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**THE IMPRESSMENT GANG JOURNAL ASSOCIATION** is a registered not for profit society dedicated to publishing quarterly literary journals. Our mandate is to publish great new writing and contribute to the critique and review of Canadian literature.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

PEARL CHAN, CLAY EVEREST & CASSIE GUINAN

We sat, a triangle around a circular table. This is how we began: a couple questions and a pitcher of Rickard's Red at Gorsebrook. We wondered where we, as young writer-reader-critics, sat in our literary community. How could we participate in the conversation of Canadian letters?

A second pitcher came and we made ourselves a seat. We started to discuss the particulars: we would start a new journal. Something we'd like to read, something that looks smart and excited. As smart and excited as we are.

The third pitcher stole our particulars from under our feet and left a whirlwind of hope and a strong core of ideals. We wanted to print quarterly, we wanted it full of amazing writing, and we wanted it to be purple.

Colours change. But in brief, that is our conception. We have since been nurtured by support from friends, family, and the community. We present to you now, fresh and excited, our inaugural issue. Thank you for welcoming us to the neighborhood.

Please find enclosed beginnings, our gentle theme, tying together the contents of what you hold before you. Tied gently because beginnings are difficult to fix. For many, beginning means upbringing – emotionally, and then quite literally as far back as we can trace ourselves.

Beginnings are also found through exposure. We don't always ask for them, but we are vulnerable to their exhibition, and sometimes we can't look away. Exposure does not always cue our reflexes. It doesn't promise foresight.

And of course, beginnings are what we look forward to when everything seems too difficult to carry on. We yearn for a new year, a new week, a new day. Here, we present you, a new voice.

Sincerely,  
The Impressment Gang

*Clay Everett*

*o — D —*

*Pearl Chan <sup>陳</sup>*



# O LIVE! O LOVE!

JOSH SALTER

O live! O love!  
One popped eye at the bottom of my gin  
(the other rolling down my chin).  
To my chugging chagrin  
the bubbles jump 20 dBs at a time.  
And I think of you  
O love! My oiled friend!  
Who slipped through the cracks,  
into the other half of the hour glass  
where tilted sand becomes silt  
stuck in the slits between my fingers.  
You, whose presence twisted  
my arms into fancy bows,  
and pit me against myself,  
a split decision  
swimming in the very pit  
I had just spit out,  
my spitting image,  
Enkidu not.  
I think about your new coat  
of green paint  
the day you told me  
we were knot for forever –  
so no matter whose daytrips you take  
or ham handed sandwich lips you shake  
or whose nails are hammered in your back  
wherever you go  
lettuce and tomato,  
I love you  
olive you.

# TWO PICTURES OF TWO

MAYA STEWART PATHAK

## PICTURE NO. I

he is not lonely. he is  
to the side, the left with one  
line of tall trees in symmetry. and  
another on the other side:  
tall aspens or birches and a corridor  
of blue sky. there is no ground  
visible there she rides into that blue:  
her back, her brown hair  
and a blue or green dress with yellow  
or light bright and thin around her,  
her body is like a star and cut  
out. he is not lonely there,  
she is in his mind.

## PICTURE NO. 2

two big Xs like two big kisses, two  
people jumping jacks: one, two  
and clapping one hand to foot  
now one foot to hand. one is  
chanting, and one singing  
just like feet walking or hands saying  
waves like Vs like backwards  
birds, they say “inside outside, outside  
inside” and now they switch sides and  
switch feet, foot to hand, now hand to foot  
but

it is hard to tell. “inside outside outside  
inside” now switches the light too:  
purple (violet) purple (yellow) yellow  
sun.

# RENAUDE

CHARLOTTE BONDY

Mischa and I met on the second day of grade nine when our French teacher mistook him for a girl because of his long dark hair and cheekbones like Kate Moss. Everyone giggled and Mischa flushed red down to his shirt collar. After class I found him in the hall and told him I was jealous of his curls. I also told him this story about when I was twelve and had a terrible mushroom cut. My mom took me to the Gap to buy a pair of velvet pants. The salesperson kept trying to steer us to the men's section, away from all the leggings, until my frazzled mother eventually pointed at me and yelled, she's a *girl*. After I told him this, Mischa gave me his special look, the one where his eyes squeeze shut like a smiling Buddha. Then he asked if I wanted to eat lunch with him and that was that.

Mischa and his mum live on the second floor of an old row house on Parliament. When I'm over there everything feels exotic. The

smell of Mischa's mother's cigarettes sits heavily in the air. There are built-in bookshelves and coloured glass bottles of foreign liquor. Mischa's mother sometimes speaks to him in Russian and her words sound livid and impassioned. When I ask him to translate afterwards it's usually something mundane, like asking him to take out the recycling or clean out the litter box. I love the way she pronounces my name. *Claw-ra*, drawing it out like it's something important and precious.

The two of them moved here from Moscow when Mischa was nine, and she is working on her doctoral dissertation, something complicated to do with physics. His dad was a radical Russian poet and left when Mischa was still a baby. His mum hasn't dated anyone since. She's always in the lab, working. When she's out, Mischa and I pretend that the apartment is our own. We make fancy deviled eggs and drink loose-leaf tea in china cups. Or we put on a classical record and waltz around the tiny kitchen, taking turns to lead. Occasionally at night when we're bored or stoned we watch porn on the laptop in Mischa's bedroom. Mischa watches porn the same way he watches nature documentaries, his head angled to the side, a mixture of confusion and fascination settling over his face.

Luckily, my parents let us have sleepovers a lot. We like to stay up until the sun rises playing *do marry die* and dreaming about running away to Amsterdam to live on a houseboat. Mischa has just discovered French cinema, as he calls it. He watches *Breathless* basically on a loop. He says it makes him nostalgic for something he's never experienced. He's always saying that kind of stuff and I'm always rolling my eyes at him. Mischa's mother says he's an old soul. Sometimes, in the mornings, she makes us coffee in her French press, pushing the top down slowly with the flat of her palm.

My seventeenth birthday falls on the weekend before we start our last year of high school. It's the end of a summer in which basically nothing has happened. Mischa and I started hanging out at this 24-hour Lebanese diner called The Lip. It's actually called the Tulip but the *t* and the *u* have been burnt out for as long as I remember. If you order cold tea, they bring you a giant white teapot filled with Labatt 50. The owners

have a son named Carl who works the night shift and silk screens his own t-shirts that say lewd things in Arabic. Carl's a bodybuilder and he's always sitting in a booth loudly eating a cut of red meat with his girlfriend who wears white denim and has nodes on her vocal cords. Carl loves Mischa and me. Calls us his young thugs and even gave us one of his t-shirts for free. It was purple with gold writing that apparently spelled out the words Bitch-Tit.

For my birthday Mischa takes me to a gay bar on Church Street with the fake IDs we had made in a basement downtown which say we're twenty-year-olds from Michigan. But when we get to the door I'm too nervous and instead we go sit on the swings at Riverdale Park. You can see the whole skyline spread out in front of you and pretend you're sitting in a diorama of a city. The grid of condos and office buildings look like you could pluck them up and put them in your mouth. We decide to eat some mushrooms that Mischa bought from a white guy with dreadlocks at school but nothing happens except stomach cramps.

"The CN tower looks like a dick," Mischa concludes, and we hop off the swings onto the grass below, rolling down the hill. Mischa does a cartwheel at the bottom and his shirt rides up, exposing a chest that's so skinny it looks concave.

"Eat a fucking cheeseburger, Misch," I call out to him. And he comes over to tackle me on the grass. Pretends to take a bite out of my forearm. He walks me home, and standing on my front porch he digs around in his pocket and produces a flat rock. I look at it closer and it's a fossil, the shape of a small butterfly encrusted on the cool stone.

