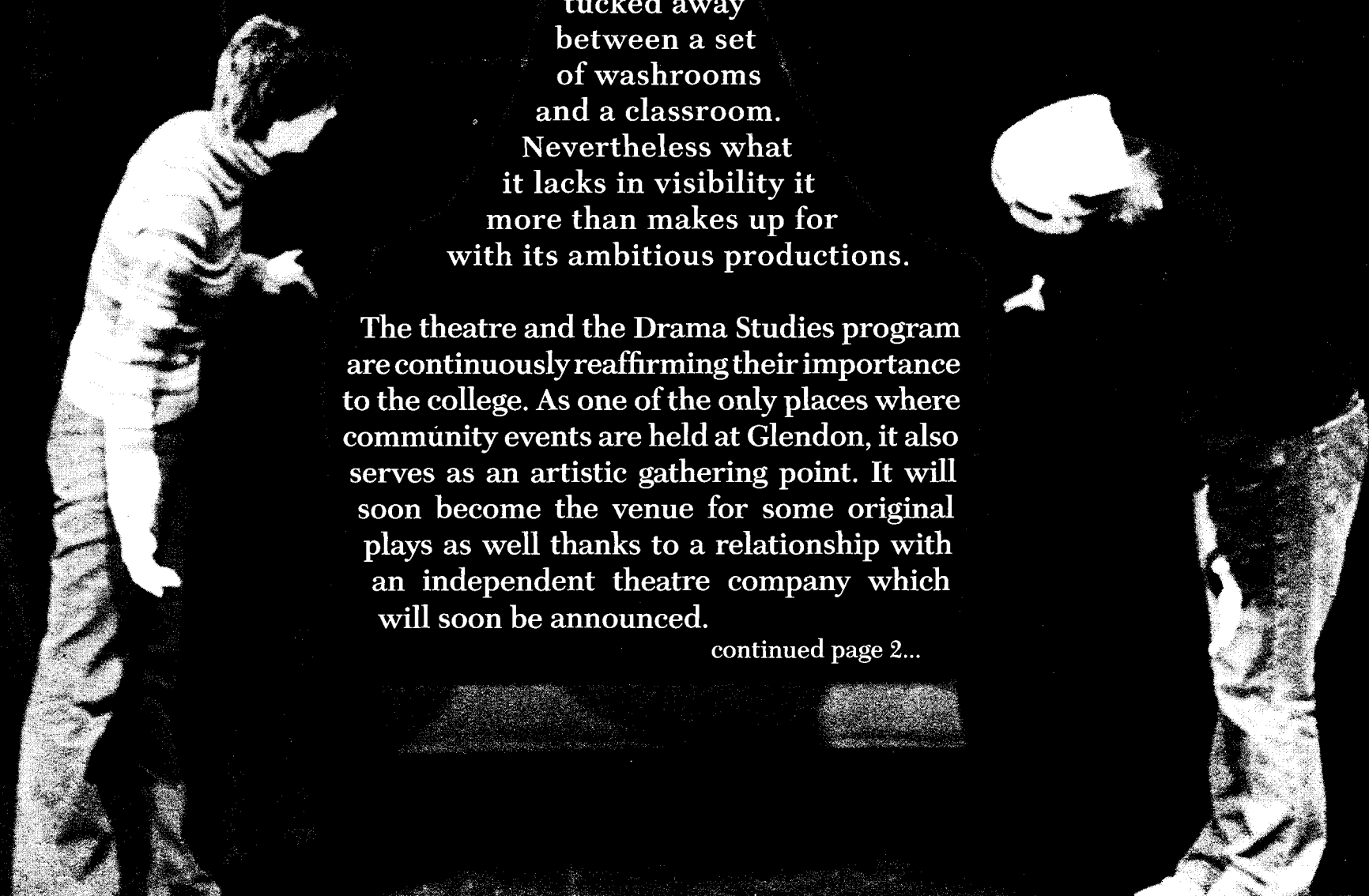


Pro tem

le journal bilingue de Glendon • Glendon's bilingual newspaper - December 3, 2003

Behind the Curtains of the Glendon Theatre



Theatre
Glendon sits
tucked away
between a set
of washrooms
and a classroom.
Nevertheless what
it lacks in visibility it
more than makes up for
with its ambitious productions.

The theatre and the Drama Studies program are continuously reaffirming their importance to the college. As one of the only places where community events are held at Glendon, it also serves as an artistic gathering point. It will soon become the venue for some original plays as well thanks to a relationship with an independent theatre company which will soon be announced.

continued page 2...

