

north





NORTH

Winter / Spring 2001
Vol 3.1

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NORTH is the literary journal of the College of the Humanities at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of all contributors.

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Editors' Note

Fellow Hums,

There is an essential quality of mystery to our lives, of which we as a group are aware. The enigma enfolds through the layers of the Aristotelian cosmos, the soaring towers of Thomistic thought, the reckless beauty of Coleridge's vision, and the perfect clarity of Krishna's immortal message. On this mystery, our realities are drawn like threads on a loom, and in moments of insight we take up these threads, and glimpse the simplicity of the light that shattered Saul. We tell these stories, paint these pictures, sing our sad songs, because we need to explore this mystery. Because we understand that, though our knowledge is the light which guides us, the night is long and we still have far to go. We tell these stories to commune, to communicate, to seek our friends and bind them to us, that we all might shine brighter.

Thank you all for your submissions and support!

Submissions are read,
The editors are blue,
We don't have enough green,
To print issue two.

Glenn, Jeremy, Tom, and James

Orbit

These words these days
are always spent in orbit, advanced
words running a maypole dance around
and around, the misguided
pitter patter of my pen, the aimless
clatter of tiny words trying to be heard-
to act like big ones;
For every children's game tries
to name itself as if it were real, to stretch its size
even as the children feel the concrete
basement walls closing
cement in around them all otherwise;
And
every playful description of you is also
looking up with tiny shy eyes
asking if the giant, stalk still standing in
the middle of my chalk circle game approves, But meanwhile
you in my head only smile, unwrap the words with sinister
style from around your knees- unwrap the words like a verbal tease,
turning again, and again and again, to say I'm sorry But
that's not me.

The old new government

The old new government
of the American empire

celebrates, with equal zest,
the saving

of 10 American fetuses
and the slavery
of 1000 Asian children,

there is some part of what America
could always have been that
it has eaten, and now
the future trickles
down its
chin-
but.

we can still collect it
gather it
save it-
for something remains.

Give me the bucket
(made in Indonesia)

Filled with whatever is left;
I will keep it hidden
until America
is old enough
for school.

Propaganda

I could write you devotions, like I would
for a product.

But I already love your freckled arms,
Your barefeet on tiles;
The shape of your back while you drink water.

I love these things wrapped round me like armour,
and I do not need a poem to believe in them.

nor will i throw this out

The real thing

Leonard Cohen
Are you there?
This is no slideshow
This is the real thing
I am searching
for my form and
I am losing myself quickly
It's because I am sitting
at this lone lit desk
like a benchmark
I want to learn
to sleep
I want to learn
to get lost
I want to learn
to give in
I want to learn
But I'm caught
in the sun-drenched hours
of waking
by the final hours of the dream
I was thinking
of holding
this moment forever.

From: Bovis Lelliot
07/23/99 12:03 PM

To: <"Flavah Workah" p_macsz@hotmail.com>

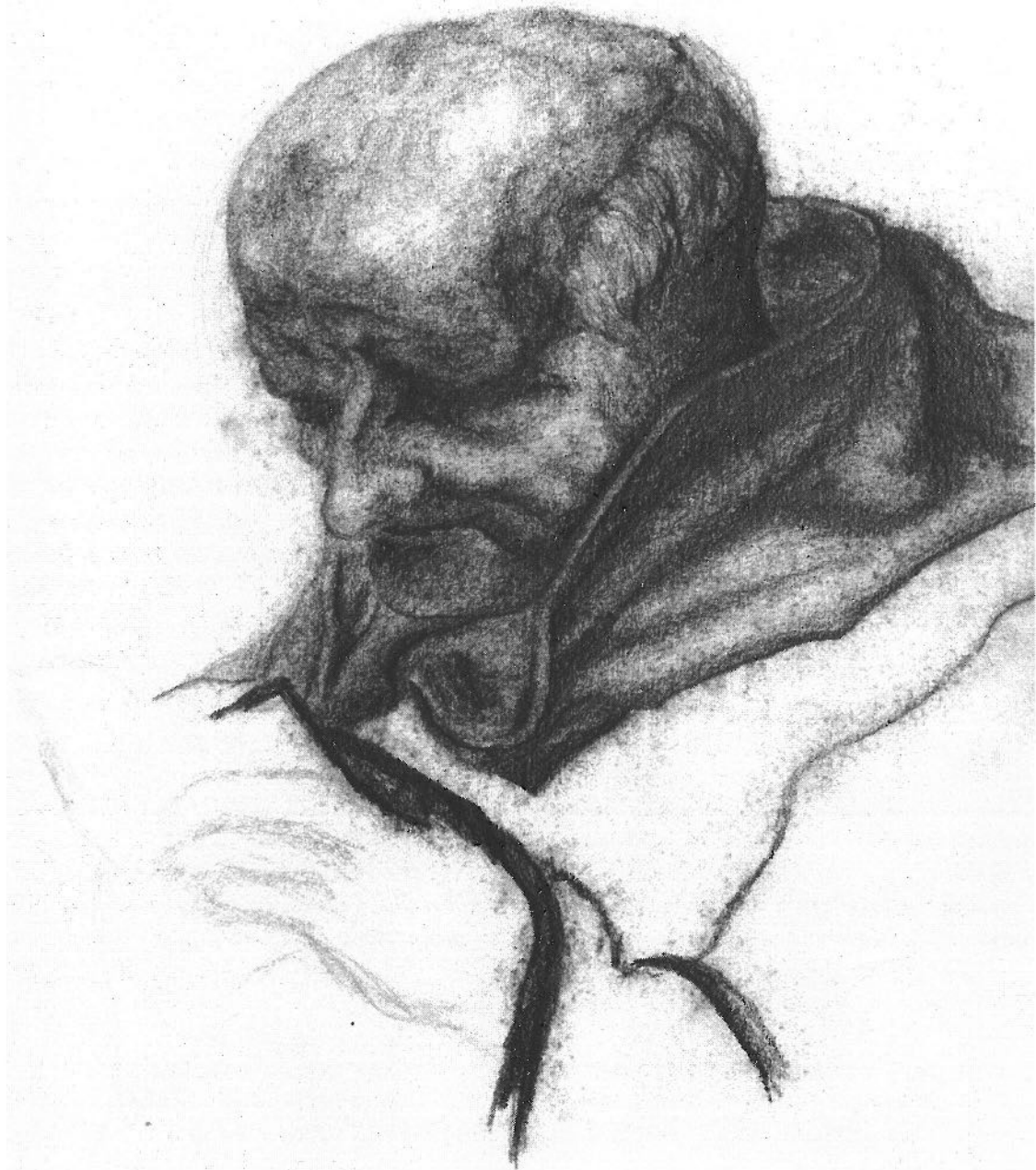
cc:

