

URBAN

X

BENEFIT



# URBAN GRAFFITI X

**October 2008**

Urban Graffiti is an irregularly published litzone of transgressive, discursive, post-realist writing concerned with the struggles of hard edged urban living, alternative lifestyles, deviant culture - presented in their most raw and unpretentious form. We accept unsolicited submissions of fiction, poetry, essays, manifestos, comics, b&w artwork, and photography; though we are particularly interested in new fiction. Submissions must include a plain text file of the piece, a creative biography that includes your email and any relevant web-links, and a portrait of yourself. Please send all correspondence, submissions, hate mail, and letters of devotion to:

Urban Graffiti c/o Mark McCawley  
[ [gse.mccawley@gmail.com](mailto:gse.mccawley@gmail.com) ]

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# 4 TRANSFORMER.

by Philip Quinn

We used to be free then they planted us in high school and jobs and said this is how you fit. It's important to fit but not in the ways they tell you. You have to know when to listen and when to shut them out.

I collect transformers. You know those plastic robot toys you can bend. The autobots are the good guys. They bend into trucks and cars. The decepticons can be almost anything. They have names like Star Scream, Omega Supreme and Jazz Inferno. I like them best. I have almost a hundred in my collection.

For me they're like flowers: the same purple, red and orange colours. When you bend a transformer in the right direction, it clicks, it pops, it fits. You can force it the wrong way. When I have the anger in me, I have broken pieces. Not that I'm particularly proud of that.

I have some college and I've taught myself human anatomy.

In high school, they called me Turtle because I'd walk bent over, real slow, looking down at the ground.

The girls were always laughing at me and playing jokes like sticking phony love letters into my locker. One time the entire track team surrounded the school and wouldn't let me out.

In the shower, I'd turn myself into a rock when they threw eggs at me.

I live at home with my mother and sister on Long Island. A place called East Meadow. Father died six years ago. Not my real parents. I was adopted.

The factories around here are rusting. An orange-red bleeding down their sides. Windows are boarded over, high fences surround the buildings.

In the parking lots, crab grass and dandelions grow in the cracks in the asphalt.

That's where I go with the women I pick up

in the city.

I pay them for sex, and then I kill them.

I like brunettes not blondes. Prefer Americans to foreigners. They can talk but not too much. I really could care less where they're from or how they will get back there.

One night, I picked up this red head. I pulled my part out and she sucked it, moaning like she actually enjoyed it.

I put my hands around her neck and tried to twist her into something else.

She didn't become something else. She just went stiff, resistant, made it very difficult to work with her. Then I had to stuff her into a green garbage bag to keep her out of the way.

I decided to plant her in the ground like a flower. Two weeks later, I saw a hand sticking out that an animal had gnawed at.

I'm fitting in.  
I'm fitting my  
pieces together.

I keep something for myself that helps me remember. I have a cardboard box filled with earrings, bras, high heel shoes, panties, necklaces, rings, needles, drugs, purses, blouses, skirts, slacks, elastic tops, driver's licenses and birth certificates.

I don't know what my mother or sister think when they see all that junk in my room. I make no attempt to hide it. But maybe they think I have a girl friend or something. That's probably how they see it.

It's important to try to walk a mile in another man's shoes. That's why I write this down. Some day, someone will read this and know how I felt.

I write everything down to do with my garden too, making lists like what I'm growing right now:

lavender  
lamb's ears  
snapdragons  
lilies  
begonias



irises  
poppies

I even have a magnolia tree. The problem I found with flowers is they die. They take a lot of work and they die and then you have to dig them up and start all over again.

My father had prostate cancer. He had good jobs but then he kind of wrinkled down to nothing. A short, solid man always smiling then nothing. So when I lifted the coffin, it felt like nothing.

That was in 1987. I killed my first woman in 1989.

I can gently squeeze on the neck of a purple snap dragon with my thumb until it pops away from its stem. Just sort of hangs there, its perfume smell on my hands.

My transformers feel very clean but that's because I wash them with a damp cloth. The smaller ones glisten like brand new spark plugs but not so heavy.

I trust what my hands tell me, knowing just how much is enough. I put my fingers there and wriggle them back and forth, so there is a heat, so that I can overcome the friction. I swear I hear the rasp of its breathing when it becomes a new thing.

A woman can look so peaceful staring out the window after herself, the cheapness and hooker-look gone from her eyes.

I usually keep her for a few days till the colour fades or she begins to smell. Then I bury her.

I guess death is where I want them to end up, transported on the seat beside me like a bunch of cut flowers, no longer growing but pretty and colourful, just the same.

So many of them like to wear red or orange tops and purple around their eyes. Most of them are kind of pretty and I keep their pictures if I find them.

I have almost the perfect job too, stocking auto parts, making lists in a computer, sometimes just playing with the raw pieces.

I have two identical Mazda trucks and I salvage parts back and forth though I've got to

keep switching the license plate. On one of my trucks I have a bumper sticker that reads, Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones, But Whips and Chains Excite Me.

I think anything can be anything if you really believe it, and take charge and don't be negative. I'm shy around most women but once they're in the truck beside me, I change and tell them what I want because it's my nickel even though I'll get it back. They don't need to know that.

If I tell them to talk dirty to me, they do. If I tell them to call me Turtle, they whisper it like it's our dirty little secret.

I like to play around with positioning their arms and legs. Or find new uses for them.

One time, I used a leg bone to tie a climbing rose. My mother and sister admired the beauty of its yellow flowers but ignored the white bone. That really showed me how blind people can be.

My neighbours like the fact that I work late in my garage. They know there's somebody around they can trust if they ever need help. That makes me feel good too. You can't always take. Sometimes you have to give back.

I tried to explain my philosophy once to this pretty thing that had a purple rose tattooed on her left wrist.

I noticed it as soon as she was sitting next to me. I could not stop staring at it until she said, "What's wrong with you?"

I said, "I grow flowers that's all."

"That's weird," she said.

"Why?"

"Most guys aren't into that."

"What are you implying?" I gripped the steering wheel tight, straightened out my arms and sat up tall.

"Nothing," she said.

I looked over at her and tried to make light. "I'm no pansy. I give most of them away to my neighbours."

"That's really nice." She

gave me one of those fake smiles.

I hated her, that she felt superior to me, a cheap \$60 whore.

I started out as adopted.

Never knew my real parents.

I had to fit in with strangers. Good people. Really. That theory don't work.

This can be me at different levels:

A gardener.

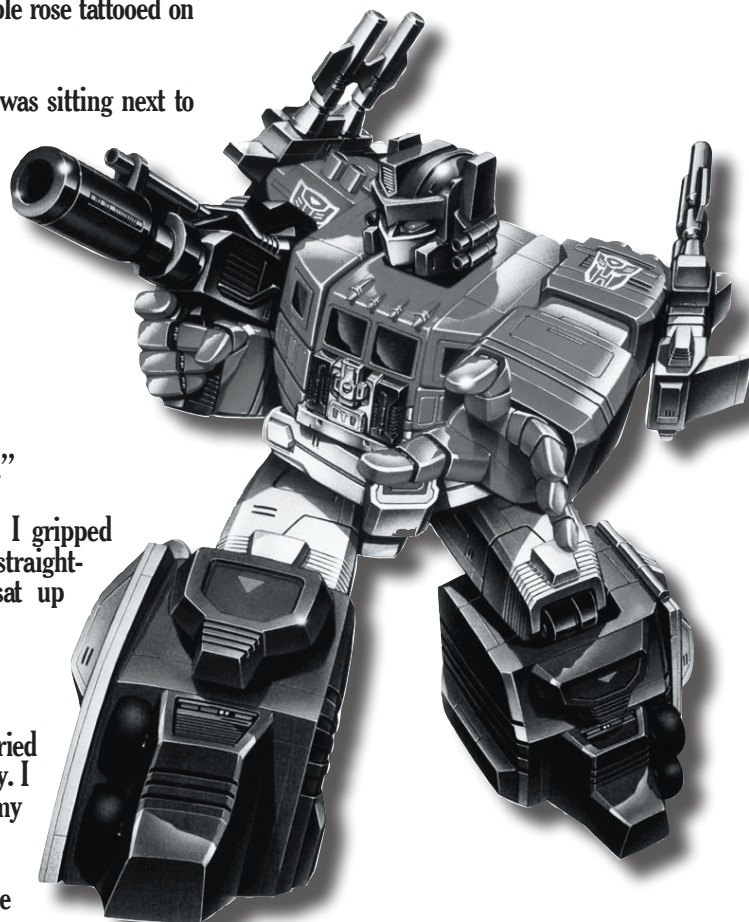
A 34-year old stockroom boy.

A murderer.

I can be as normal as the next guy, maybe more normal because I don't talk too much. I was thinking about burying a transformer, a decepticon, with each body to help it on its way like the Mayans or Egyptians did with their dead. That would be funny. But maybe only I'd get the joke. You have to learn to laugh at yourself. If you ask me the world takes itself far too seriously.

