out to sea
and become learning, become decorum.
A flood of monsters
arises at noon and shows us
what it has written.
What it has written
is certainty. Regrets.

II

A breeze diverged from wisdom.
A book grew into the dark corners
of a dank room. To be continued.

III

I mumbled to the frost,
I asked for forgiveness.
I wore a label on my left ankle.
The label said: "The air behaves strangely."
Too late. A voyage of dreams

Back home, in Ottawa, I read the article out loud to my cat, Barnacle, who twitches his tail in mute appreciation.

"Page A6. Not bad, eh, Barnie? We beat their coverage of the B.C. election."

I fold the newspaper around the article, ironing the creases on Low so they're sharp, perfect, and cut it out along the iron lines with an X-acto knife. I place the clipping between the pages of my hardcover edition of *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing.* Tomorrow I'll take it to work and make four clandestine photocopies: one for the bureau, one for my brother, one for my dad, and an extra copy for myself. I hate the way newsprint yellows as it ages.

I'll send my dad's copy along in his next bundle of pressed shirts.

I pick up the phone to call George, my one friend here in Ottawa. Another Prairie transplant. The most popular kid I knew in high school, back in Winnipeg, George moved here long before I did. The year I arrived, he used to drag me out to the Lookout or Icon to go dancing, but he was always cruising, while I sat in the corner drinking whisky sours and watching beautiful gay men dance suggestively with each other. It was a frustrating experience for a straight, celibate (by default, not choice) woman. It's difficult to meet an available hetero man at a gay bar. I couldn't hear enough over the crashing dance music to make any new friends. Eventually, I stopped going. Not that I ever go anywhere else to meet anyone. I like staying in. George teased me about it so much that I now meet him for brunch every Sunday at the Manx Pub, where he gives me a full weekend report about his friends and lovers.

"George!" I say when he picks up. "Check out the on-line edition of the *Gazette.*"

"Hi, princess. Let me just disconnect Instant Messenger . . . *et voila.* What am I looking for?"

"Oh, you'll know when you see it," I say. "I've got to get back to ironing."

I hang up.

A new parcel. I slide a box cutter through brown paper, unwrap four dirty white shirts for the hamper toss. A copy of my dad's new business card is stapled to a letter printed in his favourite typeface. On his law firm's stationary.

DEAR LUCY,
Here is my new business card.
The partners chose blue this year.
Keep working hard.

Love,
DAD

For my dad, it's a thoughtful note. We've made progress. I affix it to my fridge with a flower magnet my mom gave me once.

I shine my iron's handle with the hem of my Björk T-shirt while waiting for it to beep Ready. I set my digital egg timer to thirty seconds—I need to keep training. I grab a shirt.

I've improved on my mother's and grandmother's lackadaisical method (sleeve, flip, sleeve, flip, cigarette drag, collar, back, sides, cigarette drag, button placket). My technique is about speed: I stack shirt sleeve on top of shirt sleeve for one hard press, fling fabric into air, swoop over back, sides, and button placket, leaving the collar for last. I'm so fast, I can iron without scorching.

Extreme ironing was George's idea. A joke about spicing up my after-work life.

"If you have to do your dad's ironing at least be feminist about it," George said. "Go iron those shirts on top of Mount Everest."

I started training about four months ago. Just about the time the antidepressants started kicking in. The Montreal subway was my first E.I. event, but I plan to do more. I will target urban jungles: New York, Paris, London, Tokyo. All dangerous now that stealth or strange baggage can get you arrested as a suspected terrorist.

It makes me feel a little like a spy, and less like a Canadian federal civil servant.

At least I don't come home from work and lie on the sofa in my pyjamas crying anymore.

The day my mom died of a sudden heart attack, I was at work in my cubicle on the thirteenth floor of a gov-

holds promise. I repeat:
a voyage of dreams holds an air mattress.
I watch the girls' dresses
of smoke, dresses of oak and ivy.
Another time, our opinions were polluted.
I was so ignorant, I cried. I
wrapped myself in wallpaper
and tried to shine like the brightest star.

IV

In darkness, the secrets grew
like huge red flowers, their fumes
an elixir. Success came later and
urgently. It shifted like the steam
of promise. The crows are my children.
The mudslide is my original idea.
I sleep, I pray,
a remnant
with no memory and
no itinerary. A decade
nods, renounces that which is near.
I pin soup on my lapel.
I exist.

—STUART ROSS

ernment office tower on Kent Street. National headquarters of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Communications branch, Maritime division. Playing solitaire on my computer. I left at five, walking straight home to my downtown apartment. My dad called me at 5:35 with the news, having calculated the time difference between Winnipeg and Ottawa. He'd waited for me to finish my day at work. My job "on the Hill" has always been important to him.

My dad used his calm, reassuring, tax lawyer's voice. I paced my reaction, maintaining control long enough to arrange a flight, read my credit card number over the phone, and pack. At that point, feeling the electrical storm coming, I shakily called a cab and got the earlier red-eye to Winnipeg. The flight wasn't full. The seat next to me was empty. I buckled in, watched the video-projected safety demonstration, then felt the whites of my eyes melt, begin draining. Once I lost control, there was no getting it back. The stewardesses gave me sympathetic looks, Kleenex, and glasses of water.

That night, a stream of tears fell out of the passenger windows of a Boeing 737. Freezing in mid-air, they dropped twenty thousand feet onto the fields below. Farmers from Ontario to Manitoba complained of crop damage. Mysterious hail.

Winnipeg was a blurry ride in my dad's silver Cadillac from airport to home, home to church, church to cemetery, cemetery to home. My brother, Tim, a travel reporter, had flown in from Belarus for the funeral. There was a sodden, sullen family talk. I realized I was the only woman left in my immediate family. My grandmother had coughed through years of frailty, but her emphysema-riddled lungs continued to rasp until she was ninety-six. My mom surrendered. Exhausted at sixty.

I decided I wanted to stay home, in the house I'd grown up in. Yet home was my mother in the kitchen, laundry room, basement, garden, always working, puttering, and chatting. When I moved away, my mother wrote me long letters, with updates on all the neighbours, bugs in the garden, choices for new wallpaper or paint, the trips her coworkers were taking. She enjoyed her job. Her close friendships lasted more than forty years. She was unedited, spontaneous, and kind. The notes of encouragement she wrote to me spanned decades of lunch boxes, sleepover pillowcases, piano recital music, college care-packages—each decorated with little flourishes and illustrations she drew in the margins. I kept each one, keeping them flat, pressed, and safe in the pages of my favourite novels.

Now our house at the edge of town, sprawling after years of additions and hapless renovation, was moist and empty.

Tim seemed to expect room service. Mom had turned Tim's old room into a computer room shortly after he left, so he stayed in the guest room, used my shampoo, and waited for coffee to be made. We didn't have a chance to talk—he left the day after the funeral without making the bed, flinging himself farther into Eastern Europe to write for U.S. magazines about Latvian flower boxes and the resurgence of traditional Ukrainian embroidery patterns.

Tim's eyes had been misty, wistful. He'd been away for a long time. Physically and mentally.

I slept on the rec room couch until my tear ducts became infected. I couldn't bear to stay in my old room. My mom's vacuum was still in there, her duster and her caddy of cleansers and shammies left on the bed. She died on cleaning day. The day before laundry day. My dad quickly ran out of clean shirts.

Spending my evenings ironing my dad's shirts reminds me of being six, of silently staring at my grandmother hunched over her built-in wooden board in the old farmhouse kitchen. She smoked with one hand, and ironed tablecloths and tea towels with the other.

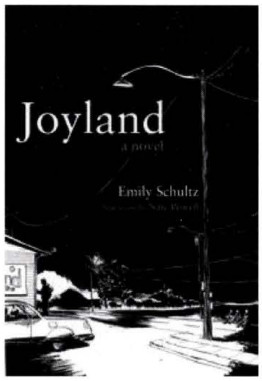
Feeling a hot iron spit and steam in my hand reminds me of being eight, of learning multiplication tables at the orange study carrel in my parents' basement, right beside my mom's oversized, yellow-padded ironing board. That's where my mom, a dental hygienist, used to hum old show tunes while she ironed her pink and blue cotton uniforms, my dad's shirts, my dresses, tops, and pants. I don't ever remember her ironing anything for Tim. He liked the rumpled look. Still does.

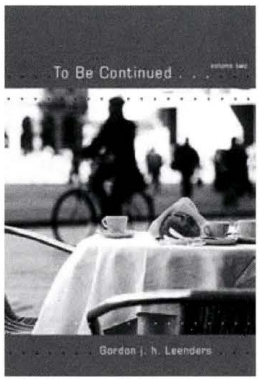
The smell of hot cotton and polyester, the surging hiss of steam, the sound of

this spring's literary fashion statements: murder, mullets, computer-generated poetry, spirituality, and cinematic fiction

joyland
by emily schultz
illustrations by nate powell
$24.95
hardcover
fiction

"Writing about teenagers without irony or condescension is no easy task, but Schultz nails it with a tone that is both honest and unrelenting. ... she has the kind of honesty and talent to earn the high score in the CanLit arcade."
— *Dose* Magazine





to be continued . . . volume two
gordon j.h. leenders
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paperback
fiction

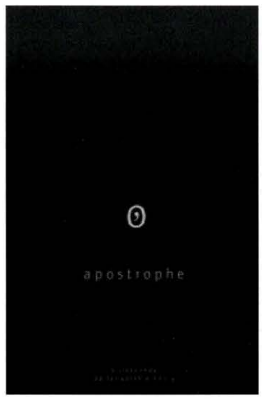
"Leenders viscerally describes Canadiana with passion and fervour."
— *Matrix*

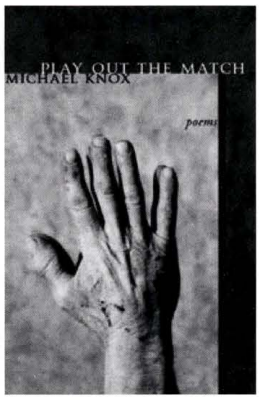
also by leenders
to be continued . . . volume one
may not appear exactly as shown

apostrophe
bill kennedy
and darren wershler-henry
$19.95
paperback
poetry

An entire book of poetry generated by a Web site that hijacks search engines in order to extend this poem indefinitely.

"You are about to investigate what you are about. Wear a helmet while reading."
— Robert Kroetsch





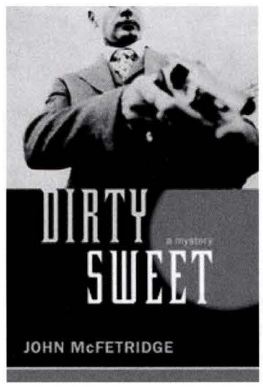
play out the match
michael knox
$16.95
paperback
poetry

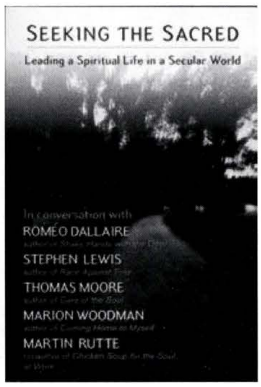
Knox's first published collection makes use of various voices, speakers, and landscapes to explore the surreptitious aspects of fear and indifference.

"Michael Knox is that rarest of beasts, a talented Canadian poet unafraid of mixing grit with eloquence."
— Kenneth J. Harvey

dirty sweet
john mcfetridge
$28.95
hardcover
mystery

Road rage or a premeditated killing? A man is shot in the head in broad daylight in busy downtown Toronto. There is a witness, but she's out to make a fast buck blackmailing the killer. In the tradition of Elmore Leonard, this is a fast-paced crime story that follows each character to a surprising end.





seeking the sacred leading a spiritual life in a secular world
$17.95
paperback
spirituality

Roméo Dallaire, Stephen Lewis, Thomas Moore, Marion Woodman, and Martin Rutte each contribute to this collection of transformational lectures that address the search for spirituality in the world's diverse and complex mosaic of beliefs and customs.

new fiction and poetry from ECW and misFit

***showbiz* by jason anderson** • ***3,000 miles* by jason schneider** • ***you kwaznievski, you piss me off* by john lavery** • ***the long slide* by james grainger** • ***fruit: a novel about a boy and his nipples* by brian francis** • ***gutted* by evie christie** • ***the jill kelly poems* by alessandro porco** • ***no cage contains a stare that well* by matt robinson** • ***i should never have fired the sentinel* by jennifer lovegrove**

Entertainment Culture Writing

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AUGUSTA COULD BE A WOMAN THE DRIVER IS TRYING TO FIND

Girls talk about what it's like, sleeping with a man. (I cannot relate, turn my head for fear they'll see my timorous face.) "Cross those legs!" one says to the other. Another gawks at everybody's drunk shoes. I hide mine, the ones I stole back, from view.

Staring out the window, I catch a man at play, locking and unlocking a Lincoln in the Murphy's Law parking lot, recoiling from light like a wild animal. But that's just how I see him: in my life, men stalked my family's house, their hearts primed with pride, steadied on the virginal prize, the more alluring sister.

Near Jim's Restaurant, which boasts "THE BEST WESTERNS," the streetcar squeals with the universal truths of these young women: "You know me!" But how to know anyone in this world of half-light, where girls speak so boldly in the shadows, and I have no words, only dark secrets.

Couples relace their hearts, dodge the Seaton Street playground, sliding misfit teens in and out of nobody's arms. I long to join them in their tirade, to speak the angry words I imagine they speak. At Church, men move themselves through the dark like pawns. "Where are all the kings?" Mama used to snivel. "What's to become of us, you?" Her faith and blindness, once upon a time, the same thing.

Bright headaches line Queen and Spadina streets, and "Augusta," announces the driver, could be a woman, or princess, he is trying to find. Just before midnight, Ali Baba's neon sign a beacon directing me home. But I have no fairy tale to go home to. I left that years ago. Those girls are also long gone, their pink heels inventing new steps into the future, surging ahead, arriving—

I too am almost there . . .

—ADRIENNE WEISS

the iron clicking against buttons belongs to me. I smile, place another shirt on a hanger, watch Barnacle paw at his squeak toy. The phone rings.

"Hi, George," I say, knowing who it is before he says anything.

"Dear God! Not only did you leave your apartment, you left the *city,*" George says. "That was you in Montreal. I know it was! You secretive little thing—next time you need to bring me along, though, and afterward we'll go out for a little fete."

"Of course," I say. "This was just a little experiment. Next time will be a bigger deal. I'll probably need some help."

"I am so there, honey."

"So brunch Sunday?" I ask expectedly.

"Oh Lucy! I forgot to tell you! I'm flying back home to Winnipeg this weekend for a little anniversary soiree at my parents' farm. It's their thirty-fifth shindig, so I can't miss it."

"O.K." I pause. "Say hi to everyone for me."

"I'll celebrate with you when I get back, O.K., doll? Don't stay cooped up indoors all weekend!"

I hang up the phone, pick up my long-necked silver watering can, and add more water to my iron. I finish my dad's shirts and decide to stay up late ironing all my bedding.

My dad wouldn't let me stay in Winnipeg. We had an embarrassing—for both of us—showdown in my mom's kitchen a week and a half after the funeral. He was already back to work. Five business days after my mom died, he had excused himself from a small luncheon of crustless sandwiches thoughtfully prepared by my mom's lady friends and descended into the basement. Moments later, I looked out the front window to see him throwing his big leather briefcases into the backseat of the Cadillac. He got into the driver's seat, reversed the car into the tree-lined street, and sped away without looking up at the house. I had my hand up, ready to wave like Mom always did. I put it down and sunk into the back of the good floral Chesterfield and stayed there, becoming a bulbous orange flower, part of the house's pattern. I thought I was the only one who could

keep our home tidy the way Mom liked it. I would make sure nobody took Mom's needlepoint pictures down from the living room walls. I would read her romance novels, keep the dust off her extensive library of family photos.

When Dad came home and saw me wiping down the kitchen table, he said, "You're too smart to be doing that Lucy."

Later that evening, when he saw me reaching for a Kleenex, he said, "Snap out of it, Lucy. "

The next morning he sniffed at the bacon and perfectly timed over-easy eggs I'd spent almost an hour trying to figure out how to make, and reached into the cupboard for a box of cereal.

I launched Mom's dog-eared copy of *The Joy of Cooking* at him. It bounced off his shoulder with less impact than I'd hoped.

"I want to help you!" I shouted. "What's wrong with you?"

"What's wrong with you?" he yelled back. "You're not your mother!"

I looked at my dad, at his narrow age-stooped shoulders and rounded belly. The red ceramic light fixture above the kitchen table swung gently back and forth, and when he sat down, the top of his bald head shone. I stared at him, realizing he could get all the support he needed from the Rotary Club, but that his good work shirt was wrinkled.

That night, my dad and I ordered pizza—half pepperoni (for him), half vegetarian (for me), and we sat down and talked about my career "on the Hill."

"You have a future in Ottawa," my dad said. "You have a really good job."

"But I don't really know anyone there," I said. "Except George."

My dad sighed. I hate those steam-roller sighs. I flew back to Ottawa, taking some of my mom's needlepoint and photos with me. And a bundle of my dad's shirts. We've been sending packages of them back and forth ever since. In ten months, not a single parcel has gone missing in the mail.

My freshly pressed purple pillowcases and striped duvet cover are folded on the table. I'm working on the fitted sheet when the phone rings again. I'm startled this time—I don't often get two calls in an evening.

"Hello?" I say tentatively.

"Hello, Lucy, It's Dad,"

My stomach flutters. Dad rarely calls.

"How are you, Dad? Did you get the last package of shirts?"

"Yes I did, thank you." Dad takes a deep breath. "Lucy, I'm calling because I'm selling the house. It's too big for me. I'd like to move into a nice condo by the river."

He doesn't say it, but he is also wriggling out from underneath our laundry business. I turn my iron off, sit down on the hardwood floor, and hug my legs. My jeans bunch uncomfortably under my knees, and I let go.

"Lucy?"

"O.K.," I say. "It's O.K., Dad, I've been expecting this."

"Obviously I'll have to get rid of some of our things. This is a large house—too big for one person. Is there anything you need, that you would like me to send to Ottawa for you?"

"Can you send me Mom's ironing board?" I say, imagining the basement, the living room, the kitchen, the bedrooms of our house. In my mind I walk down the hallways and up the stairs, opening and closing doors, fighting to remember every detail, to archive our home in my memory. Between Dad, Tim, and myself, only I will remember the place under the stairs where we used to keep the fake Christmas tree, what Mom's rocking chair looked like, the exact number of steps from the sunken living room to the kitchen. The house is a museum of my mom, and the museum is closing.

It's a week later, and it's well after 9 P.M. by the time I leave the office. I shuffle through the December snow, aware of every crunching step. The streets of downtown Ottawa are so deserted, I expect a giant lizard to spring from the top of the Quickie Mart. Or a door-front gargoyle to begin melting ice with hot exhalations at the foot of a crumbling apartment. I am four mugs of coffee and a twelve-hour workday beyond the threshold of surprise. Even staring intently at the glittering snow feels hallucinogenic. A taxi glides by, slows as it passes me, then speeds up, fishtailing. I don't need a ride.