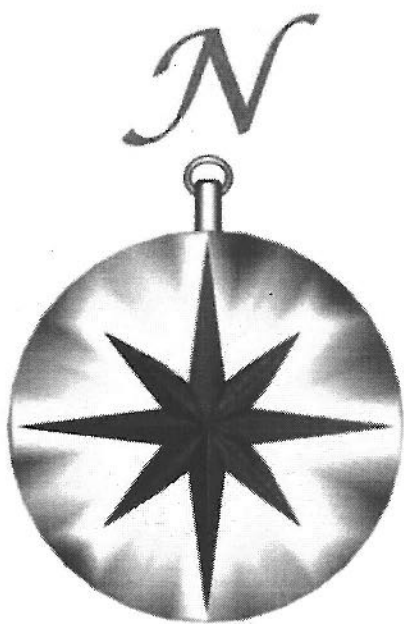
Subject: Re: Corporate email

Functify, you sly fly guy - don't wanna philosophize? That's okay, I don't mind. Got behind in the grind myself - hence my shelf is a bit dusty an' musty - ya trust me? I'm true, true like you and Karina too - true like the truth, the loose-belted truth - so much so that in the pursuit of our vast sums of loot (cute but business-like Ike's gotta wear a suit and soon our pantaloons aren't gonna be groomed enough to make Boss Koss swoon, dig? So we'll have to wear our hair parted there and beware the black rack on which they lay our backs: I'm talkin' *income tax*. No tux delux flyboy strux - we'll be business MEN, with our names on PENS, that we give out to chumps who take our salary dumps with nervous smiles while all the while the miles and miles of work get passed and smoked like grass cos on our fat ass we do nothing fast!) - anyway, hey, as I was sayin' but delayin' cos in this unrestrained rhyme I'm sprayin' like a kid playin' with a firehose that blows and blows up, down, 'round the rows but NO! Stay composed! Gotta keep the door closed like that girl with the pantyhose that the CEO knows! Ya! So, back to the flack: in tha pursuit of our vast sums of loot, we refute and reply, mailing quick on the fly, for should a worker stroll by, we look quick to the side sly fly like a worker bee we see that buddee is past fast done won but the race is still on tho he's gone so we're back to the slack with the email we yack and tell each other to mack all the chicks that we see, like some wired-up Fonzee, he's on tha pill popping scene, red yellow and green - and she knows what we mean when we point to our jeans and say "it's a size seventeen." Hot DAMN it's OBSCENE!! But that's the emailing scene when you're an ocean away - otherwise we would simply say "meet at the Oak" for a joke and a toke, but my bloke's far away, in the land of Tokei where the cabbies all say "Where to mate?" and hey! They like it that way as they drive half-alive, manic with panic you sit in the back having a heart attack but that's life in the strife sharp as a knife of Europe your home, Flavah's hot summer throne - always settin' tha tone like a young Corleone!

Gotta run - it's tha phone!

B.





1979

In 1979, Iran became the world's first Islamic republic. When President Carter let the fleeing Shah enter the U.S., students in Tehran stormed the American embassy and took 66 hostages.

Pretty and sad, she sat at the bar, trying to breathe, in the smoke-filled room. Why did she come here? It was because she was lonely. She was tired of the complaints of her roommate, tired of the mountains of dirty dishes, tired of the dinners of Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup. She couldn't really afford to be here, but she came. She had to.

The rhythm of the disco music pumped through her, electrifying her soul. Yes, this was better than being at home. Of course Ottawa was never her home. She had left her real home, Aylmer, a year ago. She would never go back, she promised herself, not even if she was starving. Her mother had wanted her to come back. At least this time her mother didn't drag her back, kicking and screaming, like when she was 18. This time her mother let her go.

She saw him dancing. He was well dressed and had all the right moves. He saw her watching him, so he approached

the bar. She was disappointed to find that he was shorter than she was, but he had a nice body.

He had come from Nigeria to Canada on a student visa. He was studying Linguistics at Carleton and already knew German and Spanish. She was impressed. They went back to his apartment that night. In the morning, she decided to move in.

In 1979, Voyager 1 sent back the first pictures of Jupiter.

Two months later, they got married. Standing in front of the Justice of the Peace, she realized she didn't know why she was marrying him. He could make her laugh but he had many strange habits. For instance, he would wear women's blouses and, even worse, he would never wash them. Actually, he never washed any of his clothes. When she finally made him do his laundry the water turned black.

By this time, she knew the truth about Carleton and the student visa. He had been in Canada for five years. Each year he would apply for something at Carleton in order to renew his student visa. He would never attend the class afterwards.

Maybe she was marrying him because

she knew it would really make her parents mad. Yes, that was it. Not only was she marrying a black man but an African nonetheless. That would make her parents furious. It was her ultimate Declaration of Independence.

She wouldn't have any children though. That was what the gynecologist said. "You're physically incapable of conceiving a child." She cried after she heard that, but she couldn't stay sad for long because there was work to be done.

At Mother's Pizza, a quaint little Italian restaurant, she was a hostess. She would bring people to their tables and negotiate with the rowdy customers and the disgruntled employees. She loved her job, but it didn't pay enough. He worked at a pizzeria but together they still couldn't make ends meet so they went on welfare. Even then it was hard times. He would spend the money at the disco. She'd only eat one meal a day. She figured that was why she kept fainting at work.

In 1979, John Wayne died of cancer.

Her boss wanted her to see a doctor. The doctor said she was pregnant. How could that be? Her gynecologist had said she couldn't have children. What was she going to do?

She would have to have an abortion because there was no way she could afford to have the baby. And that was that. He gave her \$75 deposit for it. She

went to the hospital. There she saw another doctor. Before they could make the appointment, the doctor had to see how far gone she was.

In 1979, Sony released the Walkman.

Thirteen weeks. "That's okay," the doctor said, "we can do it as late as 24 weeks." The doctor booked the appointment for the following Wednesday.

Thirteen weeks. That was more than three months. In six months it would be born. Six months, that's only half a year.