I'm fitting in. I'm fitting my pieces together. I hope you're doing the same.

UG





# 6 MYSTIC BEER

by bart plagenta

## a novel of in

"The world grows bigger as the light leaves it." - Beryl Markham, *Aviatrix, West With The Night*

"As I grew older I became a drunk. Why? Because I like ecstasy of the mind." - Jack Kerouac

Light gives off heat in the middle of nowhere. Laws of thermodynamics or something. Light, like most humans and projectiles and everything else, has to abide by these laws of thermodynamics. Witness this phenomenon — I do — through despair. Watch and feel the hail, the grumble of aircraft moving clumps of people nowhere fast, through Shoetown, past Bed City, Balls 'n' Brew, Mensworld, Liquor Land, and Sofasphere — anywhere — nothing in every direction, the difference between nowhere and somewhere almost imperceptible. No shooting stars. No leaves clinging to lifeless twigs. Garbage bags that resemble spouses, heaved into the grimy shimmer of gas and oil suspended on dark water on Queens Boulevard. The anger unmeasured, the frustration quantified only by the distance of the bag's toss. I am pre-beer, a state before the gears begin to gilga mesh. What lonely hours... Frail radio voice like cigarette ash in a movie theatre showing a film about a man who leaves home to search for his soul only to find a map that leads back to his own address.

I'm in Woodheaven, Queens, home to a flingthing [my word for her at work, which disguises the actual depth of my feelings],

Raden Adjeng Kartini, who's unaware of how much lust I've already infused into her image. No Manhattanites would ever dignify this place with their presence. But here I am and I've come all this way from somewhere to this nowhere in pursuit of the something I think Raden could be. Or the something I need her to be. To walk her home, to lean the amorous shadow [with some of me attached to it] into her. Whenever I see her, my body begins to quiver, lose density, and consciousness begins to blend with outer space. I need to sit down, grip a signpost. She is beautiful and that tears reality from limbs, bones collapse inside skin. I open my beer — TSssh — a wet mantra, its spray first inhaled via my nostrils... and suddenly I am calm. And I need to calm down because Raden — her imperturbable serenity — is the destroyer of all surrounding cool and calm. She is a destabilizer. I crumble before her smile. I have come to discover why but depart as mystified as ever. But if I show you her picture you would understand except for the fact that this sole pic, this Polaroid SX-70 portrait of her is out of focus because

her stable mysterious core / gives me the shakes / gimme three beers gimme four [I was writing lyrics to songs that would later get sung by my ex in CBGB's a year later in a Battle of the Unsigned Bands in which her band, The White Bicycles, finished last and the band blamed the lyrics.]

Raden's existence is thus far circumscribed by homework worries, mid-terms, college, post-punk concert tickets, and snags in her fishnets — and taking care of a mother afflicted with the early symptoms of ALS.

Tonight she told me she had been named for the Javanese rebel princess who introduced education to Indonesian girls — a

But now it is  
today and that is  
already yesterday. The passage  
of time is gruesome,  
cruel, mocking, at a  
blinding speed.



# nebriation & light

hero. But did my petite amourette know that I heard every word but not a one of them registered and did she know how awestruck I was by how easily she handled the extreme amount of beauty that was crammed into her small [4'6"] frame? Did she know that when I watched her mouth speak I was mesmerized beyond all comprehension? The fact that she was 10 years my junior and a good foot-and-a-half shorter made her look like my adopted daughter? Did she know how much I admired her clarity of vision, her ability to describe the limitless [and adorable] horizons she and only she seemed to see in all directions? The brazen modesty that contained so much incredible bodily beauty?

Did she know that I repeated her name over and over – Ra-den Ra-den – as I walked by way of Louie's Leftover Lounge, to the F subway entrance? After having escorted

her all the way home from my East Village to her Queens, sometimes to make love – or kiss as far as kisses would take us – in Flushing Meadow Park in among the rushes? We had found a painting – a Monet – a state of mind, damp pant knees, open green where we could wander for days. This is a place you never find in New York unless you have a cause amoureuse, a pungent, aromatic flingthing to lead you into this impressionist landscape of reeds and wildflowers... Did she know that "raden" in Dutch means to guess?

But what did Raden then know of the look of failure, the odor of despair that I so ingeniously disguised with pheromones and braggadocio, marginal zines that featured my scribblings, my radio show "Birra Birra Birra" on XYZNO Radio FM, a station that may or may not have existed? I helped her with her applications to Cornell. She being

so amazingly gracious as to make me believe I was helpful in filling them out. That is love. I resisted ever saying "some day you'll see." I tried to write poetry to let her know how she had thumb-tacked an emotional impressionist landscape in an essential chamber in my heart. I helped her study for the written part of her drivers license exam. I was awed by how she knew at umpteen [15 or 16?] that she would some day be an architect designing what she called "Zen Bauhaus." And that I only acted like I knew of what she spoke when she said "urban bowers with endless horizons." All this enamored me to her to the point of absolute disappearance. Did she know that when I masturbated it was to the image of her lunar face and her strategic choice of hem length?

[Raden Adjeng Kartini said of Pivo:





“What does he look like? Keith Haring. Maybe not exactly. More like something caught between James Dean scratching his head and a junior librarian who spends too much time slouched in the front row in an old movie house. Sometimes when he stood in front of me it was like he was standing in front of the spin cycle of a washer. Totally mesmerized. He loved me and I him but then he disappeared like a genie back into his bottle. Like my Joey Ramone into his record sleeve. He could have been a lot more than he was afraid of becoming. The more I tried to tell him the more he went into retreat. Something spooked him away from me. Maybe it was that I was totally serious, never played games, and told him that I knew what ‘forever’ was and that I was ready for it. That I understood forever, embodied it. He may have said ‘But I’m only 24.’ To which I said ‘but I’m only 16.’”]

That was the night that mist sizzled around the lamphead at 130-whatever Street and 70-whatever Avenue like the cosmos was whispering around my neck. My pursuits had led me nowhere. And you ask for directions in New York, you ask for trouble. One: because people have a natural need to disorient you especially if they sense you are a tourist or interloper honing in on what little of value is left. Two: The same numbered streets can lead you to three places in Queens, somewhere in the Bronx and two spots in Brooklyn. I was even beginning to doubt my contention that she actually loved me – what does a young teen know about love? She does not have the experience to adequately manifest it – when suddenly the streetlight right above me went out – POOF! – like someone had shot it out with aircraft scratching across the slate skies, overhead just as I was walking under it. Burnt out. Black, like an exhalation of light, like a mulberry shaken loose into the dust, like the last memory of a dying man. A song I am now hearing that my father used to sing along to with Peggy Lee. When you’re alone, who cares for starlit skies... He’s dead. Is my timing that flawed our respect run so dry? ... duhduh dudud duuh... that we’ve kept through our lives. I will place needle upon vinyl and spin Joy Division for the 1001st time when I get home. There is a relation between Peggy Lee and Ian Curtis but I’m not going to try to explain what that is.

As I looked up at the dead eye of the burnt-out light, I felt my body begin to sway as it processed the accumulated poisons, all the delirious chemicals, all the inarticulate yearning inside me. And then suddenly, out of nowhere and everywhere, my body jolted forward and it ejected all solid matter in its efforts to tear loose from all of its moorings, to enable me to float, float like a balloon that has released its ballast, all the bile and tenacious body matter clinging to the miles of intestine, everything vile, glistening, and parasitic. The head was suddenly free of all pain. I was clean, sharp, lean. Free as a glowing asteroid,

free as the last funk flicked off the end of Chet Baker’s last cigarette.

And too much drinking had become precisely the right amount. I’m a knife cutting through all the coagulated and busy din, all the clogs of trivia, and clumps of inert and hairy cat vomit with a precise clarity beyond drunkenness, where one becomes a function of the dream river, the rock in the stream that turns water to foam and beer to inspiration.

I’m kneeling there – picture it – in nowhere Woodheaven, whistling, repeating “Dog-beer-light” [not a Captain Beefheart lyric] over and over, washing my shirt in a





puddle that holds the reflection of an azure moon [the way a cameo holds the ghostly profile of a loved one] in a pothole, really a crater so immense that – boom! – when a truck hits it, things fall off. And the scavengers who tend and exaggerate the contours and dimensions of this pothole-cum-trap emerge from their abandoned warehouse stakeouts and salvaged lean-tos, arriving before the BOOM has even had a chance to vacate our tympanic bones.

But when they see me kneeling there by their roadway snare, where they collect the dislodged products [everything from crates of papayas to appliances] to resell in the itinerant markets around town they figure I'm an interloper homing in on their loot. I feel the stares of these untouchables, their eyes dark like the insides of deep abandoned mines or the stares of office functionaries made redundant by CEO policy-adjustments [see the Wall Street Plunge of 1987]. I can sense them plotting my demise with a variety of accumulated kitchen gadgets. As I retreat, insomnia continues to wring soul from light. I am running and suddenly I am airborne like a scene you won't see in Mary Poppins, but now I begin to wonder where the hell the subway entrance is.