"It's a trilobite," Mischa says. "I found it when mum and I went up to the Bruce Peninsula last month." He brushes the face of the rock with his thumb. "It's Paleozoic. Old school. Happy birthday, Clara."

I hold him tightly for a long time, listening to the cicadas pulse underneath the porch light.

On Monday, the first day of school, a girl shows up twenty minutes late to our Canadian history homeroom. Dark bangs in her eyes. Wearing a baseball shirt and Doc Martens, a black bear tattooed

on her forearm. Mischa and I exchange a significant glance as the teacher explains that she's a transfer student from Montreal. Her name is Renaude. The teacher mispronounces it and Renaude softly corrects her, then shrugs. At lunch we go to the usual spot by the park. I pick up two cans of club soda from the Korean grocer and we sit on top of the picnic table drinking them while Mischa rolls a joint. I curl one of his brown locks around my index finger and then let it go, watching it re-coil itself. We pretend to make fun of Renaude.

"She's trying too hard," I say and Mischa nods with his eyes closed, sparking the joint.

He exhales and takes a sip from the can. "This stuff tastes like static-y sweaters," he says. "And yeah. Maybe she's just like, a pure aesthetic object."

I laugh, but I can tell that we're both already a little bit in love with her.

It only takes two days of thoughtful observation before we figure out how to intercept Renaude at lunch. She goes to a deli down the road from school. We wait for a few minutes before walking in one lunch hour to discover her sitting in one of the cracked vinyl booths, drinking coffee and reading *Lolita*. I raise my eyebrows at Mischa and he smiles.

We ask if we can sit with her and she nods and gestures towards the other side of the booth. We sidle in and order grilled cheese sandwiches. Renaude gets a side order of kosher dills and we ask her questions about her life. She speaks in this frank, unapologetic way, gesturing a lot with her hands. Between her raspy smoker's voice and Quebecoise accent, all her words have this fiery quality, curling at the ends like slow burning paper. She tells us about how her mother died six months ago. Afterwards, her father needed to get away. He got a job here and sold their house in Mile End.

"And he's already dating someone new. A Japanese painter with tiny tits." She bites the skin around her thumbnail.

We ask her if she likes it here and she looks up at the ceiling for a few minutes. "No."

Before class we go behind the diner to smoke and afterwards Renaude re-applies her red lipstick in a way that makes my lower intestines quiver. She looks up at us.

“So. Are you guys together or what?”

Mischa and I look at each other.

“Well, Clara likes girls,” he says, pointing a thumb in my direction.

“And Mischa likes girls,” I say, pointing a thumb at him. Renaude smiles at this and nods, twisting the lipstick back into its tube.

That night I go over to Mischa’s. After watching *Fight Club* for like the sixth time, he throws a sock at my head and says: “Ok. You gotta fuck one, marry one, kill one. Tyler Durden, Taylor Swift and Renaude.”

“I’d fuck Renaude, marry Tyler Durden and kill Taylor Swift. Easy.”

Mischa looks at me and curls a strand of hair behind his ear.

“I love you, Clara.”

I give his clammy hand a squeeze.

On Friday night, Renaude invites us over to her father’s house. He and his girlfriend are supposedly out at a dinner party. They live in an old chewing gum factory that’s been converted into lofts. It’s a cavernous, raw space. A lot of stuff is still in boxes and a gigantic projector screen takes up an entire wall. Renaude’s bed is separated from the rest of the room by one of those flimsy Japanese dividers. She’s wearing a flapper dress and a porkpie hat and cracks open a bottle of her dad’s Prosecco as soon as we walk in the door. I feel immediately homesick for the soft domestic clutter of my own home, where my mum and dad chop onions for soup while listening to CBC.

After the Prosecco, Renaude pours us fingers of vodka from a bottle in the freezer and starts sifting through some records that are stacked in a milk crate beside a turn table in the corner. She pulls out a copy of *Histoire de Melody Nelson*.

“I love Serge Gainsbourg. He’s so sexy.” She droops her eyelids and puffs out her bottom lip, pulling a cigarette out of her pack.

*“Tu t’appelles comment?”* she whispers huskily, brushing the edge of my jaw with her fingers. Then she laughs and carefully lowers the record onto the turntable. She does a strange-looking interpretive dance to the music as Mischa and I hover clumsily around her.

We smoke cigarettes on the fire escape, their lit tips dangling between the wrought iron rails. Renaude sits in the middle of us. An arm slung across each of our shoulders. There’s a moon and I’m about to ask whether anyone knows if it’s waxing or waning when I hear the sound of the front door being unlocked.

It must be Renaude’s dad and his girlfriend, home early. Their voices are raucous, speaking half in French and half in English. Suddenly, Renaude’s dad calls out her name and she puts her finger to her lips, glaring at Mischa and I as though she thought we were about to give her away. We hear her dad’s girlfriend say, ‘Thank God’ loudly and then the sound of the freezer being opened, ice clinking into glasses. High pitched laughter and singing and then the soft, wet sound of two people kissing. I look over at Renaude with alarm, hoping she will offer some kind of way out, but her face is stoic. At one point her Dad says, ‘We have to hurry, I don’t know when she’s coming home.’ It’s the first time I’ve heard people have sex in real life and it doesn’t sound nearly as loud or as showy as it does in the porn that Mischa and I watch. In fact, there are a lot of uncomfortable sounds, like boxers during a particularly brutal round. At the very end, Renaude’s Dad sounds almost whimpery and I hunch my shoulders up around my ears, but then all of a sudden it’s over.

When I look over at Renaude she has this creepy half-smile on her face, her fists clenched into white knuckle balls. The alcohol has burned through me and I’m left with a dull throbbing in my left temple. I want to go home to bed. Renaude suddenly points down, to where a long black ladder unhooks, and connects the fire escape to the ground below. Mischa and I look at each other, and nod. He begins shimmying down the side of the ladder and I wonder whether Renaude is going to follow us, but when I look back to the grated platform she’s still sitting there, knees pulled into her chest, tapping a cigarette out of her pack.

We catch the Dundas streetcar and walk the four blocks to my house. My mum is waiting up for me. I can see her reading the paper on the living room couch, with Oscar curled up on her stomach. When we walk through the door she stands up to give us both a big hug and I squeeze her back, for much longer than usual. She's wearing a nightgown with a pattern of moose wearing cross-country skis trotting across it.

"How was the movie?" She asks, stroking my hair.

Mischa shrugs. "Not great."

We make hot chocolate and take it downstairs to the basement, where we lie side by side on the futon. Mischa flicks on the television. A re-run of *Trading Spaces*. He lies back down, and I curl my body around the soft parabola of his spine, thinking of how few ways there are for bodies to fit together.

# REVIEW: THE GREEN AND PURPLE SKIN OF THE WORLD

STORIES BY PAULO DA COSTA, FREEHAND BOOKS, 201 PAGES, 2013, \$21.69  
REVIEW BY CASSIE GUINAN

By the first thirty pages of paulo da costa's *The Green and Purple Skin of the World*, I thought we were talking medical attention worthy hematomas. Smacked my thigh off an open cupboard door and this fat bruise has declared me its summer home. This summer we are headed nowhere. Pacing these grounds with stale ideas, a refusal to understand our next generation and welcome our past.