Was it a boy or a girl? Who would it be? Maybe it would be retarded, but maybe not. Maybe it would amount to nothing, but maybe not. Who would it be? She didn't know but she wanted to. What could she do?

He was no help. "It would screw up everything," he said. "It would be no fun." She went to Family Benefits and found out that there were several programs running that could help her afford the baby. She would have it.

In 1979, the Soviets' invasion of Afghanistan looked like a potential Vietnam.

Green beans and spinach, she read, were very good for babies because they contained folic acid. Folic acid was said to be important for babies because it could prevent spina bifida. She didn't want her

baby to have spina bifida so she ate lots of spinach and lots of green beans. Two 40-minute walks a day kept her fit. After a while she had to quit her job, but with the extra money coming in from Family Benefits everything was all right.

Well, not everything was all right. He would go out to the disco every night whether she came along or not.

Sometimes, he would come home late, smelling of perfume. Sometimes, he wouldn't come home at all. She couldn't let it get to her. That could hurt the baby.

She knew the baby would be a girl. He said it would be a boy. A boy he could play catch with. She knew he would never play catch with it, whether it was a boy or girl. The child would have magical powers though, no matter what sex it was. That was what he said. He always said the strangest things.

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher became the Prime Minister of Britain.

The baby was two weeks over-due. Christmas was coming, but it had not snowed yet. December made her weary. She was tired and sore and she dreaded the thought of having a Christmas with no snow. The baby and the snow would come soon, she hoped.

She had read somewhere that having sex would precipitate an over-due delivery. She told him not to go out that night. The next morning, she woke up soaked. Her water had broken. She didn't

panic. She got dressed, packed up the little things she needed, and then called a cab to take her to the hospital. There was no point in waking him up.

The cab driver ran all the red lights. "I like you lady, but no way you have baby in my cab." When the cab arrived at the hospital, the cab driver put her in a wheelchair and brought to Admitting.

She was only in labour for two hours. She was lucky. It had seemed like an even shorter amount of time. Pop and there was the baby. At first, it wasn't breathing. The doctors had to suck out all of the mucus from its throat before any sound could escape from its tiny lips. The doctors had to slap it on the back to make it scream, which it did, but then it just settled into a quiet humming. The doctors returned it to its mother's arms. It was a girl.

Outside the clouds were closing in and it was beginning to snow.

In 1979, I was born.

Urn

The wave and surf calls to me
like an old friend.
A surging swell of ocean lifts up and away,
back to freedom.
Upon the water, that endless plain of blue,
one can find peace.
I see the craft in the water, watching them
dive and lift with waves.
Hear the creak of the sails, the howl of the wind
and the heave of the surf.
Feel the chill air of the sea, the sun behind you,
and the cold lines in your hands.
See the tight lines, the white and blue water,
the gleam of the sail.
Can you smell the sea, the salt air
and cold wind?
Such peace amid chaos, inside the
pitching boat.
How can one be so free, and yet so
constrained?
This cold, bitter, inextricable place breeds
distress, yet is placid.
On the water, with the lines in my hand,
I am at peace,
escaped from the land, the jumble and discord
of everyday life.

And yet, here I stand, upon a bit of plank on the shore,
watching and yearning.

It's been a long while but I've returned to this
salty heaven.

I've squandered my time and now it's gone,
but I've returned one last time.

So let me out, open the lid so I may return to
mingle with the tides.

So long have they been a part of me,
now I become a part of them.

a natural history

the land levels off
sedimentary rock left bare
thousands of years now
since the recession of the ice
that spilled into the lower regions
leaving lakes one hundred metres deep
and the light never penetrates to the bottom
where the whole world is frigid;
the rock is worn smoother

our Saturday caravans
we pass unrecognized and
indifferent to the thousands of years
the time could bury us
with coffee cups and eyes
half raised and sleep
never more than an arm's length away

what light to find life here
the land wears itself out
what light to awaken us from
Saturday slumbers
the indifferent clouds
diffuse the sunlight weak and pale
noontime finds us with flashlights
eyes straining for any sign
and our voices weak and breaking
calling "Who's there?"

vibrations in the air
dissipate and dissolve
or find the rock bed
absorbed and ignored
in masses of slow necessity

the land is leveling off
and finding slow its fate
awaiting the return of the ice
where only the weight and pressure
might build it anew
or to wait the hundreds of thousand of years,
the rain and the snow,
to be swallowed by the sea

and taken apart

one
tiny piece

a t a t i m e

[untitled]

She said
something about fresh nectarines
blueberries
left waiting in wooden baskets
slowly bleeding purple
under a Tuesday morning sun
I was tasting summer
remembering the burst of juice
across my tongue
down my chin
again

She said
something about telephones
busy signals
the catching of breath
the empty sound
of waiting
I was hearing numbers
thinking of voices
yours a miracle
growing-green and hesitant-
from receiver
filling my room
with the smell of forests

There is no touching him now,
she said,
his inhale exhale
are patterned
by air
no one else breathes

You said,
it's raining wishes
and blew dandelions
all over the sidewalk.

Saturday Afternoon

Shadows are yawning
under trees
shaken awake
by green

There is a black man
running
up
down
stairs
skin shining
he can imitate the sun

I have dressed myself
in the smell of dust
sweet summer wind
melting popsicles
new canvas running shoes

 I have used words
 open hands
 to move you through heat
pull your tongue from your lips

you are clever
watching from the shade
while I weave yellow
into my hair

From Mary To Jesus

I can't help but wonder at you:
the way you catch sunlight
in your mouth,
all the dirt on your feet
under fingernails
doesn't matter now
when I see you breathing green
back into the grass again.
You are so dark
I'm afraid I'll lose you
somehow
at night
along these tired streets
breeding dust where we walk.
Oh, if there were
syllables
words
eyes
that could swallow you
I'd keep you inside me

and you're gone again
across desert
water
with those twelve who will
drink your wine
and stare blankly
at your miracles-
you will leave your lover's
sleepy bed,
for those men
who will never understand.

Come again,
smelling of salt water,
children whose faces you have touched,
lie beside me, Jesus,
and breathe surrender
across my skin.

Helen

I have read of your mother,
the way your father
fell to earth
with a beating of wings
dragging the sky behind him.
She said: "It was never...
could never be love."
But he stretched over her
aching body
murmuring the softness of pale skin
curling around hands
fingers
leaving behind songs and poems
fading so quickly
that Leda began to wonder
if he'd ever been there at all.

