

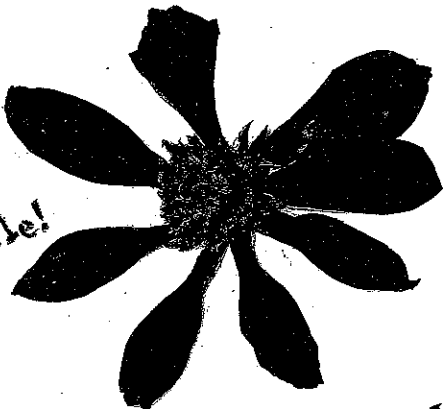
Only One Shot Only

(don't worry mama, i'm only dying)



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Fragile!



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Cowboy Up

Tom O'Hare

It is too early, and I'm too tired, and I've been awake for too long already. Eventually this bus will move, get me where I need to go for today's toil. Eventually.

The bus smells like anxiety, like the general public. I love it. The smell, the housekeepers in front of me speaking Spanish and Filipino, the schoolgirls in plaid and filled with inexplicable energy, an energy perhaps borne of the rigor of their routine, the hormones pumping the other way through their blood. And now we move, finally, the schoolgirls call out "Goodbye" and "I love you," and I don't look up to see who it is they're speaking to, because I don't really give a shit.

A writer, a painter of houses, a would-be poet, a failing musician—that's what I feel like today. And so, I'll go to way-the-fuck-out-there Montreal, I'll stain a deck, finish by four (I pray), leave, go home, wish I were a poet, wish that I could find the right musicians, think about the Divine. The people on this bus, I'll never see them again. To them, I am a nothing, a blip on the radar if the radar's on, a dirty kid with paint on his pants who's frantically putting words onto a page, words whose character, whose utter and absolute genius, they can never know. Not, probably, that they'd want to.

I am a phantom this morning.

And someone will say, when I'm the President of the US of A, "Hey, don't you remember that phantom on the bus that morning in June of 2006, with the paint on his pants, sunglasses on his head, hidden in shaggy hair and a halo of exhaustion, who's now the President of the United States?" and the interlocutor will say, "Probably not," and that'll be the day, won't it?

It will, it will.

Horsetaste

Cole Perry

I will never tell you my name again after this. There are two women. The first is a lithe blonde with the nimble nasal-tongued accent of the French. "What day are we?" She lounges beside me languorous. "There is nothing for me here." The couch is blue. We speak. She has tattoos, many. When I take off her shirt her lower torso, ribs etched, holds the depiction of a cartoon still life populated with a baby blue sky, pinkish cotton candy clouds, a stream, and some bulbous trees. On her back, a more rigorous inking. An anatomical sketch of the last joint and hoof of cloven-hoofed beasts like Asses or swine. "Did you know that was there?" "Yeah that's my baby, this is my car, but that's my baby...I don't let anyone touch my baby." "Just say something, let me know." "Do you know any Chinese?" "Ten words." "What do you do with a woman who only wants the romance?" "I know that type." "I can't because I will be in love with you." That's funny, now I expect to hear shotgun blasts. "At least you have drama...some people...they have nothing." I stole her collarbone while thunder symbolized our deaths in women-headed elephants. "How will I know?" You could see through her back, past her hipbone to the sheets, cleanly--- a cloven doorway. A sense of fear, running, hit men in yellow t-shirts with silenced machine guns. A dead tree. They are laughing and shooting my brothers in the space between front porch and dead tree. "The less we say about it the better." "We're waiting for someone, it's all right." Smirk, thumbs up. "You should tell your bling friend we're leaving." "I'm not being an asshole." "Books, who cares for books?" I read expressions, motions, scent. I searched for the essence, and then it became easy. But I never guessed it would lead me here. Stationary room, apples, mountain with no triangle: the secret life of saucers. "There are no windows in this house." Turgid tiger cock / lion velvet cunt pink dripping / interfeline fuck.