Some days later: I close my eyes and I go somewhere else. When the beer closes my eyes I end up somewhere else altogether. Over the weeks that followed, this phenomenon of streetlights blacking out – poof, going on the blink – whenever I passed under them, usually in a state of at least modest inebriation, was to occur again and again and again until the unusual began to take on the characteristics of the uncanny and one instant of synchronicity informed the next, until suddenly I began to feel that maybe I or the beer or the beer plus me was the cause of these outages. And this is what led me to feel like more than just some lesser being for the first time in my life. [It is spooky, but some 8 years later, I received a postcard that had somehow managed to make it through two forwarding addresses. No, it is prescient and synchronicity is as close to faith as I come. Faith being the results of hope deferred, the human mind – as liability or as asset – is versatile in its ability to finding meaningful connections between things.

I read the critics of Jung who claimed that coincidences are predictable but we give them meaning.

Even if synchronicity between the mind and the world was verifiable, with certain coincidences resonating a transcendental truth, we would still need to interpret those truths. I received a postcard from Raden, who was studying radical architecture under Rem Koolhaas acolytes and Zen Buddhism in Amsterdam. The postcard is a painting by Adriaen van Ostade entitled “De tevreden drinker” [the satisfied drinker]. Painted in 1685, it shows me sitting under an askew cap on a wooden chair in a pub holding a genever glass and staring bleary-eyed right into the face of the artist.

I wandered around with the postcard in my clutches for weeks – “Peripatetic, it rhymes with pathetic,” is how Djuna had put it – too money-lite even to actually stop in anywhere to grab a heady brew. The more I worked, the less money I seemed to have. And every few hours I would take out this postcard and reread it:

Dearest Pivo,

I am in Amsterdam and feel I will understand the world. I hope you have found your place in it. I had to leave “our” disinformation situation to study. NY is where “everybody eventually begins to distrust, demonize and diabolize everybody else.” Where the sane “begin to behave with all the irrationality of schizophrenics – just because they have been lied to in a calculated and systematic way. When the politics of lying becomes normal, paranoia, and alienation become the ‘normality’...” Buddhist/Maya = whatever reality means philosophically, our everyday experience is almost entirely self-programmed. Yoga + meditation alert us to new signals previously invisible but also how easy it is to deceive those who want to believe. Sorry, these are the words of others but I am in my little room near the Koningsplein and studying, wondering where and how you are.

Forever yours,

Raden

I carried it through the streets with modestly priced beer reserves in pockets, fol-

lowing scents, tracing enigmas to their source and noting autumn sunlight imbuing jails and even chopshops with the ecstasy of collapsing light. I see the sad Animal Defense League posters of a 3-legged dog flapping in a grey breeze with the simple text; REPORT DOG BUTCHERS CALL 789-DOGS. The posters had slowly covered up the ones stapled to telephone poles by the distraught owners of lost dogs and cats. Pet-nappings [and executions? Then dumped in the Gowanus?] or just pets that got fed up and fled? I mean, don't these owners wonder about the fickle nature of their pets' loyalties? I mean I can shake a box of yummys or wag a bone and I can basically take these pets home with me. Doesn't this perturb the owners?

I removed the by-now ragged postcard from my breast pocket – no raised eyebrows, here he comes again, exasperated sighs of colleagues, bar-mates, co-workers here – from its envelope and re-read even further into the details of Raden's text such as the “forever yours.” I mean, forever mine means she is forever mine, like for a really long time. But how to claim what is mine? Her toes like something exquisite the French only eat during holidays. OK, shut up.

I keep walking, the heel-grinding mileage, loneliness + exhaustion reveries – a snowflake, a welling tear, a strange knot of regret in my stomach – until I am distracted by chance discoveries, scuffling through dingy snow. I return the card to the inside coat pocket next to my heart. I see hints of the roving ghosts of Stephen Crane, Henry Miller, and Hubert Selby – their presence like watermarks on forgotten stationery blowing through the streets. I face, I assemble, I try to make sense of things I wasn't looking for – curious faces as familiar as barbed wire, objects [a lost hi-heel, panties caught on a dark wet twig, projectiles embedded in canine corpses, baseball cards of players long forgotten] that led to further morbid extrapolations into utter obscurity. When you walk down a really brutal Brooklyn or Manhattan dead end do you also get this big wad of dishrag dripping with tears welling up inside you?

Anyway, when you're new to a place like NYC you tend to explore, figure out how far you can wander from home before things get nasty or alien. Before you feel lost. Many of my NYC ramblings were random, instigated



by curiosity, taking me off the vectors as prescribed by my daily routes as a foot messenger. I didn't know what else to do; how else to spend my energy. I was like the recording heads of a tape recorder and the streets were the audio tapes.

My résumé: delivering packages and envelopes, delivering misery to joy, profit to more profit, surviving. Dreaming entire novels that double as revenge scenarios on my rounds. I was daily reminded of legs and feet and even more so when there was one missing. For instance, Cosmo's main competitor, AAAAAA Messengers, had a one-legged foot messenger in its employ. You are also eternally aware of the fragile nature of footwear, the porous nature of sneakers, your delicate nature in the face of inclement weather.

But back then I didn't worry about

how I ended up in places only what they might have to say for themselves. I walked right through Fort Greene, Bed-Stuy, Washington Heights, Bronx Zoo, Jamaica, Hell's Kitchen, Avenues D through G in the East Village, forsaken areas of Staten Island, and Harlem on a hot open-fire-hydrant night with naiveté/curiosity as my only guide. I got taunted but never assaulted, got labeled "Blond Jesus" because of my long blond hair, got given tickets for an Evangelical Church raffle — "You should come" — got pointed the way out by those who assumed I had just mistakenly walked into their hoods. One day it was a rubble-riddled cloverleaf, the next, the lobby of a 5-star hotel.

I often find myself halfway between Downtown Brooklyn [avidavit drop off] and Park Slope [Elsa] in the Brooklyn Gowanus

and Boring Hill precinct, where the surroundings are tearjerk sour and gruesome, where you see strange bones and shredded ligaments, LSD-induced benzine rainbows undulating across the water as you cross the Carroll Street Bridge. Where you could one sunny afternoon witness a hundred zip gun hunters laying what seemed like a million dead pigeons side by side — you cringe and someone says "it's a fuckin' ritual, you gotta respect it" — so that we can walk across the canal on this pontoon bridge of bloated bodies from one doubt to another. I hear a bass gasping for breath. I see the canal glow. I hear it crackle in the heat as organic matter mutates into something mysterious and associated with gonorrhea. I lean over the bridge and I am dreaming until I hear Djuna say: "Each dream is a step backward." She hadn't always been this calculating.

But now it is today and that is already yesterday. The passage of time is gruesome, cruel, mocking, at a blinding speed.

Yesterday, I went to visit the site of the old Bedford Brewery on Dean Street in Bed-Stuy. Now just a tract filled with debris, discarded car parts, mangled baby carriages, bent needles, and a nine-foot mound of used Pampers.

The brewer had once traveled all the way to the town in Czechoslovakia where they made Budvar/Budweis, the original Budweiser, where it was known as "The Beer of Kings," which Anheuser-Busch later appropriated for American Budweiser where it became "The King of Beers." It was impossible to imagine that a brewery had once thrived here. Some black teens scowled by in a pimped up shuffle, taunting me with their fix-faces, hard against despair, hard and brittle as the broken Miles Davis In Memoriam plates strewn around the lot. Hard and brittle as a Clyde McPhatter "Have Mercy Baby" 45 flung across the grey sooty ice. They couldn't figure out what I was staring at — the mound of diapers in this collapsing Cyclone fence empty lot. I couldn't tell them. And since I showed no fear I was a waste of their time. I had no map, no reason, no excuse for being here. Unless I was here to get cranked.

I wandered past the Brooklyn Academy of Music where Emerson once lectured on transcendentalism, where if you wander past during a concert you feel the rub, the





brush burn sensation of the velvet rope divide, the “us” outside, the “them” inside celebrating the “themness” of their lives with long-stemmed glasses in the pinch of poised fingers. And then back across Atlantic Ave. over to the Gowanus precinct to visit “my” Elsa Triolet.

Take a good look, the Gowanus area girds both sides of the Gowanus Canal, a gash of water that refuses to heal. There are chemicals in there not even allowed in international warfare anymore. It’s sometimes referred to as the “Dead Pet Canal” because countless troublesome or hapless pets are put out of their owners’ misery here. You can hire a hitman. And on certain days, bloated clumps of gruesome fur can be seen floating in the murky poly-chlorinated-sulfur-cyanide-biphenyl-lipo-sucked-fat waters. Giverney has its lily pads and the Gowanus has its dead pets. Or as Elsa wrote “like a circle of Dante’s hell under your dull eyes” [from her single “Midwest Mideast” on her comeback Album Winking at Mannequins on Incorporal].