I have heard how it all began:
a white pulse
swelling
against the sides of an egg
cracks slowly spreading
opening
letting the world out.

You taught yourself to fly
learned the wind

never knowing
that the bend of elbows
the curve of wingspan
would swallow men
leave their broken shapes
tangled in dust
mouths filled with swollen tongues
dogs pulled by the metallic smell of
red.

Rising above death
robbing the city below of
green
you moved over salt water
unsure where you had been
all this time.

Now I watch you hang
laundry outside every Sunday morning.
I listen to you argue
over the weekly shopping list.
You wash the childrens' hair,
braid your own,
roll over in bed.
whisper goodnight.

And when I ask where all the feathers
come from
you only smile
and raise your arms.

Ward Swarthby "Ministry of Fear" (2)
of nature:

nature is directing

- frightening at times

- stimulating ↳ fear

- ultimately exciting

and awe
together
is the
experience
of nature



"objective correlative"

↳ some object(s) or chain of events
that ~~is~~ is the formula of the
emotion so that the emotion
is always evoked thru it

→ it's the only way to express
emotion in art — to find
an objective correlative

(see ~~the~~ Luddon) — T.S.
Eliot

Ward Swarthby 4

Coleridge: PROBATIVE FEELING



Late Saturday Morning

Sometimes I name people for the places I met them.

"Hey Algoma. What's up?"

"Not much," he says.

"Yeah."

If I can get you on the phone, at home, a summer Friday midnight, there can't be much. Algoma isn't the kind to share a bed. I almost ask, but:

"So what's up?"

"Nothing. Really. Just me and the TV. Me and my self-esteem and the TV."

"Yeah. How's that comin'?"

"Could be worse," I say.

"Uh hun."

"Yeah."

I listen to John Wayne on the other end, and imagine Algoma and cowboys. He always loved cowboys. Tin stars. Tenggallon hats. He got his start with plastic Indians. Almost again, but:

"How's the... what?"

"Nothing," I say.

"How's the fish?"

"Dead. Belly up. I'll buy a new one tomorrow. Cheaper than feeding the buggers."

"Yeah," he chuckles. Algoma likes fish, but they're hard to hide under trenchcoats.

"So... uh."

"Yeah?"

"So, uh. You busy?"

"Nope. Not busy."

"So. You want a drink? Or something?" I ask.

"No. Not really."

"Oh. 'Cuz I got a bottle of Jack, if you wanted some."

"It's kinda late. I was watching a movie."

"Yeah."

John Wayne fills the silence, until a woman takes his place. She tells us, anyone, about miracle tampons. The next man sells funerals. The next vitamins. Women use orgasmic shampoo. A child thanks you, for your donation.

"Maybe a drink would be good."

"Yeah?"

"I'll be over in a while."

Algoma hangs up. He doesn't say bye. He watches the last quarter-hour of his movie, gets his trenchcoat, walks between moody raindrops, I imagine. I crumple the dial tone and listen to that rain. In the small space between walls, aluminum siding, the raindrops tap like key strokes, and remind me of work. I pour a neat drink and chew over its coldness, then throw it back. The good stuff. The expensive stuff. That makes me think of work, so I look around. I stare at a sparking screen, made nonsense by

silence, and my thoughts drift outwards while the world pulses four score times. When the reverie throws me, the key strokes and the blue light match the same drum, then lose each other. I look around at corners 'til I run out, and snap shut the TV. I concentrate on the sensation of polyester on denim, on cotton on flesh, I feel under me. I stroke my smooth chin. I accidentally close my eyes.

Sometimes I name people for their medication.

Valium lets himself in and sits across the room. He smiles at me and cases the joint. I offer him the bottle, he takes it. He swigs it like she did, and hands it back. I swig it, and realize this makes it better.

I can't remember if he talks to me, but he drinks, and I find myself sober, much later. It's early now, not late. As Valium recycles the good stuff in the next room, I sit alone, and wonder about him. He flushes, knocks something in the sink, metal and enamel, I forget, he says he's leaving; shrugs on his trenchcoat, goes. In the moody rain, walking home, he forgets.

Sometimes I name people for their psychoses. Definitive trait: hidden somewhere, near our selves. Quaint *conditions* to join us, and our fragmented psyches. Other than self-interest.

Klepto doesn't care. He's the last name, a long list, one more tiny red mental checkmark.

On the couch, between corners, I meditate on change. It's when the good stuff is gone, empty bottle under cushions, domestic oblivion. When the good stuff is gone, and it's Saturday morning, and you don't know where to find a synagogue. When I owe nothing more to the TV, but I'm too tired to stand. When a spinning spider sickens me, and her web can't catch the remote control. When I sit forward, taking my time, rising slowly, stumbling slowly, off carpet and onto tile. When I listen to the sounds of stagnant plumbing, one man showering next door far away. Or a woman. They don't care. And the Niagra thunder or the Sahara trickle in the tub as I test my power. When I imagine my heat leaching into frigid porcelain, into cold concrete, one more drop in a frozen ocean. When I slip into that womb, taking time to imagine my own dissolution. When I swear I will, do this one thing right.

Change is when dawn finds me, standing naked still dripping, appreciating in an absence my only true friend. Realizing psychoses sometimes can be virtues; that people help, the only way they know how.

My razor is missing.

Prophets and Priests

Peter folded the arts section, put the paper down, looked up, then back, then up in surprise. He stared long and made sure; the almost-thirty near the window, in the worn jeans, the army surplus coat, drinking red wine in the morning, scribbling madly or watching the world spin by, he had a familiar face. Peter smiled, left his briefcase, took his tea, moved the frail metal chair and walked over to the other too-small table. He hesitated, glanced at the art on the walls, tried to make himself noticed, interrupted:

“John Woods? I thought I recognised you. It’s been a while.”

John started, then laughed. “Peter, my good man! What do you here?”

Peter sat, careful not to upset, the table, tried to make himself comfortable where it was not. Made eye-contact and grinned. “I’m waiting for my wife. You were in Toronto, last I heard.”

“And I am there yet. Yes, I’ve got a nice place downtown. Not nice, but well-loved, near the crucial amenities. Can I buy you a drink?”

“No, I’ve got one, thanks.”

“Smoke?”

“No thanks. Go ahead.”

John plucked a cigarette, went safari through his pockets, found matches, made

fire and watched Peter. He watched Peter several drags. “You look good, by Zeus! How have things been? How does your world turn?”