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The car is yellow. "Doesn't enjoy any sort of frivolous food items, she is allergic to smells." His baby I mean. "What do you remember first?" "All these people and a sense of dread." She cries too often. It is cute. The way her face fills with soft violet, diffusing up to the heavy under lid of her big child's eyes, then she will hunch, her face fully beaming, and the first drop will purge itself from her tear duct bearing the seed of her misery. "Shut up." "You just don't want to be like your mother." "We are fucked." "Where are the guns?" "GUNS? GUNS?" These women will not take me. "I will give you a big surprise." White carpet house, pulpy lemonade. There was a picture, he was looking for something. "I can't." Paradox and schism sense. "You would really love me?" If she only knew the surplus of astonishment over-brimming, seething. "Don't take this the wrong the way, but what better men to be stuck in between...?"

There is a hoof, cloven, imprinted on her back, as if she had been kicked, hard. "And we hadn't done much to anger the beast, but it must have felt threatened by something illusory. Stepping back for it glared, baring its teeth and releasing guttural verbiage from frothing unintelligible lips, tongue, but no lips just snout, no snout just myself and this garden." She had three bodies, alternating simultaneously. Then she became a coy Chinese girl in black, shying away. I chased. I sat on the paisley couch looking across the room barely aslant through the sliding glass doors. Past the screen, four men, bodies, space, and a dead tree. "Give me a fucking break. This isn't a jet set, this isn't a miracle." Indecision inevitable. "What do you want?" Visions of accomplishment, visions of glory and fruitful labor, visions of too many bits and pieces conglomerated into a single whole. Visions of the stairs of my concepts like the vertebrae of a lithe French blonde who leans towards me and whispers, thickly, opulent, oranges: "I want you to climb my back to paradise." The way it gently billows from her mouth I can almost believe she could love, like sailboats. But I have never had any luck with dream girls. Besides, I am

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about to die. But I never do. A long table, a displaced carrel, a letter with words I no longer remember. "I wrote three drafts, not that I'm making excuses. It has been so long." Or "Something." I see in form, the queen of table waters. "He is an enigma, don't listen to him." "Almost." I lie even to myself: chocolate nightmares, elusive composite bitches, death and guns, emptiness. I now imagined different shifting terrains beneath the window and that old plan of holding myself up under the raised box spring frame. A soft doorbell chime, silence in all the corners conversing. "I can't, I love you."

My Apartment is the Place I Live In.

Axel Brown

My apartment is the place I live in. It has windows. One faces North and the other East. I get good lighting, something I haven't always had. To the East are other apartments arranged in such a way that there is a terrace. It is a nice place, concrete with no grass. There are benches and a table. The people who occupy these apartments compensate for the lack of grass with numerous plants. It's a nice scene and I often wish it were mine to use. There are usually people there, sometimes two or three sitting on the benches and talking. Sometimes there are more around the table eating dinner and listening to music, talking more. Sometimes they stay out there late at night. They talk and keep listening to music. My bedroom faces the terrace and I usually sleep with my windows open to help cool down, so I hear them when I am going to bed. They woke me once on a Sunday night. It was two in the morning. I could have gone out onto my balcony and asked them to quiet down. Instead I closed the window and could barely hear them.

I am frequently on my balcony, only for short periods of time though, about six minutes, enough time to smoke a cigarette. It's a cramped space and I don't find it hospitable for sitting and reading. I could work on it. There is a lot of junk, including a rotting old wooden ladder that lies across my neighbour's balcony and stretches out to mine. The balconies are not divided; you can walk from one end of the building to mine. I often sit on the end of the ladder to smoke my cigarettes.

I have a plastic chair out there, but there's usually a puddle on it of a strange sort of rust-colour. I suspect that the colour comes from the shingles on the roof and that the water that falls from the roof is the cause of the colour of my puddle. I have flower pots on the balcony. They have no flowers. Maybe there are a few weeds remaining in them, I pulled out a bunch. Maple saplings in flower pots are not welcome. My building is surrounded in them and since the end of winter they have grown to considerable size. If I cared enough I would cut them down and replace them with shrubbery. I would get garden scissors to keep them looking nice.