The first story "Flies" presented me with a tired cliché peppered with eloquent word choices. I'll break it down. Two old men on one side, two boys on the other. They look across the street and say something like "I don't get you" to each other, but can't hear from opposite sides. There's also this dig about a woman referred to as a mini skirt thrown in there – something about desire not expiring with youth. I gave an ugly yawn. Like

the name of the story implies, this piece feels as expectant as flies hovering over waste, stagnant as the air above hot crap.

da costa introduces his short story collection with an epigraph by Anaïs Nin: “The world shrinks or expands depending on one’s courage.” The quote lends itself nicely to the title’s analogy to bruises; but I didn’t get a sense of either of these transformations until someone lost their finger at the kitchen table in da costa’s second story, “The Table”. Blood spilled onto the oak, staining its surface and re-animating my interest in the collection. After that it didn’t take long for things to flesh out.

da costa dedicates his stories to “those who suffer and do not know they suffer.” I read each story with this frame of dramatic irony that placed me, the reader, in a preeminent position. And it felt good up there, on the look out for anguish – like I’d pinched an epiphany. The title story, “The Green and Purple Skin of the World,” is a treasured box of love letters you’d find in a secret hole under the floor boards. Between the decaying pages, the paper still smells faintly like the soap bubbles blown by the narrator. But as with any love letter read by a third party, the entirety of its meaning is concealed in the material object. The story is a time capsule of heartache, and I am not sure if these letters were ever received until now.

It’s the stories with the [insert stereotype here] parents, the ones who suffer the least interestingly and yet know they suffer, that draw me down from this imperial position. These roles of man and woman have been set in solid black type: the old fashioned mother, the worried mother, the absent father, the pushy father, the double-standard parents. I don’t feel almighty at all. I feel like I was duped into listening to a lecture about how to make the right moves from the wrong people. We’ve heard it all before. These stories are anticlimactic. At what point does their bruise shrink or expand and phase into green?

It’s in the moment of “Kiss Baby” where a girl smashes her doll’s chatty head, “Hell’s Hell” where a man inhales the smoke of his friend’s burning flesh, “Love & Medical Miracles” where a street-kid has an organ stolen for the boy whose parents can afford for him to die-trying, where we witness the breaking point of strangers. This is where we get to the crux of the collection. da costa’s work isn’t demanding anyone’s

attention. Like a piece of overripe fruit soft, wrinkled, and fallen to the ground, it is waiting to be picked up.

And you know what? It's probably a balance between the stubborn old fogey, the runaway child, the new and grand mothers, the sports fan, survivor, mechanic, cougar and so on, that gives this collection a common skin to bruise and speculate. *The Green and Purple Skin of the World* accounts for the overlook of the inevitable, unfamiliar, and intimate – and overall that is what charms me about these stories.



# ONE THING TODAY

GEORDIE MILLER

The world's least interesting bingo hall  
where #1 Dads devise work plans  
hunting in the morning  
fishing in the afternoon  
rearing cattle in the evening  
criticising after dinner  
another thing tomorrow  
— never bingo.

# BOTTOMS UP

Job Title: Flexible

Job Description: You Got It

Pay Rate: Ain't Great

Qualifications:

Dependents

Personal Debt

a Ouija board

Socially Necessary Labour Time

So, you know, the usual

We make references available upon request.

# HUMAN CAPITAL

Whom It May Concern  
Enterprising Solutions  
A1A Beachfront Avenue  
Gary, IN  
10101

24 February, 2014

1588 Barrington Street  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 1Z6

Dear Sir or Madam or,

I am writing to apply for disposition. My résumé, my CV, and my synergy bear witness to my fitness for fulfilling *homo economicus*. In addition, this handsome face.

Having competed I have completed several tasks. All to maintain this bundle of skills, myself. For instance, my communication skills deliver results. I work well under gravity. My administrative acumen facilitates few moments where I am not attending to the aforementioned delivery of said results. My ability ensures a professional demeanour with debt profiteers. My organizational behaviour boils eggs before bed, sorts them into the refrigerator, and consumes them in the morning.

My mother was a computer. Words per minute? More like sentences per second. Teach me to value time management. Prepare to adapt to negative liberty and the latest version of Excel. I am proficient at becoming whatever you need me to be. My father was an unpaid internship.

I am eager. It's an excellent company you keep.  
Please let me know  
Please let me thank you

sincerely, sincerely

# NIETZSCHE'S PROPHET DISCOVERS HIS POWERS

DAVID HUEBERT

Seventeen days after my second child was born, I found myself spending Christmas at Club Manties. Though my wife was at home nursing our infant daughter, ignoring our neurotic baby son, and minding the new litter of kittens while watching *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, I felt no remorse. Instead, I felt the usual bottomless ecstasy as I watched the dancer I adored prancing around the stage, lip-syncing “Do They Know It’s Christmas?”

There were no other patrons in the club. I was alone with the velvet-vested owner and my beloved performer. Her stage name was Miss Trans-Canada, but I’d always thought of her as Maphro. The pet-name was not just a tribute to Hermaphroditus, child of Hermes and Aphrodite; it was also an allusion to her afro. She wore her hair in a brilliant copper orb, a bright bulb that made her head seem to float through the air,

independent of neck and chromosome, as she strutted and danced and bent into cripplingly evocative poses.

I had been frequenting the club for half a decade and Maphro had been dancing there just as long. I'd fantasized countless times to passing whiffs of her, but I'd never bolstered the nerve to approach. *Now*, I thought, as I watched her prowling to that magnificent supergroup melody. *Tonight, I will strike.*

I sipped a whiskey soda and watched, plotting my approach. As the disco ball swirled above, Maphro shimmied and bucked on stage, the mysteries of her apex swelling behind the glittering clutch of her thong. After she finished her set, I headed to the men's room, succumbing to the urgency of a full bladder. I figured I would find her at the bar afterwards, where I would dazzle her with prophesy. But the plan was severed at the root. As I released the contents of my bladder, Maphro snuck up behind me and took hold of my instrument, wielding it skilfully and shaking it off as I finished.

Afterwards, she produced two brandy snifters filled with a green liquid. Though the stuff had no odor, I presumed it was weak absinthe. She handed me one of the glasses and I swallowed the drink, surprised to find that it was completely tasteless.

"I took great pleasure in the flow of your liquid," she said, eyeing my groin.

"Thank you. I admire your musk."

"Well then," she said, presenting an armpit.

I stepped forward and drew a deep sniff. "Divine."

"You're too kind . . ."

"Call me Zarathustra."

"Zarathustra? Is that –"

"Argentine. I grew up on a vineyard beneath Mount Aconcagua, gathering grapes and stamping on them until my little thighs cramped. Later, it was my job to detect inconsistencies in the wine. That is how I refined my nose."

She looked at my lips. "What do you smell right now?"

“A woman on the sidewalk. Pregnant. First trimester. Vomit on her scarf – regurgitated eggplant dip, carrots, Havarti, and tuna salad. And you. Your last bowel movement was sixteen hours ago. You masturbated at four p.m. For lunch you ate borscht with warm white buns and for dinner you had Cobb salad from Werner’s.”

“Magnificent,” she said, stepping closer. “Now, let me ask you this: what does it smell like, the scent of a woman’s loins?”

“Every woman is unique. Your smell is like a sharp French cheese, sweating in the morning sun.”

She lunged and we were on each other – she was licking me and I was sniffing my way to her primordial core. We stumbled into a little room backstage. There was a snake with the shape of a mouse visible in its abdomen and a few turkeys in a coop. The room buckled and swayed and the velvet-vested owner appeared, spinning a platinum hula hoop around his waist.

“You are a very strange lover,” Maphro said, as we lay together afterwards, flushed and pungent.

“I’m not sure what you mean.”

She smiled. “Indeed.”

Then she pulled one of the turkeys out of the coop. I believe it was sedated, because it stared at me with one vacant eye as I took it by the wings and examined it.

“Eat it,” Maphro said.

“Excuse me?”

She grinned and gestured towards her loins.

“So soon?” I said.

And with that she was down at my foot, nibbling a toenail and grunting with pleasure. I plucked a feather from the turkey, shoved it into my mouth, and began to cough as I tried to swallow. “Yes!” Maphro shouted from below. “That’s it! More! More!”