It's happening on our Campus yet many people don't even know... see pages 6 and 7

theatre Glendon continued

the theatre is a staging ground for productions being put on by various courses. This year alone, six full length and several independent shows will be performed. As one of the only places where community events are held at Glendon, it also serves as an artistic gathering point. In short, it is continually reaffirming its importance to the school.

If Glendon wants to keep up its reputation as a liberal arts college, the potential of a Drama Studies program cannot be underestimated. Duncan Appleton, Technical Coordinator of the theatre sums up what many think when he says that his "first impression of the theatre was that there's a lot of potential in both the space and the program".

Interest in the program itself is steadily growing. Drama Studies has recently had several years of healthy enrollments. On top of the numerical successes, the theatre is also a truly bilingual success story. This past year incorporated a record number of plays in both languages. Productions are, generally, according to Duncan, "taking their inspiration more from what is being done in Montréal as opposed to the Broadway tradition".

If success is also measured in terms of the feelings of students involved in the program, the theatre is scoring well. Jessie Shepherd, the Costume Designer for Alice says "I love the Glendon theater. Everybody is coming from different spots, from a different discipline. There are Sociology, Philosophy, English majors, etc. It's my community at Glendon. This is the space to express ourselves." It

is precisely the cross-disciplinary nature of the program which has helped it and has allowed it to differentiate itself from other similar programs.

The theatre has carved itself a niche compared to programs at the Keele campus or at Ryerson. Because it is housed in a Drama Studies program, there are fewer pressures on students for limited spaces in an acting or directing program. Duncan explains that "the program does not make promises of an instant job in professional theatre to people". Instead it says that students should "try it out and see what sticks - and then you can later decide if it's right for you."

Forging links with professional groups is something that that Drama Studies program has been doing for a number of years. So far this year has seen the arrival on the campus of the Théâtre la Tangente, a professional francophone theater company producing original works here in Toronto. The aim of the relationship is to have the company produce a lot of original work on campus, to run workshops for students, and to premier their new shows on campus.

A partnership of this kind is something that the program sees as a real benefit to its students. Théâtre la Tangente's new office can be found in the Glendon greenhouse. Their director is Claude Guilmain who also used to teach at Glendon. The hope is that with this company the production of original plays and interest in the theatre will increase.

The Drama Studies program is also a bit of an anomaly when it

comes to where they receive their support. Both the Office of Student Affairs and the program itself fund the productions.

There's not a whole lot of money to go around though. Many, like Duncan would not want an infusion of money or rapid growth either. "Small theatre like this is all about being poor. Having very little money forces you to think of new ways to be creative with what you have" he explains. The stakes are low, but at the same time, the theatre is described as a type of "bubble world" where few pressures exist.

"When I was working in student theatre as an undergraduate in Montreal there were times when we would get negative reviews in the press, and people would get negative reviews on their first public performances" he explained. Inevitably this would lead to disappointment among the volunteer actors. At Glendon the stakes are mainly related to marks in the accompanying courses. As well, the attendance at shows is typically quite low. "It would be nice to have more involvement from students and the wider community. Audiences tend to be the friends and family of the performers and the same group of 20 people" explained Duncan.

His advice for people looking to go out there and work in semi or professional theatre is that they "should be a workaholic and enjoy doing a lot for very little money. Be interested and open - actually, they should be everything that a liberal arts education is. You have to be that times ten. As well, like any artist, you must be curious about

the world."

On top of the arrival of the Théâtre la Tangente on campus, the next few months there will bring several changes to the program. The director, Professor Wallace will soon retire and a new position is currently open. The hiring committee is hoping to fill it for July 1st. As well, the desire to starting to offer acting courses is in the air as well.

Because the whole point of a liberal arts education is to try new things, the theatre has always fit in well. Angela Ricciuti, the Stage Manager for Cactus Moon and the character "Talia" in Alice who is herself not a drama student sums up the feelings of many here. "Working in the Glendon theater is a great opportunity. I chose to be a part of it because I respect the writers so much. Nobody gets paid and we all work together on student productions. But I have to say that the theater gets overlooked at Glendon. I don't think students are aware of it. There are so many good talents!"

For more information, see: The Theatre Glendon website which can be accessed off of www.glendon.yorku.ca or Le théâtre La tangente at: www.theatrelatangente.ca

-By Chris Spraakman and Julie M. Sage

pro tem

Pro Tem is the bi-weekly and independent newspaper of Glendon College. First published in 1962, it is the oldest student publication at York University. En plus d'être gratuit, Pro Tem est le seul journal bilingue en Ontario. As a full member of the Canadian University Press, we strive to act as an agent of social change and will not to print copy deemed racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise oppressive.