Fingers too raw with cold to flick my lighter, I huddle over a large grate in the empty parking lot behind the C.I.B.C. From my briefcase, I pull the final version of the press release I wrote then revised twenty-three times over the course of the day and rip it into tiny pieces. For every level of hierarchy it advanced there were new changes that had to be approved and reworded by communications specialists at the P.M.O. By the time it was finished, not a single word of my original remained. Now, buttressed by multidirectional winds, the fragments float in a spiral of centrifugal force, before falling down and through grate gaps into permanent darkness. ⊳

Suzanne Alyssa Andrew lives in Dufferin Grove. Her fiction has appeared in Kiss Machine and Draft. She is also the books editor of Broken Pencil.


a really special summer
BY CHRISTOPHER HUTSUL
I was just an ordinary kid in an ordinary town...
GEOFFREY, ARE YOU GOING TO PICK UP THE PHONE?
huh?
RING RING RING
but one summer, I made some new friends, and everything changed...
GEOFFREY, IT'S KRAFTWERK. THEY'RE AT THE MALL IF YOU WANT TO MEET THEM.
Cool!
my mom didn't understand...
WHAT DO YOU GUYS DO ALL DAY?
I dunno. Stuff.
We met every day by the food court.
Manchu Wok
KFC
Sandwich Tree
KARL
FLORIAN
RALF
WOLFGANG
We'd spend the afternoon at the arcade. Ralf always had more quarters.
EXCITING HOUR
Sometimes we'd all get our hair cut.
gerade eine ordnung*
* just a trim.
We went to matinées...
HEY CUT IT OUT GUYS
...Played soccer in the park...
and watched the clouds go by.
VOLKS-WAGEN

We set off firecrackers in the parking lot...

...until mall security came after us.

Every day at around 4pm, we'd visit Mr. Wilkinson at the musical instrument store.

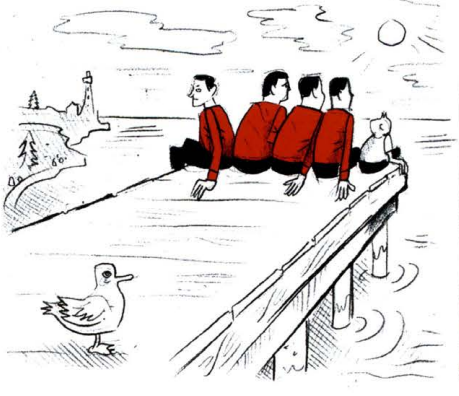
The guys would play a short set while I danced.

At the time, we pretended that summer was never going to end...

we didn't talk about the fact that when September rolled around, Kraftwerk would head back to Germany, and I'd start grade 8.

We kept in touch over the years, and we even met up a few times. None of us would ever admit it, but we could never recapture the feeling...

And that was ok. No matter what happened - no matter how our feelings changed - we would always have that summer...



...it belonged to me. It belonged to Kraftwerk. It belonged to us.

www.hutsul.com

THE COLOURIST

BY HAL NIEDZVIECKI

His wife offers tea.

They accept, the ten representatives.

The Colourist sits facing them. They fumble for milk, sugar, lemon. Apologies all around as they jostle each other, stare down at the thick carpet.

Steam hovering. Pursed, prim lips. Praise for the sugar cookies. The Colourist's wife nods.

Then, they fall silent.

By now it is late afternoon. Sun blazes through the streaky bay window, irradiating the clouds of dust that fill the old room.

They try to remain perfectly still. They twitch. They are: air conditioning, delicate pastries, leather upholstery.

The Colourist begins.

. . . Vermilion.

The bidders shift uneasily. Silt spumes.

The Colourist continues.

Violet caught in motion.

Raspberries and fresh blood.

Robbers shot, writhing wounds, trickling springs.

Nightmare of a dream entering. So: day uninvited.

The perverted coupling of red and orange, hidden incest suddenly unveiled.

A repudiation, an uneasy stain, a day's anger.

What's begun.

Unfinished.

Spreading cerulean sunset.

Inveigled.

A past time.

A pastime.

Fingers peeling beets.

Stain on a stain.

Imaging more.

Dream on your own: an abortion.

Progress.

A dog drooling feral hunger.

A great building on fire during morning.

People.

Jumping . . .

The representatives slowly produce their pens. Shielding their numbers from view with their arms, they write their bids on the backs of creamy cards emblazoned with the logos of the firms that sent them.

The Colourist's wife collects the cards in a wicker basket lined with a fading blue handkerchief fraying at the ends.

She disappears into the kitchen.

The Colourist sits motionless. Head bowed. Blank eyes closed.

Through the window, city sounds: rattling trash truck, children playing in the street, a siren getting fainter as it hurls toward some distant emergency.

A few, believing themselves to be unobserved, grimace at each other, pantomime gagging.

They will not be asked back.

The Colourist's wife returns. She utters a name. Polite rattle of applause.

The representatives hurry from the apartment.

In the evening, the Colourist's wife closes the window against the cooling breeze.

The Colourist starts.

Mother? he says, though they are childless.

She goes to him. Runs a hand down his creviced cheek.

It's getting harder for you.

He shrugs.

It's time to—

The Colourist pushes her hand away.

His wife looks out the window.

Take me to bed, the Colourist says, groping for his stick.

Tomorrow arrives in a haze. The Colourist sits down to his breakfast. His hands are trembling. He spoons cereal. Milk on his chin.

What is it? his wife asks.

Assemble them.

What?

I have another.

But they were here yesterday, she says reasonably. Why not wait until next month?

It must be now.

His wife steps across the small kitchen. She dabs at his chin with a napkin.

They'll think . . .

He lets her dab.

It doesn't matter, he says.

These aren't the olden times, she says softly.

He lowers his head to his bowl.

They gather. It is night.

The Colourist's wife looks at them disapprovingly. They are bedraggled. Dark circles under their blue eyes. Those not reinvited have been replaced by others exactly like them. In a break from convention, she offers a cooling punch served in thick goblets that remind them of a previous century. There are no cookies. A tepid trickle of air makes them long for open suburban backyards, wide dark roads driving wind into lowered car windows, humming efficiencies of frigid filtered air pumped into sparsely furnished lounges.

They take quick halting glances at the Colourist. He sits impassive, hands folded on his lap. He seems to stare at them. He smiles awkwardly, a man who has never seen a smile. Some note the faint gleam of sweat on his upper lip. Sign of discomfort, evidence betraying weakness. But what does it *mean*? their bosses will ask them later, as they stand on the crumbling sidewalk outside the old apartment building, cellphones flattening their ears. They shrug, the humid night pressing down on them.

A hush as they settle. A few close their eyes and, feeling ridiculous, open them again.

. . . Teal, the Colourist finally intones.

Jalapeno flecked with freshly cut grass.

Swirled circle of fired pottery, glazed imperfection its own cosmology.

Late summer?

Early spring?

Leaves bearing . . . unripened fruit.

Sun diffracting.

Fresh paint.

Avocado glistening, wet with lemon.

A weed.

No blooms, no permission.

Fresh and hopeful, this child.

Rays of light through brackish water rich with sucking fish.

Cat's eyes.

The marbles we coveted and collected.

IAN PHILLIPS

Childhood in the woods.
A nostalgia more keen: alive.
Mere remembering.

The Colourist's wife stares at her husband. His mouth hangs open. The grey top of a tongue.

Then, a near-frantic scramble for pens, paper.

Teal! It is an achievement. Among the finest of his career.

There is no one in the room who does not understand the potential of such a vibrantly rendered shade.

The representatives are furiously scratching out numbers. How high can they go?

Please, the Colourist's wife murmurs. The Colourist is pale, waning in lamplight. She collects the bids, hurries into the kitchen. Returns mere moments later, speaks the name of the winner.

The bidders are ushered on their way.

The Colourist falls into a fever.

Outside, the raw cruelty, the jealous intensity of vermilion.

Outside, the cool contemplative compassion of teal.

The Colourist soaks his pyjamas.

A band is formed. A parade struck. Bleeding pinks and soothing greens march up and down the boulevards, pause in front of the squat apartment building. It is as if such things had never been, so bright is their combined and complex intensity. All the residents gather on their crescent balconies. Like movie stars, they wave to the crowd.

The Colourist groans as his wife turns him over on his side, strips him of his wet garments. The Colourist's wife sits beside the sickbed. The shades are drawn. Her husband sweats again, shivers. His hands curdle into fists, then go abruptly slack, like the final transition from rigour to rest.

Night falls. The Colourist's wife sits beside the dark lamp.

Weeks. Then months.

Summer rusts into fall, traditional season of epic pronouncements, celebration of startling hues, a time of expectations harvested. Lime streamers and crimson pompoms lie in gutters, stained water leaching into the sewers.

Still, the Colourist is bedridden. His wife dribbles broth into his mouth. Her vigil measured in the progress of shadows and the accumulation of gloom. He thrashes, cries out. She draws figures on his forehead with cooling fingers.

He calms.

Weeks pass.

It is winter. As cold and drab and unrelenting as any.

There are murmurs, muffled accusations, private confabs that encompass the highest ranks and the wildest of speculations.

Swaddled in fur gloves and long black coats lined with silk, the Representative of the Representatives and the Parliamentary Adjunct from the Department of Heritage and Legacy sweat in the hallway. Their minion knocks insistently on the door.

February. Snow falls again. The days are short as breath and desperate couplings. There is hunger and lack. There is war overseas. Rising prices. Nothing much on TV.

It has been eight long months since the apartment last opened.

Knock again, intones the Adjunct.

Louder, snaps the Representative.

APRIL

Months late, I dive into my New Year's resolutions,
Promptly giving up sugar, caffeine, cigarettes, you.

Days, moments, seconds, minutes, hours pass,
But even when I'm tired of willpower, I manage

To hold back the cravings and call out a victory.
Stomping angrily on budding grass and happy birds,

I smoke in my sleep, visit past lives, then drink too much,
And spend the next day penitent, doing spring cleaning.

Promptly giving up sugar, caffeine, cigarettes, and you,
For the second time in as many weeks.

—DEANNA MCFADDEN

They fiddle with the leather bands of their gloves. They stomp their feet, shaking off the dripping slime of snow.

Finally, the door does open.

The Colourist's wife, in a faded nightdress covered with a grey cardigan. The apartment behind her, a tomb exhumed.

May we? the Adjunct says, the Representative already brushing past into the blackened living room.

The minion follows, feeling along the wall for the light switch.

They blink. Their footsteps marked in dust.

The Colourist's wife, her eyes like an old wounded owl's.

Well? she says.

The Colourist groans from the bedroom.

Is he . . . ? the Representative asks.

He's resting.

Mr. Sands will look in on him, says the Adjunct, indicating the minion.

Sands steps smartly toward the hall.

No, the Colourist's wife snaps.

Sands stops.

The Adjunct and the Representative glance at each other. The Adjunct nods. Sands continues down the dark corridor.

The Colourist's wife sinks into a Chesterfield. Dust in tear-gas cones. A smell: rot, time passing.

It's not done, the Colourist's wife says.

We must, soothes the Representative, take into account the times.

Adaptation, murmurs the Adjunct, is the key to survival.

He won't permit it, the Colourist's wife insists.

As if on cue, the Colourist moans.

His wife makes to get up, but the Adjunct stays her with a gloved hand to her thin shoulder.

It's been almost a year, the Representative says.

Eight months, the Colourist's wife snaps.

A longish period, the Adjunct points out.

But not unprecedented. The Colourist's wife is pale to the point of being ethereal, the Chesterfield's brown fabric encompassing her.

The times, the Adjunct says.

The Representative nods fervently. People have expectations, he adds. The pace of modern life.

She glares up at the men. What do I know of modern life?

Sands reappears, clears his throat. He is nursing a wrist, rubbing it.

Well? the Adjunct demands.

He, Sands says, raising the injured arm up to display a bite mark, has refused treatment.

And? the Representative says.

Sands glances anxiously at the Colourist's wife.

Go on, the Adjunct demands.

He is dying.

In the lamplight, winter darkness, in the Colourist's apartment of sixty-some years, the men's smooth flat faces twitch imperceptibly.

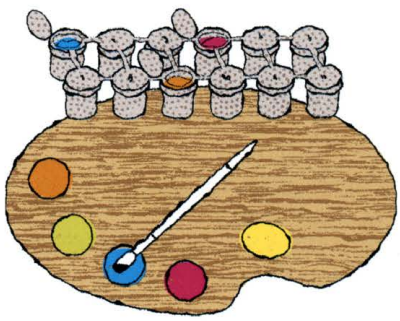
He cannot die, the Colourist's wife says. That is impossible.

Traditions are . . . shifting, the Representative says.

Nonsense.

There is another, the Adjunct says.

The Colourist opens his blind eyes.



Theirs is a small city in a vast country. It is a city known for only one trade, a singular industry that affects the doings of the entire sprawling nation. The cityscape is dominated by the great colour corporations, their massive downtown headquarters an assemblage of lusciously painted towers penetrating an ashen swirling sky. Within are the captains of commerce, the shapers of colour consensus and their teams: salespeople, marketers, public-relations experts, accountants, and factotums. From their vantage points on the tenth and thirtieth floors, they can see the vast warehouses that surround the outskirts of the city. Here the colours are made, churned, dabbed, bottled, boxed. And between the great warehouses as wide as city blocks and the skyscrapers as high as the clouds, thousands of small enterprises—middlemen, hustlers, deal markers, tone brokers, shade speculators, liars, buyers, fools, and their false prophets. They, too, find their place in this small outpost city with a hold on a great empire.

And yet, reduced to greys, monotone variables.

And yet, who would know him when he steps among them?

He is just a blind man with a stick. He picks his way through the crowds, walks with difficulty on slush-slicked sidewalks lined with icy embankments.

Above him, giant skyscrapers set the sky on fire with their corporate colours.

Tap, tap, tap. He pauses at the foot of one such headquarters. He sighs, leans forward to take the weight off his swelling feet.

A security guard, uniform adorned with an armband of green and pink, waves him away.

Move along now, old man. You can't stay here.

The Colourist allows himself to be propelled back into the streets.

He makes his way through the workers in their business suits sporting lapel pins of delicate chartreuse and magenta. They swirl around him, each one trapped in their worries—business is slowing, layoffs coming, confusion at the top, no one knows a damn thing, and the government—ha!—the government.

And on into the nearby entertainment district, past the restaurants and bars overflowing with anxious employees seeking brief solace in happy hour—all shades welcome. The Colourist taps and shuffles his way into the old city. Here is where it all began, in the legendary souk, marketplace of myths. Even today tourists lose themselves in the abundance of bright craven hues and collectors searching out the rarest exotica, ancient formulas for pigments long thought lost that might be reintroduced at a tidy profit.

Such discoveries are rare.

The market has been plundered over and over again. Only a handful of dignified old traders still ply their wares here amongst the hucksters and con men, tricksters employing scams almost as old as the colour trade itself.

Into the area known as the tapestry, a cobblestone maze of narrow corridors and winding alleys leading to the cubbyhole homes of ancient couples wizened by time, anxious to talk of the old days, magenta and plum, sunflower yellow and ruddy ochre, uncorrupted colours capable of breathing vitality into an entire nation.

The colours today . . . they croak, gathered in tiny café caves, sipping bitter coffees, hot water stained a gloomy hazel.

The Colourist could be one of them. He shuffles forward, his bulbous knees preceding each step. His head dangles from his leathery neck. He breathes heavily through curled lips.

He is old and tired. He does not deny it. Let them know, too, that every hue cannot pump up the economy, revitalize nationality, inject purpose into a faded collective consciousness. Let them know, too, the beauty of colours that dim as soon as they are imagined, the transitory redemption of permeable inky moments, gone, gone, gone.

Then forgotten.

The Colourist emerges into one of the many squares, dust-and-dirt-swept plazas enclosed by stunted buildings leaning into tight, empty spaces. Their bricks slowly crumbling. Their askew balconies crammed with dead plants and rusting chairs. And above them, the yawning skyscrapers, their luminescent facades endlessly replenished by teams of painters clinging to the ramparts.

In the centre of the square, a man in a black suit, his hair long and rakish, his tie a vivid ripple of watermelon and carnation. His eyes buried under tinted sunglasses.

The Colourist stops where he is. Where is he? He shivers. It is cold. The air, wet on him.

The young man addresses a modest crowd of pensioners, hustlers, and scoffing teens. The assembled stand in the wet square, shuffling their feet, looking down at the slick cobblestones.

If we are not the leaders, the young man boldly proclaims, we will be the followers. Others will take our place. Others will produce the great colours of the world. Where is the Colourist? Where are the proclamations? How long can we go on tied to one man's vision—admirable though it once was—but a vision that no longer comes, that restricts us just as surely as if we were dragging behind us a great weight. We want colours. We *need* colours. Can there be others? Must there be a single successor—not yet named, I point out, even as the Colourist, God keep his soul, lies on his very deathbed? Let those who have the vision step forward. Let us compete, like all good workers, on the open market.

A man, neatly attired in the style of a Representative, takes attentive notes.

The Colourist slumps, head on his chest, at the back of the crowd. The whiskers his wife shaves gently each morning have sprouted, yellowing needles of grass pushing up.

I, too, have the vision, the young man exclaims, pacing now. I, too, have seen the shades in my head, from behind these sightless eyes that have never known tones other than in endlessly receding landscapes of white. I will not lie to you, my good countrymen, my fellows. I have not been named the successor. How could I? I have never met the Colourist, who lies ill for months on end.

And yet—here the young man lowers his voice to a whisper as the gathered folk lean in to catch his final words—*I. Have. The. Colours.* The time is now. Let us embark on a new era of prosperity. I have the colours. Let them come.

From the blank stare of the heavens falls a desultory snow. The crowd breaks up like guests disinvited.

The Colourist follows ringing footsteps, his stick marking out the narrow dimensions of alleys and corridors. The Colourist hears not just the steps of a man, but also the hum of the televised news, the flushing of toilets, the complaints of old bones cramped into shared beds. Briefly, irresistibly, he contemplates a pallor to accompany this crowded moment, this march backward toward an inevitable future. Some beige bumpy concoction, hints of grey and purple, smears of flesh.

The footfalls stop. The Colourist falters, swings his stick in front of him. Nothing. Empty space. Voided distance.

Abruptly, he feels himself grabbed by the stiff starched collars of his shirt. His back hits the brick wall and air pushes out of him in a hiss.

Why are you following me?

I—

The grip on his collar tightens.

What do you want?

A . . . a . . . colour, gasps the Colourist. His throat freed.

The young man laughs.

A colour!

One colour. Please . . .

And what makes you think that I can give you a colour?

Your speech . . . in the square . . .

Did you like it?

Tell me, are you blind?

As you are.

And do you really . . . see . . . ?

The Colourist feels something cold and sharp at his neck.

INVISIBILISM

smart drug, nanoshot cocktail, virtualvodka, liquid supercomputer
drinkdeepblue

what you see goes no farther—pornoplasm menu, red eye sun
click here to link, enter the password, make the connection

have contempt for death, believe in all things
magical and unseen ; be mystery itself,
the worm in the apple secret agent,
all gadgetry behind the scenes.

Discordian sabotage monkey-wrenching with art,
with ideas . . . ticking lysergic bombs metaphor potential
subsonic and subliminal explosives,
real as a written word.

baby, you're a rich man, tuned to a natural "e"
guerilla campaign in the digitalmountains,
indecipherable graffititag on a garage
can't catch what

you can't see
blowup at the what-a-way-to-go-go
madness and trances, dancing for freedom

and gods with elephant heads . . .
a car is waiting.
Sixtiesspyshow electricathemesong—as it comes on . . .

TimeMachineGo

we're ready for anything
here come the policemen. there there
don't cry

—Patrick Rawley

Go home, old man. Or else.

Just one colour. If what you say is true. One colour. And I'll leave you.

Who sent you?

Who would send an old blind man?

Who better? You'll steal my colour! Sell it on Blue Street to the shade scalpers. What'll you get for it? A few hundred. Do you know what they pay our dear Colourist for his efforts? *Millions.*

The young man spits on the cobblestones. A venomous sound whirring past the Colourist's furry ear.

Colour has no value to me, the Colourist says. Not in that way.

In what way then?

To see the colours . . . it is a duty. A fleeting moment. Cruel compensation for the indignities of sightless life. It is a bridge. This world . . . and the next.

Very good old man. A very heartfelt speech. What would you know about it?

A colour . . .

And what will you give me in return?

The same.

The blade retracting.

The young man's loft on the top storey of a four-level walk-up. A white leather couch faces a sleek stereo awaiting remote-control instruction. The walls of exposed brick suggest the old town factory this once was, before the last of the small-scale operators sold out to the real estate speculators anxious to cash in on the sudden cachet of urban living. The Colourist stands uncertainly. Bass and synthetic drum. He pants for breath, waits for his host to return with a glass of water.