I took a bite of the turkey’s leg as Maphro tore a large strip off my toenail. Strangely, I did not feel any pain as I watched the blood leak

out of my toe. Maphro closed her mouth over the wound and sucked. Her eyes swelled with the effort and I could feel the blood draining out of me. I felt my essence seeping into her, making her larger and more powerful. I chomped more turkey flesh and the bird squawked with pleasure, its active eye spinning. The club owner appeared beside me, stroking his velvet-clad stomach and grinning. His eyes were flickering, dream-like, behind closed lids. He reached into his vest pocket, grabbed a vial of the odourless green liquid, and poured the stuff down my throat.

And then I was inside Maphro, literally inside her, seeing the world through her eyes. What I saw was indescribably glorious, like soaring through a supernova. Somehow we were dancing, dancing as one on the stage of Club Manties, the chimes of “Do They Know It’s Christmas” ringing on eternal repeat as I wondered how many men and women had been here before me, how many of us were contained in this beautiful, swaying body, in these bounding, boundless loins, this swirl of music, flesh, and scent. That was when I asked myself: this life as you have lived it, could you live it again and again – every joy and every agony and every hour of boredom – could you relive it an infinite number of times, could you embrace and love each moment eternally? And I knew that the answer was yes. Of course I could say yes to life!

It was then that I thought of my family on our leafy residential street – wife sipping, daughter suckling, son envying, kittens struggling for the teat. And I thought, If only they could be here too. If only they could join me. How happy we could all be. And with that I began to laugh, rejoicing as I lost myself in the dance.

# REVIEW: PUBLIC SPEAKING AND OTHER PLAYS

CHRIS CRADDOCK, NEWEST PRESS, 165 PAGES, 2014, \$19.95  
REVIEW BY PEARL CHAN

Chris Craddock ventures naked like a worm in this collection of lean, mean, one-performer shows. The collection features three plays: *Public Speaking*, *Porn Star*, and *Moving Along*, the last of which is autobiographical. In its written form, stolen away from voice, light, and ambiance, the dialogue reads quick and believably. Economical and loud, Craddock's invitation to the audience into the space of the play is 'an offer you can't refuse'.

Craddock's voice is smart, but untrusting. His work gives off a sense of neither trusting his audience nor his own work enough to shed gimmick plot lines or use more subtle turns. For instance, the character of Diane in *Public Speaking* is a teenage sex-addicted drug user with a mother who committed suicide and a neglectful and rich father. Diane is striking

as a character, but the reader is forever reminded of these rigid identifiers, which supposedly make her more interesting.

*Public Speaking* is very clever in its construction. The interwoven characters surprise at every turn, and it is not until the end that Craddock loses faith in what he has already presented. The show falls flat when an off-duty policeman steps in and explains all the nuances away. Craddock cites Daniel MacIvor's *House* as his influence; and although *Public Speaking* is as astute and dark as its inspiration, the play fails to trust its audience.

*Moving Along's* technical notes display how self-sufficient Craddock aims for his work to be. The performer controls the lights from his chair. The lighting and setting are all made transportable so that location does not play a factor into the look of the show when touring. Craddock is meticulous in his anxiety.

*Porn Star*, the middle child of the collection, is lighter than the other two. She's cool, she's tender, she's honest. *Porn Star* displays Craddock's imagination at its busiest. Craddock is the most relaxed and assured when his imagination is put to use in describing hell, where crazy magnificent why-the-hell-nots happen.

*Public Speaking and Other Plays* marks an important shift in Canadian theatre. It's leanness speaks to the times, and its distrust speaks to the community. Nevertheless, the craft behind *Public Speaking and Other Plays* is sharp and skilled. The collection and playwright are entering into an exciting new realm of theatre which calls on the participation of the audience. It reminds us how important our role is as an audience, and it is only by accepting the invitation playwrights like Craddock are extending, that theatre can happen at all.



# LEFT

CAROLE GLASSER LANGILLE

My old dog hauls herself awake to follow  
up and down stairs when I get chocolate,  
a ripe plum, stays close as I read  
a letter about Michael, boy I met at camp  
when I was fifteen. He was sick as a dog  
that summer, hospitals, colostomy. But he calmed  
us all with his heart-to-hearts. Mine I hid,  
mostly from myself. When we kissed  
I thought, here's a place to be admitted. For a time,  
when I pressed against railings, I believed  
I was separate from what lay beyond. The body  
is an alibi when the mind roams. Years later,  
he waited hours in a blizzard for my plane  
when I visited. We both had children then.

I don't know what followed him  
up and down his own stairs,  
what his days were like before he died, paralyzed  
in a hospice, his mind clear, his children young.  
The ripe plum of his kiss, echo of his laugh  
like my dog running close  
then bounding away. This can't be  
all that's left: a face that smiles and leans towards me  
and lingers, but has nothing more to say.

# MOTHER AND SON

ROY TONTARELLI

My mom. I always was angry with my mom. By the way I was brought up, I always was nice to my mom. She was my guardian and I trusted her.

I was born in Toronto. I was in the hospital a lot. There was something wrong with my left hip. There was something wrong with my walking. I couldn't walk straight. I had surgery on my hip. Then I was in some sort of a cast with a stick in the middle. I was in that cast for months.

My grade one "mother" used to put me in a room or in front of the TV. I had a bedpan to use to go to the washroom. That wasn't fun. I was out of school also. I was a hard burden for the household. I was young and needed care. When the cast came off, I couldn't walk or stand up. I needed a lot of rehabilitation.

I stayed in the hospital for what seemed like forever. I hardly had any visits from my family. I remember the nurses more than anything. The nurses used to take me everywhere in the wheelchair and always gave me

oatmeal cookies and ginger ale. I can still see it. When I think about it, it's like it was yesterday.

When I started learning to walk again, the doctor put steel braces on my legs and big black boots. The soles must have been eight inches thick. Wow, was I a freak. I had a special bus to take me to school. What a horrible a feeling that was, going to school with braces on my legs and huge boots and don't forget the crutches. In school, even my brothers and sisters ignored me. I was picked on. People threw things at me and called me names; I was even knocked down. Everyone stayed away from me like I had a disease or something. Even at lunchtime I was alone.

I went back to the hospital to take the braces off and see if the operation worked. It didn't. I had to repeat the same thing two more times before I could walk properly. The torture and humiliation I had to go through again. Just the nurses were nice. When I started to get older, I started to get in trouble a lot, even with the police. I was thrown out of school. The principal brought me to my mother's work and left me there with my mom.

One morning my mom took me to the court house and told the judge that she "can't handle me no more" and she turned around and walked away. I turned around to look at her. She didn't even look back. I was thirteen. I never saw her again until I was sixteen. I was in and out of jail for a long time – I have to break this cycle. I believe I can do it.

My mom! I have to forgive her. And I do. She had her own battle to deal with. Just recently I started to find things out about her, how she was taken away when she was young by the Indian agents and put in a residential school for eleven years. Both her parents were killed. Back then you weren't allowed to leave the reservation. If you did, you were more likely to be killed. My mom lived in a residential school for eleven years, and that wasn't nice at all. She was beaten, slapped, touched inappropriately, forced to eat her own puke, and not allowed to talk. I thought I had it bad. This opened up my eyes, the way I look at my "mom."

My mom was a survivor and I'm very proud of my mom. I can honestly say I love her. And those words were never spoken. My mom had her own battles.