As for the roof, I could use the ladder to climb up from my balcony (since I live on the top floor) to verify my hypothesis, which I'm certain is flawed. For one thing the roof is flat and may not have shingles at all. Next year I will consider planting some flowers or green plants and not putting my folding plastic chair outside when I can put it away when I am not using it. This would avoid the appearance of puddles and ensure that I always have somewhere to sit other than the end of a ladder. I could use the ladder to climb onto the roof then pull the ladder up and leave it on the roof. Then I would find some way to get down from the roof. Perhaps I would employ the services of a friend to help out. This feat accomplished, I would keep the whereabouts of the ladder a secret. If asked I would lie and say that there had never been a ladder.

I pay excessive amounts of attention to all these minor imperfections. There's a host of them. Most of them are inside the apartment, not outside as it might seem. I will list a few and comment. There is not enough decoration on my walls. I have never been an expert at this. I attribute the cause to a slow development of my tastes. I recently found an enlarged photograph of a convoy of trucks across the street. I brought it home and fixed the frame with wood glue and then fixed it on the wall using screws and twine that were lying around. It will stay there until I find something better. The furniture is scarce although I have slowly been making some improvements. I brought an armchair home that was still being used by old roommates. I still have a coffee table to claim on which I plan to put a lamp in the corner of my living room. There is a lamp in particular onto which my grandmother painted a bird. It is quite large, and would probably be cumbersome in my modest amount of space. Not to mention that it's at my Father's house, in the basement, in the boiler room, in another city. I don't have enough drawer space for my clothes. The apartment is full of dust and, on top of all the tar that's in my lungs, there must be a good deal of dust in them too.

The all important computer is an issue. I don't have a good desk for it, there's not much room for one. Instead I have one that a couple friends of mine found outside an apartment they moved into a year ago. It is too high. The monitor, which takes up more than half the surface, is missing its stand and sits on two course packs. I could pile more course packs, but the



structure would not be solid enough, making the monitor prone to accidents. (I have a developed capacity for clumsiness. I opened a rather large gash on my right index finger last April while washing a glass, a crack I had not paid attention to did me in. The cut was deep and bled profusely. I had to rush to the doctor's office to get stitches. I kept my arm elevated the whole way, my digit wrapped in paper towel and masking tape. The scar is still not completely white. It stayed pink for a longer than usual time. Scars are not supposed to stay pink. I don't know why.) The keyboard is too high, and because of the awkward positioning of the monitor I have to bend my head in an unpleasant way to look at the screen. I have to lean over to use the mouse, which would be fine if the cursor moved around smoothly, but it doesn't because I lack a mouse pad. I don't have an Internet connection. Because of these factors I don't use my computer much.

I try not to pay too much attention to all these details. I find one of the best remedies is to leave and go somewhere else, like the park for example, where it is wonderfully easy to drink and not be hassled for it by anyone. Reading books is also a good source of detachment, and in my apartment that has been largely facilitated by the addition of the armchair mentioned above. I play musical instruments too. Those help me focus my attention away from my surroundings, but this activity is also easier when the space feels right. I cook and eat all sorts of meals. I have most of the equipment and space I need for that. I have a big appetite and I like to eat good tasting food. I am unimpeded in that area. I appreciate the good fortune I have.