He feels dizzy. The music around him.

Abruptly, a cool glass is fit into his hand.

The Colourist drinks. Sputters.

Ha ha. The younger man laughs. Vodka. Something to warm your old bones.

The Colourist gasps as the liquor spreads.

Well, chin-chin.

He feels the tremor as the young man's glass meets his.

The music booms, shaking the floorboards.

You're not drinking?

The Colourist holds out an arm for balance. Please, he says. That . . . music.

Too loud for ya?

I must . . . sit down.

He feels his elbow pulled, lets himself be directed. Slumps heavily. A chair, soft under him. The music continues, soundtrack to the conundrum of infinite light.

Please, he says.

He feels a glass at his lips. Water this time.

All right, old man. Have it your way.

The soft underbelly of sound recedes.

The Colourist closes his eyes.

He wakes up. How much time has passed?

What does it matter?

The Colourist smiles to himself.

What's so funny, old man?

It's been years. Since I tasted the bottle.

You should get out more.

There was a time . . .

Ah, the good old days.

Let us drink again.

What about the colours?

The bottle, boy. The bottle.

This time, the Colourist is prepared for the harsh heat of cheap vodka.

Again, he demands, swaying, waving his glass in the air.

Old man . . .

Again!

They drink.

The sound of settling, of downstairs and upstairs, of night falling in drifts.

The Colourist struggles out of his overcoat, feels truly warm for the first time since catching fever.

Another? asks his host.

Another.

Did you follow me home to get drunk?

Tell me, have you always been blind? Your steps are so certain. And the way you fill the glass.

We learn differently now. We are taught independence. We are taught that there is nothing we cannot do. As a child, I was instructed to see without seeing.

And how is that accomplished?

It's too late, old man. Your time has passed.

The Colourist slumps into himself. Drifts away.

He is awakened. His host's voice, above and around him: You promised me a colour.

The Colourist paws the empty space around him for his stick.

Stay where you are, the young man says.

Where am I?

Don't you remember? We had an agreement. A colour for a colour. A trade.

Such things, the Colourist says slowly, settling back into the armchair, are not ours to exchange.

Why not? Why should the Colourist sell while we go hungry?

What is your name, my friend?

What does it matter?

Not all things are as they seem.

Aren't they?

Consider it. A blind man who sees colours.

So what? Is it such a miracle? Don't you also claim to have the gift?

I claim nothing.

Well get out then, old man. The Colourist feels his coat slap his face. Get out.

But we have an . . . agreement.

Get. Out.

A colour for a colour.

But not a trade?

A sharing.

Sharing. The young man extrudes the word. Paces the floor, his boots cracking off the boards.

O.K., old man. Why not? What do I have to lose?

A gurgled swish followed by a swallow and a gasp.

Ah. A little lubricant to get the ink flowing. If you know what I mean.

The Colourist suddenly feels the urge to vomit. A heat in his chest. His head shimmers. He begins to sweat.

The young man drives oxygen into his lungs, exhales loudly. Begins. Speaking hurriedly, his voice lilting to a shout.

Charcoal stygian night a mind's imagining no moon wild dogs breathing mist rocks under a deep still sea the remains of the house after the fire-singed skeleton the men who sin all our lives night sky in winter insouciant haze of confusion stairs leading nowhere tar poured and dried in the sun factory chimney stained the smoke of a billion colours the remains of all of our lives. The remains!

The bottle gurgles. The Colourist hears swallowing. A belch.

Your turn now, old man.

The Colourist thinks of his wife, of the old apartment. How far they are from him now. And yet, with him, on him, a tint shading every action and event—memory.

. . . *Dun,* the Colourist finally says.

His voice quavers, shrinks. He shakes.

Sand fleas mating.

Their lives in moments.

A Chesterfield in the southern exposure.

A thousand thousand days.

Bottle of spirits: once clear.

The space between.

THE INVENTION OF TENNIS

Estonian cheeks soak-in the "DUTCH DREAMS
HOMEMADE ICE CREAM,"
sign says,
As we sit on caged stones,
Knee-highs and ball ankles,
And two death-by-chocolate cones,
Looking to each other
through brown
plastic
frames.

Bucktoothed video artists
approach on
tiptoes,
Snap in mid-sentence,
Leave with smug smiles,

And brother, tennis came on like a trick,
Like the way I knew to shoo
bees from
your back
Without ever knowing.

And brother,
our mother,
Didn't have those same laughing Japanese eyes
that you wear,
And stare with like searchlights shooting out,
like tennis balls,
On the court where we bounce,
like we walk
(With cellphones calling up dads, limbs flailing),
like we point,
With those same rackets,
At the woman dressed all in brown.
We are assholes, real jerks,
and bastards.

That same woman carries a plastic bag,
Which sags and then tears,

And brown liquid drizzles out in shaky circles behind her,
And brother, we follow her trail,
Our feet careful not to wander from the moving line
That she creates,
Like the "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DARLING" on a chocolate cake.

And between the lines it turns into a charm,
We swing at worn tennis balls,
The way your mouth looks like a red apple
When you say that red apples will cure me
from the M.S.G.,
wandering
mid-bloodstream,
And the twenty-foot weeds
Meant to grow like trees,
Meant to discourage moths,
And after seven years just drop,

Like how at night, we drop our rackets
To swat the ball with bare hands,
We play on glassy courts, like bathtubs,
calling interference,
calling crazy bounce.

And brother, these are mother's eyeglasses I wear,
And her red rain boots and pink terry cloth one-piece,
While you've got your dad's
tennis sweater tied around your neck,
then waist,
And soon you've got your head into it.

Because brother, it's getting chilly, and the trees
are turning,
And our arms keep turning,
And I keep serving the ball
out of bounds,
And the more I watch you hustle
The more I'm turning,
Into our same mother,
And the more this tennis is turning into a sport.

—AMY GAIZAUSKAS

Mind and imagining.
The assurance of a cloud.
Rusting fall forest.
A first time, a second time, a third and final time.
Fading to feeling.
Deserts replaced.
Cities, beaches, condominiums.
The twilight.
Inevitability.
Transmogrification.
Petrification.
God's pupil squinting into a slit.
Time's protection.
Her arms around me.
Moth's wing . . .

The Colourist feels the wet soaking through his shirt. Then the sound of boot heels slapping floorboards. The smell of alcohol, cloying rot. His host's breath.

And what of mine, the younger man demands, his lips hot on the Colourist's face.

The Colourist turns away.

Fingers sinking into his mottled cheeks. His face forced forward.

Come on, old man. Don't be shy.

You see nothing, the Colourist whispers into the swelling air. You aren't even—

The Colourist feels hot lips on his own. Biting. Sealing. His nose pinched shut.

He doesn't struggle. He has not named an apprentice. He cannot die.

His eyes water.

It is morning.

The Colourist's wife, the Representative of the Representatives, and the governmental Adjunct enter without knocking.

The Colourist sits, head slumped. The younger man, dressed in a freshly pressed suit of charcoal black, his hair flowing and disappearing down his shoulders, rises. The Colourist's wife tries to run to her husband. The Adjunct restrains her. Sands approaches, presses a finger to the nape of the Colourist's wattled neck.

He's dead.

The Colourist's wife breaks free of the two men and falls across the body.

The three officials regard the young man in front of him. He is resplendent in a deep, shimmering ebony suit. Behind him, the empty swallow of a sunless morning.

He came to me, the young man says wonderingly. He named me. And then he—

The Colourist's wife: Liar! *Murderer!*

The Representative of the Representatives clicks his tongue. The Colourist, he says, cannot die without the naming.

So it is written, intones the Adjunct.

The Colourist's wife digs her fingers into her husband's drab shirt. She screams. Sands opens his case, extracts a needle.

The Representative and the Adjunct regard the young man in his startlingly dark suit.

He named me, the young man says.

Show us, the Representative demands.

The young man nods. Eyes absent behind dark plastic.

. . . *Dun,* he begins. ⊳o

Hal Niedzviecki lives in Little Portugal. He is the author of The Program (Random House, 2005), Hello, I'm Special (Penguin, 2004), and Ditch (Random House, 2001), among others. He is also the co-founder and fiction editor of Broken Pencil.

• THE OUT-OF-TOWNER •

I STILL DON'T EVEN KNOW YOU

BY MICHELLE BERRY

Rebecca and Jack are on the chairlift early in the morning. Rebecca says her ankle still hurts from her fall the previous day. Jack looks off toward the horizon, balances his poles carefully, and taps the front of his skis. A tune. He taps out a tune that makes Rebecca sit up and listen and briefly stop complaining about her ankle, until eventually she says, "It won't stop throbbing. Like there's a miniature heart in my boot."

At the top of the lift, Jack wants to turn away from Rebecca, to ski off onto another hill, another chairlift, but this is their first vacation in ten years, their ten-year wedding anniversary vacation, and she wants to talk. And talk she does. That's why Jack wants to be on another hill. What about the tune in his ski, the tapping tune? Or the bird calls? Or the calls of all the kids? Those will come later. They are not up and skiing yet. Too early. But soon. The calls of all the kids as they fall down the mountain. It amazes Jack that they do that. Fall. All the time. Up and down, up and down. Especially the snowboarders. Jack would like to snowboard, but Rebecca won't let him. She says he'll break his ankle and then, Jack thinks now, it'll throb. Throb, throb, throb.

The hills are getting shorter, it seems. Two days into the vacation, and they've done all the hills, and now they know them and the hills feel short. The chairlift feels endless, slowly winding its way up the mountain, screeching and making towering noises that fill Jack's head. But not enough to overpower Rebecca's chatter. She reminds him of a bird, he thinks. He's never thought that before. Ten years of marriage and suddenly his wife is a bird, a duck—something twittering and honking and . . . no, not a duck. More like a little bird. Because she's small and lean and, well, her nose is a bit beaky.

Not fair, Jack thinks. This is not fair. He's just not used to being with someone so much. He needs his alone time. That's what Rebecca calls it. Alone time. Up time. Down time. Alone time. Ridiculous.

Down the hill and back on the lift. Again. Here they are again, seconds later it seems, and Rebecca is talking again. Her sentences stop at the top of the hill, halfway through, and then continue when they get on the lift. Right in the middle of a word even, she'll keep that train of thought and go with it on the next lift up.

"It's just a little throb, really," she says. She turns her head and looks out from her ski goggles at Jack. He looks a bit yellow because her ski goggles are tinted, but he's still handsome. She slides over toward him. Thinks about last night, about the fireplace in their bedroom and how Jack tried to light a fire and couldn't, and how she finally took over and lit it, trying not to make him mad. She was, after all, a camp counsellor as a teenager. She spent every summer, all summer, making fires in the wind, with little or no firewood, for groups of shouting kids. But Jack got all huffy about it, and soon Rebecca was wishing she could douse the fire with water and go to bed.

Lovemaking last night, Rebecca thinks, wasn't up to par. Distracted by the fire, Jack seemed distant. And Rebecca has been worried about her stomach lately—it's getting pudgier than it used to be. The forty-year-old bulge. She kept trying to hold it in as Jack worked away above her. Grunting. And then she grunted, she knows she did. One big grunt. Because holding her stomach in while moving back and forth, well, it's hard. But probably good for the muscles. Jack looked at her when she grunted. She could feel him looking, even with her eyes closed, and she wondered what he was thinking.

Rebecca takes Jack's hand in hers. His mitt. She can't feel his fingers through all the padding. There are probably only fifteen or twenty people on the lift. They have the lift to themselves. Rebecca talks about what they will have for lunch. And then where they should go for dinner. The hotel? Into town? Then she brings up the kids. She likes to talk about the kids. All the time. Jack stares off over the horizon. Perfect, Rebecca thinks, perfect to sit up high like this and talk about their two kids. At home with the grandparents.

Up at the top of the hill, Jack skis ahead quickly. Rebecca has to skate to keep up with him. Her ankle aches.

"Wait up. Where are we going?"

Jack moves through a path in the trees. Effortlessly. Rebecca thinks he's an effortless skier.

Jack thinks he almost wiped out there. One too many moguls too close together, and the trees are thick. The path through the woods is ungroomed.

They stop together at the top of a hill. One of the harder ones. Rebecca sighs loudly and says, "It's beautiful today."

Jack looks down toward the lodge, toward their hotel, and knows he should be feeling lucky. Not everyone can go skiing, he thinks. It's expensive. It's a rich-man's sport. But then he thinks that he deserves it, this sport. Because he works hard. Not that everyone doesn't work hard, that's not what Jack is thinking. But that doesn't mean he should deny himself some fun.

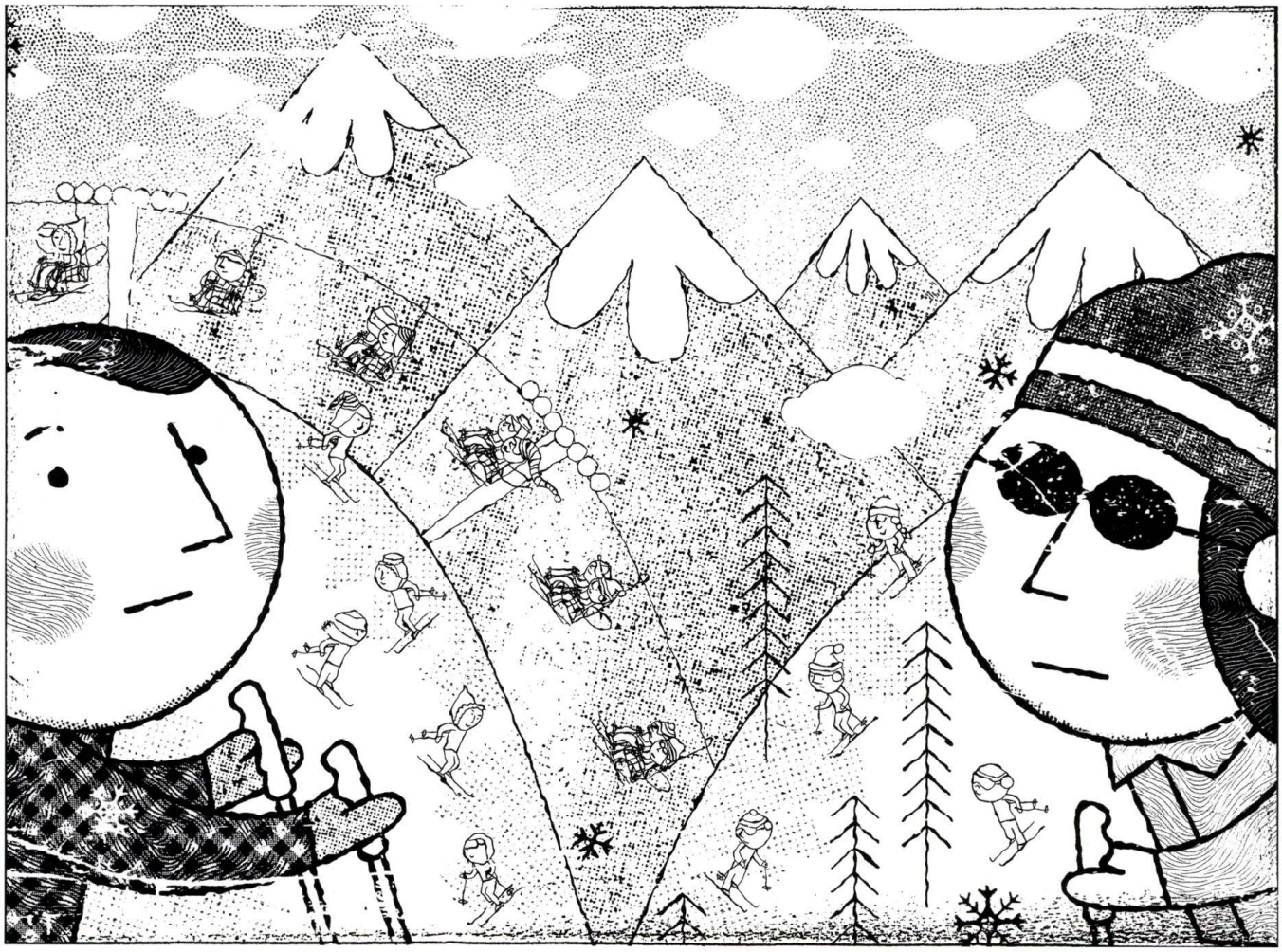
Although, lately, skiing hasn't been so much fun. When he skis with the kids they just whine about the weather, about their socks, about the fit of their boots. They both want to snowboard, but Jack won't let them. Not until they are old enough to drive themselves to the hospital with a broken neck, he says. Although he knows that makes no sense. Especially since he wants to try snowboarding himself.

There she goes. Rebecca swoops down the mountain. Good form, Jack thinks. Parallel skis. She bends nicely. She's wearing a light pink snowsuit that looks great with her dark hair.

Yes, he should feel lucky. But he

would rather be anywhere right now than here. He'd rather be at work. If he really thinks about it. Jack doesn't know what is wrong with him. It's the silence he's missing. Or is it? Is that what it is? Quiet? At work there are noises, people all around him. Talking. Meetings. Maybe it's the fire last night. The fact that he couldn't make it flame brightly.

More likely it's what Rebecca is saying. Nothing. She talks and says nothing. Jack would rather hear the kids on the hill screaming "fuck" when they fall.



Yesterday there was a girl on a snowboard. Maybe fifteen. Her blond hair braided, coming out of her helmet. Jack could tell she was pretty under her goggles and helmet. She came down the hill beside him, then in front of him, and then she fell. She leaned back when she should have leaned forward, and she toppled over in front of him. She called out "fuck" to her friends behind her. Jack passed by quickly, knowing she was O.K., and thought to himself that he'd never heard such a pretty word before. "Fuck." It was full of laughter.

Rebecca is waiting for Jack at the bottom of the hill. She can see him, up top, right at the start of the hill. Just standing there. "What is he doing?" she thinks. He has no helmet on, not even a hat, although it's cold, and his hair is puffed a bit from the wind. She can see that from all the way down at the bottom. At least he still has hair, Rebecca thinks. She taps her poles on the ground, waiting. She looks around at the sudden influx of kids and parents and teens. Having slept in, everyone awoke to see the sun, and now the hills are full of people. Rebecca thinks of her mother with the kids, thinks of what her mother said to her about how only rich people can ski and how lucky they are to have been married ten years and be able to take ski vacations. Her mother, the social do-gooder. Volunteers at the Y.M.C.A., in the soup kitchen. Her mother wouldn't ever click on ski boots and feel the wind as it hits her face going down the hill. What good is life, Rebecca thinks, if you spend the whole of it worrying about everyone else?

Rebecca knows that's selfish, but there are times you just want to be selfish. You just want to do things for yourself, or for your family.

Here comes Jack now.

"What were you doing?"

"Just waiting for those other skiers."

Rebecca looks around. There are no other skiers.

"Thinking," Jack shrugs. "We're not racing, right?"

"Right. Nothing is a race." She laughs.

"You don't have to be a bitch about it," Jack says. He gets into the line at the chairlift. Rebecca holds back, astonished.

"Bitch?" she thinks.

When she is sitting next to him, Rebecca taps his ski with her pole. She decides not to be angry. Just like that, Rebecca can now decide not to do something—get angry or sad or go to a party—and she won't do it. That's the beauty of age, she thinks. At some point you just say to yourself, enough is

IAN PHILLIPS

enough. No more people-pleasing.

Her mother, however. She can make Rebecca angry.

"I wonder how the kids are doing," Rebecca says suddenly. The two teenagers next to them on the chairlift look over.

"Nice day," Jack says. He nods.

Rebecca smiles.

A girl in grey and black, and a girl in a powder-blue suit. Lovely. Her hair and eyes are complemented by the blue. Her hair is braided and long. She has rosy cheeks. A snowboard. Maybe next year Rebecca will get a blue coat.