# AUGUST FIRST

JAIME FORSYTHE

A man in swimming trunks  
steps out his front door, stitches  
himself onto my stride, says he finds  
this place unfriendly. The shopping cart stuck  
in the parkette won't budge. A mannequin's hat  
stutters past the café. Summer of softball mercy  
rules, pop cans, fountain spray, naps in the bleachers.  
I play dumb in an ergonomic chair, ask questions  
I know the answers to. And he's right that everywhere  
is deadpan; wary-eyed. Yet plots balloon  
with tomatoes. Pea tendrils curl tight around whatever's  
close. Yellow sky and long lineups at the lost & found,  
hot demand for lone mittens to float between innings,  
past pennies quiet in their turquoise bath.



# RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

RYAN ALLEN

The first explicit material I ever laid my pitiable eyes on wasn't in the woods, or at the side of my parent's bed knelt on the floor, or huddled around a locker, it was under the docks by the beach that the town I grew up in overlooked. The pictures didn't really incite any arousal at the time, we were all nine years old, maybe too young to really be taken in by it all the way it's intended to. We could go down for fifteen minutes at the most each day after dinner and before sundown, nervously thumb our way through the bizarre magazines before we dropped them back into their pile and ran to our bikes, convinced we had heard the footfalls of some official-seeming Someone dragging along the boards above us that left us darkened and out of sight. The magazines had chunks of text that looked Mandarin, running parallel to the images that showed girls giving and receiving a number of variably endowed boys at a time and doing so with muted expressions – eyes caught mid-blink, exhalations half-contained,

visible violet palm prints from slaps on their bottoms and sides, and bob cuts and fat distributions that differed from ours in ways that were only slight in our juvenescence. Except for the first day of discovery, where we stumbled upon the trove of gonzo mags and inspected the salted and smudged pages with delicate finger-thumb turns, and questions of who, how, why, and expressions of bafflement, we never really spoke to one another down there in the shade. It wasn't out of a lack of knowing what to say at all, it was something else – parts mutual embarrassment, shame, and a constricted annular field of vision on the explicit in front of us. I remember on the ride home that first day, Joey said he had never seen a real Asian in person before. Somewhere in the four days of leafing, we started to feel uncomfortable about the mags, worried we may get caught and hid by our parents or outed for being perverts or worse. On the last day we left them out on the compacted wet sand where they'd be picked up by the rising tide come morning, and that last night I couldn't sleep. In the restlessness time turned to a slow crawling continuum underscored with wolfish thoughts libidinous and confused, with no idea of how to escape them or who to tell. And then light returned, and the world resumed its bustle; my parents yawned and rubbed their eyes and entered the world anew, pleasantly waking into the night's independent alternative, while I lived in my fevered continuous stretch of time.

I remember biking down to the wharf the next day around dusk. I don't know what I wanted out of the trip down there really or it is maybe just too embarrassing to think about even now. I remember hiding my face during dinner just before, averting my empty stare when any glance tried to meet my eyes whose life lied elsewhere. I hugged the turn coming down the hill to the wharf, and as I got closer I saw under the dock's shade Brian, Marcus and Kyle Simmons heads budding into view. Craning my neck, I could see the rest of them. I lightly gripped the brakes of my bicycle and pedaled further down the hill at a snail's pace. The orange orb setting on the westward ocean that channeled narrowly into the wharf, shimmered its bright light over the harbour's surface that lied beneath a day that was quickly gliding downward over the earth's precipice. I used my feet to push myself forward slowly as I felt my heart pound against

my chest. My father, when we used to come to the shore to skip stones, would tell me that when the sun sets over the horizon there was a green flash that covered the earth – a blast of blinding light that shone over the infinitude of all earth for the single flutter of a second, and then was gone below the horizon with the setting sun. I drew in closer, still overhead on the hill's final turn looking down into the wharf when I saw them crouching over the magazines beside one another, like drunks tending to trashfire. I stopped myself and steadied my gaze. We used to stand at the wharf and wait for the sun to disappear and he'd always tell me I just missed the flash, laughing and tousling my hair, I remember. The three of them had their hands down their pants and they were tugging at themselves. I stood over my frame a few moments and studied their shaded faces. They knelt silently, eyes fixed on the open magazines, ignoring the sandpipers and the suction-sound of water coming in and out over the rocks behind them, coveting every pinprick of photographed flesh their eyes could absorb under the evening's light. By now light had turned to a soft, purpling glow as the mosquitos drew in audibly around me. I started to feel sick and wretched and lonely. I turned my bike around and stared straight ahead eastward up the hill towards town. By the time I made it home, the evening's twilight grace period had ended and inside my house was the same dark as the dark beneath the docks and the dark above the ocean.

# EARNINGS

ANDREW PATTERSON

The having, then,  
came down to  
a focus

an ability  
to know when

someone said

“You’ve got  
a good deal there.”

what  
exactly they meant.

# PREOCCUPATION

Time was,

all you needed  
to know

time was

how to  
fix

a decent breakfast.

# COLD ADVICE FOR GRADUATES

Take with hot water  
and be less

concerned  
with

why you go

and more  
with

how you keep

finding yourself  
there.

# SPEAKING ROLE

I want to say one  
word to you

and have it mean 'protection'

but more specifically,

not that you should  
need it

or as though I  
could provide.

# DIRTY MOUTH

KATIE CONNELL

Luanne got a good embalmer. She looks younger in death, less tired. The wrinkles in her face, which used to sag like wet grocery bags, are now caulked with foundation. Scarlet lips, pearl earrings — platinum blonde hair curled past her neck in a sort of Marilyn tribute. Nothing like the run-down alcoholic who'd wear an apron while she defrosted oven pizza and took the lids off of big bottles of coke. She now dons a white blouse and black dress pants. Tucked under the collar is the thick knot of a short colourful scarf. Beneath it, a long gold chain forms a perfect arc. Khyati's touch.

My mother, eight years older than Luanne, discredited all my apprehensions to attend. "I've already picked up a dress for you. I'm making Sheppard's pie. All you have to do is come." Her voice, over the phone, sounded like crumpling paper.

"How is she?" I meant Khyati.

“She keeps her door closed. I go over and cook though. It’s always gone in the morning. That girl needs... Well you know what I’ve always said. Luanne did as well as she could, I suppose.” Then, “How does Sheppard’s Pie sound when you’re here, dumpling? I’ve been thinking of making Sheppard’s Pie for awhile now.”

Khyati stayed for dinner a lot when we were in highschool. Sheppard’s Pie was my favourite and I remember watching Khyati eat three or more helpings with this harrowing resentment. Chewing loudly, talking while her mouth frothed with mash potatoes, gravy at the corners of her lips. All I could think of while she was doing this was how there wouldn’t be any leftovers for lunch the next day and that she’d probably do this again, for the rest of my life, whenever it was my favourite for dinner. Luanne wasn’t a great cook. I ate lots of frozen food and TV dinners when I was over there. The greasy, saline musk of cocktail sausages heated in the microwave would ascend the carpeted stairs to Khyati’s room where she and I would kiss.

It only happened a couple of times in grade ten, but it was always at her house and always started the same way. We’d be doing homework, talking about the other girls in our grade. Khyati used “slut” as a compliment and insult interchangeably. She’d lean over lined paper to let me know that she wanted to. Focus her eyes on my jaw line in a way I could feel but often ignored. She’d nuzzle one, curved cheek with her flat nose. I’d turn my head and suddenly we were going at it. Khyati would swing one leg over my hips and roll on top of me. I could see down her shirt, her small breasts hanging down like fleshy almonds. Braless. Big nipples, bigger than mine. The kisses felt like lifting a mug of warm, milky tea to my lips. When I’d go into the bathroom to wash my hands before mealtime, there’d be this film on my vagina. Like saliva. My underwear carried a particular smell and I was worried that my mother would guess. Trying to remember the desire now is like curdled milk. I expect to return to thick sweetness, but everything is separated and sour.