Just a Moment

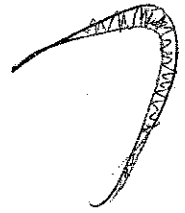
Ilya Zaychik

Patterns-patterns, patterns-patterns. All day long, numbers filling the screen, thundering down, a silent waterfall of information, useless information. The teal digits reflected in her glasses, her reflection in the monitor—endless—made her think of a movie where what she was doing served some purpose. Her fingers clacked away until she bopped her head to the rhythm. Hit 'Enter', the chorus, sing along—everybody—if you know the words. At five, six, seven or eight, she would leave her little office, on the tenth floor, step out from air-conditioned paradise out into the street, and as her foot hit the front step the heat hit her, hard. For a moment, it was a welcome change, a thick blanket. Just a moment. The bus home, across the Charles River, with the oddly glorious view of a minimal skyline, came every half an hour. She would get an iced coffee at the shop across the street, where the abandoned summer students typed on their iBooks, small headphones, music a little too loud but still just noise, not yet words, or scanned highlighted textbooks with the regularity of old Remington typewriters, or gossiped with the wild pupils of addicts. The door jingled when opened, and a burst of cold air welcomed her in. Everyone stopped and looked up for a moment, just a moment, an uncomfortable and dreaded second, before the silence evaporated again. The skinny kid behind the counter playing Pixies said 'one seventy-nine' with his poorly concealed timidity, and she threw the change on the counter, carefully counted out the night before. The skinny noticed that her eyes did not react to movement. Then she sat by the window and stared out at the street, tried to blink. The sidewalk, the road downtown, the streetcar tracks. Repeat and reverse for the other

side. The sky in clean strips of color, darkest downtown, lightest out in the suburbs. She had tried reading after work but the spaces between the words and letters and lines on the page would catch in the corner of her eye, form a diagonal or a straight line or a snake, and she couldn't focus on the words anymore, just the shape their absence made. When the bus came, she knew it would be just a moment between air conditioners.

City Escape

She had heard once that the livestock made the roads and the people just went along where their herd was bound. When she couldn't sleep—and it was often—she counted not sheep that jumped calmly over fences but sheep she suavely picked off from a top floor of a nearby high-rise. It never worked (the sleep, not the sheep) and she hopped on her bike, tiptoed out in fact with it on her shoulder, because Gary was a light sleeper, and the house had poor acoustics, and Brian, his partner, kept reminding her that they had been nice enough to rent her the basement for a fraction of its worth, in this, a very, very up-and-coming part of town, where you would be fortunate, honey, to be paying three times what you are here. At midnight, one, two, three, or four, the city was always dead, save some punks hanging out by the 7-eleven, twenty four-seven, the Indian guy inside with a look, do not start any trouble with me, sir, please, nothing you can do is worse than what I have seen. All the streets, by themselves neat slices with potholes from a meteor shower of neglect, deserted and suburban converge on these squares and don't know where to go next, so they lose their cool, and swap names and directions, and exchange arbitrary street signs, all the trappings of an urban identity crisis. Everything would inevitably be



closed, or closing, loud twentysomethings hop out from the island bars and making noise that ripples off, ultimately vanquished by the sea of trees on surrounding roads where houses were built to look like they'd been there since 1795, but at 2006 prices, no lawns, and politically radical, politically correct tenants. She always heard the bell on her bike echo, a maddening sound, in those squares where the centerpiece would be a traffic light and a few sparse benches, where the punks from 7-Eleven would go, only too happy to be a big fish on a small bench. There was no direction. One square after another, and they weren't even squares! Geometry cruelly betrayed by livestock! She wanted blocks, right angles, square and cut with the precision of a meat slicer, set it on auto, jes' watch 'er go through that-there meat. She wanted horizons, the infinite possibilities of a visible ray, between encroaching buildings who knew their place, not cul-de-sacs and rotaries and crescents. But there she was, far from her point of origin, and after she circled the square a couple times, and made the punks fidget and squirm, hey man, hey man, hide that bowl!, and made herself dizzy, and spat on the brick of the T, she turned around and ignored the traffic lights and went up and over, the quiet side streets with foot-high curbs, up and over, the houses with one light on out of twenty, up and over, like a giant football player hopping through tires, trying to make the cut. This went on for hours, until she inevitably got to the intersection where no cars go, where no cars *could* go: the street she rolled down was one way. At the end of the street was a stop sign. On the left, on the right, and in front of her were streets. All three of these streets had 'Do Not Enter' signs. She would have collapsed right in the middle of that Bermuda rectangle, sleeping a tortured sleep until morning's rays roused her, but, fortunately, her house was on the corner. She lifted her bike, and slipped in the back, careful not to wake Gary.



Convictions of a Mid-Westerner

Graham MacDonald

I was sitting on a terrace one sunny night in late July. To my right was this character from Minnesota that I had been bumping into lately, it seemed, all too often. He spoke with a mid-western drawl in response to something I had said – muttered, perhaps still slightly hung over from the night before.