The girls just look at Rebecca and Jack. Jack knows it's the girl who said "fuck" yesterday. He knows what they are thinking. That he's old. That he's there with his wife who is vomiting up stories about their kids. That he is trying to be young again. He knows they are thinking that when they are as old as he is, they won't be skiing. They'll be in an old-age home. That's what he would have thought when he was their age.

The chairlift stops. Creaks to a halt. Swings.

"Fuck," the girl in blue says.

"Yeah," her friend says.

"Oh my," says Rebecca. Like an old lady, Jack thinks. "Oh my." When did she start saying that? She can build a fire. She can ski all day. Why is she saying "oh my"?

Jack looks down and sees a family of four skiing below them. The snow falls off his ski tip and lands quite near a little boy, who skis through it, oblivious. In fact, Jack thinks, he could probably spit and the boy would ski through it without knowing. Family of four. Perfect family. All skiing together. The father laughing proudly. The mother looking snug in her snow pants. Her ass bulging. At least Rebecca's ass doesn't bulge, Jack thinks.

Why doesn't Jack talk to her, Rebecca thinks. Only in their room at night. Or in the restaurant after a glass or two of wine. But he doesn't talk to her on the chairlift. It's just occurred to Rebecca that maybe she and Jack are having problems. Not just little relationship spats, but real solid problems. Maybe not doing anything alone for so many years has really affected them. Maybe they don't know how to be alone together anymore.

Their children are with her mother and father. Probably recycling and eating vegetarian and putting up protest posters and hanging out at the Salvation Army. "Ha," Rebecca thinks. At least her mother and father have a good relationship. Solid. Her father talks to her mother, at least. They have something to talk about.

Rebecca wonders when Jack stopped talking. She can't remember. And then she wonders when she started talking so much? It was with the kids. When the kids were born she couldn't stop talking. Wanting more attention. Wanting more of Jack's ear. His eyes and his mind were always occupied with the kids. Their freshness, newness, tininess. She wanted some of him.

At work, she doesn't talk so much.

Rebecca turns to the girl in powder blue and says, "Do you mind not swinging the chair? It makes me nervous."

The girl's foot stops swinging in her snowboard. "Whatever," she says. Surly.

Jack groans and looks away. The lift starts up again and rushes toward the top of the hill. Getting off, Rebecca is knocked slightly by the snowboarders. At first she doesn't think they meant to do it. Snowboarders always seem awkward getting off the lift. But then, when they stop to put their feet in the board, strap themselves in, Rebecca can hear them laughing. Saying, "Good one." Rebecca gathers herself and skis up to them.

And then she does something she never thought she was capable of. She pushes the girl in powder blue over. The girl is standing, waiting for her friend, both her feet in her board. Clipped in. She looks so perfect in her powder blue, her shining blond hair, her blue eyes and tinted cheeks. She has strong, long legs. Rebecca pushes her and the girl

SPRING POEM

May 1st

The night after aloo gobi and chicken korma
at the Red Rose, I was informed my stomach
made surprising noises—songs it had never sung before.
"Incomprehensible to some,"
I trilled, "last night I was dreaming in Hindi!"
And the thrillows sang on behind the blinds.

"Are those sparrows, Bird Poet?" I was asked
after minutes of listening.
"Despairos?" I said, in unmodulated credulity,
or modulated incredulity. "Why despairo?
Those are the young enthusiastic children
of jaded conservative parents."

They were not the nagging jay who joined us last week,
so handsome and angry and mean
(his very name the root of jail; his voice
a fork on a plate, the screech of a taxi brake).
My second sighting, he buzzed an old sleep-drunk squirrel
clambering down the trunk of the maple out front.

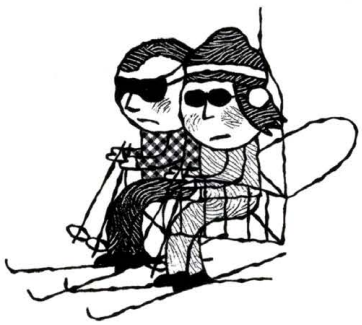
Welcome back forsythia—welcome thrillows and
despairos, pigeons, wood doves, squeaky bikes,
bikes whose seats need raising. Welcome crowded bike posts:
now we'll lock a block away.
Welcome needy grass, magnolia litter.
Welcome squirrels. Welcome jay.

—CHRIS CHAMBERS

tips in slow motion, then goes down quickly. Like a domino, she knocks into her friend, who has just managed to stand up, and soon the two are splayed on the ground in the snow. Rebecca skis past quickly and down the hill. She loses Jack in her haste. In her escape.

Jack helps the girl up, lifts her under her arm and feels the small bulge of her breast with his fingers. He almost drops her he is so astonished and sickened by the placement of his fingers. As if they weren't his own. But she doesn't seem to notice, and she laughs as she bends now and helps her friend up.

"What a bitch," the girls say. At once. And then they laugh. Jack laughs and says, "Yep." As if he doesn't even know her, even though the girls know she is his wife. They'd heard her talking on the lift about their kids. But everyone chooses to ignore this and they head down the hill together, and then up the lift together and down again. And Jack talks a bit. And laughs. And finds out the girls can say more than "fuck." They talk about the terrain park, and which run is the best, and where the jumps should be instead of where they are now. And they talk about the pool at the hotel, and that there was a cute guy there last night who, the girl in blue says, is in love with the other girl. And they laugh some more.



Down the hill, up the next lift, down again, not thinking about anything but the feel of the hill under her skis. Rebecca spends a lot of time alone. When she sees Jack, out of the corner of her goggles, he is with the girl in powder blue. He is laughing and talking.

Jack has a good time and it isn't until his stomach growls that he thinks of Rebecca and realizes, suddenly, that he hasn't seen her for a long time. He looks at his watch. Almost dinnertime.

"Shit," he says. And the girls laugh, because, as Jack realizes again, they think it's funny someone his age knows how to swear.

Jack wonders how his daughter is doing. She is just six, and he wonders if she's going to swear when she's fifteen. Of course she is. And snowboard. And talk about guys in pools. He likes it most when she leans up next to him on the sofa, if they are watching TV together or reading, when she puts her soft head on his shoulder or his chest and she sighs deeply. Kind of like the sigh Rebecca made earlier on top of the hill. Big sigh. As if she is holding the weight of the world on her shoulders. It's too heavy, and she has to lean her head on him for help.

Jack thinks there's something deeper happening to him here. Deeper than a mid-life crisis, than young girls giggling in powder-blue snowsuits. Deeper than his wife's incessant talking, than her fire-building abilities, than their wedding anniversary vacation alone. Jack realizes that this deepness has to do with his fear. He's growing older, and the rest of the world is staying young. Or it seems that way to him. He's growing older with his wife. And it's almost as if he blames his wife for that. Rebecca feeds him, washes his clothes, makes the bed—can't she control the aging too?

"This is ridiculous," Jack thinks. And just then, as he's swiping down the hill, making short cuts, digging in, Jack sees Rebecca ahead of him, racing toward the finish line. He speeds up, or tries to, but ends up with a face full of snow. He has to climb the mountain a bit to get his skis, which have popped off. The two girls pass him giggling.

"Fuck," Jack says.

They laugh louder.

Jack finds Rebecca is nursing a beer, and her ankle, by the fire in the bar of the chalet. He sits beside her, picks up her leg, under the knee, and rubs her ankle. She tries to smile. His touch is rough and hard. But if she pulls away, she doesn't know what will happen.

"Nice fire," Jack says. "Did you make it?"

Rebecca rolls her eyes.

All afternoon she skied alone. And quietly. She would let everyone go ahead of her on the lift so she could sit by herself. So she could look down on the skiers and up to the sky and over the top to the lake way down there, frozen over and so white it hurts to open her eyes fully to look at it. She would think about nothing. Talk about nothing. Say nothing to anyone. It was good, Rebecca thinks now. To have some peace and quiet. To not have to fill in the blank spots.

"I didn't even know," Rebecca says, finally, after Jack has got himself a beer at the bar and his cheeks become flushed by the fire. "I didn't even know we were fighting."

Jack looks at her. Looks at her small frame, her dark hair and eyes. Her hair is sticking up a bit in the front from her helmet. She is wearing long johns and a turtleneck. A fleece vest. They are sitting before a fire that Rebecca didn't make. Their kids are at home. They are lucky, Jack thinks. And then he laughs.

"Neither did I," he says. "I didn't know we were fighting either."

"It was a beautiful day, wasn't it?" Rebecca says. She yawns.

"Tomorrow is supposed to be nice, too. I asked the guy who runs the ski shop. Sunny. No wind."

"Good," Rebecca says. "No wind. I like no wind."

"Dinner?" Jack says, finishing his beer. He stands. He helps Rebecca stand.

"I might like to go back to the room first," she says. "Fix this hair. Call the kids."

"Don't worry about it," Jack says. "Your hair or the kids."

He takes her hand and leads her into the restaurant. He leads her past the tables filled up with other skiers, with women and men and little kids and teenagers. There are some older couples there. Everyone seems to be smiling. Cheeks are flushed. Wine is being poured. The noise level increases gradually over the course of the evening.

In the dark, in their bed, Jack takes Rebecca in his arms. She grimaces when his leg knocks into her ankle. His elbow hits her hip. And then they fit like gloves. Tight together.

"I still don't even know you," Jack whispers, finally, just before Rebecca falls asleep. "I still don't even know myself."

"Maybe that's O.K.," Rebecca thinks. But she doesn't say anything, because she's asleep.

Michelle Berry lives in Peterborough, Ontario. She is the author of three novels—What We All Want (Random House, 2001), Blur (Random House, 2002), and Blind Crescent (Penguin, 2005)—and two short-story collections.

• PROFILE •

FORM AND CONTENT

Collaboration is the medium of Darren Wershler-Henry's message.

BY RACHEL PULFER

Go to a computer that's equipped with high-speed Internet access. Launch a Web browser, and type in "www.apostropheengine.ca."

A page loads that resembles an online bookseller's Web site. To the left is the cover of *Apostrophe,* a book of poetry by Bill Kennedy and Darren Wershler-Henry, published this past April, by ECW Press. The remainder of the screen is filled with a long, list-like poem that addresses the reader directly in the second person, ascribing to them an extraordinarily cool variety of ideas, all of which could potentially reflect back an experience they once had or a nuance of their personality. Scroll down, and you'll be told that, among many other things, "you are": "a deftly turned phrase," "an onion ring with an identity crisis on the Korona Restaurant's 'Transylvanian Meat Platter,'" "a piece of performance art that deep down inside wants to be a bust of Beethoven sitting on a Steinway grand piano," "the lusts of your father," and "an unceremonious exit."

Wave the cursor over the list and you'll see each line is a hyperlink. Click on a line that interests you. (The line I chose said I was "having paranoid delusions that a figure much like Henri Matisse's 'Blue Nude' is following you around trying to get you to join the Jehovah's Witnesses"—which appealed because I paint part time, love Matisse, and my scientist father recently chucked in biochemistry to become a United Church minister.) The screen goes blank as the Apostrophe Engine searches the Web for results matching the line chosen, then refills with a unique new catalogue poem whose lines often echo the idea in the original line picked. (My poem told me I was, variously, "being welcomed by many lovers of Jehovah," "beyond help," "not alone," and "the one who is angry that I am exposing the error in your religion.") Net effect? A weird sense of déjà vu, reflected through cyberspace.

Hyperlinking the lines of a poem to a search engine, and enabling readers to generate their own poems riffing off one of those lines, takes a pretty creative brain—in this case, the brain of the writer, poet, editor, and media professor Darren Wershler-Henry.

"What *Apostrophe* is, essentially, is a Romantic 'address' poem," explains Wershler-Henry over brunch at Insomnia, an Internet café–turned–hipster joint on Bloor Street West. A compact man of thirty-nine, Wershler-Henry's shock of brown hair and open, animated face belie his fashionably minimalist all-black attire. "Bill [Kennedy] wrote the poem, I came up with the idea to put it on-line," he says. "He wrote the code for the search engine, I came up with the book. We edited the book together. I did the design; he did the cover. It's true it came from a conversation in a bar about Bill's poem, way back in 2001. But if it had been left up to either one of us, it probably never would have happened."

Like so much of what makes Wershler-Henry interesting, *Apostrophe* illustrates his fascination with how the mechanics of a medium can completely transform writing, both in form and content. It is also the fruit of a collaboration with a writer whose talents complement, but don't cancel out, Wershler-Henry's own. Essentially the end point of one conversation between collaborators, it is also, quite literally, the beginning point of a million new poems that don't yet exist.

Back in the restaurant, Wershler-Henry is putting his paradigm-busting method of digital poetry production into literary context. "An apostrophe"—the punctuation mark itself—"is the trope of address, which is right at the heart of the Romantic lyric," he explains. In other words, seeing an apostrophe followed by an address in the second person indicates you are reading a style of poetry in which the poet addresses an object directly. What the poet says becomes a metaphor for the poet's thoughts about his or her reader.

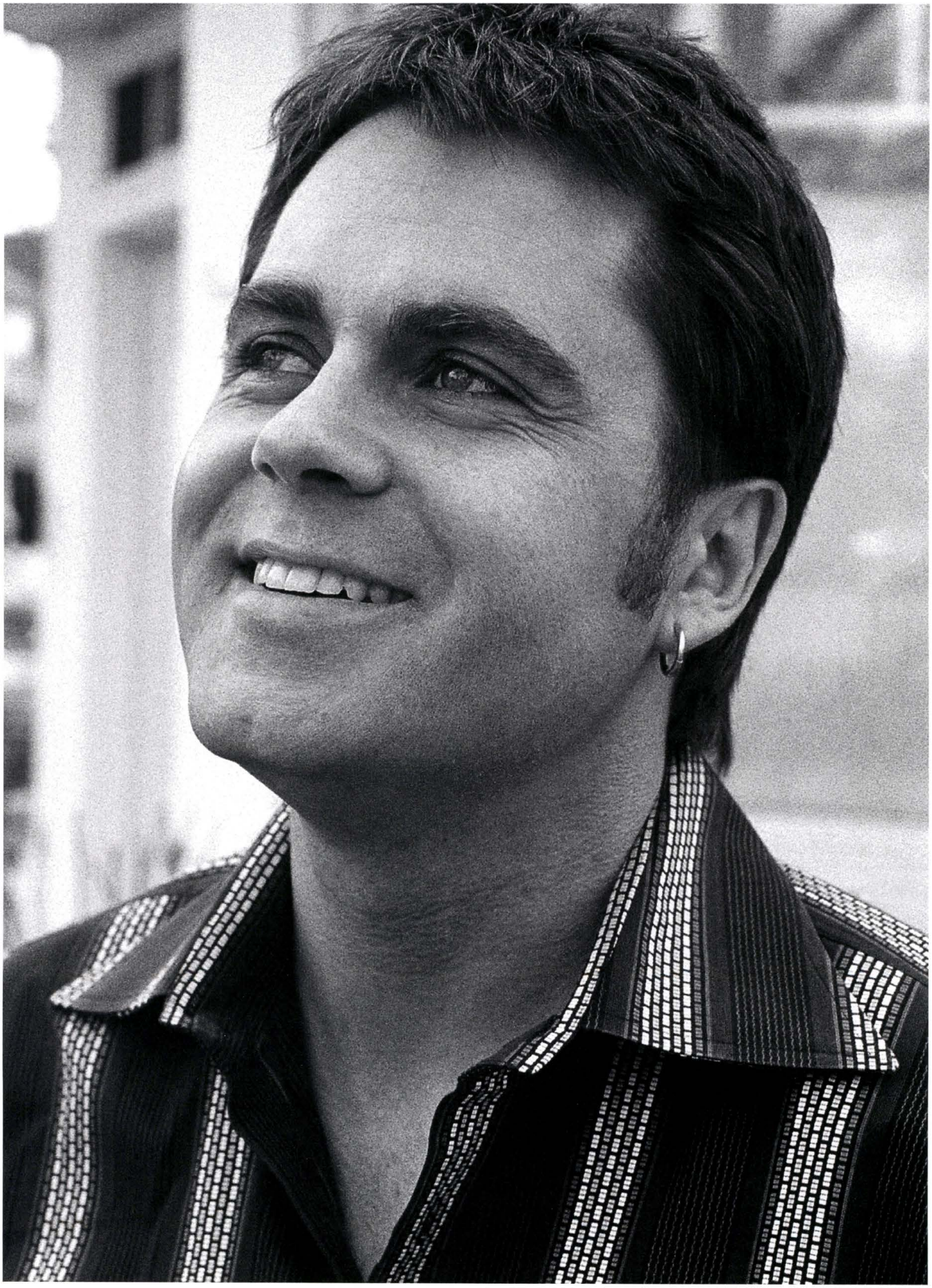
"If you read [Percy Bysshe] Shelley's 'Defense of Poetry,' which we quote in the afterword, Shelley asks, how do you write a poem that adequately reflects the condition of everyday life? We live in the age of the Internet, an age of endless streams of text, navigated by search engines. How do you write a poem that reflects the lived conditions of right now?" *Apostrophe*—a poem that, Wershler-Henry points out, is "actually written by [a search engine] and everyone on the Internet who has ever written in the second person"—gets pretty close.

Wershler-Henry first hit the Canadian literary scene in 1997, with *Nicholodeon,* a slim volume of poems whose exquisitely structured lines are intended to enhance the theme in a very literal sense. In "Solar Eclipse," the word "sun" is repeated down a column; the whited-out word "moon" slowly passes through the column line by line, literally eclipsing the meaning of the original word. Since that time, Wershler-Henry has published everything from non-fiction treatises on the economic value of file-sharing software to a humorous almanac aimed at helping alienated Canucks navigate the tricky waters of urban living, co-authored with Hal Niedzviecki, the founder of *Broken Pencil* magazine. *The Tapeworm Foundry,* his 2000 follow-up to *Nicholodeon,* was short-listed for the Trillium Book Award.

"He's got so much going on, it's hard to describe what he actually does," says the editor and writer Alana Wilcox, "but his ability to make connections between things that seem really incongruous and bring them together in a way that is very coherent—that, I find, is really wild."

Über-wired poetry is light years from where Wershler-Henry grew up, in a

MARK LYALL



small town ten hours north of Winnipeg. "My dad was an R.C.M.P. officer, and we were posted up there," he says. "It was a horrible place—a northern logging town." Wershler-Henry eventually escaped to Winnipeg, where he earned a degree in literature at the University of Manitoba, followed by a master's at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, where he studied the cyberpunk novels of William Gibson. On graduation, he knew he wanted to attend York University, in Toronto: "For some reason, the English department there had lots of poets," he said. "Chris Dewdney, Michael Ondaatje, bpNichol—they all taught there."

By 1990, the year Wershler-Henry arrived in town, a new generation of poets had descended upon York, including Christian Bök, who became one of Wershler-Henry's long-time friends, and someone with whom Wershler-Henry, as editor, would eventually publish one of the most popular books of contemporary Canadian poetry in recent memory, the 2002 Griffin Poetry Prize–winning *Eunoia.* "We decided the poetry community was more interesting, so we spent less time in [class] and more time going to [the editor and poet] Michael Holmes' reading series, at the Cafe May, on Roncesvalles."

Wershler-Henry did enroll in a Ph.D. program, intending to pursue his interest in Gibson and the point where "cyberspace and body inscription collide." But, as it happened, "there was a glut of proposals like that," he laughs, "so I switched focus."

Instead, Wershler-Henry returned to an earlier interest: the mechanics of writing, specifically typewriting. His obsession with writing as a technological process, and what the mechanics of that form of writing do to the writing itself, can be traced to an early fascination with the Canadian concrete poet bpNichol. "The first poem I ever read and liked instinctively, without anyone telling me I had to like it, was this poem by Nichol called 'Blues,'" he explains. As with all concrete poetry, the way in which "Blues" is laid out on the page and formatted is as intrinsic to communicating the theme of the poem as the meaning of the words themselves: an early example of Marshall McLuhan's old saw, "The medium is the message."