I should have expected the open casket. “That woman is a drama queen with a capital DQ,” my mother used to say affectionately of Luanne.

Mom smells like cooked beef and standing next to the corpse is nauseating. As she looks at Luanne, tears ski over the jumps of her high cheekbones. Her hair is the same brittle grey as the dress she picked out for me.

“Love you, mom,” I squeeze her tiny palm and think of all the ways she’s different than Luanne. Luanne was cackling and erratic. Her drinking and smoking always on loud display with that Double D rack that poured from low-cut sweaters.

My mother, a bookkeeper for forty-four years, is muted and consistent. Her vices are found in her perpetual plainness, the stagnancy of her clean-cut bob, her moderate liberalism, the way she says ‘that’s so funny,’ in place of laughing out loud.

Luanne’s sister was unfit to raise a child and so when Khyati was two, Luanne bit the bullet and became a mama. Not that she was fit, or even had the maternal instinct. But she was better, somehow, and it had to be done. I don’t know that much about Khyati’s birth mom but mine always said that it had something to do with drugs and a man. When I asked Khyati about this she shrugged and said, “all I remember is that she was really fat and moved slow.”

The kissing stopped when Harvey Meyers asked me out in the summer before the eleventh grade. He was sweet, with charcoal eyes and dreadlocks. Always asking the loners to join his hacky sack circle when they walked by. I liked this about him. His father passed away in grade three, a playwright. Harvey had a journal where he liked to write plays too — all involving boys who’d lost their dads. He read them to me as we drank fountain drinks and ate Doritos outside the 7/11. I remember thinking that his plays were stupid, then feeling bad and kissing him. We played fooseball together in my basement. He often tried to unbutton my jeans with his thick fingers. I just didn’t feel comfortable. We dated from the summer to November, when he punched a hole through the drywall of his bedroom and shouted “Jesus, Lilah. I’ve got a permanent case of blue balls!” Asked me if I was fucking other guys. I took this as a roundabout dumping.

When I told Khyati, she threw her head back and called him a fag. Said he didn’t respect me, respect was the most important thing after

all and I could do better. Nimbly rolled a thin joint with her long fingers. Tossed me an issue of *Seventeen* with a Post-it note bookmarking an article called “Are You Ready to Lose the V-Card?” The second line read, “The right person will never put pressure on you.”

“Have you had sex?” I asked Khyati. I knew she hadn’t because she would tell me. Still, I just wanted to check. She rolled her eyes and winked. Then her face was covered in smoke.

Come December we were at a house party and it was time to go. I couldn’t find Khyati anywhere. Someone pointed to the bedroom. Half-hour later she busted out, jet-black hair mussed. Harvey Meyers followed. His fly was undone. We made eye contact. I broke it. The party applauded. Khyati smiled, sticking her tongue out between her teeth. The golden stud gleamed. She made the ‘rock on’ sign with her fingers and lifted her hand into the air.

The funeral home smells like Lysol wipes and I can tell that she’s spotted me. The frequency in the room becomes potent. Scary. Like when I first left home and entered a florists shop in Toronto to ask for directions. The place was oversaturated with jasmine; it clung to the corners of the ceiling, reaching like some fragrant phantom into every pocket of air.

I turn to see that she has shaved the sides of her head. The turquoise barbell, hanging from her septum is meant to stand out. Thick liner and bare lips. For Khyati, everything has always been stark. She wears a knee-length yellow dress and a long black cardigan over top that I recognize as Luanne’s. It smells of her drugstore perfume and that classic copper brooch pinned sturdily onto the breast. The metal head of a calla lily.

“Hey, bumble bee,” I try to remember the last time I saw her. Our last year here was a chemical haze. Try to remember I am an adult now. Act mature. “How’re you holding up?”

“How are you holding up, Lilah? Are you even wearing a bra?” I look down at my breasts. Are they sagging? I didn’t really focus when I was doing things up this morning.

“Guess I’ll have to tighten up and adjust,” I comically snap one of the straps from beneath my grey dress. Smile gentle. Please forgive me for not being here.

Khyati's eyes shut sleepily, she takes a step forward and for a moment I think she's going to embrace me. Instead she reaches underneath the sofa-material of my dress. Tightens the strap on my right shoulder, then my left.

"Luanne always said, 'tits out for the boys.' Course that was when I was carrying her drunk ass to bed and her ratty old nightgown would slip." I notice now that moldy, exhausted crescents hang under Khyati's lower lashes. I want to love the bones of her. "It means a lot you guys came," Khyati, breathes it out, quietly. She didn't expect me to come.

"God Khyati, I am so sorry." It is an attempt. "She was too young."

Khyati smiles. "She had just gone grocery shopping. The tonic water was flat and we needed more cereal. She was bringing in a box of tangerines and the heart attack just... hit her I guess."

"Oh my god, that is awful."

She grips my shoulder hard and keeps going. Her eyes are wild and fast. "The box of tangerines fell with her. I can't bring myself to pick them up. They just scattered like tiny basketballs or something. They're just going to mold in the back yard, it's disgusting."

"I can pick them up."

"No, no. I'll just let them compost there."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, yeah. I'm sure. Listen, I gotta talk to my great uncle. He came here from somewhere in Utah. Will you come to The Thirsty Pine with me after this? They gotta wheel her off to the crematorium and I gotta sign some papers, but if you stick around I really want to, you know, old times sake. Let's get a drink."

"Of course," I manage. She's speaking so quickly and it's hard to stomach. My shoulder is hot where her fingers dug in. She didn't realize how hard.

Graduating year, I worked as a maid in the Best Western trying to get enough money together to do a diploma in PR at Humber College. This was the same year Khyati dropped out. There was nothing Luanne or anyone could do. Inevitably, I saw her less. I was at work or she was. She

was on so much shit and her ribcage was showing. She worked the 24-hour McDonald's. Guys used to make shit up and say that she tried to prostitute herself out the window. 'Blowjob and a Big Mac' became her nickname and she fronted as if she loved it. We spent less time together, but when Khyati wanted to see me, I felt I could keep her safe.

One time I took her around with me as I cleaned rooms. She'd do the whole *Maid in Manhattan* thing and try on guest's clothes. No one was really rich or had anything nice, so I was surprised she got any enjoyment out of it. The next morning I was fired on the spot. Reports of theft from all the rooms I'd been cleaning. A gold watch, jewelry. The wedding ring of an elderly woman who'd just gone for a swim. I knew who this was. Elaine. Here for a week visiting her son. Long white hair she wore in a braid down her spine. Always said I looked pretty and should try modeling. I looked like shit in that housekeeping uniform. Trusting me, she had slipped the ring into the bedside drawer, right next to *the Bible*.

The Thirsty Pine is a dive but I'm just glad the visitation is over. Right at the bottom of our street, the plastic tables and two types of beer on tap remind me of being seventeen. Khyati pops her left index finger into her black Russian and fishes out one wet, boozy maraschino cherry. Pops it in her mouth, swirls it around for a couple of seconds. Spits out a waxy knot.

I feel I should talk or that this is some sort of wake, so I warmly recall one time when Luanne taught us how to separate darks and lights to make things easier on our mothers. I think about this nearly every time I do laundry. As I ramble, I take note of Khyati's new ink. A grape vine winds its way up her right upper arm. It loops in thick curlicues, dripping the oval outlines of big, lush clusters of fruit. Her shoulders, now visible without Luanne's cardigan, give birth to the image of a mountain range, fresh and peeling. I have no idea what any of these images mean.

"When I was driving up, I saw a girl with the sides of her hair shaved and a tattoo above one of her ears," I tap a grape leave on Khyati. She does not register my touch, knocking back her drink in one big gulp.

"What was it of?" she asks, mildly interested, putting her finger up into the musky carpeted bar air for another round.