“Graham, I’d call you a misanthrope,” he said, without much interest or conviction.

This was provoked by a comment I had made. My thoughts fell back to the fateful day when, as just a little boy, I saw my beloved dog hit by a car. The woman who hit him said it was either the dog or a small child that lay in the path of her veering vehicle.

I was sad to see my dog killed in what, perhaps less eloquently at the time, I perceived as the anthropocentric choice of a fleeting human second, with the unnecessary speed and force of a human vehicle. The circumstances, as I saw them, were analogous to our wont as a species.

With this, I sat back in my chair and faded out of the conversation. The quirky mid-Westerner went off to stir mischief somewhere else, and my mind floated back to my angsty teen years, when I used to meditate on a rug placed carefully at the centre of my all-black room. Around that time, my mother had made a similar comment (“You’re acting like a misanthrope”) about my disdain for our species and my increasing guilt at being human. After sputtering some two-bit teenage words of wisdom, I left the room and consulted the Webster’s (still developing my vocabulary, as it were).

Happy with my new-found understanding of myself – identifying deeply with the definition – I left the house to be in the ‘majesty of nature’ that was my rural backyard.

The green leaves of the trees glistened in the wind. I found my favourite little perch in an overgrown pasture and lay down in the green grass, looking up at the deep blue of the sky in admiration.

Returning to school that Fall, I read Romeo and Juliet for grade nine English class. I found the obsessive emotional attachment between

Romeo and his darling Juliet to be trite, to say the least. If they had just fucked off and gotten over one another, they could have lived, rather than died their pointless deaths.

Back in the woods near my house on a September night, I listened to the creepers creep and the coyotes cackle in the sunset. I thought, 'Now, this is *love*. This is *art*. This is *music*. This is *beauty*.'

Living in a city constantly for four years really distances a person from nature. A few months into my first year in Montreal, after all my heartache and despair, I felt myself fading increasingly into the 'human' world that was previously the object of my contempt. I felt an accumulating appreciation for what mankind has to offer. When I saw art, or read poetry, I fell in love with its raw, human beauty, and moved on from my previous conceptualizations of my world and myself.

Fast-forward to the future, and I become conscious of my surroundings that night on the terrace. Conscious of my friends and acquaintances scattered around me in the light of the barbecue's fire.

I realize over the fleeting thoughts of one of my more philosophical friends that lots of life and love have passed me by during my new life in the city. I've taken many steps on the parallel and criss-crossing roads and sidewalks that around me in the intricate concrete jungle that has now become familiar ground. I have my favourite little perches at cafes and bars.

I even stop to admire architecture from time to time.

And when I became conscious of reality, sitting there that night, I was aware of my heart, aching just a bit from a lost romance. A romance that becomes ever more distant with each flip of a calendar page. Suddenly, I smirk and chuckle aloud a bit to myself. As I think about it, I really feel sorry for Romeo. That he lost his beloved Juliet. I sort of identify with him.

And although I still see great fault with my fellow man... the wars, the terror, the destruction... the wasted words spoken by some dumb bitch that walked by me on the street with her jock boyfriend... the superficialities of everyday life...

... I'm content with my life as an oxymoron. Despite what the mid-Westerner has to say.

only a one-ly gaslamp

Jon Nussbaum

in this silver loneliness
Chimneysweeps dissappear in the suit of night
& even my shadow walks out on you;
a cat climbs above into a Lovecraft oak
smiles & becomes the moon



Ode to the Mountain (redux)

Tom O'Hare

'One day,' you tell her, 'I'm gonna grow wings.'

And she looks at you and laughs and shakes her hips in a way that says, 'Uh-uh, honey,' and you wonder why she has to be such a naysayer sometimes, before realizing that you don't know her well enough to determine whether she is, in fact, saying Nay.

And anyway you're drunk; when you wake up you don't remember her hips moving like that. You remember only leaving the place you both were in a tumble, kissing her cheeks, trying to express some sort of gratitude. Which you feel bad for doing, of course, because you can't remember her signals, her gestures, the tenor of her speech. You can't remember if there was anything to thank her for.