There is Elsa Triolet: mother, the kind who picks up her kids after school, the kind who’d lost the compass to just how beautiful she had once been – “People always say I look like Kim Novak – yea, plus like a hunnert pounds.” Someone who nursed the hope of a comeback. Prepared Winking at Mannequins carefully and then saw it fail as a result of mismanagement, of misguided aesthetics, wrong producer, and three failed gigs, which saw her triumph tumble off the stage and

drown in a puddle of beer, whiskey and puke. And New York hipsters consider association with a fuckin’ failure as worse than AIDS, than shaking hands with a leper... And before she had even made it halfway through her second set at the Pyramid, the hipsters had baled, landing on the waffle soles of their purposefully scuffed boots running, escaping to a more successful opening [free drinks, “everybody” was there] and forever avoiding her like the plague and exiling her to an area of Brooklyn that Brooklynites thought was limited to chopshops, and tire retread joints.

Elsa’s the kind of woman you meet in a club where she is no longer headlining, where she hopes at least one fan will recognize her, will ask her to sign an old single of hers or something. whether you consider this hope against hope or unequivocally hopeful is your choice. It could be irritating, standing with her in a bar, she always looking past you, distracted, expectant, imagining someone calling out her name... Elsa’s the kind who buys you a hundred drinks then gives you money so that you can both make believe you are paying for her. Liked you in the desperate hope that her liking you would lead you to liking her. She had a million good stories, and each one led to the conclusion that she had once been somewhere, been someone, and that in pity there is pride just like in a modest wine there is the potential for cognac. Elsa managed to chew the cud of her former glory over and over, getting mileage out of stuff others couldn’t even manage a foot and she tried to

preserve this glory as best as she could in endless adventure stories. But in so doing, she suffocated it in the handsome scrapbooks and under the many layers of anxiously applied makeup – punk-goth-death make-up that only looks effective/attractive on faces beaming with emergent hope and sprightly expectation. Her makeup expressionistically zigzag saw-blade askew because her hands were now ruled by a bad case of the shakes. “Looks like Alice Cooper’s half-sister,” observed one friend in strictest confidence.

“It’s not neurological, it’s just nerves.” She kept telling herself and others, hoping.

“Yea, but hope, that’s not medical treatment. That’s, that’s voodoo!” Ex-friend, poetess Anne Sextant pointed out.

“You try to get medical insurance on my income.”

“Oh, go play the victim, blame the government.” Without knowing it, hipsters (however self-described) had shoplifted shards of Reaganite rhetoric. People were sick and tired of compassion. And now it was time for the payback. The weak would be blamed for being whiney-annoying weak and their bloated bodies used as steppingstones to whatever top there was left....

And what’s that festivity called again, when people decorate the trees of NYC with plastic shopping bags? So when the wind huffs and you squint your eyes just right your mind makes Chinese lanterns of them all? **UG**



**Splurge**, noun: a large or excessive amount of something.  
**verb**: to expend energy, or, capital on a given object or item.  
**a zine**: an outlet for all your satirical and sardonic needs.

***splurgezine.blogspot.com***

**splurge.**





# A Ditty for the New Russian Woman Novaya Ruskaya Zhenshina

# POEMS.

by Angela Hibbs

Depearled and unfurled  
less white than my booty  
found another bite  
mark, unwound  
another choker  
so bewitching  
in its rigidity  
set in solid platinum  
trades for bounties  
of laudanum  
Too easy  
to claim virginity;  
ketchup pack hymen.  
Rubies always inherited.  
Any book on the shelf  
I wrote it myself  
Take it in stride-  
up to a yard  
if your measuring diamonds  
line them up  
between russian splits  
in lieu of mink  
you clean his sink?  
Mislaid skills  
better off counterfeiting bills  
perch on different windowsills  
never heard a raven say nevermore  
but i've gone by the name Leanore  
Backfired royally  
as I thought it sounded  
his dear old mum's name  
i probably wore her perfume too.

Always claim a chill  
when swimming with your Bill  
if he needs an excuse to embrace you  
let him say you feel warm  
widen your eyes  
look that part  
a caress under the dress does no harm  
open your legs before your heart  
if your jewel chest is full  
and you've never been in love  
you're a cooing turtledove,  
if Bill's out of earshot, a pig in shit.  
circle the handbags, mope and weep  
til he buys you one,  
between his arms you sleep  
his to keep.  
let his hag be the one who nags

when you start to sag  
reach for his moneybags.

A pet name comes in handy  
who can remember if he's Rick Rob or  
Randy?

There's other jobs  
to boggle your mind  
than wrong name  
at the right time  
call him your little lemon rind  
call him Darlink  
and keep his cufflink  
make of them earrinks  
get some ice for that pink.

Sing him lullabyes  
pat his head when he cried  
if your sighs be fake  
harmonize he's  
too busy reaping  
to notice nothink sowed.

I'm blessed to recall jewelry cases  
better than faces.

His cigarettes may leave you breathless  
but you can sell them by each on Dundas  
Then in Safeway, with your bananas  
next to Sweetie's protein bars  
he looks your way and clicks his platinum  
card  
on the conveyor belt and his is off  
don't let on you're older than the scotch  
his nice enough to share  
from the cellar where the rare violins  
are barometrically cared for  
the beauty of a redwood neck  
invites him to give yours a peck  
So be it. Sashay away, say  
tell me more  
about your involvement with the Soviet  
He wants to be smart around his art  
and you need to cat and mouse  
with the collectibles  
and keys to his house  
His alarm he disables  
once he has you on the table  
his sheets you share



in your french underwear  
leave in his sable  
pocket gin and a violin  
he'll tell the security company  
he met you at the grocery?  
it's not theft its confusion  
I was sure I had my violin  
when he forced me to come in  
all he has is an outline of dust  
a lipstick sample and a forgotten name  
am i to blame if his jacket is sold  
on the black market?  
Is it a sin to be cold?  
Better excuses would've kept us in Eden.

## BABY MAKES ME BEG

just because he can  
baby makes me beg  
and feels like he's the man  
baby makes me beg  
to feel my own man  
baby makes me beg  
cuz he knows I will  
baby makes me beg  
just to get a feel.

He acts like he don't want it  
so I'll let him get up to no good  
and let him stick it  
where he never should  
we're not posing for a Christmas card  
but I wouldn't mind if that got him hard.  
Baby makes me beg  
til I'm cross eyed  
Baby makes me beg  
To tie the noose inside  
baby makes me beg  
til I'm hairlipped  
Baby makes me beg  
til I vow to fuck his fist  
or hump his heel  
but baby gets so cold  
it's like he can't be real.  
You may think, furniture-fucker

that I am, I'm in no place  
to furnish advice,  
but stakes are higher than right and wrong,  
and this back'll give

another inch or two:  
(even while I'm shining shoes)  
Remember a hand that can pinch  
can flick and swirl  
Remember when your man won't give you

his axe to grind  
two batteries  
aren't so hard to find.  
Don't let him make you forget  
It's a civilized country after all  
Be resourceful, go analog,  
you know your fingers  
are always close at hand.  
Failing that, there's no shame  
In giving your ipod a new home.  
When he hears your drumstick  
moan and hum don't ask  
where he came from  
just keep the door barred  
a crumb of loyalty to the sisterhood.  
It's worth giving up  
a reason for him to boff you  
just to make him suffer too.

Baby, make me beg,  
like I'm some Elaine,  
Baby, make me beg,  
But I can take the strain,  
Baby, make me beg,  
Fuck me or I'll fuck you  
Baby, make me beg  
I'll leave it up to you  
Baby, make me beg  
Til I'm sat in the corner  
Baby, make me beg  
You're my Jack Horner  
Baby, make me beg  
You to stick in a thumb  
Baby, make me beg  
Til the next commercial break  
Baby, make me beg  
Like you're the only cake  
Baby, make me beg  
Just to ease your mind  
Baby, make me beg  
I don't need to be wine'd or dine'd  
Baby, make me beg  
You don't know any better  
Baby, make me beg  
Baby, make me beg longer  
Baby, make me beg  
We'll see who's stronger.

## ROCKLAND

Crescent Street's exposed steel toe stilettos  
Just give me oodles

Pluck browed Betties preparing their woes  
Just give me oodles

Bitches in bustles brandish ass on Frontenac?  
Just give me oodles

These sluts make rump-shaking look like math  
Just give me oodles

Fingers so far down I felt my heart attack  
Just give me oodles

Well-lit ice at Rockland's mall  
Just give me oodles

Rockland Psychiatric's pretty pills? Doll,  
Just give me oodles

Mummifying dresses to simmer down the hall  
Just give me oodles

Chests so flat their drawers fall  
Just give me oodles

There's a woman's movement in the toilet stall  
Just give me oodles

When they start to heave, it's come one come all  
Just give me oodles

Edges so serrated can't resist slashing a gash  
Just give me oodles

Relatives visiting made up like trash  
Just give me oodles

Doubles as a noose but wears like a sash?  
Just give me oodles

That's why men are walkin' poodles  
Just give me oodles



# GREEN LIPS

by Bill Brown

14

It was past eight. Most of the musclemen should have been home juicing their carrots or dicks. Somehow, two got left behind. Dropping weights. Extravagant posing for the mirrors. Then some frisky tit pinching, towel snapping, and the usual primitive hullabaloo: one snarling, "push" "that's it" "more ... another two inches"; his buddy, pressed down by enough weights to ballast ships, grunted like a troglodyte.