“A diamond. She was at the Tim’s back in Tweed.”

Khyati touches her pockets looking for something. Lighter? Instead she pulls out a small transparent baggie of white powder. Better my ass. “I’ve been thinkin’ of shaving my head. All of it. For cancer, you know?” She shakes the little sack.

When we were fourteen Khyati tried to run away. This is when I started to notice that there were things she didn’t tell me. I remember scanning the country roads for her, riding shotgun in Luanne’s rusty Pinto. Luanne’s one-handed, white-knuckled grip on steering wheel while chain-smoking out the window, cig dangling precariously in the valley between her index and middle finger. Her sharp, dark purple manicure.

“Shine this into the forest areas, ‘kay Lilah?” The flashlight she shoved into my lap was a honking red beast and I had to hold it with two hands. We searched all day. It was the end of November. The crimson leaves were drying out and curling into their centers. Thick patches of forests swung by us where fat and towering trees lifted entire circulatory systems of vein-like branches into the air. Sharp and poking. I could see Khyati climbing them.

During hide and seek she always told me the best hiding spot was up. I pictured her weak arms and intense tenacity lifting her higher and higher as the branches got weaker. I imagined her falling from the top. It was brisk out. She didn’t have a proper coat, only a pleather jacket from Winners. As it got darker my arms got tired from holding the light. I kept worrying I was getting lazy, that we’d miss her — it would be all my fault.

The radio was broken to one station and one volume in the Pinto. They were interviewing Fleetwood Mac. Stevie Nicks was talking about cocaine and how it had almost completely eroded the bridge of her nose. I imagined the flurry of white grind as it was inhaled, attacking that bone like a blizzard. The collapse. A nose just hanging there all loose and rubbery.

“I’m all outta cigs,” Luanne drummed the steering wheel. “We gotta stop.” We rolled back into the strip mall at the edge of town. Bertha’s Hair, Martin’s Smoke Shop and a Tim Horton’s.

“You want some chips or something, honey?” Luanne asked, sliding her bottom off the leather seat. I shook my head, though I hadn’t eaten all day.

“Well at least stretch your legs, Lilah. We’ve been at it for awhile.”

I opened my door and popped the red seatbelt button that sent it whipping back into its socket. Tapped my toes to the concrete of the piss smelling parking lot and tentatively stepped into the evening. The chill made the dark hairs on my arms stick right up. I brushed my palm over them. The stars were poking pinheads out, the night sinking into a plum.

We filed a police report. Luanne mouthed off to the officer for a long time. “I don’t give a flying fuck if it has to be forty-eight hours. I’ve been out there all day, doing your job with my daughter’s fourteen year old friend.” She could have slapped him when he told her to settle down.

It was three in the morning when Luanne gave up and pulled into their home. Khyati was sleeping deeply on her porch, covered in her childhood duvet and about six unwrapped chocolate bars. We carried her to the couch. As I was leaving, I peered back into the kitchen. The only light on in the house, it illuminated Luanne’s slumped back, the serrated twist of the Gordon’s bottle as she unscrewed it. Khyati stirred and produced a yawn that stretched her mouth wide as a rattlesnake.

“Is she awake?” Luanne hissed. “Oh she’s going to get it.” I shut the door behind me quickly and made my way home through hot heaving sobs.

I’ve never seen real cocaine, though I know plenty in the city who take their fill. Khyati opens the baggie, holding its Ziploc seal open between thumb and forefinger like a pair of lips. She has no fucks to give, doing it right here.

“Coke?” it’s all I can ask.

“With rum. Can I borrow your car keys?”

I hand them to her, ever the enabler. She scoops some onto the silver tooth and holds one nostril flat with her index finger. Purple manicure. With the other nostril she snorts the powdered rock aggressively. Repeats this three times before tossing the key back to me with a gruff, “thanks.”

“You want some Lilah? Don’t tell me you haven’t done it Miss To-Ron-To.”

I haven’t done it. But on impulse and out of some alien anger, I lick my finger and stick it deep into the bag like I used to do to pots of sugar when I was a kid. Rub it all over my upper gums.

“Yeah, that’ll feel like you’ve been to the dentist for about fifteen minutes max,” Khyati laughs low. It sounds forced.

Sure enough my mouth has begun to feel completely numb. When I run my tongue on the slick inside of my lips I taste bitterness but feel nothing. I poke my gums with my finger. A dead mouth.

A man approaches our table. Six feet tall, curly auburn hair. Receding line. Sparse greys. Five o’clock shadow. “You girls look a bit young for blow,” he nods at our table. Khyati turns towards him, propping her elbow on the back of her chair where Luanne’s sweater is hanging. Sticking her chest out she smiles in full, “well, I recently came into a bit of money.”

“That so?” He smiles back.

“Yeah, I’ll tell you how if you buy me and my girl a round of drinks.”

He leaves without asking us what we want and returns with three bottles of Canadian. Introduces himself as Michael. I detect small sweat stains under the arms of his blue button-down. A loosened black tie around his neck. A white tan line on his ring finger.

“Where are you girls coming from?” Michael downs half of his beer. I find him repulsive.

“The woman who raised me just died,” Khyati looks at him dead on, in the same way Luanne was capable of. “We were just at her visitation, Mike.”

“I’m sorry,” he’s genuinely taken aback. My gums are beginning to thaw.

“Don’t sweat it — how come I’ve never seen you before?” she tugs at his tie gently. “Lilah doesn’t live here, she works in Toronto. But I’m just up the road. I’m here all the time.”

He laughs, “Maybe you just haven’t noticed me, my dear.”

I hate that he calls her this. And she lets him buy us another round. We talk about growing up here. Michael says he lives on the same street that Harvey Meyers lived. Mrs. Meyers has lung cancer. I ask about her son. Michael thinks overseas with the navy but isn't sure. He does some blow off my keys with Khyati. She excuses herself to the bathroom, returns ten minutes later with pink, glassy eyes.

"Mike you got a car? I wanna show you something." She plants a kiss on his cheek. I am not invited.

"I've got a car," Michael grins slowly at Khyati.

"You'll get this right, Lilah?" Khyati grabs Mike's hand and drags him out of his seat, forcefully. She drawls my name really bitchily, drawing out the *Li*, emphatic on the *lah*. Grabbing Michael's hand she leads him out of the bar. She is forceful, determined. High out of her fucking mind. She forgets Luanne's sweater. They're gone within seconds, stumbling and giggling out the door. I settle our tab, Luanne's sweater balled under my elbow, calla lily pin poking into my side. The front stoop outside the pub looks out onto a small parking lot littered with cigarette butts. I see a snap of her yellow dress and a red car door shut clumsily.

Tipsy, I should not be driving. I follow what I assume to be Mike's car. We pass by some of the same foresty roads that six odd years ago, I shone Luanne's hulking red flashlight into. At this dark hour, the black branches appear like flurries of bats. We pass the strip mall. Luanne and her packs of Marlboros. She'd often slide them into the pocket of the same sweater that's balled up in the front seat with her letters, all of them about Khyati, all asking me in more or less words to come back and take care of her. I can't say they didn't pit me with guilt. The way Luanne had spent time with the handwriting, the gold pen. The way she'd sign each one, please don't be forgetting about us. But I couldn't keep following Khyati into ditches. It was stunting my growth. Sometimes in the city I am asked about my best friend from home. I say it's my mom.

Michael's car pulls into a road not far from the visitation. A grey brick building that's unfamiliar to me. I park across the street. Turn my engine off and wait three minutes. Put on Luanne's sweater. This is the last time I will follow her. They've picked the lock easily. I can hear Khyati's

voice from down a short hallway. It reverberates off metal and echoes like we're all underwater.