Editor-in-Chief
Chris Spraakman

Rédactrice-en-Chef
Julie Marion Sage

Layout
Rob Shaw
Chris Spraakman

Photo Editor
Peter Garver

Contributors
Gerard Stocker
David Bouquerel
R. Reid

Jon Swayze
Moi
Elle
Lui
Todd Cleland
Adil Mamodaly
Isabelle Coté
Jacqui Simon
Gerard Stocker
Sara O'Shaughnessy
Jake Mitchell
Julien Daviau
Jennifer Capano
Todd Hustins
Alfonso Grufman
Frank Bolivar

Please respond to what you read in the pages of Pro Tem. We can be reached by:

416-487-6736
protem@glendon.yorku.ca

Pro Tem
Rm. 117 Glendon Hall, Glendon College, 2275 Bayview Ave. Toronto, M4N 3M6.

Venez nous voir tous les mardis après-midis dans notre bureau qui se trouve ENCORE au rez-de-chaussée du manoir.

Merry Christmas to one and all!

Letters to the editor may be edited for content or clarity. All copy appearing in Pro Tem is at the discretion of the editorial team.

We Asked You

What will the Glendon manor end up looking like this time next year? In the new year it will be undergoing some drastic changes which will possibly involve the moving of several of the existing tenants. With that in mind, Pro Tem went around visiting some of those working in the building, to ask them: What will the changes to the manor mean to you and how will it affect your work? Also, were you notified?



Pam Broley

Yes, I was informed. Gilles Fortin discussed it with us long before the decision was made. We will not be moving - our understanding is that the transformation will not affect this end of the building. I think that it's great that it's going to happen as the building needs money and this money is not available through York.



Dr. Shodja Ziaian

Je ne sais pas vraiment ce qui se passe dans le manoir. J'ai l'impression que cette décision fut prise d'ailleurs sans consultation avec les personnes concernées. Les autres professeurs autour de moi ne savent pas eux mêmes ce qui arrive dans le manoir. Je ne suis pas trop content, c'est une chose angoissante! Et je me demande aussi pourquoi ils ne font pas toutes ces transformations durant l'été.



Gerard Stocker

Yes, I've been informed. The timing was pretty tight though. I don't remember when the official notice was first given. We will be moving to the old bistro in the basement of York hall. I'll be working in a basement which will be pretty gloomy and I'm worried that we won't get the same traffic in the summers. Nevertheless, anything that makes the manor look better is good for the college.

PRO TEM

The Next

Meeting
Will Be Held

On The First

Tuesday in
January

At each meeting we'll give you the lowdown on what's happening with the next issue of the paper and during the Tuesdays following the release of an issue we'll be talking about what went wrong and what was done well.

Ed. Note: We encourage you to respond to what you read in our pages. Here are a few of the letters we've received:

Dear Editor:

In our free and democratic society that we live in today, certain individuals and organizations unfortunately take it upon themselves to ensure that their society is in fact not completely free nor democratic. The question then arises; what do we, as students of a liberal arts college stand for? Surely we all believe in the fundamental freedoms of a democratic society. Surely we all believe in fair treatment, and equal opportunity. But Glendon is not immune to the infringement of these basic freedoms as can evidently be observed through the workings of the Glendon Council Student Union.

The GCSU's lack of respect for a democratic environment was conspicuously made in these past councillor elections. I chose to run in these elections, seeking a council representative position and had submitted all the paperwork necessary to do so. Apparently on November 13th, 6 days before the election date, a meeting was held for all those seeking to run for the position, yet I had not received notification of this meeting and consequently did not attend.

On Wednesday the 19th of November, the councillor elections were finally held. (Only two months after the proposed date.) I went to fulfill my student duty and voted, and found that my name was not on the list. Many questions were racing through my head; among them was how this could be. I had submitted my application form with the required twenty signatures. I was clearly nominated, why on earth would I not be on the list? I voted and then proceeded directly to the GCSU office to inquire just as to why my name was not printed on that ballot. I asked why and was told it was "Because you didn't come to the meeting." I asked how I could have gone if I knew nothing about it. I was then replied with "I sent you a page; (I have a pager)." I was then shocked because I know I had never received a page. I am not one to jump to conclusions, but I have never missed a page yet, and it seems

odd that I would have missed this one. On the chance that my pager did not receive the page, I asked why I wasn't notified via email. I was told that there would be no preferential treatment and if the others didn't receive an email then why should I. I understood this but was still flustered. I asked how much time was there between the announcement of the meeting and the meeting itself. I was told it was two days. I asked what other forms of communication were sent out about this meeting, there were none. So just because I "missed" a page I was taken off the ballot. A meeting that was so important, important enough to take me off the ballot should have at the minimum been communicated to all candidates in writing.