“Since grade-school you mean? Well, enough. I got out of Timmins. I got married. Did my time at Western in literature, then made it over the pond for a Master’s, and now Ottawa. I write a bit. I edit a bit. I’m sure you’ve got a better story,” Peter smiled. John always had a better story.

“Not much different. It’s been a long long time, no? Fifteen bloody years? But don’t worry: I haven’t changed.”

Peter didn’t. “Yeah, my mom and me left Timmins for the city. Family, and all that. Made it through high school, somehow; valedictorian. Then U. of T. for English, and survived that too; praised be the Maker and all His minions. Still paying for it. But it’s good to hear someone else is trying to make it writing. Hell of a job, or ‘lifestyle choice’, whatever they mean by that. Took me years, but I got a novel published. Won an award. You come across it?”

Peter observed the table. “Sorry. I don’t have much time to read for pleasure. Last year I wrote my own novel, though. When I do read it’s always SF...”

“Sci Fi, egad! Well, this was fantasy,

that's my poison: Runes of the Elderwatch. Not your normal faux-Tolkien tripe, though! It's an epic tale of passion, magic, and adventure, set in the vast world of the Severed Realms."

Peter laughed, careful not to upset. "Sounds terrific. I'll buy one today."

"You are a gentleman and a scholar! Not a penny will be wasted. Except for the cut that goes to the publisher. And the retailer, and the printer, and of course my agent. If you want, you could just give me the \$12.99 and I'll tell you the whole tale..."

"My lunchbreak won't be long enough. We could meet, later?"

"Alas, I leave tonight. Just visiting my new cousin, you know."

Peter nodded like he knew. There was an awkward moment while the two sat, in the trendy coffee bar, and sensed they didn't, belong: Peter was not a starving artist.

Neither one wanted to exhume the old days.

"Here's a good game!" John exploded, "We'll trade first lines. You quote the bold opening of your book, and I'll tell you mine. 'Wyrdfaln's prophet stood atop the Black Portal and from his mouth onto the gathering throng fell the words of God.'"

Peter sipped his cooling tea, smiled, quickly sipped again, wasted twenty seconds, cleared his throat. "The Winds of Time burst from the Holy of Holies, and brought tears to the old eyes of

Haverden Westfay, guardian and archpriest of the Celestial Temple."

John was satisfied, said nothing like there was nothing to say, for a moment.

"Sometimes I wonder how people do it. How they live their lives without writing or shouting the great story inside them. I mean, what do they think about, day in, day out? Do you comprehend them? I could never live that blasted way." John drank his wine, waited for Peter to agree, waited.

"I don't know. Maybe few people have an epic in their soul. Someone has to read what writers write on water."

"Hmm," John returned, unconvicted. He looked at the waitress. Then he admired the woman, standing behind Peter.

"Veronica! John Woods, Veronica Chapel, my wife of eight years."

"Eight years, by the hammer hand of Thor! Madam, you bedazzle me with your charm and beauty."

Veronica was polite. Peter stood, "Good to see you John. Hope we meet again sometime, soon."

"Yes yes. I'll be in town next month, perhaps. Perhaps we'll meet."

"Sure. That'd be great. Have a safe trip, John."

"Ciao."

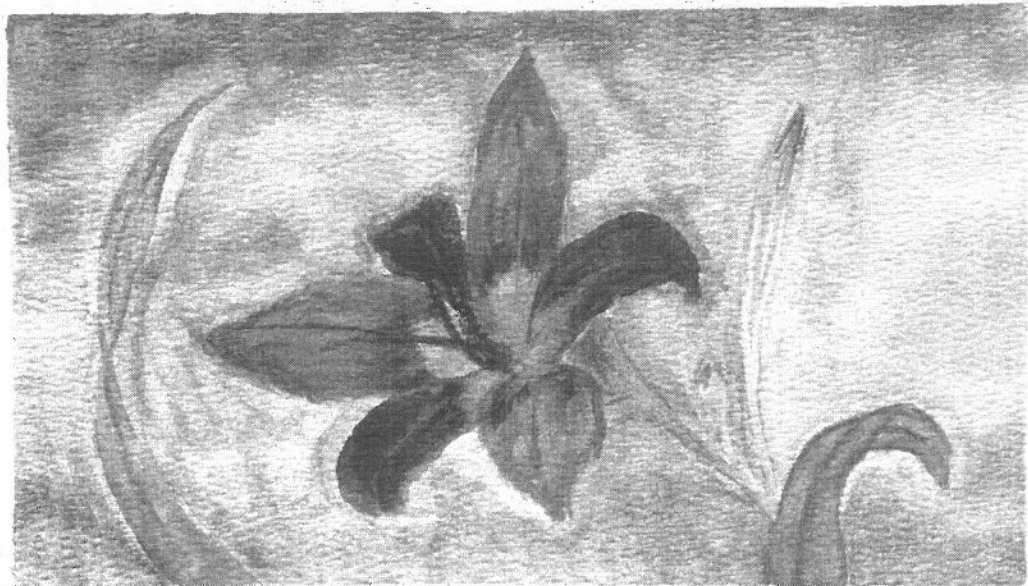
With his wife, in the non-smoking section, Peter sat and talked and thought. John rose, leaned on the counter, tried to pay for the wine, left and left no tip but a smile on the waitress' face.

Peter tried to listen, waited until he could not wait, interrupted:

“The thing I remember about John is one winter, in grade-school. He made the girls steal the class pet, take it out during recess, to the snow hill. It was the darkest of the year, but there’d been a huge blizzard, and the banks were eight feet where the snow-plow had piled them.”

Peter drank the dregs of his cold tea, winced, went on:

“He made the girls frenzy for the little thing. Made them fight, rend it in pieces, on the hill. On the hill the snow was stained crimson, like candy. And that was the place, in May, where the flowers grew.”