And so three days later you're up at 4:30 in the morning, can't sleep, and you head on up the mountain to watch the sun rise. It's May 1. Your rent is due. You think about this as you watch the assorted homeless people rummaging through trash heaps on the mountainside for bottles and cans. 'Such delicious simplicity,' you note with considerable optimism, and continue on your way.

And you near the top, thinking, 'Wouldn't it be a fantastic coincidence if she's up there now, also depressed, also unable to sleep, waiting for me to take her into my arms and tell her everything's going to be okay?' You nod. That would be fucking fantastic. It would be so fantastic that you start to expect to see her at the summit, on the viewing platform, a lit cigarette dangling in her lips. Waiting for a hug. From you (of course.) And so when she's not there, you have something to be pleasantly disappointed by.

And besides it's you, not her, who needs a hug. Besides it's you, not her, who finds therapy in a landscape. Besides the sun's poking through. Shut up for a second and bask.

Hit the Showers, kid

Daniel Spitzberg

The discussion ran along the lines of whether or not man was fated to propel himself towards the stars, since we are all insatiable explorers. Insatiable? I don't know about that. The first time I left New York, I came down with a self-diagnosed case of anticipated nostalgia. It set in immediately as I crossed the Manhattan Bridge. As the first visit, I pegged my first impression of the city, which was, in turn, marked by a certain 'The Gift' song and mental photographic evidence of a rooftop in Chinatown. By this I expanded my horizons, as they say, but I remain favorable to habits and the familiar.

Speeding over the bridge, opening to where you wrote in my pocket-notebook, there are 4 lines to savor and smile over. The message is something neat and memorable like, "Where will you be when you read this? Physically and metaphysically?" All the while repeating in my head: "Wald-o Jeffreys had reached his limutt./ It was now mid-Ahwguhst, which meant..." and so on.

Over three years I've put more pegs on the map. It's not striking out into the great blue yonder, it's bumbling in what mathematical modelers call a Random Walk, pegging here and there until I, for example, connected the dots thousands of miles by car to California.

Three years later, my chest hard and brown, you say: "Look at you. You're a man."

That's one of those things to which you can't say anything in reply. I think, Well, I feel pretty good myself. I think that when I told you I was driving across the U-S-A, and would fly back into New York, you said, "You'll stay with me, right?" "Of course. Of course, of

course." Welcoming me at the top of the stairs, your skirt is much too short. Was that the *idea*?

And, honest to goodness, you happen to be playing that song again. I'm not even going to change, let's just get going and we'll talk about our summers along the way.

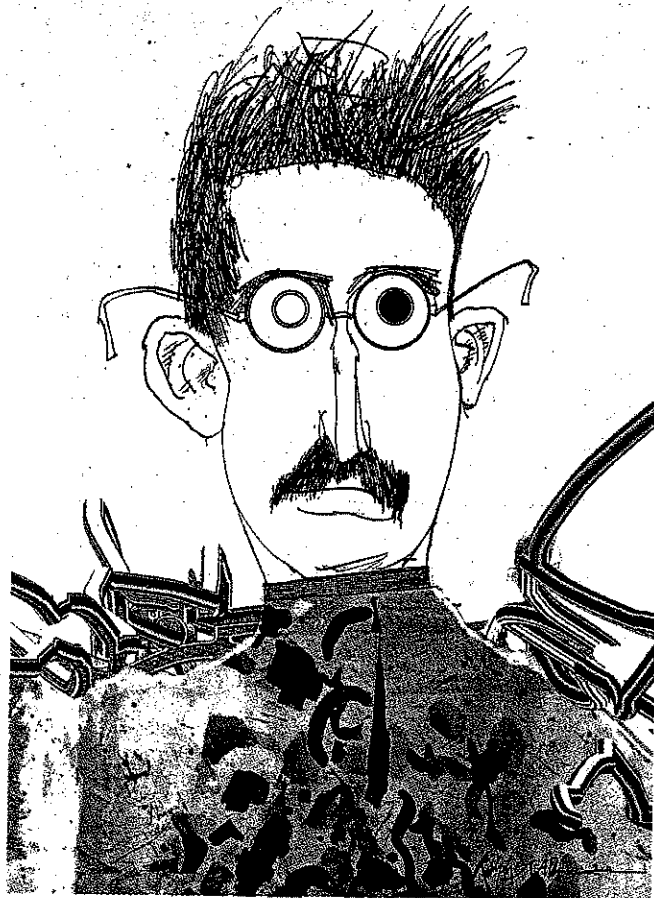
We hung around some friends of yours in a packed, light-green bar, trying not to spill, and the music from the show just fine without paying to get into the next room, but we ditched everyone and found a hidden saki bar with tiny candles to scribble and play games on napkins. And then we bought gum and carob candy, I showered beach sand out of my hair, said goodnight to your cat, and then you just went to sleep. And then so did I.