"This is where she is. Isn't that *fuuucked*, Mike?" She slurs. I hear her stumble. I hear him catch her, a grunt.

"Who?"

"Have you ever fucked a girl in a *cree-mah-tor-ium* before?" The serpentine pull of a zipper.

"No... Do you work here?"

The question is so earnest I want to laugh.

"Take off your pants." I pick up speed. Zip, drop.

She is here somewhere, Luanne. Lying in a locked metal drawer the size of a person, ready for the young men who will come here tomorrow to fire up the furnaces. If only I had the red flashlight I could find her amongst all these mothers, packed away and waiting. At the end of the hall, the door is open ajar and in that crack is some flailing creature I do not need to be a part of. I drop the sweater for Khyati, who cannot afford to lose it.

# ELEMENTAL

SHERYDA WARRENER

I ace the Myers-Brigg under the highschool basement's  
lazy fluorescence. Led to a room laddered

with light, the counsellor declares me a knife maker.  
Here's the opening I've been waiting for – I climb up

into the bright blueprint of finally knowing. I would make  
tools by hand that last forever: Butcher, table,

balisong, oyster, palette, gravity. I turn  
my woodshed into a studio, thread

the sanding machine. I have it in me to take an elemental  
material, give it purpose, and then maybe I don't.

Do I want this? I'm a Viking.  
Take a piece of obsidian, black guts

of a volcano, forge it into a point pointing in this  
direction, this direction I've been moving all my life.

# DEAD AIR

Baby pulls *Why Are You So Sad?* from the shelf. I tuck it back. Baby pulls it out again, drops it at my feet. I give in, read my favourite poem aloud but leave out the line about horses making love to whales. A wild herd lives on the moon – this impresses him. I shelve the book. He pulls it out, crawls away. I'm the iced grapes brought with the bill, the tetherball's slack rope. Baby eyes the pattern on my coffee cup each time I bring it to my lips. I warn against getting too caught up in it, but what do I know. There's this easy-going part of myself. I'm riding on the back of an old Inuit woman's skidoo. We barrel over snow's erasure until she slows, points to a mound not unlike any other mound. I was expecting a made-up flag or simple notation, a trestle to pass under in fanfare. The too-bright white cascades out in every direction. I bear the silence, dismount, do a little dance while the skidoo idles. Compose life into this moving thing. Not far off, the horses swish and whinny, go about their mutual grooming. Hooves dredge up a dust so particular it suspends in the dead air.

# POOLS IN FLORIDA

AFTER GINGER SHORE, CAUSEWAY INN, TAMPA, FLORIDA  
NOVEMBER 17, 1977 BY STEPHEN SHORE

Nevermind that it's November and there's a woman to her waist in it. We can't see the woman's face or maybe it's a girl. Her aquamarine suit ties at the shoulders. Miniature wet bows. The lines make a triangle of the pool, railing. She's looking past the sun chairs reclining toward the natural bay. The pool water is cheerful, no one's arguing against that. The auburn of the girl's hair and skin makes for great proximity effect. Does she feel lonely? Dusty rose of the bay in the distance, bright sunburst pattern on the surface of the pool. Yes, she's longing to be elsewhere. Just past the sun deck there's something invisible worth having.

# LETTER TO SOPHIA

EXCERPT FROM *TYPE*, A NOVEL-IN-PROGRESS

HEATHER JESSUP

Dear Sophia,

I have been thinking today of my work in the foundry and the type shop. Have I ever told you that each of the letters in a typeface are modelled after the handwriting of a scribe? I never spoke much of my work.

Each solid piece of type, forevermore the same once cast, was alive: a dancing letter made of ink. Each letter was free to change and shift with the modification and movement of the muscles in the hand, or the grip on the pen or stylus. What we write with our hands is evidence that we exist. (Which is why your letters are so dear to me.) For instance, at the bottom of a page in the *Exeter Book*, the letters loosen in the script. Perhaps the roses that climbed up the monastery's walls — where those tenth-century monks sat at their writing tables with their quills and inks — opened in the spring, and a soft-hearted monk's letters, as he transcribed, loosened with the fragrance of the flowers and opened too, the roundness of the script blossoming against the roughness of the animal hide upon which he wrote. Or maybe I am being romantic. Perhaps on that particular page the transcribing monk had come back to his work after sampling the latest batch of beer his Brothers had brewed, his hand feeling a freedom with the barley and hops that he had not felt before lunch. Whatever the case, the letters are our clue that the man was once alive, although his name is lost.

Letters such as *a*, *c*, *e*, *o*, and *s* have apertures. Their apertures are their openings. How open is that space at the bottom of an *a* or in the slope of an *s*? How roomy is the eye of the *e*? What kind of enclosure do the walls of the *o* provide? It is one thing to intellectually know a fact. To understand that the openness of a letterform's apertures will change the mood of the typeface entirely. But the body teaches us another kind of knowing. I had not considered that letters are also cages. That once cast in metal, once forged as type, the *o* is a permanent room where only a certain amount of light is permitted to reside.

I love you, Sophia. I miss you.

Yours,

Bo

# CONTRIBUTORS.

**RYAN ALLEN** is from Halifax, Nova Scotia. He grew up in Cape Breton. By the time this issue goes to print he will be living with a cat named Magda.

**CHARLOTTE BONDY** is from Toronto. She is currently studying Creative Writing in Dublin.

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**JAIME FORSYTHE** is the author of *Sympathy Loophole* (Mansfield Press, 2012). Her work has also appeared in *Lemon Hound*, *The Puritan*, *This Magazine*, *The New Quarterly*, and *Geist*. She lives in Halifax.

**CASSIE GUINAN** *est poeta quae in villa nominata "Bible Hill" crevit. Ea Creativam Scripturamque Classica Studia Dalhousiana Universitate didicit.*

**DAVID HUEBERT**, of Halifax, is a PhD student at Western University. His work has appeared in journals such as *Event*, *Grain*, *Matrix*, *Vallum*, and *The Antigonish Review*.

**HEATHER JESSUP** is an instructor of English Literature at Langara College in Vancouver. Her first novel, *The Lightning Field*, was shortlisted for the Margaret and John Savage First Book Award, the Thomas Raddall Fiction Award, and was nominated for the 2013 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. She loves the ocean and her blue bike.

**CAROLE GLASSER LANGILLE** is a poet and short story writer. She teaches Creative Writing at Dalhousie University.

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**ANDREW PATTERSON** is a writer/reader/listener living in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He spent the past winter discovering the glory of the Black Mountain poets and now fancies himself a mountain man. He's got the wardrobe down and, this summer, he'll be working on a more believable mountain face during a residency in the Catskills.

**JOSH SALTER** writes poetry that occasionally rhymes. If he had a son, he would name him Walter.

**MAYA STEWART PATHAK** mostly lives in Halifax and likes words, birds, and pictures. She is in the contemporary studies programme at University of King's College. Her collage work has appeared with Paisley Chapbook Press.

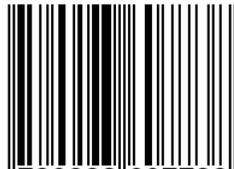
**ROY TONTARELLI** was born in 1968 in Toronto, Ontario to an Italian father and native Mi'kmaq mother. Because of his dual heritage he refers to himself as "Whapaho". After his father's death in 1988, he and his mother left Toronto in 1993, to return to her Mi'kmaq reservation, Wagmatcook, in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. He is presently incarcerated at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

**SHERYDA WARRENER** lives in Vancouver, where she teaches at the University of British Columbia. Her poems have appeared in *Arc*, *the Malahat Review*, *Event*, and *Believer* among other journals, and in the anthology *Best Canadian Poetry 2013*. Her first collection of poetry is *Hard Feelings* (Snare/Invisible).

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