Nichol's work owed a great deal to typesetting and the typewriter. So Wershler-Henry decided to focus his dissertation on the relationship between concrete poetry and typewriting. Although it would be fifteen years until he defended, in the spring of 2005, McClelland & Stewart published his dissertation last fall, in a much-modified book form, as *The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting,* and Wershler-Henry is now teaching in the department of communication studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. But as with many things in Wershler-Henry's life, what he did in the ensuing years is as important as, if not more important than, the academic bookends.

When Wershler-Henry left school, in 1996, to ensconce himself in Toronto's literary community, he first supported his poetry habit with a series of odd jobs as a technical writer and an Internet hack. In 1997, he became the senior editor of Coach House Books, which, he says, "was kind of like being handed the keys to the candy store," given that he could now go after and publish anyone he wanted. He devoted considerable energy to publishing a gigantic two-volume set of the experimental poet Steve McCaffery's work, and then worked with Bök on *Eunoia,* a book consisting of five chapters, in which Bök used only one vowel per chapter. He also put considerable energy into Web publishing. "We put seventy full-length books online in the time I was there," he says. "We were the only publisher in the world to do that."

Wershler-Henry was instrumental, says Wilcox, the current senior editor of Coach House Books, in focusing the sensibility of the press into one that was both experimental and avant-garde, yet also accessible, even fun. His approach paid off with the popular success of *Eunoia,* a critical smash that to date has sold seventeen thousand copies. Wershler-Henry modestly deflects credit for *Eunoia* onto Bök and Wilcox, saying he was "on the way out the door" as it was coming together. He left Coach House in 2002 when a teaching opportunity at York presented itself. "They asked me to teach one of my books," he says. "Who wouldn't jump at that?"

Academic job and esoteric publishing

aside, it's definitely not all high art with Wershler-Henry. He describes his attitude toward writing as one where there needs to be "as many conceptual handles as possible"; access points where people can derive different meanings from a piece of work, depending on their own experiences. As in art, so with life: Wershler-Henry's writing goes far beyond the esoteric, as the variety of his published works shows.

With so many collaborations, and more to come, Darren Wershler-Henry, the writer, is hard to define. It's interesting to note the original work that inspired *Apostrophe* was not in fact Wershler-Henry's—his contribution was his fascination with how technology can reform the poem in a million different ways. This innovation makes the poem a mind-blowing experiment in Web publishing, but also replaces the organic process of writing inspired by a muse with one in which the muse becomes a menu of options written by someone else, and machines and software do the thinking for both the writer and the reader. Much like our everyday lived reality, the process is both profoundly interactive, and disturbingly passive.

Such concerns aside, there's no question Wershler-Henry has contributed both new forms of publishing and brilliant work from new writers to the Canadian literary landscape. With *Apostrophe,* he's not just thinking outside the box of what poetry can be, he's completely exploding it. And though he may have landed a tenure-track job, he's certainly not retreating to the ivory tower. Currently working on Art Mob, an effort to get local poets and writers published and archived on-line, he's also planning numerous other projects. "The more that is going on, the more I have energy to do things," he says, as he finishes his sixth cup of coffee and wraps up brunch by simultaneously calling for the check and dialing for a cab. "And one thing I've learned the hard way: if you want anything to happen in Canadian literature, you have to go out there and do it yourself."

Clearly, he's just getting started.

Rachel Pulfer lives in Trinity Bellwoods. Like many Toronto media hacks, she toils in the journalism trenches by day, and dreams of literary and artistic greatness by night.

JANE JACOBS, 1916–2006

Remembering Toronto's great urban thinker, who died on April 25.

Jane Jacobs had a few weaknesses. One, we learned, was sweets.

In September, 2004, I was asked to act as the interviewer and moderator of a Q. & A. session with Jacobs, at Harbourfront, in conjunction with the launch of her book *Dark Age Ahead.* Hosting isn't my specialty, but I know enough to start with small talk—something to put both the interviewee and the audience at ease. Someone had recently told me butter tarts were a distinctly Canadian sweet, and I was sure that Jacobs, a former American, with special takes on Canada, would know something about them. As it turned out, she did like butter tarts, knew of their Canadianness, and wondered aloud about their history, drawing gamely on her wisdom. People laughed, of course—just what was needed to leaven the more serious discussion to come.

PHILLIP SMITH

Jacobs must have struggled with her celebrity, perhaps even resented it at times. Celebrity commands respect—it gives one access to people who have the power to implement ideas, and must be excellent for the ego. But the price is constant interruption, which is a curse and a temptation to all writers, and can stall both projects and accomplishment. So Jacobs wisely limited interviews, gracefully declining to talk about a book until it was ready, occasionally jumping in on behalf of her publishers or her ideas, but then retreating back into her work.

Several months before my Harbourfront debut, I interviewed Jacobs for this magazine, in her upstairs writing room, at the back of 69 Albany Avenue. It was cluttered and unpretentious, a former apartment kitchen. This time, she conducted the small talk, breaking the ice by asking me about my *Annex Gleaner* column, which she graciously said she read and liked. She also noticed the vintage four-by-five camera *Taddle Creek's* photographer Phillip Smith, who had accompanied me, had brought along to snap her picture, and listened with great interest as Phillip told her the story of how he had found it in the trash on a New York sidewalk.

Her publishers may not have always let on, but Jacobs was in fact, as Phillip and I saw that day, very accessible, and certainly friendly. It was not uncommon to run into her around town, especially in the Annex. My first encounter with Jacobs was in 1984, at the corner of Bloor and Markham streets, on Ed Mirvish's seventieth birthday, when he and Jacobs led a walking tour of the neighbourhood. (Last time I looked, my brief report on it, for the *Toronto Star,* was still hanging amid all the other posted clips on the west wall of Honest Ed's.) We later met again, by chance, in a small office above a Bloor Street store, the office of Nadine Nowlan, like Jacobs, a veteran of the battle to stop the Spadina Expressway.

Jane Jacobs never claimed to be perfect, or clairvoyant, though you might be tempted to think she was after reading *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* written well before much of the potential destruction described in its pages actually happened. One of the criticisms of Jacobs was that she was hard on planners, many of whom adopted her outlook and sought to implement her ideas. From this she never budged; she resisted being labelled a planner herself, though many a planner thought her the master.

What will we think of Jane in ten, twenty, fifty years? We may never know Jane Jacobs the person any better. But we will surely discover and rediscover her ideas, learning something fresh and valuable each time, something that, like the ideas in her books, might make life better, and just might help save us.

—ALFRED HOLDEN

WITHOUT AFFECTION

BY MOE BERG

Waves. They dominated the aural landscape, drowning out tiny conversations. The occasional shriek from a child or a crossing motorboat would compete for attention, but only briefly, like a solo violin over a steady backbeat. Waves were a dull wash of sound that never ran out of breath.

Like train whistles or sirens, Alan thought the breaking waves sounded lonely. At night, they reminded him that the beach was now deserted, the water cold, dark, and dangerous. Waves were reminders of too-short romances, lost loves, lost souls at sea. The final days of a summer vacation.

Right now, they splashed harmlessly just above his thigh. The water was still too cold for him to fully commit to immersing himself. He'd signed out a mask and snorkel, "free" with his all-inclusive package. Mandy lay beneath a shelter made from palm leaves, still recovering from the burn she'd received on their second day here. Out all day in the Caribbean sun, sans sunscreen, to get a tan that says, "I was at a sunny place." Instead, she resembled a rotisserie hot dog and had spent a full day vomiting and moaning in their room.

The other guests at this resort were friendly, which posed only a minor problem. Though Mandy was eager to talk to anyone who'd give her an ear, Alan was confident that they wouldn't make any friends. Mandy would drive all prospects away with her passive-aggressive insults about the person's hairstyle, clothes, or weight. Like she should talk. She had gained a full twenty-five pounds since they were married, rendering her unpleasantly plump. Back home they were also without friends, which suited Alan fine. No one to make nice with, spend money on dinners with, or mentally beg to leave after inviting them into your home. No birthdays, kids' names to remember. Yes, Mandy had alienated anyone who came into their orbit, keeping their galaxy population at two.

Alan dropped to his knees, flinching at the coolness of the water on his chest. He held his position for a moment to acclimatize himself, then secured the mask to his head. Biting down on the snorkel's mouthpiece, he put his face into the water, then propelled himself forward with his legs. The sound of his breathing, now amplified, along with the gurgling of water as he moved through it, created a womb-like soundscape. The water was clear, but the sea's bottom this close to the shore revealed little more than the same golden sand that composed the beach. He kicked, now wishing Mandy could swim in case he discovered anything interesting. Water was just one of her many phobias, making the choice of Cuba as a vacation destination somewhat curious—except that she could find something scary about anywhere they might choose to go.

Water filled his ears, creating a dull pressure. A small school of tiny fish lined up below him to his left. They were almost the same colour as the sand, and he might have missed them were there anything else to look at. They swam alongside him as though they were checking him out, then, out of either fear or disinterest, scurried away. The water suddenly felt cooler, and Alan guessed that he was now out a bit far. Turning, he made for the shore.

He trudged through the sand, his feet sinking into the wet shoreline until he hit dry land, itself also less-than-firm ground. Mandy's lime green one-piece bathing suit beckoned in the distance. She was on her back, reading one of those three-inch-thick romance novels Alan was sure were rotting her brain.

"How are you feeling? Can I get you anything?"

Mandy looked up from her book.

"Would you get me a drink? A pina colada?" She reached into her bag for her lip balm. "I wish you didn't always have to be doing something," she said, mushing her lips together. "I wish you could just lie here with me for a minute."

I wish, I wish. Most of her sentences began that way, always wondering why everyone didn't do exactly what she wanted at all times. Like the world was a genie in a bottle. "I've got a wish for you," he thought. "I wish you'd shut your fucking trap. How would that be?"

"I'll get you your drink and then I'll sit with you a while."

Fishing a dollar bill from his fanny pack, which lay beside Mandy, he made his way toward the beach bar, located about fifty yards from their spot.

The beach was liberally spotted with sunbathing tourists, but Mandy and Alan had managed to find a semi-secluded area to hang out. He squinted at a row of six or seven lounge chairs perched at the top of the beach. His eyes stopped on what he thought was a topless woman.

It was, in fact, a topless woman, still pale, her skin refusing the sun. Her breasts were small but breathtaking. She was resting at a forty-five-degree angle, her arms at her sides, her sunglasses resting on her nose. A dark-haired young man, also shirtless, was sitting at the bottom of her deck chair, talking to her. God, what a vision. Alan rarely noticed pretty girls anymore. Perhaps it was the oddity of seeing a semi-naked woman in public, or perhaps it was that she was just *that* beautiful. Either way, he was transfixed, his head turning as he slowed down almost to a stop. Then the guy she was talking to grabbed her wrist and they both looked over at him.

Fuck. Caught. Instead of casually looking away he jerked his head, guiltily. Great, now he was the pervert of the resort, the reason why women were afraid to go topless. He picked up his pace, as much as that was possible in the sand.

The bar was jammed. Scarlet-skinned fat guys in tight Speedos, dozens of bikini-clad women of varying shapes. A small group of faux surfer dudes, older women who were almost fully clothed. Everyone having a booze-and-sun-fueled party, like a Kahlúa commercial. A four-piece band played in the far corner, loud

enough to mask the sound of the waves.

The drinks here were sweet and had an artificial flavor. There wasn't any decent Scotch, and the beer tasted off. He stuck to rum and Coke. When in Rome.

"A pina colada and a Cuba libre, *por favor.*" He didn't know why he bothered with the Spanish. He must sound ridiculous. The bartender loaded the blender with white goop and sang along with the band against the roar of the mixer. Service was a bit slow, but this guy had recognized Alan as a tipper and like this. The people here are mainly retired or working-class dogs who saved all year to afford this one luxury. Relatively speaking, not much different from them.

Alan delivered Mandy her pina colada and sat on the beach with her for half an hour until she asked to go back to the room. She took a shower and got into bed. He lay down beside her until she drifted off, then quietly slipped on his sandals and headed for the bar.

Ordering a cappuccino, he found a seat where he could watch the Animation Team give awkward white folks dance lessons. The Cubans were a good-looking people, especially the men. There was a masculine quality to their faces that Alan envied. The team moved fluidly to the salsa music while the tourists flopped about like retards.

Mandy liked this kind of music. She liked any music that didn't require you to know the name of the song. As long as it was performed in the appropriate style, in this case, the style of the islands, it was good to her. She also liked ABBA and had dragged him to see that dreadful *Mamma Mia!* thing in Toronto. It was made worse by the two women who sat behind them, bathed in drugstore perfume, who talked through the entire performance. Women and their superior communication skills—couldn't they suspend them for an hour and a half so that other people who'd spent a hundred dollars a ticket could "enjoy" the "play"?

The flick of a lighter distracted him. He turned to see the girl from the beach lighting a smoke. She was alone now, wearing the top that matched the bottom part of her bathing suit. She was also wearing a white, unbuttoned men's shirt.

Her nose. It was long and straight, just like Mandy's. She had the exact same nose as his wife. Mandy thought it was too big, but Alan thought it was her best feature.

This close he could see that the nails on her fingers and toes were painted a deep red. Her legs were long. Mandy's legs were once almost that thin.

IAN PHILLIPS

made for him immediately. This was supposed to be an all-inclusive package, but one should factor in an extra couple hundred bucks for gratuities.

He exchanged a folded dollar bill for the cocktails.

"*Gracias, señor,*" the waiter said, bowing. Alan wondered what the Cubans thought of the tourists. Probably a love-hate thing. They need us, but think we're a bunch of rich, rude babies. He'd like to tell them that rich North Americans don't travel to Cuba and resorts

"You're staring again"

Alan banged his coffee cup down hard, hot foamy liquid splashing on the back of his hand.

"Oh, dear. I'm sorry. It's just that . . . that . . . you remind me of someone."

"Nice line," she said sarcastically. "No, it didn't hurt when I fell from heaven."

"Uh, listen, I'm married. I'm not trying to pick you up. You really do look like someone. I'm very sorry I stared. I know it's rude." Alan rose to leave.

"Hey, don't leave on my account. I'm pulling your leg." She took a drag from her cigarette and blew half a lungful into the air.

"My name's Kate," she said through the rest of it.

"Alan," he said.

"So, Alan, how are you enjoying your holiday?"

"It's fine. How about yourself?"

"The beach is nice. The buffet sucks though. The à la carte restaurants are O.K. but they drown all of the seafood in butter and I'm beginning to get a bit nauseous. Other than that, it's pretty cool." She swung her leg back and forth in a slow rhythm.

"How long you and the Mrs. been together?"

"Ten years."

"You bored yet?" she asked, without a hint of a smile.

"No," he lied. "Marriage isn't about being interested or bored," he said, wondering if he'd be able to answer what he knew would be her next question.

"So?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

"It's about thinking about someone other than yourself. Having someone to look out for who will, in turn, look out for you." Sounded good coming out, he thought.

"Doesn't sound very romantic," she said, now very serious. He was thrilling to the way she was looking at him, like he was someone worth speaking to. Her eyes were dark and he bet they had a unique and privileged view of the world.

"Romance is for young, beautiful people like yourself. Most people just want someone to love them." God, this sounded good. He couldn't believe he was coming up with this shit.

"Do you have any kids?"

"No," he said, hoping this wouldn't go further. Three years into the marriage they'd discovered Mandy couldn't have children. She'd wanted to adopt but Alan had talked her out of it. He told her that the way young people were these days, they'd only be taking on someone else's problem. In hindsight, Mandy's infertility was a blessing. With them as parents, the kids would be little psychos.

She uncrossed her legs, then recrossed them the other way. The breathtaking breasts he'd seen earlier were safely tucked into her bathing-suit top.

"So, who do I remind you of?"

"Just someone I used to know."

"A lost love?"

"You could say that." Suddenly he didn't feel so great.

"But she doesn't matter anymore, right?"

"Right," he lied, getting up. Nothing had ever mattered so much in his life. "I should be getting back. It was nice chatting with you, Kate."

"You too, Alan." She sat forward, placing the balls of her feet on the floor, her legs forming two perfect sevens. "And don't worry about the staring. I love to be adored," she said smiling.

Alan laughed weakly. He figured she got a whole lot of what she loved. Looking at her, he felt about seventy years old. So much had changed. He remembered how he had loved Mandy, as much as he could love anyone. When they first met, she had been quite pretty and he'd been proud to have her on his arm. She hadn't always been how she was now—complaining, contrary, ignorant.

They used to sit on the sofa together watching television, her head in his lap. These days she sat alone on the sofa with Alan in his chair at the opposite corner of the room nursing a Scotch, her controlling the remote, a gin and tonic in her other hand. They hit the sheets tipsy but land on opposite ends of the king-size bed. If it weren't for her occasional sigh, he couldn't be sure he wasn't in bed alone.

He offered her plenty of attention. He did everything she asked, gave her all she wanted. But he did it grudgingly, without affection, silently cursing her every request. No wonder she was so unsatisfied.

Back in the room she was laying on the bed in a T-shirt and panties, her legs crossed at the ankles, pointing the remote at the jabbering TV like it was a video game. Alan lowered himself onto the bed and kissed her hard on the lips. She surprised him by kissing back and letting him pry her legs open with his.

They hadn't done it in ages, but fell quickly into their familiar fit. It felt good. He ran his fingers gently down her fleshly, sunburned leg, then back up, cupping her ass. He let go and put his hands on the bed, one on either side of her head. With every stroke her face softened, a line disappeared, a year vanished. He looked down at her peeling chest and noticed small drops gathering on it.

Now her eyes were full of fear.

"Honey, what's the matter?" she asked, breathless from the sex. He kept pumping, the tears flowing freely as he rose and fell.

"Come back, Mandy. Please come back."

Moe Berg lives in Dovercourt Park. He was a member of the Pursuit of Happiness for eleven years. His first book of short stories, The Green Room, was published in 2000, by Gutter.

CHAINED FOR LIFE

Excerpts from Trapeze: As Told by Siamese Twins Iris and Lily Hutton.

BY LEANNA McLENNAN

The first time we see him, he is on-stage, half-naked—ankles bound, legs bowed apart, wrists cuffed behind his back, chest curled forward spooning the empty space before him, neck wrapped with a thick chain, and at his throat, a padlock. Beside him a hand-painted sign promises, "THE AMAZING ABSCONDINI, GREATEST ESCAPE ARTIST EVER KNOWN! PRODUCING THE BEST ACT OF ITS KIND IN EXISTENCE!"

I eye the lock at his throat, longing to release it and taste the salty fruit beneath. I want to climb inside the chains that surround him and press against him until our bodies take shape from one another. I want to shed this skin, to release the invisible chains that bind me. In this double body, I am always torn in two directions: I want someone to gather me like night and hold me firmly on this earth; I want to fly high into the nocturnal sky until I see beyond bodies and into souls.

A dwarf in a miniature mauve tuxedo steps onstage and wraps Abscondini's cuffed wrists with a heavy chain.

"Who would like to click shut the lock?" he asks the crowd. A tall awkward man clambers onto the stage. Basking in the spotlight, he drunkenly clicks the lock shut, then fades back into anonymity.

The distance between Abscondini's hands is carefully measured to preserve the illusion they are closely bound, and to allow easy escape. The dwarf escorts the escape artist to a small wooden booth, draws the curtain, eyes his gold timepiece, and waits.

I study the shoddy exterior, imagine that half-naked man struggling behind the fluttering curtain. With a shimmer of black velvet, Abscondini emerges to our applause, bows low before us, and winks.

•

Interior dressing room. Early evening. We watch Abscondini enter our mirror. A threadbare plumage of competing stripes brightens the glass. Puffs and pads overflow from jars; hairbrushes snagged with tangles are scattered on the flimsy dressing table; fallen underclothing lewdly glows on the floor, kicked under the table by Lily, not quite out of sight.

Abscondini approaches us with his hands extended, one for each. "I'm A-A-Alek A-A-Abscondini."

Lily looks away, but I meet his gaze. "A pleasure."