Guys like that—unsettling and smelly as shit houses—kept my dick taut throughout high school. But at twenty-six I had had more than enough and switched gym time so I wouldn't have to put up with the bullshit. I wasn't afraid of them (Are you kidding?). Just wanted to avoid the hassle of them.

I liked the bikes. Lined up along a high mezzanine above the Y's workout area, they faced a thirty-foot wall of glass, which, by nightfall—my new gym time—were transformed to a vast mirror. Though looking was usually enough, occasionally my crotch would stir before my brain switched to "on" and its fan could blow memories of bone-dry longings and where they'd got me.

But that night I was jumpy and the racket pissed me off. I glanced up and scanned the reflection. Oh shit, not another. A guy, about my height but covered in tattoos, moved straight over to the ab machine. Legs and arms—every inch covered in enough pigment to paint a kitchen. The excessive-

ness, and the distorted reflection, gave him a grimy look. Like he'd been flayed and then scabbed over. Not like the other two, both hairless and glistening, torsos carved by mind-numbing repetition. But besides eating and breathing, what could they do: Count to ten? Run a blender? Tug jeans over impractical thighs? But this new fellow, his musculature had all but vanished under sagging tattoos and small waves of fat, but retained a sense of biding its time. I thought the hair looked black. Hard to tell though the way the darkened window played with colour. Protruding eyes reminded me of a guy who lived behind us in Kingston but this guy didn't seem right. Wrong hair. Wrong city.

Ordinarily I'd have gone right back to my book. But, as I said, I was jumpy. So I decided to pack it in early and exit via the weight room. A quick walkabout. No harm in that. If it was the guy from Kingston, he'd not know me from Adam. Besides, think I gave a sweet shit?

It had been September in Grade 9 when I stopped caring what any of these guys thought. I had been thirteen when they'd trapped me at my locker. I can still feel the solid wall of boys, fresh from the shower after football practice and giving off that shitty chemical smell of green liquid soap. I knew without looking that my fast legs would be useless. It was late. The halls empty. They knew they had me: hissed filthy things, spit in my hair, poked and slammed me against the locker before finally shoving me completely inside, closing the door and using my own lock to finish the job. I was not only small and skinny at thirteen but also very tidy.

So  
this was going to  
be the damage for chewing  
on a fat, tattooed cock  
and a quick fuck. This guy was  
going to want me hanging on  
the end of his dick every  
second night.



I was twenty minutes in the locker before the janitor heard my call for help. Twenty minutes that changed my life. Up until that moment I had done everything to disappear: paid attention to my wrists and my walk, made sure no one caught me looking, lowered my voice when it refused to do so on its own. But during those dark and airless minutes my life changed course. By the time the janitor followed my shouted directions, I could see how stupid I'd been. Like I'd spent my life painting over rust.

It took three months of slurs, threats, shoving, tripping, and one after-school ambush before the way opened in the shape of a new girl in town. Francis Dent, who moved into the locker right beside mine, was an unrepentant dyke. She became the apple of my eye. She was also big, boisterous, and had an army of tough older brothers in the background. They had taught her to take apart cars, toasters, and assholes. It only took her one slender knife mark, barely noticeable, across a linebacker's neck and neither of us was bothered again. But she didn't just protect me, she taught me how to carry myself, when to get dirty, and how to get out of dead ends. By the time I moved to Ottawa with my dad, she had also taught me how to use the eyeliner and scent she so appreciated on her girlfriends. More importantly I had learned how to read any situation instantly: dangers, opportunities, weak spots and exits. It was Francis I thought of as I scanned the weight room.

My hesitation drew his attention. The fellow with the tattoos gave me a saucy wink. Not that old ploy. Jittery straights. Without the right response it becomes a blink or something in their eye. But I could see the other two had noticed nothing, that the wink was private and not a provocation. He even lowered his head like he was passing notes in class. I relaxed. Didn't give a shit one way or the other. So, okay, since Grade 9 such guys had hardened my dick enough times that I'd stopped counting, but after my visit to Emergency three years ago to be fitted for a cast, the only thing hard-

ened was my resolve to stop playing with them. Too unpredictable. Might as well have sex with a Rottweiler. My current self-imposed celibacy, begun as a lark, has lasted four months. Even that had followed two years of near-monogamy with Ralph.

I loved it. Just when these guys expected me to grovel I would turn up the camp. It gave me a short-lived advantage. In the right mood, I could swing it wildly: gibes, irony, icy quips, scoffing, let a slow

finger slide down a brawny arm. The trip to Emergency seemed a small price paid to avoid a life of sniveling and mewling. However I had get well into my twenties before I figured out I could simply stay out of their way. This guy, though, seemed harmless enough. All alone. Out of shape. But saucy. I've always had a soft spot for saucy.

So standing with my back to the water fountain and going for gold, I fanned





fingers across both hips just like Mrs. Preston, my Grade Five teacher. "All right Ryan, I know you've got Tommy's pencil. I want it NOW." At that age while I played it safe with other kids, my mulishness with teachers bought me a reputation with three different principals.

Mr. Tattoo stopped all pretence of working the machine and held his crotch with both hands. I rolled my eyes. I'd been grateful lately to have picked up nothing at the Y but the flu. But there was something more to this guy than the obvious soft-around-the-edges loser. The sheer excess of the tattoos said something. And, if I was right, the layers of chub were fairly new and thinly veiled something a little more solid. Something with a story. Something in its mid to late twenties. Around my age, but hard to say.

With the closer look, I could see I was right: a hosing down and this Tat fellow—the name I'd already settled on—might be all right. I'd not even consider it as breaking my fast. Just a helping hand through the rough spot I'd made the day before when I stormed out of work, telling Martin he could arrange his own fucking windows. "Too frizzy? Frizzy? What the fuck's that supposed to mean Martin? Well darling, you can shove your window up your ass along with all the dildos and dicks." Finding other windows to do was going to be easier on my blood pressure than putting up with Martin-the-prick. Still, the noisy outburst had my adrenaline frothing.

I could see Tat would want to be discreet, so I headed straight for the locker room. I hung about the toilet. When he didn't follow, I breathed a silent thanks and decided on a slow poach in the sauna and a quick cold shower. Over the years the combination had been helpful at keeping my cock in my pants when someone like Tat drifted past. Though I didn't have strict rules, this guy wasn't really my type. I preferred them a bit older and Tat had gone to seed without ripening. Oh, but such mouth-

watering seed. Such squandered youth.

Unable to settle I cut short the sauna and decided on a shower at home. I chalked this up as a close call. Besides, the loser looked like he might have trouble getting it up. Maybe he'd have cried. Or what if he wanted to piss on me, like that ninny I met at Loblaw's?

Fuck it. No way. I had enough shit piled on my plate at the moment and here I was making room for more. But I couldn't seem to help myself; by the time I pushed through the front doors of the Y I had fantasized a whole hour with Tat. Sex with him would be fast, galvanizing and memorable. I was sure of it. Maybe I should have been more direct, cut the shit and at least got him into the field next door for a blowjob. Oh well, the little flirtation had kept my mind off losing my job. And now in the bracing night air, I quickly focused on my warm bed.

When I looked across the street, I saw Tat leaning against a lamppost. I mean really. These guys watch too many lousy movies. Without missing a heartbeat, I pulled my Bette Midler—sashaying across the street, straight for, then through his pool of light. The crisp night air helped me think more clearly. His flaws rose like

welts. He's hosting a terminal disease. What about your dirty knees Ryan darling? Did you think to bring Kleenex? He's probably uncut and would want to come in my mouth. I don't think so, darling. None of this is coming even close to being worth it.

I was well past him when Tat said in a low but firm voice, "What about a beer." No hint of an upward slide into a question.

Having already set my compass for home, I ignored him and readjusted my bag. The pace I had slowed into would have to pass as poise.

I loathed Elgin Street at that time of night. Way too much testosterone stitched into labeled jeans and German sound systems vibrating dark, mean cars. Still, I didn't have much choice. As I passed an angled store window, in its reflection I caught Tat just behind. He too had to weave through knots of kids lined up outside noisy bars. This guy was starting to get on my nerves. I turned to say something and slammed right into one of those fucking sandwich boards. I hate them; they never say what they mean: "Eat out here." "Get fucked upstairs." "Blow jobs out back." Besides, they forced anyone with some place to go into slaloming along sidewalks already too narrow. As I picked myself up, both shins raw just below





the knee, I was pissed. My bag ended up in the midst of a crowd of young smokers; the book I was reading escaping onto the sidewalk.