MAY 1951 - JULY 1951 - AUGUST 1951

[untitled]

when she visits i am not ready
i can't offer her food even, or a smoke

the knots on the wood floor crawl toward the walls
aberrant shadows on the table the
arm of her glasses casts a shadow like a breast

my mind casts around because the room is
empty

she can see the condom box by the bed

there are no stories between us
the silence yawns and never closes its mouth

nothing happens.
i am blown off the earth

[untitled]

stepping together into this forest
the night bursts up
like a wave at the ocean's lip

as my soul lifts her head she says 'my heart is like a flock'
lifting from the great lake of africa
the last ripples resigned
like a woman wandering the meadow in the wind
hands touching the grass where her hips lay
beneath her lover
before they both rose up beating into the air

and so we walk not lovers
the spirits wanting to know
how it enters us

so many guests appear (meditations for Lyotard)

i.

i am wreckage in the shallows
unable to dissolve
just
crumpled
and still i remain

ii.

we enter my grandmother's house
long after her death,
find jars of jam in the pantry

iii.

dancing
every feeling a nothing moving the body
gesturing the air into shapes
a little cry
and the dancer stops

the body is uninhabited

the audience
lingers and coughs
watches the new absence

that never appears for it
would vanish forever

iv.

an archaeologist bends over
a grassy piece of earth, humming

v.

otter river.

after a hundred years
a tangled mass of wood
surfaces
like a kingfisher

[untitled]

he bites my neck and positions himself
o a fist in ice a
brush pushed through the canvas my shudders

throw a thousand caped arms over my sobs
we touch like clapping games my eyes distracted

on him like crab apples.

fuck on him like crab apples

From a Plane

"Cities glowing to the east," underneath.
Black cloud patches make black land patches.
Dots of light, holes in a shield shine out
Small and flying around a fucked up Christmas tree.
No pattern to the lights but urban sprawl.
Jewels of migration now static in homes.

Parks are black and indistinct from a shadow.
Streets only exist if punctured with light.
Buildings stand as if reaching from
Some two-dimension plane, I know they have
Depth but they are merely an artist's
Perspective white dots.

It is all so beautiful, the city has spread
Herself wide and I am looking in with
Rapture, face glued to double thick glass.

Cities look better at night.
They should only be seen by their own light.

Walkman on Bus

Silent landscape made soundscape
From a bus seeing roly polly
Hills, green with greener trees and greenest grass.
Silent through dust dripped window
Pane held still as everything roly polly by.
Earphones give to it, not make it.
But two senses fill with tears of joy.
Like a movie starring sheep, white
Pupils on green irises, no mouth to
Speak but my ears pickup
Recorded noises. Together saturated
Senses relax and play alone happily
Together.



The Telling of a Story

Once upon a time in a faraway land, there lived in a castle a beautiful princess...

"All right. Stop there. Now, everyone, what is wrong with this?"

Sergei put up his hand. "Overused adjectives?"

The professor (teacher?) shook her head gently. "That's not all."

"Conventional setting?"

"Stereotyped character?"

"Lack of description?"

Joanne, Mark, Mallory (why Mallory? Too similar to mallow, marshmallow, pink flowers, coagulants, all giggles and saccharine smiles for Sergei).

"No attention-getting start?" Sergei again.

The teacher settled back on the edge of the blackboard (chalk on her suit? No, it's pale dove-grey, too light probably for chalk marks. Pity) and smiled a glorious smile at Sergei. Everyone smiles a glorious smile at Sergei, even when they aren't suited to the expression. "Yes. Yes."

Oriana: "How does that work?"

Sergei, eager to give the answer: "Because it has no bite, gives no real answers to the questions of where and when. When is this 'once upon a time', where is this 'faraway land'? We don't know."

What if it takes place in the beginning, in the Dream-time, in the land of myth

and magic, the land of fairy tales? Not exciting enough, probably. No bite to that, no interest generated (and how many of the people in this class could tell a fairy tale off the top of their head? A different one each?).

All right, all right, attention-getting start. With bite. And answers.

In the year 1247, on the twelfth of June, in the Kingdom of Bavaria, there lived in a stone building of approximately twelve hundred square feet a ravishingly attractive young woman of the royal persuasion...

"Good. Keep going."

This young woman had a beloved pet canary...

"Uh, miss?"

"Sergei?"

"Did they really have canaries in Bavaria in 1247? I thought they weren't introduced till much later."

"You may be right. No canaries. But keep going. Yes, Mark?"

"What about the word 'beloved'? Isn't that a bit strong for a pet, whether it's a canary or not? I mean, beloved's really only for people, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes. No bestiality either."

Well, that destroys the story completely. The canary was crucial to the plot - not to

mention the princess's fetish for yellow feathers, etc., in the night. But... one must cater to the audience. No bestiality. Or canaries.

This princess...

"Ah ah ah. Remember about our discussion on royalty last week? It might be offensive to some people."

Of course. No princesses.

This young woman had a pet swallow whose company she enjoyed very much. On the morning in question, she went to the swallow's cage and found, to her surprise, that it was empty. The swallow was gone...

"That's a bit redundant, my dear. Obviously if the cage is empty, the swallow's gone. And what time is this, exactly? It pays to be precise."

On the morning in question, at nine fifty-three, she went to the swallow's cage and found...

"Miss?"

"Joanna?"

"They only had sundials then, didn't they? No precise times?"

"Ah, yes."

On the morning in question, around ten o'clock, she went to the swallow's cage and found the bird missing. However, the door was still closed and locked. Mystified, the young lady went to ask if anyone had seen

her pet...

"Good, good."

Thank you. Three sentences without "constructive criticism"! Must be a first. But still an interruption.

She asked first her father, the king... the leader of the country, but he did not know. Neither did her mother, who was painting her fingernails neon pink...

"Ah--"

"Yes, Mallory?"

"They didn't have nail polish then, did they?"

"No, I wouldn't think so."

"Black ink, maybe. Kohl."

"That's Egypt, not Bavaria."

Neither did her mother, who was dyeing her hair blue with woad, nor did any of her three brothers, all of whom were trying to beat up the butler...

"'Butler' is a term we don't like to use, my dear. It reeks of a class system, inherited worth, ridiculous aristocracy, the sorts of things we don't like to have."

Where is this story taking place, again? Could it possibly be in a kingdom at the end of the Middle Ages, the time when feudalism is not only running rampant but lying couchant as well? And could these three brothers possibly be princes? But there's no royalty, of course. Or imprecision.

"And 'beat up' is such an ungainly term. Perhaps we could think of something

else?"

...nor did any of her three brothers, all of whom were trying to infringe severely on the personal and indestructable human rights of an employee of the government. However, the employee, who was having rather more luck infringing on her brother's rights than they were on his, pointed in the direction of the front door with her eldest brother's head. Thanking him, the young woman went on her way...

"Ah, a very nice element of suspense there. Everyone else, please note this: we are wondering whether the swallow will be found, whether the young lady will achieve her goal. Now we are off into the forests. Does anyone remember the symbolism of the forest from last week?"