Abscondini invites us to dine at Le Paradis. His silence makes Lily talk even more, to fill the space. She tells him her dream of flying while I examine his silent wrists for imprints of rope and chains, something tangible to connect him to the marvellous man I have just watched onstage. I notice a thin sliver along each wrist, sealed with a perfect row of stitches. Quietly, he smoothes his suit, tugging his cuffs to cover the scars.

Abscondini sweeps away dark curls, which frame an aquiline nose, thin lips, and wildly crooked teeth that reappear with each laugh. Then he answers my question about chains.

"A volunteer snaps the cuffs around my wrists. My assistant locks me in a long wooden box. While he wraps heavy chains around the box, inside, I break free of the cuffs, using a pick hidden in my hair. With my feet, I easily push off the end of the box, which has been loosely secured with sawn-off screws.

"My assistant draws a velvet curtain to enshroud the event with mystery. The orchestra plays Wagner. At the climax of the piece, I rattle the chains, for effect. Then I draw open the curtain and emerge, hands held high. Slowly, I walk around the stage three times and bow. I am always looking for volunteers."

He grins at Lily, but he touches *my* wrist.

•

We remain sitting at the table long after the crowds have gone. When she thinks I am asleep, Iris covers my face with her grey scarf. I drift off into the darkness. In my dream, Iris and I fall from a high cliff, free for an instant and fearless. Then we plunge into a deep pool. Hands grasp our legs. I kick hard, trying to rise to the surface. The hands pull me deeper.

I take a breath: water. Iris cries and the pool becomes deeper. Murmuring voices approach. We stand mute before the large bodies.

"Nothing special but for that hip," a voice says. Father is at the table drinking whisky. Mother turns her back on us and walks toward a bright light.

"Please don't go," I say. Without a word, she vanishes into the light.

I sink deeper into the pool. The Amazing Abscondini plunges underwater in a coffin. I open my eyes. My lashes press against the rough surface of the scarf. Who am I in this darkness?

In *The Everyday Life of Side-show Freaks,* Professor Humboldt Fogg wrote, "Iris is the evil twin, while Lily embodies all that is good." If there is evil, it is also in me. If only you could see through my eyes, you would know what I am hiding.

When I cast off the scarf, Alek smiles at me. Then he looks into the mirror and meets Iris's eyes. I wait, because that is what I have learned to do.

•

Sunday morning, Iris presents me with the following set of rules:

1. You will remain silent Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays.
2. I will pass the day reading, and will not speak on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays.
3. Sundays we stay together.
4. On my days, the world exists for me, and me alone.
5. On your days, I surrender my will and allow you to go and do as you wish.
6. Do not speak unless you are spoken to.
7. Never, never interrupt.
8. Do not fidget.
9. On my days, I decide what we wear. (Please note: if you select frilly white, I will insist on crimson satin.)
10. Please, please do not make loud noises while I am in bed.

•

"CHAINED FOR LIFE." In the newspaper photograph, I juggle bowling pins while Iris tosses small white

balls. The audience forms a circle around us, revelling in our hip. I close my eyes. Beautifully alone, I drift into the most peaceful sleep. Iris wraps her arms around me and holds me like I am a child. Our guardian, Mrs. Hutton, enters our trailer and cuffs Iris on the head.

"That stumble of yours spoiled the act. You stupid girl. Who do you think you are?" Mrs. Hutton tugs at the grey sweater that clings to her like a second skin. She needs us to make her living and we could turn on her at any minute. "I never had the opportunities that you girls have. You don't know how lucky you are."

bind us, this persistent umbilical chord. In response, Iris cuts her arm in intricate patterns with a small knife until it becomes a bleeding work of art. It is the only way she knows how to feel, the only way she can release her pain. I want her to surrender to me, a spirit guide lodged deep within. If only I had said yes.

•

I lean to the side while Alek straps Iris into a straitjacket. How easily she surrenders. As he binds her, she tells him stories.

"We were once asked to leave a train

count of the fog, but I did catch a glimpse of the Reversing Falls and the insane asylum high on the cliff above.

"I wandered up the driveway and explained my business to the doctor, who wanted to know why I chose to escape underwater and not on land. He began to speak excitedly about the death wish and invited me to dine with him. We drank plenty of whisky and ate our fill of lobster, and the gentleman agreed to give me a tour of the asylum the following afternoon.

"It was like nothing I had ever seen. People sat in a large room: some stared

I rise to the ceiling, which presses down hard upon me. I want to disappear. Instead, I remain above, compelled to see everything.

I don't pretend to understand anything. All I want is to fly. I am learning to live with the family that haunts me: a mother who abandoned me, a father who does not know I exist, a guardian who pushes me onstage every night against my will, and a sister who will not leave me alone.

"Do you love me?" Iris whispers. I could embrace her now, as she did me not so long ago. Instead I whisper, "No." I want to cut these chains that

for travelling on one ticket. We were once asked to remove our dress to prove that we are one. We were once fired from a double-barrelled cannon."

He does not mind if what she says is untrue. As he binds me, he begins to tell stories of his own. The soft timbre of his voice washes over me and I, too, am no longer concerned with truth.

"Several years ago, I went to do a show in Saint John, New Brunswick. I had always wanted to visit Canada. The few who turned out for the show were largely seamen and were unimpressed by my act. After the show, I wandered through town. I didn't see much, on ac-

at the walls, some rocked back and forth, some played cards at a large table. The doctor was a curious fellow. His hair was a shock of dishevelled grey, and he stooped over like a hunchback. When I asked about a woman who sat staring at the bay, the doctor told me the story of a woman who had jumped into the Reversing Falls, in 1842: 'Her petticoats filled with air as she descended and kept her suspended on the surface of the water. She was whisked over the rapids and shocked into sanity.'"

"Maybe she was just happy to be free," I say.

Alek tightens the straps and continues.

IAN PHILLIPS

"At one point in the tour, the doctor took me past a heavily bolted cell with a narrow grille on the door. Inside the cell, a patient desperately struggled to escape from a straitjacket.

"I had never seen such a restraint. The jacket was made of canvas with an opening at the back, and the sleeves were fastened behind the man's back with leather straps and metal buckles. As the patient struggled to free himself, he thrashed against the wall and fell to his knees. The more he struggled, the tighter the straps dug into his flesh.

"'Only a madman would attempt to free himself from such a restraint,' the doctor said. I begged him to give me one of the jackets. The doctor seemed intrigued by my request and agreed to give me one if I could successfully free myself from it. He tightened the sleeves around my back with buckles and straps. Once he had me bound very tightly into the jacket, he locked me in a padded cell and observed me through the grille. For hours, he watched me as I struggled to remove the garment. Finally, I collapsed onto the floor, exhausted by my efforts.

"Eventually, I managed to use my teeth to loosen the buckles on the sleeves. Then, I undid the other buckles through the canvas and twisted out of the garment. Once I had removed the jacket, the doctor turned the key and opened the door.

"'For that,' he said, 'you deserve three.' He went to a cupboard and handed me three jackets to carry about for the show."

As Alek speaks, Iris struggles to escape. Her writhing only draws the straps deeper into her flesh. The intensity of feeling heightens her love. She wants to feel deeply, even if what she feels is pain. I am looking for a different story, a love that is easy, a mother who cared, a father who wept, someone to forgive.

•

The midway is littered with paper cups and scattered popcorn on the muddy paths between rows of sagging stalls, bent frames, torn awnings. Even the recently acquired ball toss is mud-splattered and cigarette-burned.

The clown's faces, each with its own perfect tear, create the impression of rain. Tumbleweeds of sugar spun to cotton drift by. To avoid a syrupy puddle, Lily pulls us sideways. Mud squishes between my toes and under my sandaled feet.

Through the dangle of prizes hanging from the roof of the ring toss, I see Abscondini, on his knees, wrap a chain tightly around his chest, breathe deeply, and burst it apart.

A heart could do that.

•

Mistake No. 341: Ask him about his past.

"The first time I fell in love was with Bess. She joined the circus as my assistant, but she was too sensitive and was prone to fits of sadness. She missed her family, from whom she had never been separated. When I stayed out late, I would come home to find her wearing only the ruby red shoes she wore for the show, crying, and sharpening our knives. She began to chew her nails until her fingers bled.

"Bess became famous as the Woman Who Gets Sawn in Half. People said that we were joined at the hip, that without

PLENTY

The sky, lit up like a question or
an applause meter, is beautiful
like everything else today: the leaves
in the gutters, salt stains on shoes,
the girl at the I.G.A. who looks just like
Julie Delpy, but you don't tell her—
she's too young to get the reference and
coming from you it'll just seem creepy.
So much beauty today you can't find
room for it, closets already filled
with beautiful trees and smells and
glances and clever turns of phrase.
Behind the sky there's a storm
on the way, which, with your luck,
will be a beautiful storm—dark
clouds beautiful as they arguably are,
the rain beautiful as it always is—
even lightning can be beautiful in a
scary kind of way (there's a word
for that, but let's forget it for the moment).
And maybe the sun will hang in long
enough to light up a few raindrops—
like jewels or glass or those bright beads
girls put between the letters on the
bracelets that spell out their beautiful names—
Skye or Miranda or Veranda—which isn't
a name really, although it's also a word
we use to call things what they are,
and would be a pleasant place to sit
and watch the beautiful sky, beautiful
storm, the people with their beautiful
names on their way toward the lake
in lovely clothing saying unpleasant
things over the phone about the people
they work with, all of it just adding to the
motherlode, the surfeit of beauty,
which on this day, is just a fancy way
of saying lots, too much, skid loads, plenty.

—Kevin Connolly

each other we would never survive, that we completed each other somehow. They didn't see how jealous she was of me.

"During our act, Bess climbed into a wooden box. I closed the lid. She thrust false feet (wearing identical ruby red shoes) through one side of the box and pressed her body tightly into other side. I sawed through the middle, cutting the box in half. Then I drew a curtain, recited a magic chant, and opened the curtain to reveal her standing in her red shoes, which shone like blood beneath the hem of her white dress. Soon, she began to wear those shoes to bed."

Abscondini lifts the bedcovers and reaches for my naked feet. When he enters me, I open my eyes to find him looking at Lily. "Oh baby," he says.

As I gaze at the faltering candle, the tangled clothing, and the thin man I am about to lose, I am consumed by the irrepressible hope that, one day, he will love me as much as his grief.

That night, the Woman Who Gets Sawn in Half masters a new trick. She wires Abscondini, "I have just thrust one hundred knives into my wrists. Come quick." That night, Abscondini leaves us without a word. With her, he was always the Strong Man. With me, he is weak.

•

Saturday. My day.

We sit at a Brooklyn lunch counter. I am eating a salad. Messily. For me, lettuce is never elegant. Translucent dressing drips like milk down my chin. Iris sits at my side. Observing Rule No. 2, she is silent.

When we leave the café, I see Alek. He has come back for tonight's show. He returned on last night's train after discovering the Woman Who Gets Sawn in Half in bed with the Knife Thrower.

"I want you to join my act," he says. "The dime museum has two sections. The exhibition hall displays freaks and curiosities: midgets, giants, fat ladies, bird girls, dog-faced boys. The variety hall is for shows: magicians, jugglers, clog dancers, puppeteers. We could do a double bill: the Amazing Abscondini, assisted by the Two-Headed Girl. You would always be at my side."

I have lived my entire life in someone else's shadow.

"Do you love me?" Iris whispers to him. Alek smiles at me apologetically and turns to her. I close my eyes and vanish, grateful to Iris for saving me. Even if I wanted to, I don't know how to love without an end in sight.

•

I want to chain him to the bed, to know he is mine, if only for an instant.

"Do you really think you can hold me?"

"I'd like to try," I say.

"What do you think, Lily?" Abscondini asks.

She looks up from her romance novel. "I think she wants to try."

My fingers brush blue velvet and steel. Cold metal turns in my hands as I remove his most recent acquisition, regulation handcuffs, from a wooden box lined with blue velvet. I tighten one cuff around his wrist and the other around the headboard. I snap a second pair around his free wrist and stretch his arm to Lily's side of the bed. Then I bind his feet.

When I straddle him, I bring her with me. She leans against the wall and pretends to look away as I push my fingers deep into his thick hair and remove the pick he promised not to hide. He defends himself: "In the world of illusion, there are no lies."

"The cuffs are too tight," he complains. Earlier, he said I could close them as tightly as I wanted. He's just angry that I found the pick.

"Admit you can't do it and I will release you."

He is silent. Lily tries to hand the pick back to him, but I conceal it in my own hair.

He speaks to me like I'm a child, insists I unlock him, "immediately!" But I refuse. Without surrender, love is impossible.

Lily reaches into my hair and places the pick in his hand. He opens the lock, unshackles his feet and walks away. On the dusty path, splinters of a broken mirror capture our reflection. We don't know it yet, but this is the last time the three of us will be together. Already, I feel the chains loosening and myself slipping away. ⊳

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MARK LYALL

• CITY BUILDING •

THE PAPER POMPEII

Imagination was the cornerstone of Beaver, a metropolis of skyscrapers, mad industrialists, and a game called "fraughpp."

BY ALFRED HOLDEN

The house located at 189 North Avenue, in Burlington, Vermont, is what is known as a four-square. Built in 1911, it is a two-storey cube, unpretentious but commodious, capped by a lofty pyramid—a tall hipped roof, punctuated on the four steep slopes by dormer windows. Instead of a point at the very top, a brick chimney rises forcefully near the middle of the house, through the attic's muscular framing, which supports a heavy slate roof, and out to a high, blunt perch where pigeons like to gather.

"It's sort of squire-like, being able to look down on your neighbours from up here," my friend David Barber said to me when we visited the house, on August 1, 2005. The surrounding working-class neighbourhood, where my mother and grandfather grew up, sits on a high bluff, and from the west dormer of the house there are glimpses, through trees and over house tops, of Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains, in New York state, to the west.

During the afternoon, thunderclouds rolled up the lake from the south. Because the attic gets hot in summer, the dormers are left open. When the rain came, you could hear the downpour, muffled by the slate. Members of my family have been living here since 1922, the current residents being my parents, Clem and Sylvia Holden. It's fair to say the house has a Tut's-tomb aspect to it. Treasures and trash lie indiscriminately about, one ever-morphing into the other. In the attic, under a drop cloth, a box containing a run of the first year of *Fortune* magazine. Over there, a shelf of Upton Sinclair novels. There's technology: Garrard, Lenco, and Webcor turntables, from the days of hi-fi; an operable history of Bell telephones since about 1910; movie and slide projectors that still do service at Christmas and during summer vacations. An early Eames moulded-plywood chair sits under another cloth, while near it is a box of clay my uncle Buz used to sculpt model-car entries for the General Motors Fisher Body contest. For a long time there was even an Eclipse mattress up here with a tag that read, "AS APPROVED FOR THE USE OF THE DIONNE QUINTUPLETS."

To one side, under some plastic sheeting, are toys, mostly vintage building sets. There is a heavy box of stone Anchor Blocks, from our ancestral Germany, played with by generations of children, and remnants of my brother Jeffrey's Kenner Sky Rail, including a box top

picturing the suspended vehicle, the one I remember weaving its way around futuristic towers we built during the 1963 Christmas season. Also here are some Tri-ang train sets—a C.N. freight, Canadian Pacific's Canadian, with its dome car—and my Lego Town Plan. A measure of my skill as a lobbyist before Christmas of 1966 was its price: $27.50 (about one hundred and seventy 2006 dollars). "For Xmas Alfred," I wrote brazenly on a Lego brochure, part of a substantial campaign resulting, arguably, in the biggest coup of my childhood.

But, on this rainy summer day, we were focused on something else. In a corner, David and I located large cardboard boxes, six or eight of them, dusty with coal soot from a notorious, now-defunct waterfront power plant. They were light for their size, as though there wasn't much in them, and tightly sealed with tape. I'd promised David, a kindred spirit, that within these boxes was something of an Atlantis—the great, lost metropolis of a vanished civilization.

Time machines are the stuff of fiction, but time capsules turn up everywhere. A famous one is the Westinghouse time capsule, placed at the site of the 1939 New York World's Fair, not to be opened until the year 6939. More common are the accidental time capsules—the forgotten drawer, the back of a closet. Cardboard boxes aren't the best material for making time capsules, but they served well in our watertight attic, as David and I discovered upon opening them. Inside were hundreds of handmade paper and cardboard buildings—a whole model city, as it had been packed and left nearly thirty years ago. Victorian, modernist, square, round, quadrilateral, short, tall, ordinary, and a few extraordinary, they were nested within each other such that, as they were being emptied, the contents of each box seemed to grow exponentially. Soon, the floor was filled with urban structures ranging from telephone booths to skyscrapers several feet high.

"Were you out of your minds?" David asked, as the buildings piled up, knowing just a little of the history of how, as children, my brother, cousins, and I built this tiny town, bit by bit, summer by summer. He noted the human labour represented, the sheer number of buildings, and, on closer inspection, signs of the bizarre civilization that inhabited them. This cardboard city was, on many levels, a community of signs, figurative and literal, with much of its content improbable, silly, macabre, and cuttingly satirical.

The Shady Finance Company, we saw, was a tidy, three-storey business block with a shed roof. Martin Nock offered his wares at Fire-Trap Mobile Homes & Vampire Supplies. At Shody Protection and Security, a small sign on the back door read, "WALK RIGHT IN." Towmaine's Restaurant ("LIVING ENTERTAINMENT") occupied the same building as Dr. Corpse, M.D., the municipal morgue, and Hal's Auto City (indicated in a fourth-floor window). A sign over one four-storey business block read, "Grace Smedley, Precision Tricycles." (That one I built myself, I could see by the coded dates we took to writing on our structures as we built them, in this case: "ACH 30/7/76.") A law office occupied space above a phone booth, reached by exterior stairs. *Good Housebreaking Magazine* ("Journal of Professional Burglary") took up residence in a pink business block with bars on the windows. *Swipe! Magazine* offered a competing vision of the trade from its own four-storey block across town.

Most of the buildings were free-standing, custom-created to fit a particular spot on our city's map, such that the whole went together like a three-dimensional puzzle. No building is known to have gone astray, although the key map indicating exactly how everything fits together has, so a puzzle it truly is.

At a glance, this was a city of small business and endlessly gothy, arguably healthy, irreverence (partially inspired by a compilation of Charles Addams cartoons found on the camp bookshelf). Funeral homes such as Diemart ("DISCOUNT FUNERALS") were numerous, as though people could hardly wait to go, while Count Alucard's Fright Club, its offerings to the public vague, was designed by my cousin Lynn Sawyer in a style of dungeon adapted to Main Street—entry through a guillotine-like contraption of bars.

Main Street, Everytown, appeared to be the model from which this city grew, a community of tightly packed business blocks rising from the efforts and enterprises of its citizens—some good, such as Otto Flatte (musical supplies) and G. J. Blight (tree surgeon), some questionable, such as Bill Bogus (printer of bank notes), and Pierre DeCline (stockbroker). One of the more active small-business owners—at least by count of the many matchbox-sized properties on which his name appeared—was Ned Erp, whose storefront portfolio included Erp's Dirt & Dust, Ned's Erpburger, Erp's Discount Horse Entrails, Erp's Brand Name Junk, Erp's Discount Rocks, and Erp's 7-Day Old Discount Fish Shop.

On emptying the boxes, it became clear that, like the real world, a handful of large corporations and dominant families ran this city. J. Milford Squigley held fort in his "multi-national headquarters," a nineteen-sixties–era Le Corbusier–style podium, with its second-storey overhanging the first. Its twin towers simultaneously reflected the shape of the era's Quaker Oats box (from which they were made), and the brutalist style then in vogue. Squigley seems to have had his fingers in a department store, discount accordions, and a Squigley's Diner, whose menu, if you trust the specials listed in the window, included yak eyes and giraffe steaks. (On another corner, Geoff's Giraffes, a pet shop, sold the live article.)