By the time Tat caught up, two guys were tossing my book back and forth. They didn't like what I called them. A third one grabbed my neck. His mouth pressed right to my ear, he alternated between tonguing me and whispering things like: "You got any other holes I can stick things in?" "If it's men you want all over you just try pulling away sweetheart." This one must have been let out from the Grade 12 gifted program, with his little joke about my runaway book, *Men on Men*. Unwisely, he kept at it. "Hope you got some Kleenex in your purse darling so's you can —." His "can" curdled into a strangled choke.

Tat's voice, icy but loud enough for the others to hear, sounded to me like music.

"Anyone want in on this little dai-sy chain we got started here? Or maybe you'd like to see your friend dancing on one leg?"

The kid had already let go of my neck. Without turning I could see from the half dozen sets of eyes that there'd be no trouble. Tat probably knew as well. He was mean looking but if the crowd turned on him even with me swinging my bag we'd not have lasted long. The kids backed off. They'd driven downtown in daddy's car for some fun. They thought I'd be a harmless part of that, until Tat's little reminder that nothing's free, kiddies. The only girl in the group handed the book to Tat, who released the kid, brushed his jacket and said, "Now then, you know you shouldn't be smoking. Way too young. It's gonna kill you." No one besides me laughed at Tat's little joke, instead they flicked their cigarettes and headed, en masse and quietly, back into the bar. Taking his time, Tat flipped through the book before handing it back.

"Now, how about that beer?"

I suggested a spot on Metcalfe Street.

The waitress had just taken our order when Tat started with the questions: You often go looking for trouble? What you reading a book like that for? Is that eyeliner? But before the pizza arrived, the questions had changed direction: So you got anyone steady? That the right way to say that? What sort of thing you like doin' with guys? You like boys? There seemed no limits to the asinine curiosity.

By the second beer I was feeling expansive. And just as I thought, Tat was interested. Very interested. I pegged him for an old-fashioned, I'm-not-gay blowjob. No strings attached. Fast and dirty. To swallow or not, the only thing to work out. Of course, Tat wouldn't be expected to reciprocate. This was, after all, not my first time going fishing. There were some I had to toss straight back in the water. No way was I wasting time with someone who only wanted to wank off on my face. On the other hand, for those with some give, I always squeezed out a little fun. But my two years with Ralph had given me a breather from all that. I had lost momentum. That is, 'till Tat and I finished the last slice of shrimp pizza. By then Tat had issued a formal invitation to his nearby apartment.

• • •

My laces snagged just as the phone rang. I wanted to get it before dad. He'd been drinking since four. The night before, when I'd been late because of Tat, Edweena had called. Dad had answered her, "No Ryanitta isn't here. But listen sweetheart you come ahead over anyways and I'll give you enough fuckin cock to keep your pansy gob shut for a week." By the second year of sharing a basement apartment I had stopped thinking of him as punishment. My dad had

always been a man of extremes; nothing was going to change that. I'd switched to thinking about his explosions as rivers bursting their banks. Don't blame it on the river. In full flood, he'd say or do anything—probably the most useful trait he'd passed on to his only son.

"Okay dad, I've got it," I said, though I could still hear the telltale wheezing. "I've got it dad. Hang up." The faint click cut short a mumbled, "Cocksu...."

"Hello?" I said.

"Ryan?"

"Who's calling?"

"That you Ryan? I interrupt anything?"

The penny dropped. I wondered if I'd hear more from Tat. After the half hour at his place I wondered why the fuck I hadn't listened to myself. Thirty minutes of what? And for what? Just because he'd rescued this damsel in distress?

Between the restaurant and Tat's third floor walkup he had kept up with the story of his life, begun somewhere between the third and fourth beers. Tat had done time for pilfering money from rich ladies. He'd worked in the underbelly of Toronto's film industry but couldn't stand either the hours or the ass licking. He'd thought about joining a small biker club, but once tattooed they'd wanted him to fuck three different animals (a man counted as two, and Tat said the man had been a lot easier on his nerves than the cow). He left Kingston in a hurry after they told him to pick up the six year-old daughter of a rival gang member.

I didn't care whether any of it was true or not. I'd had enough to drink that I'd have considered fucking three animals myself. Maybe even snatch the girl. But once in Tat's small barren room I focused on the only photo. No frame, but it had been



enlarged. Slim and boyish, about my height, a boy stood in front of a large figure—the boy's arms pulled back behind. He could only have been cupping the man's balls—hard to tell the age. A baseball cap shaded the details of the boy's face. The larger figure had its head clipped off raggedly. The photo had the hurried look of a shot taken on automatic. Set up, then rushed. The result disappointing. Tat flipped the photo over even before I reached for it.

Thankfully, during our half hour he hadn't cried, although that would have been something expected. After being on the receiving end of a brief, fully-clothed blowjob, Tat suddenly dropped his jeans and turned around. He leaned against the kitchen table. Said he wanted me to lick his arse clean, then fuck him. Not easily ruffled, I spread his cheeks and set to work, and thankful he hadn't had time to work up much of a sweat at the Y. Thirty minutes

max, and I had backed out of Tat and his apartment. Both in what seemed a single liquid motion. I headed home, now doubly in need of that shower.

Being thankful for small mercies didn't cut it, but during the short walk home I went easy on myself. A stupid mistake. That was all. It won't happen again, I promised. And I thought, obviously incorrectly, that I'd been clear with Tat that our little fuck was a one-time item. In and out. Thanks, but finito, sweetheart.

Not about to give an inch of wiggle room, I switched the phone to my other ear and tightened my reply. "No Tat you didn't interrupt a thing. I was just reading. But it is late."

"I had a little trouble finding your number. Had to call in a favour but figured

I'd be able to collect on the deal."

So this was going to be the damage for chewing on a fat, tattooed cock and a quick fuck. This guy was going to want me hanging on the end of his dick every second night.

"Figured maybe we could have ..."

I cut him short. "Sorry Tat." He didn't mind me calling him that. "It's late. My dad's just shit himself. I've got a job interview tomorrow. I'm back on the rag. I can't."

"Now Ryan, I ...."

I cut in once again. "You're not listening sweetie."

"You're the one not listening Ryan—darling." He drew out the last word to twice its normal length. "You don't have a fuckin' clue who you're playing with, do you?" The shift came suddenly and raised the hairs on my finely tuned alarm system. Tat sounded like he was back on Elgin Street threatening half-witted kids. And once again I felt the menace of semi-circled boys around my locker. Careful Ryan; where are the exits? I was now certain that Tat knew where I lived and that something beyond blowjobs and fucking had slipped unnoticed through my open window.

"The name Sage Radcliffe mean anything?"

Even fogged up with tiredness I didn't have to think about the answer to that one.

...

My family had lived in the north end of Kingston where small plain houses stretched out in row after row of a treeless tedium—a so-called compensation for





returning soldiers. Thanks for saving our asses, now piss off. Our house at least had a basement, but the few north-enders with a car must have had to stack snow tires behind their fridges. No hallways, just rooms giving onto smaller rooms. The two-bedroom limit meant when mom and dad stopped sleeping together, I got the basement. After mom died, I stayed down there.

Despite Sage's house being on the next street, abutting our back yard, it might as well have been in the next county. I had been eight or nine when Dad told me if he caught me with either Radcliffe boy he'd tan my arse. Not much chance of that since they both went to the Catholic school.

With my curiosity piqued, I started spying from my basement window. I could see into the room Sage shared with his brother Doug, who was clearly more my age. They never closed the blinds. I used to think them careless, but that couldn't have been further from the truth.

First it was simply the wonder of how others lived their evening lives. Because cold weather drove activity indoors, winter was better than summer. Winter pinned people down long enough so you could see what they were up to. Fixing toilets. Flipping through magazines. Rolling cigarettes. Two brothers play-wrestling, followed by predictable squalls of hurt and anger. Even though older, by the time Doug must have been about twelve, Sage was not much bigger. But what he lacked in size he made up for in meanness. I watched as he started tying Doug to trees, poles and then his bed. Doug, by then almost as big, didn't really try. A few times he struggled without conviction and only briefly. Outside, Sage usually just left him tied up but one time Doug's arms were pinned by a snow tire from the stack behind the house. Slipped around his chest like a napkin ring. That particular day was hot; the garden hose was left just out of reach. Later in the summer, when the days had turned chilly, he'd held a lighter to a fistful of Doug's hair till

it caught fire. He made a big thing about slapping out the small flames. And not a sound from either of them.

Once they moved indoors things got really interesting. He made Doug eat what looked like dog food. Suck on his toes. Bite his tits. Lick his arse. Then Doug would turn, spread his own ass and hold the cheeks apart while Sage fucked him. Doug never resisted in any serious way and I never told a soul.

"I see you know who I'm talking about."

"Doug? That you?" Ryan still hoped it wasn't.