Next night, up on the street again. Broadway is 4 taxicabs wide. Sweaty, but luckily no courier bag strap to discomfort my chest further, not at 2:37a.m. no thank you. I just want to get back to Brooklyn before you fall asleep again. Switching for the N or Q? or R probably from which I can hopefully navigate several streets on foot to Hoyt-Shermerhorn 9 stops later in Brooklyn. Swipe, \$2. Downtown/ Brooklyn trains. No, I must switch for A. Waiting for trains is a gamble at this late-night hour. I will take the 'A' train. Ev'rybody says that, it's famous. Up the stairs, cross the street, hold my hand up in thanks at traffic, swipe, \$2. Uptown trains.

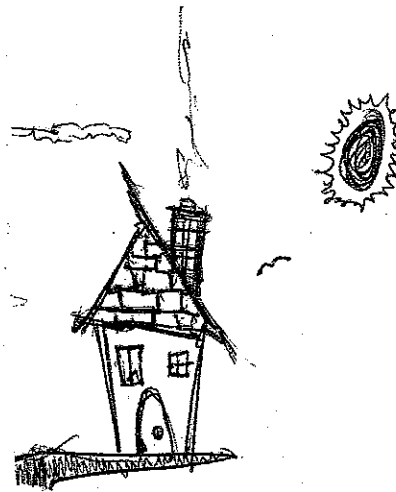
Next station, switching trains again. 4, 5 or 6 local. Flipping through photographs and waiting, new favorite bandana around my neck. The cowgirl 24 feet across the tracks smiles. Smiles, right? Tasseled boots and a brown dress mostly on her chest and hips, turning a little on her heel. Yes, uh-huh, she smiled at me again, half-dodging eye contact. My back is stuck against the wall tiles, one foot in front of the other, and I'll trip if I move. Opposite train makes rumblings. I can switch to the A after all, Plan C. Quick: scribble out a note on

the back of any photo and dash up and over and down the other platform stairs and hop into the car ahead and hop out again to hand-deliver her the note a stop later and it flutters down on her lap but you can't switch here for the A and you can't not Stand Clear of the Closing Doors, Please, so shucks.

Back where I started.



For Benjamin, the whole world was material for criticism.



Tom O'Hare just graduated and is now moving to Portland, Oregon to start a band. tomohare3@yahoo.com

Cole Perry is currently living in Bovey, Minnesota, where he has not, as of yet, killed himself. coleperry@hotmail.com

Axel Brown plays bass, philosophizes, and organizes books in Montreal. gold_fingur@hotmail.com

Ilya Zaychik edited 'stationaery magazine' (stationaery.com). now he lives in boston, and is starting another magazine, 'other Investigations'. email to get involved: ilya.zaychik@gmail.com

Graham MacDonald is involved in the saving of the world in some-way, shape, or fashion. grakmac@gmail.com

Jon Nussbaum carouses in world literature, plus gives you all the details you didn't ask for. high_way_61@hotmail.com

Daniel Spitzberg, scientist, wrangled his way out of the space-time-space-time continuum. danbann@yahoo.com

This zine was produced top-to-bottom by Tom O'Hare and Daniel Spitzberg; in Montreal, August, 2006

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