An also-ran family, the Nosdurs, headquartered its cabal in an orange eleven-storey building whose tower was just one window wide. They positioned themselves as rivals of the Rudsons (their name was even Rudson spelled backward), but the real rivalry in this city—and the region—was between the Rudsons, whose many members had their fingers in businesses both big and small, and one Grace L. Ferguson, who, according to the 1960 Bob Newhart comedy skit she was stolen from, ran an airline and storm-door company. As on Newhart's LP, here she was cast as a grasping, greedy Leona Helmsley type. Headquarters for the airline division, a deliberately bare-bones operation, was a tiny, two-storey, two-window-wide purple and orange box. But Ferguson's corporate headquarters was one of the tallest, most imposing buildings in town—a soaring, slim red cardboard edifice, its modernist tower with just three sides.

The Ferguson tower contrasted with the Rudson empire's stepped-back skyscraper, three feet tall and reminiscently Empire State Building–ish. Nominal head of the family was Bunkabard (Bunky) Rudson, a buffoonish young man who drove an olive-coloured Oldsmobile (the town was fully inhabited by miniature Matchbox toy cars and their ilk). The Rudsons had interests in everything from airlines to outboard motors ("Everude") to fast food, including Rudson Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches, a one-storey building with two pieces of bread floating over

its roof, layers of brown and red felt acting as the filling.

In comparison to the post-9/11 era, the nineteen-seventies seems like an age of innocence. But we were reminded by these playful, homemade artifacts that no, it wasn't. Elections shaped this fantasy town and so, ultimately, did real-world events. The egotistical Bunky was also a political figure, faintly modelled on U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy, who also drove an Oldsmobile. On one of the Rudson family enterprise's buildings is the painted sign: "BUNKY FOR KING" (the years '48, '52, '56, '60, '64, and '68 are crossed out; apparently 1972 was on the horizon when the billboard was last revised). In a small, five-storey building, one window wide, could be found the Idee [*sic*] Amin Charm School. The big event of the era is hinted at by graffiti drawn by one of us on the side of R. Weardly's drugstore: "UP WITH NIXON." U.S. President Richard Nixon's troubles dominated public discourse in the early seventies, and my cousins the Sawyers, from Washington, D.C., were naturally well-versed. On our imaginary city's storefronts and signs, up popped takeoffs on the names of prominent Watergate characters—then household words in the U.S., now nearly forgotten—most notably the storefront of Rebozo the Clown Amusements, a reference to Watergate figure Charles "Bebe" Rebozo, a friend of Nixon's who accepted, on the president's behalf, a hundred-thousand-dollar campaign contribution from the millionaire Howard Hughes. Innocent we might have been, but we weren't naïve.

We called our city Beaver, which sounds more virtuous than those shady characters inhabiting it, or their strange enterprises, or all the architecture of paper, ink, and Scotch tape seems to justify. The name was strictly a practical matter, the brand stamped on yellow fireplace bricks that were lying around, but knowing that tells us the city's origins.

The story begins nearly a century ago, in 1914, when a plumbing contractor, Harry Wheelock, built an Adirondack-style summer camp (the term "cottage" is not used in the region) in the dark, lovely woods of Coates Island, just six miles from the house at 189 North Avenue. My mother's parents bought the camp in 1946, and ever since it's been a family gathering place in the summer months. As a youngster and teenager I'd do what I could to extend my stay when my cousins came.

Many of us have long assumed Coates Island trees aren't in a hurry—can't be—because of the thin soil and clay on the rocky island. It was that very clay, combined with gravity, that caused the camp's original limestone fireplace to sink and shift toward the lake until it had to be dismantled—a noisy, disruptive project, lasting most of the summer of 1964, and still remembered with regret. The brick replacement was a handyman's special, lacking details such as the original's masonry arch over the top, which let smoke out the sides but deflected dangerous sparks back down the chimney.

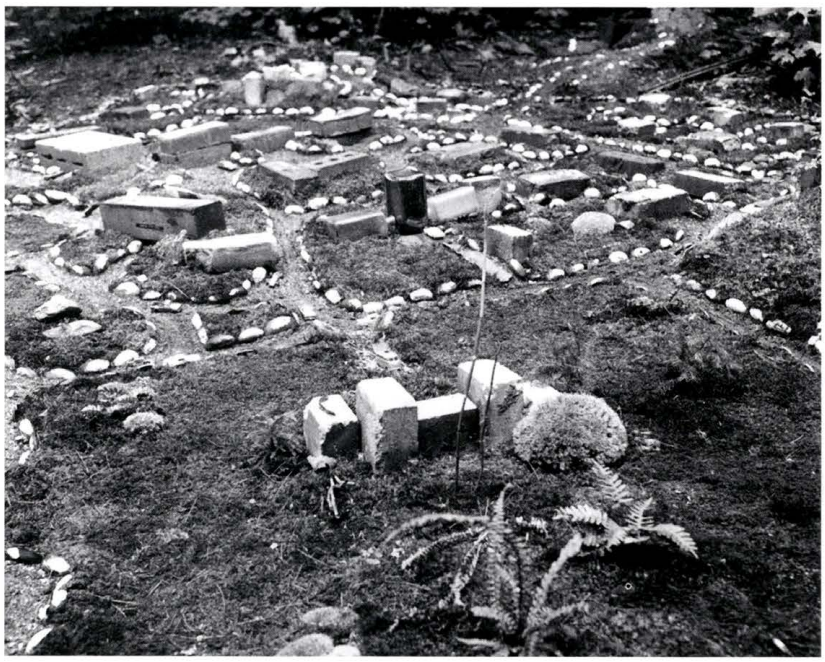
But cataclysmic events are not without their positive outcomes. The event released materials and energies throughout Camp Cedar Ledge that shaped us for decades. A pile of sand dumped near the garage, not used up in the making of mortar to lay bricks for the new fireplace, became a play area. We drove around in the sand with Dinky, Corgi, and Matchbox cars, and sometime in the summer of 1967, we began grouping bricks into a village we called Boston.

In succeeding summers, in the hands of young town planners, Boston grew rapidly along pastoral, suburban lines. "I think of it as having evolved from making mud pies with [my sister] Lynn

up there," my cousin Carol Sawyer remembers today. It was controversial from the start, due to the materials and methods used. "I remember it met with opposition from adults who wanted the parking space and objected to rocks in the woods being denuded of their moss to make our city's front lawns," says Carol. The bricks from the demolished fireplace, we decided, were convincing abstractions as buildings: hardy (they could be left out all winter) and versatile (they could be stacked and cantilevered like Expo 67's Habitat).

We strip-mined the ancient rocks and sides of the cliffs of their moist moss coverings to use as lawn. As supplies ran low near the camp, we'd go on poaching expeditions far into the boulder-strewn woods. We also took rowboat trips to the other side of the island, to a cove near the camp of our other cousins (on our dad's side), the Laidmans, where we would gather bucketfuls of freshwater clamshells washed up on a pebble beach. These black-and-white shells we used as curbing, to outline the streets. They achieved an original, pleasing, and urbane effect. We'd transplant hemlock seedlings and columbine flowers to gardeny Boston, both of which looked good on the landscape in combination with the geometric shapes of the bricks. We transplanted various other plants, from walking ferns to domes of an odd puffy moss that grew in circular mounds on dead wood. Since they weren't far from home, most of the flora survived well enough. At season's end, we'd lay plastic sheeting over the whole thing to minimize winter damage and keep leaves and needles off. A fringe benefit was that the clear cover created a terrarium effect, keeping Boston clean and moist and extending the season a bit. We assigned our aliases (I was Alfred Molden) nice lots, and put mansions on them. Lynn (Leitchen Treebird) had a thick piece of purple Vermont roofing slate to park her Matchbox Lincoln Continental on. Her estate was well-landscaped with ferns and rocks. My brother, Jeff (no alias), drew up a map, and from his numbered key I see that he, I, and the Sawyer cousins Carol (Carol Harbog), Brian (Nairb Reywas), and Lynn were all inhabitants. Two of the Laidman cousins, Stuart and Andrew, also took up residency.

By 1969, when I was eleven, with the cousins relatively close in age, there seemed no way to curb our desires to develop these Vermont woods. We began planning and building a whole region of satellite cities. Sprouting deeper and deeper into the forest were clusters of bricks from the expired fireplace, and now whatever else we could scrounge that made convincing buildings, including wooden blocks and glass booze bottles, mined under Uncle Alan Sawyer's supervision, from an old dump on the property. There was Springfield, behind the garage. We located Mountainville high on the cliffs, as close to the edge as we dared—then and now a beautiful spot, where towering eastern white pines have engineered out competition by laying a luxurious pinky-brown mulch of dry pine needles that matt down so nothing else can grow. The cliff area was also cottage country for Boston, below. Each of us pretentiously developed, for our aliases, luxurious summer homes at choice rock outcroppings.



Boston, with its moss lawns, brick houses, and ferns, 1969.

All over the place appeared villages whose names, such as Carol's Cave and Jeff's Rock, mirrored long-standing territorial claims among us. The names of Septic City, Leeching Fields, and Flushing Meadows reflected the 1970 installation of the camp's new septic tank. Next to an oak rose the town of Rudson, the name a play on "sudson," the suds being the real-life intermittent rivers created when anyone washing dishes in the camp kitchen finished up and dumped the plastic tubs of grey water outside (supposedly to "save" the septic tank). Rudson was never more than a hamlet, actually, but the name was attached to one of the power families of the state, the aforementioned Rudsons.

Further west of the camp, into forbidding woods, and past what we called the Poison Ivy Preserve, appeared the villages of Treton, Lone Swine, Birch Heights, and, finally, the Brasilia of the empire, Hillton.

The first Hillton was too daring, laid out Boston-like with bricks as buildings, amid sharp protruding rocks on a steep, eroding slope. On Jeff's trail maps of the island, he called this area Dead Tree Ridge. The forest canopy above was so thick the lower branches of the ancient cedars there were starved for light and died off, creating a dimly lit wood of craggy, twisted dead branches. In 1971, we moved Hillton to a more gently sloping spot where a big rock jutted out toward the lake (though Old Hillton remained marked on my cousin Brian's map). Like Brasilia, Hillton suffered from its remoteness. A colour slide I took with my Kodak Instamatic around 1972 shows nothing of the park-like grooming of Boston. At Hillton, leaves and forest litter falling from above triumphed constantly.

These towns all had to be connected, of course, by road and by air. The latter

OSKAR "BUZ" HEININGER

was easy. We cut out plywood planks in the shape of runways, coated them with polyurethane, and laid them on a flat spot with the usual strategically arranged bricks for airport terminals. The fleet was my own collection of Revell, Hawk, and Airfix plastic models—classics of period air travel, including Lockheed Electras, Vickers Viscounts and Vanguards, Convair 880s and 990s, and various Boeing and Douglas jets. One year, I built a cardboard model of Washington's Dulles airport—Eero Saarinen's masterpiece, with the roof that dips in the middle—and then waterproofed it with a coating of LePage BondFast glue (which wasn't waterproof, and that forest insects ate).

As in real life, road building proved a more taxing undertaking. Surviving maps show dotted lines proposing an ambitious network of four-lane highways linking the three states of Cliffton (Boston, Mountainville), Trefernia (Hillton), and, eventually, Middiland (Beaver) as roughly a triangle.

Unlike the urban visionary Robert Moses, we were not always able to finish what we started, but much did get built. The need for bridges and maintenance challenged our resources and ingenuity, but produced constructs that were worthy feats. The rule was that surfaces had to be passable by Matchbox; realism and a consistent, convincing look were the requirements. The basic engineering was to strip away surface leaves and needles, down to the soil, surface the roads with sifted sand from the sand pile (a dwindling resource, eventually; the rougher sand sifted out was used for "dirt" roads). We'd line the roads with twigs, filling some gaps with gravel or soil, and bridging others with boards cut to fit.

When fresh, they looked good. But driving them by the rules (no flying cars) proved tiring, and nature responded to our intrusion with endless rain, wind, and leaves, and the push of nearby ferns and other plants to take back their territory.

But the busiest corridor got its superhighway: the B–BE, for Boston–Beaver Expressway. It led from the sand pile next to the garage, down the hill, somehow (curves and switchbacks, maybe tunnels) across a stone stairway—built over a period of years by Uncle Alan, from dismantled fireplace boulders—past the giant red oak next to the back door, down the east side of the camp, and into the cellar through a slatted door.

Like Boston, Beaver began as bricks, but its location opened other possibilities. Lake Champlain summer camps were usually built on posts, with dirt underneath enclosed only by lattice or wood slats. Because the land slopes down, a large area under the camp's big front porch is useful for storing small boats, motors, life jackets, fishing rods, and other dock gear.

As very young children, we played in the dirt under the camp, around the stumps of trees cut down when it was built. It had become dry and granular, turning to clay when wet. We could see that the thin layer of rich, dark soil we found in our road building in the forest had a not-too-fertile foundation.

At one end of the area under the camp a long, narrow table with checkerboard designs applied as decals had been left. We painted a network of streets over it, and placed yellow Beaver bricks from

the fireplace demolition as buildings. But what worked outdoors wasn't as satisfying here. Since 1967, when Boston began, when I was nine years old, our skills and ambitions had grown, and sometime in 1970, the first cardboard building was placed.

Browsing the boxes in the attic at 189 North Avenue, in 2005, I saw that building—an elongated colonial-style structure, white with black shutters, and rather elegant. I recalled that it was positioned diagonally at the northwest corner of the table and declared to be the parliament building. This structure, like most of the early ones, was made from scrap cardboard obtained by my father, Clem, from his office at the National Parks Service of Canada, in Ottawa. He was involved in a government grants program advertised on one side of this cardboard.

"BOURSES D'ETUDES" and "SCHOLARSHIPS" you will read inside the Spongy Worm Apartments, and many other Beaver buildings. (Coincidently, the cardboard also carried the National Parks logo: the seal of a beaver sitting on his stick home.) The other side of the big sheets was blank, and made excellent construction paper; it was deliciously white and inviting to marker-pen ink, watercolour paints, and crayons. The paper was frequent cargo in our long trips by Volkswagen from Ottawa to Vermont.

One dry run for Beaver was a crude city built by Jeff and me in the attic of our home on Renfrew Avenue, in Ottawa's Glebe area, starting in the fall of 1967. We put the *bourses d'etudes* cardboard to extensive use building freeways and factories. Toilet-paper and wrapping-paper rolls served as smokestacks. This was the Cleveland of model cities—immense and chaotic, filling the whole attic.

On the Sawyer side, "I think the closest precedent for Beaver from our family was large structures of wood blocks we would make in the basement, in D.C.," my cousin Carol relates. "Cityscapes built to scale for Matchbox cars, including elevated freeways and office towers. We also had a few stray Lincoln Logs."

When the Ottawa attic was finished, in 1969, the industrial city had to go, and a new, finer, more detailed one was constructed by me with my school chum David Stanley, who lived a dozen or so houses east. Slides I took of this city show large cardboard skyscrapers, their proportions reflecting the full dimensions of the sheets of *bourses d'etudes* paper they were made from. Visible in some images are a sprinkling of smaller cardboard structures, but our Lego bricks, Kenner sets, Anchor Blocks, and Tri-ang train sets provided most of the architecture and infrastructure. A structure made from a lesser-known set, Super City, is also visible.

My parents have home movies from the mid-nineteen-sixties showing that my brother and I were building cities even earlier, when we still lived in the Montreal suburb of Pointe-Claire. One brief clip in a now-fading eight-millimetre reel, marked "A Day With the Holdens," shows me and my brother scampering around an impressive set-up combining Tri-ang electric trains and the Aurora road-race set that Uncle Buz gave us, probably for Christmas, 1963. Everything seems to be working at once, which, as I recall, was a feat.

The problem with the projects involving building sets was there were never enough parts. The lid of a box of Anchor Blocks emphasizes our frustration. It shows a boy and a girl at a table, having completed, apparently from the blocks in that set, an impressive complex with twin towers. The backdrop is a great urban skyline, slightly abstracted. Their approving father, in pinstripe pants and neat blue-and-black tie, is seated near the model, inspecting it. Flanking the image are smaller drawings, including two monumental bridges, also apparently made from Anchor Blocks. But we knew from experience you couldn't build any of those things with the contents of our box.

The lobbying for Lego, through 1966, arose from the same defect. From the jaws of victory that Christmas came the discovery, later, that there were barely enough parts to build the town shown on the cover, notwithstanding the beaming boy and a girl, updated versions of the Anchor Block kids. We weren't obsessed about the parts shortage, which was a common reality, but the seeds of discontent were there, and they grew, almost literally, in the bricks, moss and ferns that became Boston, in the shift in the attic in Ottawa. The drive was to cardboard, and the road to Beaver.

Surprisingly, Beaver did not die as we grew older with each passing summer, but grew more sophisticated and absurd. It reached a pinnacle in 1976, when I was eighteen. Over time, the buildings grew ever taller, stranger, and better, increasingly becoming a shell for the characters we created to live in them. "The real root cause of Beaver," Carol told me in 2005, "is a love of storytelling and narrative. All the absurd names of businesses, the characters. The pleasure in cooking up further absurdities." Carol calls the camp project a "fictional city," which suggests something more than models, that incorporates the importance of the character, whose existence was supported by increasingly elaborate fictional events. Brian would comb through magazines and find pictures of faces that, uncannily, seemed to match the mind's-eye appearance of particular characters. A biography card shows Grace L. Ferguson, the airline magnate, for instance, as a well-coiffed senior dame, wearing sunglasses, looking over cards picturing buildings, presumably real estate. "Age: in excess of 80. Style: very clever, volatile. Hobbies: deep-sea fishing. Residence: Broken Arms, Beaver."

One of Brian's inventions were elections, carried over, Carol thinks, from earlier races between stuffed animals at their house in Washington. In Vermont, we'd run them by cutting up hundreds of tiny pieces of paper, on which we'd written vote increments, an equal total for each candidate. We'd then draw them for a specified period of time. At some point the polls would close, and we'd count the ballots, and have a winner or a runoff. I see by the records for the 1974 national elections that J. Milford Squigley beat Count Igor Vicoius and Treetop Wunderunder for the governorship of Trefernia. Petunia Gumbody took Middiland in a race against Athram Nosdur, J. Herbert Praetell, and Jeremiah Codfish. Beaver elected Kenneth Cinycle, forty-nine, mayor. Platform: "anti-everything."

"It only seemed natural to cook up our own elaborate plots or drawings," Carol says. But, she thinks, "another factor in Beaver being created is probably the fact that Brian doesn't like to swim. Think what there is for kids to do at camp: swim, go out in one of the boats, swim . . . play records on the

Victrola, walk in the woods, swim, play cards, help the adults (pretty low on the list), go into town. Subtract the ones that aren't fun to do when it's rainy, and voila—a paper city is born, a participatory art/sport that many can play all day, an ongoing comic narrative."

One of Brian's inventions was a game called "fraughpp"—the national sport. No one knew how it was played, only that large sticks were involved. Brian managed to clip from magazines lots of photos of people holding sticks, from boaters wearing life jackets to seniors holding canes, and use them to put together the *Fraughpp News,* the sport's official organ. Beaver's team was the Pollutocrats (coach, Bealls Mutterly). Leading goalies at the time included Cashewbutter and LeToad. Sponsors who advertised inside the stadium Brian built for Beaver included the Lumpy Bread Company, Nosdie (the Nosdur's run at competing with Diemart), and Ned's Barnacle Removal (another member of the Erp group).

The *Fraughpp News* reported that one elderly player, the Awksford Goobers' Voxsmith "Ace" Durk, "had a big night scoring 108 points as Awksford downed the Sprigfield [*sic*] TRILLIUMS 67–44¼."

The author and his extended family, at Camp Cedar Ledge, circa 1963. Back row: Alan Sawyer, Erika Sawyer, Dana Sawyer; second row: Clem Holden, Erna Heininger, Lynn Sawyer, Alfred Heininger; third row: Sylvia Holden, Diane Sawyer; front row: Alfred Holden, Brian Sawyer, Jeff Holden, Carol Sawyer.