Ignoring the question, Tat continued. "I thought because Sage brought home all A's and ribbons and degrees that he was smart. That sitting in the centre of the football team's photo had been entirely appropriate. But then he told me about you and him. About him sliding through your basement window and what he used to do to you. He'd come back, wake me up and tell me everything. Said you'd been watching us all those years and that he'd left the curtains open just to make you hungry.

"When he married and moved to Toronto, I missed him. Can you fuckin' believe it. I missed him. You listening?"

I was listening very carefully. And getting some idea of where this was going.

"When Sage came home to visit, we still had to share a room. I thought things would go on just the way they always had."

I could have finished for him.

"But he never said a word. Just pretended like we'd been normal brothers. Like nothing ever happened between us. One night I couldn't stand it any longer. He'd come in late after drinking with some of his old high school buddies. I'd watched

your window and made sure he hadn't been with you. I was still awake and could smell the booze. He started humming. I mistook it for our old signal: How much is that doggie in the window?"

I could hear the embarrassment in Tat's voice and knew he had indeed understood my "finito" message and that's exactly why he was calling.

"The night had been hot as hell. He had flopped on the bed with only his jockeys on. Without turning on the light, I moved over and sat beside him. Slowly I slid the pants down his legs, an inch at a time. By the time I finished, his legs had spread, his cock sprung. So I hadn't misunderstood. I wanted to let him know that even though he'd gone away nothing at home had changed. I moved in between his legs and started licking his balls."

Sage had turned on him. Put his neck in a scissors hold, gripped a fistful of hair and told him if he pulled any more of that faggot shit, he knew six guys who'd take turns dry fucking him. When Tat asked him, "What about Ryan?" Sage told him all he had to do was say that name once more—to anyone—and Sage would make sure the whole of Kingston knew how wide he could spread his ass cheeks, how he had practiced holding his breath so's Sage could sit on his face long enough to beat off, and exactly how much he liked to swallow cum.

"And who you think they're gonna believe Doug? An engineer living in Toronto with his wife, or some dropout druggie who plays with himself in toilets?"

The phone line fell silent.

Then Tat said, "You still with me Ryan?"

"Yes Tat. I'm still with you."

"That's good. That's real good." **UG**



# FAULTS.

by Devin McCawley

## 20

This set was shot from dawn until noon in the east side of downtown Edmonton, on September 8th, 2008. My aim was to capture the beauty and timelessness of the brash neighborhood I live in, whilst in the thick of an early Monday morning. — Devin McCawley









# THE HOT TITS AND ORC BUTTS ARE BIG AND HOT

by Neale McDevitt

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She was fat. I mean really fat. With huge hanging tits and a monstrous, dimpled, bulbous arse. She was a little crazy too, like being slapped around and treated like shit. Liked feeling my open hand come crashing down on her jiggling white crapper.

I swear to Christ, this one was middle linebacker weight, 240 pounds. Easy. But she wasn't any taller than 5 foot 6. Just a sloppy-fat broad who got off from getting smacked around.

I had heard her ad on one of those telephone dating services where people leave a description of themselves and tell you what fleshy fetish puts the whirl in their whirly-bird. She was box 3401, in the "Submission and Domination" category. Unlike a lot of us desperados, she wasn't full of shit when it came to describing herself. She came right out and told the world how she was a porker who enjoyed a bit of the kink, in her case, being tied up and flogged like some poor fucker in a medieval fun-factory.

I don't know why - up until then I had only listened to the ads - but I left a message right away. Cost me ten bucks on my next phone bill. I said something about wanting to paddle her white butt red. She called me back the next day and we arranged to meet at a dough nut shop.

Sweet fuck. She was bigger in real life than even her own blunt description of herself could have prepared me for. When she wedged herself into the seat in front of me I was disgusted. I just sat there mute, waiting for her to order a dozen French twists and a tub of custard. Instead, she asked for a small coffee, no sugar, and smiled wryly at my thinly veiled surprise. But she didn't say anything, not a word. She just looked me up and down, sizing me up like I was a meatloaf sandwich or something.

A couple of silent minutes later, her coffee arrived. I was still staring, wanting desperately to get up and run screaming down the road, but I just sat there. Staring. She blew the steam off her coffee, took a sip and smiled

menacingly. "So, you like to beat women?" her voice was bland, nondescript, invisible.

Oh shit, I felt sick knowing why I was there. Knowing I was going to do it. Nausea speed-bagged my belly and my fighting legs jellied. I was sweating like a whore in church.

She leaned forward, big fleshy throat shimmering like lakewater under a sickly moon. "What's wrong," she asked. "Don't like to talk? Good. Let's not talk anymore," and with that she was on her pinchy piggy feet, waddling out the door. And I, disgusted and wanting more than anything to bolt, followed closely behind.

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Pimples, dimples and unhealthy red blotches. The deepest, darkest, most menacing ass crack of all time. An ass crack for the ages. Without so much as a word, she walked straight into the motel room, number 214, peeled off her clothes, climbed onto the bed on all fours and

buried her head in the pillows. She looked like a gigantic, hairless puppy wanting to play, butt in the air.

I had never been with a broad even half that huge. In fact, I took a certain pride in knowing that I had never been desperate or drunk enough to fuck a real fatty. But there I was gazing into the Grand Canyon of arses. A fucking monument to big shitters the world over.

So I slapped her. A little tentative at first - remember, I wasn't very experienced at this. A small shudder rattled down her spine and she notched those hungry mud flaps up a bit higher. I put a little elbow grease into the next one and smacked her with added oomph. She groaned and shook a

bit, like my dad's old station wagon on a frosty winter day. I cranked her harder. And a little harder after that. Pow. Crack. Bang. Soon I was taking a running start from across the room like some crazy fucking cricket pitcher.

I windmilled my open palm down on her oversized poop cutters with absolute malice.

I breathed heavy and my dick was hard. I was sweating like a rapist.

Yeah, I know it sounds crazy. I know it is crazy, but she seemed to really get off on the violence.

Every time I belted her it sent a jolt of feel-good way

down inside her, like I had to hurt

her deep just so she could feel something. Anything. Whatever, she really got off on all that hair pulling, blindfolding, ass-smacking, handcuffing stuff.

Every night  
ended the same way.  
After a while, maybe  
hours, she'd gently roll me  
off of her, cover me with  
a sheet, get dressed  
and leave.





The only thing was, she didn't have an orgasm. She never came. Every Wednesday night for seven months I had that crazy fat bitch roped and tied and moaning and twitching like a great tub of happy pink Jell-O, but she'd never come. I know why, of course: I never touched her pussy. Ever.

See, she had this tiny pussy hiding under all those grotesque layers of suet. A little girl's private parts; a shy baby thing nestled in delicate soft curls. I'd spend hours spanking her fat shit locker with all my might and crashing her big tits together like great gods of war. I'd ram my fingers up her butt, my cock in her mouth and I'd come all over her face, on her jugs and all over that never-ending ass crack. But I couldn't bring myself to touch her pussy.

It almost made me feel shy, like it was an innocent witness to my nastiness and loathing. See, I spend all day, all week, all fucking year, fighting the anger, tying it up and strapping it down. But it struggles and twists and strains at the bonds. It's exhausting and terrifying, because when it does bust loose it bubbles over and spills out onto the street like gun powder-tinged blood. A prison break.

It slashes and cuts and comes at me hard and fearless, a lunatic with a broken bottle. It overwhelms the workaday me, the guy-next-door me, the socialized me who talks politics and hockey and tells forgettable off-color jokes to co-workers, bartenders and guys at the gym. It pistol whips me into a corner and hands over the cage keys to the ugly brute beast I've kept locked away since I was brooding bastard

kid. I didn't mind beating that crazy fat chick. She seemed to like it, even need it in a way I'd never understand - but something about her pussy shamed me. Made me want to cover up and hide.

Now, maybe you last few Freudians want to hear how my earliest memory of my mom is of her naked in the bathtub, highball in hand, nipples like raspberries topping off cream-colored breasts. And maybe the armchair psychiatrists would be better able to label me like an entomologist's dead butterfly, pin through the heart, if they knew that during two periods of my youth I tortured small animals. And maybe it would simplify things, rationalize them, if I told you that once a month my old man would march us four boys down to his workroom and belt-whip us whether we deserved it or not. And maybe I would garner the sym-



pathy of sociologists and psychologists and all the world's other apologists if they knew that between the ages of eight and eleven, I had a hockey coach, the grandfatherly Mr. Granger, who would make me jerk him off like a circus monkey whenever he drove me home.

Yeah, maybe it would all help you sleep better at night knowing that there is a reason why I carry this hatred in me, why a white, middle-class, well-educated boy went so bad. To paraphrase Marx; cause and effect is the opiate of the people. The weak people. You hope all my ills can be explained away in a broad, sweeping, comforting stroke, because if they can be so neatly categorized and compartmentalized, then maybe, just maybe, they can be cured. Cured before your daughter finds herself alone in Room 214 with me.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way out of this one because none of those life-defining moments - not mummy's tits, not daddy's whippings, not the tortured animals or the pedophilia - belong to me. My childhood was simple and perfectly uneventful, just an endless loop of summer camps and snowball fights and cellophane-wrapped quarters buried like treasure in birthday cakes.