"Mystery." Joanna.

"Danger." Mark.

"Fear." Sergei, rolling his eyes.

"Adventure." Mark again.

"Change." Mallory.

"Nature." Oriana, with a simpering smile at Sergei. Too many esses; alliteration. Or consonance? Something like that, anyway.

"Good thing to bring in, the nature vs culture tension. Well, continue."

...and quite soon found herself completely lost. She wandered all day, getting progressively more tired, hungry, and despairing, and eventually came to the banks of a glittering stream, the sort which ought to have naiads in it...

"Remember what we said last month about mythological creatures infringing on our stories? They are slightly... crude."

Remember the genre of this story? Fairy tale? What is a fairy if not a mythological creature? No sense arguing. Maybe the nasty fairy who cursed Sleeping Beauty will come to her and give her an unpleasant gift: May you have a class who refuses to be corrected and who smiles so nicely at you that you can't bear to become angry at them but makes you tear your hair out. There.

"And, miss?"

"Ah, Mark. What do you think?"

"I don't think you can come to the banks of a stream. Surely you only arrive at one side at a time?"

"Good point. Did you make note of that? And don't forget, too many adjectives diminish the effect."

Yes, yes. One adjective is too many.

...eventually she came to the bank of a stream. Near to tears, she flung herself on the grassy verge and sipped water in her cupped hand. After a little while, she fell asleep. When she woke again, the moon had risen and was shining down on the stream and her, silvering everything...

"You're getting redundant again. This is just to make your writing stronger, I hope you realize."

When she woke, the moon had risen. The young woman sat up in confusion and saw, much to her surprise...

"Miss --"

"Sergei?"

"That line's already been used once --"

"So it has! My dear--"

She saw, oddly, a small man with a long beard and an unpleasant leer twisting his mouth. "Oh!" she said. "Who are you?" "A sage," he said wisely. "And I have a story to tell you." The young woman thought this was peculiar, but smiled and said, "Please begin."

"Hmm. Any comments?"

Nothing, for once. Weakest part of the story, probably; they can't ruin it any more.

"I have a story," he repeated, sitting down on a rock, "that was told to me a few years ago, and I have been looking for someone to tell it to ever since." The young woman looked at him, and had no idea what to say in return, so she smiled politely and looked attentive. "I heard, O lady --"

"That's the class system again." Mark said triumphantly, just barely beating Sergei to the punch. Mallory, ambiguously: "No ladies in our stories."

Don't laugh.

"I heard, O my audience, that once there was a man of a mythical land named Kisare, who journeyed far to the north to visit the Haunted Woods of the Wildlands beyond Calandra --"

"Haunted is another one of those words we don't like, if we remember, class?"

"Ghosts are part of the antiquated superstitions of the masses," Sergei intoned dutifully.

"Fit," Joanna continued; her turn to simmer at him, "only as a means of expressing the underlying tensions of our collective subconscious."

"Very good."

"And, O!" said Oriana, looking even more brainless than usual, "what about these mythical lands? Kissar? Calandra? They oughtn't be in the same story as Bavaria, ought they?"

The teacher (professor? whatever) beamed at her. "Good thinking, Oriana."

Very well then. And this is supposed to be a creative writing course? Good thing it's not 'the mechanics of poetry!'

"I heard, O my audience, that once there was a sage of the far East, where they grow cinnamon and sandalwood, who journeyed west to gaze upon the face of a woman who was said to be the most beautiful in the world. She lived in a palace on the seashore, in a desert, and painted her eyes with kohl and her lips with ochre. On his journey there he met a demon --"

"Demons go along with hauntings and mythical creatures, my dear."

Religion, too, is out of bounds?

"On his journey there he met a being which seemed to rise out of the sand, which doubtless was a hallucination brought on by too little water and too much sun--"

"That's a bit wordy, isn't it?"

"Mallory's right, my dear. Why don't you fix it?"

Why doesn't she fix it herself? But patience, patience.

"On his journey there he met a being which was doubtlessly a hallucination brought on by dehydration and sunstroke..."

"Much better, don't you think? Cleaner."

"...Which said to him, O my audience, 'Where do you come from?'" At this point the young woman heard a rustling in the bushes around her, as of the night wind; but when she looked there was nothing moving and no breeze touched her face. The sage –

"Which sage was this?" Mark, with confusion.

"The one trying to find the most beautiful girl--"

"No, the one telling the story to the girl who lost the swallow."

"In the forest."

"At night."

Sergei, Mallory, Oriana, Mallory again. The professor: "Continue, please."

What, no constructive criticism on the nature of ambiguous plots? Only grammar, presumably, warrants her attention.

The sage stopped and followed her gaze, then continued on. "The hallucinatory being said, 'Whence came you to this

lonely desert?' The sage shrugged, said, 'I was meditating on the nature of infinity when a swallow came to me bearing a message of the nature of the universe. Following its dictates I saw that the reason for intelligence is to see beauty wherever possible, so I came to search out the most beautiful woman in the world.'"

"That's a bit stereotypical, isn't it?" Joanna said. "I think it's a bit misogynistic, don't you? The most beautiful woman in the world."

If it was the most beautiful man it would wreck the storyline. No other comments? Then ignore that one.

The girl said to the sage, "I heard a noise in the trees--"

Sergei. "Weren't they bushes a moment ago?"

It's a forest. There are trees and bushes.

"Hmmm. My dear, we must be consistent. It's so annoying to be able to pick out inconsistencies in others' work, don't you think?"

No comment.

"I heard a noise in the shadows." The sage frowned at her and said, "The sage said, 'O demon – hallucinatory being – whence came you?' 'I came from a land far from here, bearing the swallow who sharpens his beak...'"

"That's sexism!"

It happens to be a male swallow, thank you very much. But it might as well be

female. It used to be a canary; what's a sex change beside a special shift?

"...bearing the swallow who sharpens her beak on the rock of eternity." "Why," exclaimed the young woman, "that's just like the story the court jester-"

"Relics of an outmoded social system, I think," Sergei murmured, making eyes at Oriana. She sighed, blushed scarlet, and wilted in a faint against her desk.

"Yes," Mark said eagerly, "no jesters!"

The trickster is one of the more important figures in literature. Oh, all right. No court jesters.