The building process was a rite of summer with its tensions and fallout. Alan Sawyer once famously said that humidity at the camp was so high you could "untie a pretzel." It also buckled cardboard and led to mould. Add to that the fact the camp's wood-slat skirt offered no protection from wind, which blew buildings over, and rain, which destroyed them, and it is clear both Beaver's creation and survival were miracles. We dealt with the problems creatively, with partial success. Scrounging around the camp we discovered an ancient piece of canvas that had been cut to hang inside the screened-in front porch, a kind of storm curtain that we appropriated and hung just inside the slats. But the heavy, opaque fabric stole our light, so we switched to plastic, stapling the translucent sheets to the wooden slats. As young sailors, we should have been more aware of the power of the wind, which quickly tore the plastic away, and we took to nailing boards to the inside of the slats, spreading the load away from the staples.

None of these solutions truly worked, and Beaver regularly got blown away and rained on, something the boxed collection testifies to today, in running ink, leaning towers, and warped walls. Still, Beaver grew. When the long game table was filled, we made new real estate from gypsum board found in the garage. Sporadic urban renewal displaced some buildings; others were rebuilt. But there was nothing planned about it—our buildings grew taller and our city spread out, presenting visitors under the camp with quite the skyline.

Design and construction took place either on an old oak table in the relatively comfortable living room, or in an area of the front porch without screens, where we set up a long folding table from town. As the creations got bigger, the term "project building" came into use, shorthand for skyscrapers, sports stadia, factories, and other complexes that took days to draw and assemble. Tensions ebbed and flowed, among siblings and cousins. "I think I resented how much time making Beaver took away from Brian playing with me," Carol says. She still managed to create such tidy jobs as the Porter's Slum Visitors Center (dated August 8, 1974, with bars on the windows and a second-floor back door that opened into thin air), Porter's Slum being the original table on which Beaver was built.

Though we'd broken free of the constraints of toy building sets, materials were never as plentiful as we'd have liked. Besides improvising with cracker and booze boxes, and the then-new Pringles canisters, we went on expeditions to Ben Franklin, a five-and-dime in the North Avenue Shopping Center, to purchase Bristol board (twenty-five cents a sheet, as a price tag inside a completed building attests). We also used up old campaign signs from municipal elections in Ottawa. Ed Henry, Tom McDougall, Joe Cassey, where are you today? Your campaign signs helped build quite another municipality than the one you wanted to serve.

Carol remembers "a lot of riffing on ideas, and cackling laughter" in the building of Beaver. It was, my older cousin Diane Sawyer remembers, an infectious project. "Eventually, it captured everyone's imagination, so that sooner or later the older kids and even some of the adults got pulled into the project," she says. Her future husband, Gerry Yuskauskus, built Gerry's Roofing Company, among others, and Uncle Alan carved a statue of the municipal hero Tweedledorf L. Schneidelfinck, which we placed in a square (the only thing resembling a park Beaver had). "I remember," Diane recalls, "one night at the round table [in the living room], all

OSKAR "BUZ" HEININGER

of us bent over our plans, the yellow light from the paper shades on the chandelier, the skinny markers that were always running out of ink. I loved the feeling of working separately, but together." She compares it to SimCity, the computer game where players build a virtual town, complete with inhabitants and infrastructure. "I recently read an article in a teen magazine called *JVibe.* It was written by a seventeen-year-old about his childhood fascination with . . . SimCity. As the creator of these worlds, with the power to assign body types and attributes—even happy or sad interactions—he felt that he was playing at being God."

A set of Anchor Blocks, such as we played with at 189 North Avenue, is pictured in the first catalogue for a series of building-toy exhibits the Canadian Centre for Architecture, in Montreal, has been staging since 1990. In the text opposite, the architect and author Witold Rybczynski describes construction toys as "a magical journey to another world." He, too, sees a godlike aspect, where for young people, miniaturization "reverses the usual order of things." They are given "an opportunity to control and dominate their surroundings."

Other toys our extended family knew as kids are sprinkled through the centre's catalogues, including Lincoln Logs, Erector sets (a U.S. version of British Meccano, handed down from Uncle Buz's childhood), the plasticky Design-a-House that Buz, who was an industrial designer, gave us, and Kenner Girder and Panel building sets. The exhibit catalogues also include German toy villages similar to one that Helene Neumann, the sister of my grandmother, who remained in Germany, played with in her own childhood in the early twentieth century. She noticed my enthusiasm when I played with it on a visit with my mother in 1971, and gave the toys to me.

As we shaped these building toys, how did they shape us? Rybczynski suggests the obvious: "We know that architectural toys influence certain children in their later choice of vocation." If he is thinking about architects, the epitome is the greatest of all, Frank Lloyd Wright, whose geometric designs reflect the toys he had in kindergarten. They were no mean toys, actually, but famous ones created in the nineteenth century by kindergarten's pioneer, the German educator Friedrich Froebel. Kindergarten was one of the era's phenomena, an educational innovation. Froebel's twenty "gifts" were an important part of the program, a sequence of educational toys that included building blocks, weaving papers, sewing kits, modeling clay, and other building projects.

Norman Brosterman, an architect who collected many of the construction toys acquired by the Canadian Centre for Architecture, knew of Froebel's creations and makes the case in his book *Inventing Kindergarten* that a whole spectrum of great art and achievement of the twentieth century was unleashed by kindergarten and Froebel's constructive gifts to the children of the nineteenth. Wright was one in a million—actually, "one of *millions* of people, including most of the so-called 'form givers' of the modern era, who were indoctrinated, in effect programmed, by the spiritual geometry of the early kindergarten," Brosterman writes. He plausibly calls the innovation "the seed pearl of the modern era."

Such was Froebel's influence that it was still detectable in Beaver, through such modernist buildings as J. Milford Squigley's Le Corbusier–style headquarters. Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, who adopted the name Le Corbusier, was another notable who had absorbed Froebel's kindergarten geometry as it conquered Europe's education system.

Past and future both seem visible in Beaver's cubist Ricardo de Hoya Candy Company, with its jutting, irregular walls and angles that, in the summer of 1976, uncannily anticipated the postmodern expressionism of Frank Gehry.

Froebel might not have anticipated, but surely would have approved of, the breakaway from the building sets Beaver represented. Interestingly, *Inventing Kindergarten* notes, discussing the prescribed uses of the gifts in kindergarten classes, "solid forms made good, albeit symbolic, models of objects . . . a stack of cubes a bed, and the more prismatic building blocks an entire miniature town."

Beaver was not the work of kindergarten students, but by 1976, virtual adults. It

was a detailed city, detailed in its architecture, filled out with people, politics, and a satirized (not sanitized) modern economy. It was not unlike Dominion, the model city created by the Canadian cartoonist Seth as on offshoot of "Clyde Fans," a serialized story from his comic book, *Palookaville.*

Seth's buildings, displayed at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2005, contrast with Beaver's in their greater realism and a sophisticated greyness, though they seem every bit as improvised from nothing as Beaver's, made from cardboard and paint. Dominion grew, Seth told *Comic Art* magazine, in 2004, as part of his planning for "Clyde Fans." But, like Beaver, "it got a bit out of hand and became a project in itself."

None of Beaver's creators, in real life, became architects, though they largely followed the careers of their Beaver aliases. The lawyer Nairb Reywas (Brian) is a lawyer, practising in Manchester Center, Vermont. The artist Carol Harbog (Carol) is an artist, living in Vancouver. Leitchen Treebird (Lynn) became an Annapolis, Maryland–based language specialist—close enough to her artsy alias in brick-and-shell Boston. My brother Jeff (no alias), who charted the territory in the woods, today maps forests for a paper company in Federal Way, Washington. My alias, that Alfred Molden, was a lawyer. In real life I became a journalist—though one who often writes about cities, real and imagined.

Viewed from the twenty-first century, the buildings and people of nineteen-seventies Beaver appear neither real nor virtual, but occupy a vivid space in between. Says my cousin Diane, an erstwhile Beaver conspirator, a fan, and now a graphic artist based in Boston (the real Boston): "I think that Beaver represents the best of what was good about our childhoods—the time and space to dream up the ridiculous and the marvellous, and the time to play, to build, or make those ideas real." ⊳⊂

Alfred Holden lives in the Annex. He is an assistant financial editor for the Toronto Star, and the City Building columnist for the Annex Gleaner. He also contributed to the book uTOpia: Towards a New Toronto (Coach House, 2005). The city of Beaver, along with many of its artifacts, will be on display at the Design Exchange, 234 Bay Street, from June 21 to July 9, 2006.

TADDLE CREEK RECOMMENDS

Taddle Creek does not publish book reviews. However, the following books were recently written by contributors to the magazine and are, thus, highly recommended. (• indicates books containing work originally published in Taddle Creek.)

Joyland, by Emily Schultz (ECW, 2006; $24.95). As the legendary Gene Shalit might say, it was a joy to read *Joyland.* The dark mood of Emily's debut novel is offset by lots and lots of fun references to classic eighties arcade games. The only way the book could be better would be if an entire chapter had been devoted to Mr. Do! Oh, the hours *Taddle Creek* spent in Andrew Gordon's basement playing Mr. Do! on the Colecovision. At least there's a chapter named after Venture. (Hmm, *Taddle Creek* just went and looked Mr. Do! up on-line, and it now looks kind of dull. How can that be?)

• *Creamsicle Stick Shivs,* by John Stiles (Insomniac, 2006; $11.95). *Taddle Creek* originally thought this book was about video games too, given the mention of Dig Dug four pages in, but it turns out Stiles was talking about actual digging. *Taddle Creek* should have known. At least the book includes a nice balance of poems set in Stiles' new home of London. (Mr. Do! was kind of a Dig Dug rip off, wasn't it? What a stupid game. Damn it! All those wasted hours!)

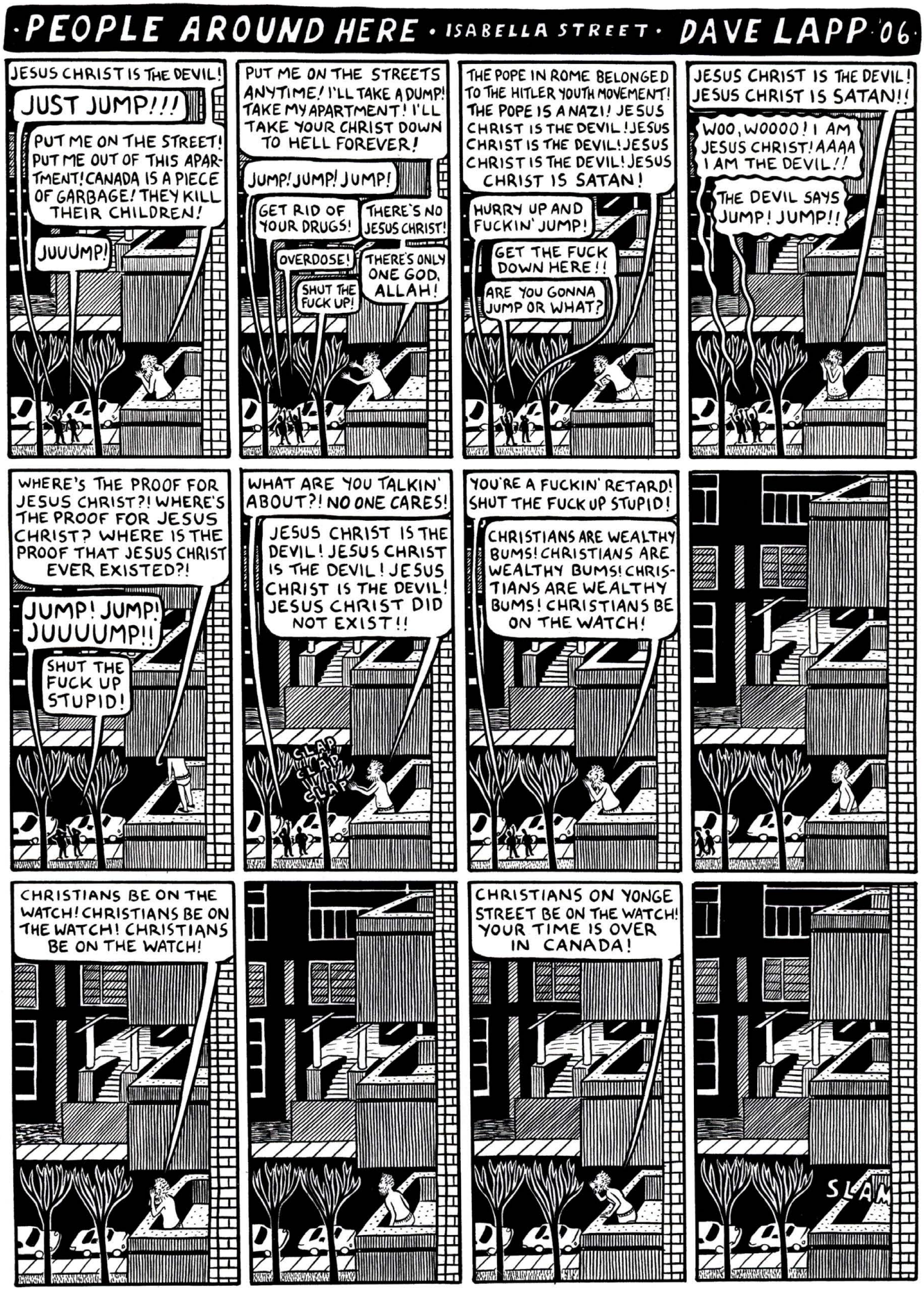
• *Apostrophe,* by Bill Kennedy and Darren Wershler-Henry (ECW, 2006; $19.95). Jiminy Cricket, don't even try to read this book in one sitting. *Taddle Creek* recommends no more than ten pages at a time. Every "automated poem" within *Apostrophe* is the literary equivalent of one of those 3-D art posters (though less of a sham—*Taddle Creek* has never actually seen a clear picture in one of those damn things). If you have a coffee table, put it there and pick it up every so often. If you don't have a coffee table, pick one up while you're out at the bookstore buying *Apostrophe.*

• *Liar,* by Lynn Crosbie (Anansi, 2006; $18.95). Reading this hundred-and-forty-page breakup poem, you'll both feel you lived through Crosbie's relationship and be glad you didn't. The whole thing sounds quite awful. But Lynn and her unidentified (!) ex's misery is the reader's gain, as the book really is a fascinating read. Don't listen to *Quill & Quire.* Self-indulgence rocks. Just look at all that blathering about Mr. Do!, above. That's good stuff.

The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting, by Darren Wershler-Henry (M. & S., 2005; $29.99). Before reading this book, *Taddle Creek* thought it loved typewriters—those wonderful pieces of machinery that, like the dial telephone, no one under the age of twenty-five understands how to use anymore. Turns out *Taddle Creek* only kind of likes typewriters. Although, the magazine did come away amazed and baffled at just how much time, energy, and money have been spent over the years trying to get monkeys to type. Cure cancer already. Everyone knows monkeys are good for two things: smoking and roller skating.

Frogments from the Frag Pool, by Gary Barwin and Derek Beaulieu (Mercury, 2005; $17.95). As much as *Taddle Creek* loves Gary Barwin, it recommends this book with slight hesitation, for no other reason than that it includes a multitude of shaped poetry, something the magazine usually finds quite icky and distasteful. It's pretty much all shaped poetry, in fact. At least there's not a poem in the shape of an apple formed from the letters a-p-p-l-e, with a w-o-r-m coming out of the top. *Taddle Creek* really hates that one. No, *Frogments from the Frag Pool* is pure Gary (half of it anyway), and a book fans of his work should enjoy.

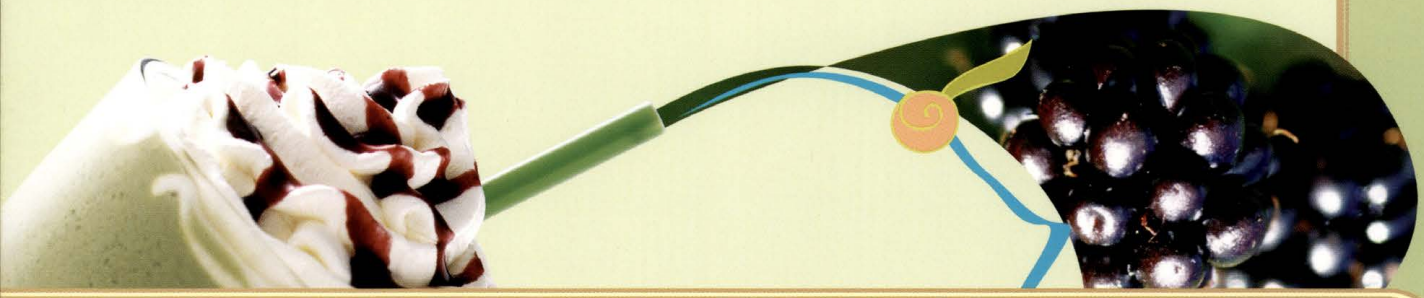
Blind Crescent, by Michelle Berry (Penguin, 2005; $22). *Taddle Creek* is glad to see moving to Peterborough hasn't drained all the life out of Michelle Berry. Her latest novel, about a group of neighbours living in a cul-de-sac, is quite enthralling. The magazine is embarrassed to admit it didn't even hear about its being published last year. It took Michelle's return to the magazine's pages in this issue for *Taddle Creek* to discover this modern masterpiece. More time at the bookstore, less time searching Coleco fan sites, *Taddle Creek* guesses.


·PEOPLE AROUND HERE · ISABELLA STREET · DAVE LAPP '06·
JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL!
JUST JUMP!!!
PUT ME ON THE STREET! PUT ME OUT OF THIS APARTMENT! CANADA IS A PIECE OF GARBAGE! THEY KILL THEIR CHILDREN!
JUUUMP!
PUT ME ON THE STREETS ANYTIME! I'LL TAKE A DUMP! TAKE MY APARTMENT! I'LL TAKE YOUR CHRIST DOWN TO HELL FOREVER!
JUMP! JUMP! JUMP!
GET RID OF YOUR DRUGS!
THERE'S NO JESUS CHRIST!
OVERDOSE!
THERE'S ONLY ONE GOD, ALLAH!
SHUT THE FUCK UP!
THE POPE IN ROME BELONGED TO THE HITLER YOUTH MOVEMENT! THE POPE IS A NAZI! JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL! JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL! JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL! JESUS CHRIST IS SATAN!
HURRY UP AND FUCKIN' JUMP!
GET THE FUCK DOWN HERE!!
ARE YOU GONNA JUMP OR WHAT?
JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL! JESUS CHRIST IS SATAN!!
WOO, WOOOO! I AM JESUS CHRIST! AAAA I AM THE DEVIL!!
THE DEVIL SAYS JUMP! JUMP!!
WHERE'S THE PROOF FOR JESUS CHRIST?! WHERE'S THE PROOF FOR JESUS CHRIST? WHERE IS THE PROOF THAT JESUS CHRIST EVER EXISTED?!
JUMP! JUMP! JUUUUMP!!
SHUT THE FUCK UP STUPID!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT?! NO ONE CARES!
JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL! JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL! JESUS CHRIST IS THE DEVIL! JESUS CHRIST DID NOT EXIST!!
CLAP CLAP CLAP
YOU'RE A FUCKIN' RETARD! SHUT THE FUCK UP STUPID!
CHRISTIANS ARE WEALTHY BUMS! CHRISTIANS ARE WEALTHY BUMS! CHRISTIANS ARE WEALTHY BUMS! CHRISTIANS BE ON THE WATCH!
CHRISTIANS BE ON THE WATCH! CHRISTIANS BE ON THE WATCH! CHRISTIANS BE ON THE WATCH!
CHRISTIANS ON YONGE STREET BE ON THE WATCH! YOUR TIME IS OVER IN CANADA!
SLAM

STEAM WHISTLE
PILSNER

DO ONE THING REALLY, REALLY WELL.

your taste buds will *bloom*



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