But still I seethe for no apparent reason, at least none that I can finger. The anger is just there in my cells, in my genes, woven like barbed wire strands in my DNA. And I'm not the only one: I recognize the same blood-sport glint in the eyes of white middle classers everywhere. Middle-management types riding the metro and grimacing on the stairmaster at the Y. Bus drivers and teachers. Me and the laughing guy at my elbow at the bar. Buckle up, people, this privileged class kicks ass - or at least beats it to within an inch of its life.

So, luckily for your plaid-skirted daughter, that fat chick's giant arse was the conductor of all my rage. Like a fleshy lightening rod, it drew from me all my electric hatred and every smoldering frustration that made me ball up my fists under my desk while my boss chewed me out.

I began seeing the faces of people who pissed

me off in each purple bruise and pinkish blotch. There! Mr. Jameson - the first cock-sucking coach who ever ridiculed me and made the team do pushups whenever I dropped a fly ball. Crack! Kelly - my ex-girlfriend who dumped me for a dyke with hockey hair. Smack! My polack landlord. Slap! The rude bitch cashier at the corner store. That smug, burly cop. My asshole brother. Dogs who shit on the sidewalk. All fucking Jehovah's Witnesses. Crash! Wham! Pow! Smash! Bang!

"Oh my!" she'd moan from the pillow.

By the end of each session her ass glowed hard like steamed lobster. Red, red, red - an angry, violent and dangerous red sucked from my eyes and heart, yanked from my guts like a fetus gone horribly wrong. Week after week, she took, begged for, the blood-red bile that flash-flooded through my veins and filled my stomach with razored edges.

Her ass would accept the very worst of me, the stuff that keeps me awake at night shaking and crying, and it burned with it; a living ember fueled entirely by my venom. In some weird, Daliesque way that ass became an entity unto itself. Alive with my hate, it hung above us both, above us all; the North Star to angry mariners and sociopaths and pissed of wise men everywhere. But when next week lurched around, I'd bust through door 214 to be greeted by that white, terribly white, ass. By then, it had processed all my torments and beatings and absorbed them like a huge, forgiving sponge. Her cream-colored butt just hung there, tabula rasa, waiting patiently for me to carve another week's worth of rage upon it.

When it was all over, I'd collapse on her belly or between her fat thighs, panting like a poisoned dog. Her skin was hot and wet, and with every breath her horrifying body would ripple with tiny rhythmic waves, a living waterbed. I'd be so exhausted from all that ass-slapping and nipple-twisting and hair-pulling that I couldn't move. Didn't want to. Lying there, I floated in that flesh ocean, drifting away into the liquid whiteness. Away. My sweat, my heartbeat, my strength, my violence - all envel-

oped by her huge, receptive frame. Week after week I'd give in to her vastness.

I'd sprawl out with my head on one of her fat folds, staring right at her tiny pussy. It was an island, an undiscovered Greek enclave. I was bobbing in an ocean of pimples and ugliness, numb and exhausted but always aware, however instinctively, that the sea swells were carrying me toward paradise, my Arcadia. Floating. Drifting. Closer and closer and closer still. Cognition stopped, warm sensations returned. I thought I would sleep, but I know I didn't. She breathed for me and each breath whispered "peace."

Every night ended the same way. After a while, maybe hours, she'd gently roll me off of her, cover me with a sheet, get dressed and leave. I remember all this but I can't say I ever saw or heard it. I was always still adrift, so close to serenity.

But when she'd leave, the metallic click of the door would echo low thunder across the open water of my dreamscape, and Arcadia was nowhere to be seen on the distant, foreboding horizon. Suddenly, I was mindful that I was between realities, the dreamer who sadly understands he's only dreaming.

With that awareness came the disintegration of hopeful reverie and the resurrection of bastard thought. One by one, the sounds and smells and textures of my ugly life, my motel existence, would barge into the liquid white world of drifting. Car horns, cheap scratchy sheets, the practiced moans of the whore next door, sirens, the stink of spilled beer, sweat and sex. My heartbeat.

And then there I was, on my side staring at myself in the mirrored wall with vacant eyes. For the first few merciful minutes I'd feel nothing, nothing at all. But the air-conditioned cold would snake up my skin, slide in my ass and ears and nose and chill me through. Chill me like death. Chill me like curse. Chill me like my every day. And in my gut I would feel the bitter new bud of hatred send out its first tentative shoot.



# CONTRIBUTORS.

In Order Of Appearance



Philip Quinn's work has appeared in sub-Terrain, blood + aphorisms, Front&Centre, Kiss Machine, Lichen Journal, Broken Pencil, Snow Monkey and Anemone Sidecar.

On-line appearances include: Laura Hird's Showcase ([www.laurahird.com](http://www.laurahird.com)), eli mae ([www.elimae.com](http://www.elimae.com)) The Shore Magazine ([www.theshoremag.com](http://www.theshoremag.com)) and The Danforth Review ([www.danforthreview.com](http://www.danforthreview.com))

Books include: Dis Location, Stories After the Flood and The Double, a novel.

Mr. Quinn lives in Toronto and online at [www.philipquinn.ca](http://www.philipquinn.ca)



Bart Plantenga  
(US/Nd)  
[www.wfmu.org/~bart](http://www.wfmu.org/~bart)  
or google "Bart Plantenga"  
or "Beer Mystic"  
or "Yodel-Ay-Ee-Oooo"

For the past 20 years, Bart Plantenga has been producing his mythic radio show Wreck This Mess in New York (WFMU), Paris (Radio Libertaire), and currently in Amsterdam (Radio Patapoe). Plantenga is the "nonfiction novelist" of Beer Mystic and Paris Sex Tête and recently published YODEL-AY-EE-0000: The Secret History of Yodeling Around the World, the first-ever global history of this mysterious

vocalization. He is also a founding member of the New York writing group, the Unbearable Beatniks of Light.

He currently lives in Amsterdam.



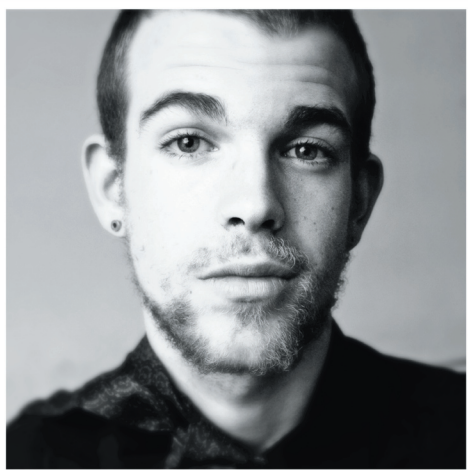
Angela Hibbs is the author of Passport, a collection of poetry publish by DC Books in 2006. She was a founding member of the now defunct Anarchist's Manifesto. She still loves Nirvana. She wishes Courtney Love would smarten up and be a better widow. She likes vodka sodas and samosas. She's not a very good guitar player.

She lives in Montreal.



Bill Brown's work has appeared in Boheme Press's Grunt and Groan: The New Fiction Anthology of Work and Sex and Siren Song Press's Writing at the Edge. In addition his stories and book reviews have appeared in Front&Centre, which he now co-edits with Matthew Firth. Firth is also the captain of Black Bile Press which published Bill's chapbook, Folly. A full collection is in the works for late 2008 or early 2009.

**Bill and his husband, John, live in Ottawa.**



Devin McCawley is the editor of Splurge (a zine that confronts and contorts the hyper-reality of consumer culture), the co-publisher of Greensleeve Editions, and an aspiring photographer. When not editing, writing, or taking pictures, he sleeps, eats, works, and defecates: just like everyone else. Try it. You might like it.

**Devin McCawley currently lives and works in Edmonton.**



Neale McDevitt is fixture of the Montreal neighbourhood NDG, having lived in a four-block radius of Sherbrooke Street his entire life. His debut collection of short stories, One Day, Even Trevi Will Crumble (Exile Editions), celebrates the denizens of this community, and won the Quebec Writers' Federation First Book Award in 2003. Before turning his sights on writing, McDevitt was a weightlifter in the 1980s, winning the Pan-Am Championship in 1985 and representing Canada in the 1986 Commonwealth Games.

**Neale currently lives in Montreal.**



Mark McCawley arrived naked, kicking and screaming into the cold war world on a Tuesday morning in January, 1964. Shortly thereafter, he had a revelation that if one of those strange smiling faces looking down at him in his crib got close enough, he could actually smack them right in the kisser. Since then, he has discovered that the pen is truly mightier than the palm. Founder of Greensleeve Editions, and editor of Urban Graffiti.

**He lives and writes in Edmonton.**