"Why," exclaimed the young woman, "that's just like the story the sage told me, of the bird who measures time." The sage shrugged and said, "I must return the swallow," said the hallucinatory being, 'to she who cares for it.'" "O!" said the young woman. "O," said the sage, 'will you bear me to the land where the most beautiful woman in the world lives?'"

"Person!" screeched Joanna.

"...to the land where the most beautiful person in world lives?' 'Of course,' said the demon, 'but first you must listen to a story which I heard a few years ago and have been looking to tell since.' 'I will,' said the sage, 'with a good heart.'" The young woman thought she heard another noise in the shadows, but said nothing this time. "Once," said the hallucinatory being, 'there was a princess who lived in a castle...'"

"O! O!" said Oriana. "Outmoded social systems again!" Oh, right.

"...there was a young woman who lived in a stone edifice with crenellations, high walls, and numerous tower-like structures, who once met a sage in a forest. She asked him to listen to a story she had heard and wished to tell someone else. The sage said, "I am listening," and so the young woman began her story. "I heard, O my audience, that the most beautiful person in the world lived in a palace built near the sea, on the edge of a great desert. One day she was walking along the seashore, where she saw a swallow lying on the sand, with a peculiarly worn beak..."

"Why would a swallow be in a desert? Don't they live in the north?" Mark.

"It's probably African," Sergei said, "smuggling coconuts."

No comment on that. Continue:

"...She picked up the swallow, and as she did there was a sudden swirl of sand about her; when it cleared, she saw what was doubtlessly a hallucination brought on by dehydration and advanced sunstroke. This being said to her, 'O my audience, why do you have that swallow?' In reply she said, 'I found here on the beach, O hallucination.' And then, O my audience," said the hallucinatory being to the sage, "the swallow fluttered her wings and flew away. And the hallucinatory being took up the young woman in one of his hands and flew after it, till they came to a dark woods where the swallow made her home..."

"I thought they were in the desert...?"

"They flew after the swallow, north."

"With the coconuts."

"Or south, I suppose."

"With the coconuts."

"To a temperate forest."

"What coconuts?"

"There aren't any in temperate forests, of course, so the swallow has to bring them."

"Right... Er, why?"

"Literary purposes?"

The young woman said, "I hear a noise in the shadows--" but the sage interrupted her. "The young woman was carried by the hallucinatory being to the dark woods where the swallow made her home, where they hid in the shadows and tried to find a way to the edifice where the young woman who cared for the swallow lived." At this the young woman said to the sage, "The most beautiful person in the world, while they were hiding, told the hallucinatory being, 'I wish to tell you a story.'" The sage said, "I am listening." "The hallucinatory being said, 'I will listen to your story.'" The young woman said, "I heard, O my audience, that once there was a great demon ..

"Demons, my dear, are most crude."

"We already covered that!"

Oh, be quiet, Sergei!

"...I heard, O my audience, that one there was a great hallucinatory being whose duty was to carry the bird which measures time to the rock which, once

worn down, indicates one second of eternity has passed. This hallucinatory being had just returned from bearing this bird to sharpen its beak, just once, on that rock--as it does once, just once, every thousand years -- when it came across a shadowy forest where a young woman, tearstreaks on her face ..

"Tear streaks is, I believe, two words."

Thank you, Mallory.

"...where a young woman, tear streaks on her face, was listening to a sage tell a story. He moved down from the sky where he had been flying and listened to them for a bit, and then, feeling hungry, ate them and promptly disappeared with a maniacal laugh at the irony of the universe."

A pause. Then:

"Well, what then?"

"What do you mean, Sergei, 'what then?'"

"What happened next, that's what I mean!"

"To whom?"

"To the young woman -- and the sage -- and the hallucinatory being -- and --"

A swallow flew past the window, chasing insects, and the breeze of its passing caused an empty cage to swing slightly, and there was a faint grittiness in the air, as of sand or chalkdust.

Contributors

Glenn Clifton is a third year college student, who comes from a strip mall which legislators have since named "Mississauga." He supports the medicinal use of bricks. He is NOT responsible for the Humbug.

Tom Pokinko is a third year. As a co-editor of North, he exercised co-supreme power and drank co-pious amounts of beer with his fellow co-eds.

Anna Pollock (nee Zolkiewska) was recently married to Douglas Pollock, her highschool sweetheart, and is soon to be unleashed upon the world with the second round of Humanities guinea pigs.

Dan Waldman is a third year Humanities student. He does not write poetry, he does not burn incense, and he is not a vegetarian. He does, however, drink beer every Thursday with the editorial staff of North. So he wanted his name in here.

Chelby Daigle-Oniyemofe is a second-year Humanities student who still doesn't know why she's staying in the college. Usually, Chelby writes about other

people's lives. This is the first time she's attempted to write about some aspect of her own.

Jose Rodriguez: Born Victoria B.C. May 22, 1982. I grew up in the boonies of Victoria, beside a chicken farm, a slaughterhouse, a fairground, and a mountain. There was also a lake beside my house, and a brook. The ocean was nearby too.

Timothy L. Brownlee weighs 134 lbs. He prefers headphones and LP's. He anticipates a quiet death followed by a very loud funeral.

Jessica Langston is finishing her fourth year in Humanities after which she intends to travel and unwind for a year. Eventually, Jessica hopes to acquire her Phd. in English and become a professor at some poor, unsuspecting university.

James A. Overton is a third year student with vague aspirations in many directions. He does not, however, intend to make a living as the tech-monkey for North.

wanted to find herself inextricably involved in a fantasy or spy novel, but that not being particularly feasible at the moment is writing one instead.

Jeremy Mesiano-Crookston, Born December 31, 1979. An author would draw out the point that I was born on a threshold day, and give it some significance. I'm not an author. My epitaph will read: "Nice hair, somewhat irresponsible, lacking in style, loved strongly."

Mark Sentesy tried very hard to get a biography to the editors of North, but they were not organized enough to receive it. This is not a conspiracy, on their part, to marginalize the voices of all previous editors of North. (Actually, we were at the pub.)

Apparently Aaron Gordon was born in August of 1980. In his several years on this planet he has enjoyed many and various accomplishments: meeting the Prime Minister, watching many, many episodes of Degrassi, traveling the world, and having much to drink at the Heineken beer factory in Germany.

Victoria Goddard is in first year Humanities, Liberal Arts concentration. She was born in Sault Ste Marie, which is not nearly as interesting as her sister, who was born in Papua New Guinea and is in the military, and so doesn't have to re-enter the narrative. She's always rather



the last: word