I wonder how GCSU justifies this. How is it right that a person who could not attend a gunshot meeting of prospective councillors be taken off the ballot without verbal or written confirmation. Each prospective councillor represents a minimum of twenty signatures and thus twenty people. Why are twenty people's political say ignored on a "missed" page. I was told that the election coordinator was designated at the last minute, thus the quickness of the election and the meeting. What kind of justification is that? I was told that the onus was on me as a prospective councillor to be aware of the meeting, and if I really desired the position I would have made the effort to know about it. Who decides how much I want the position, me or GCSU? My only thought to that was after two months of waiting for these elections, how enthused should I be to go to GCSU everyday to receive an update on when and how the elections were going to take place. Once again, where is the justification? Now, this may only be my humble opinion but my rights as a nominated perspective councillor were not respected by the GCSU as democratic procedures were not followed. This is just another proof that the GCSU lacks any integrity.

Todd Hustins



The Breasts of Both Worlds

When a student enters their school pub, he or she feels a certain kind of joy knowing that there is a place on campus where they can go to hang out, to drink, and just have fun. So when did this change at Glendon?

When did going to Pub become a chore? Last year I tried to make it to every pub night. This year, I was a little disappointed by the fact that I had to pay to get in, but I let it go because if it weren't for students like me going, there would be no pub.

I am trying to figure out when my opinion on pub shifted from good to bad. Perhaps it was the time a friend and I went to pub really late after going to a bar downtown. My friend had asked if we could get in for free since the night was going to be over in less than an hour. The guy taking the money implied that only if she showed him her chest would she be able to. My friend was outraged.

She threw a twenty at him and demanded her change. Hossein Samiian was in close proximity to the incident. To make it up to my friend, he gave each of us a free shot. This incident alone is reason enough for me not to go to pub anymore. However, this same friend asked me if I wanted to go

back on Friday November 21 and I reluctantly said yes.

When it came time to pay, I noticed that for the first time this year, Hossein was working the door. I presented my health card photo ID, and I was denied access to the pub as a member of the age of majority. Apparently, after a year and a half of using my OHIP card as ID at pub and throughout various bars in downtown Toronto, it is now an invalid form of ID. As confused as I was, I accepted a 'X' on my hand as proof that I cannot drink at pub, and walked around stigmatized as a member of the 'under 19' club. What is even more confusing is the fact that at the pub previous to this, I received a free "sorry" shot.

To be sure that I am not going crazy, and that every bar I have ever been to in Toronto has accepted my ID, I called the Liquor Control Board Infoline and spoke to a woman named Christine. I asked them if Health Cards are a valid form of ID. She told me that Picture health cards are acceptable, however, only when they are presented. An employee is not allowed to specifically ask for a health card as ID. Christine continued, "personally, I think a driver's license is the best form

of ID to use, but; when asking for proof of age, most places will accept a health card." I asked her if bars and clubs downtown were allowed to accept Health Cards, and she told me that it is up to the individual bar's discretion. "Some clubs accept it, some clubs don't," she said.

If this is the case, and bars have the choice of whether to accept them or not, why then has Hossein decided that Glendon Pub will no longer be accepting Health Cards as proof of age? I have been to practically every pub this year, and I am one of the only people that actually purchases alcohol. I have been paying three dollars to get into each pub to pay for renovations that I didn't ask for. And now all of a sudden I am not eligible to overpay for my liquor. To everyone that goes to Glendon and relies on his or her health cards as ID, don't fret. There are still many bars downtown that accept health cards as ID. To sweeten the deal, these bars let you in for free before eleven. Who could ask for anything more?

Jennifer Capano

Congratulations on your coverage of Sex, Drugs and Rockresponsibility

I would like to congratulate Leanne Legault for her article about Poppers in the recent edition of ProTem. The article is very educative and covers very well all the aspects related to poppers. It is very true that each person has to make their own judgement and also have to fully inform themselves before engaging in such an activity. Educating oneself is a daily and lifelong task whether it is about drugs or personal finances or another

subject. Providing education and information is not reserved for specialists only but it is everybody's responsibility in our society.

Vinesh Saxena

Manager,
Housing, Hospitality and Food
Service

One little correction...

In an article published in the November 11th issue of ProTem, it was erroneously stated that the depletion of this year's Pepsi account was due to expenditures on GrassFest and Frosh Week. This year, Pepsi money was not, in fact, spent on either of the aforementioned events; Its current balance is the result of past fiscal mismanagement by former GCSU members.

The Pro Tem apologizes for this inaccuracy.

Squatting: No Problem -- Toronto Police

With the Christmas season approaching, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) decided to declare its wishlist

On Saturday November 8, OCAP and its supporters withstood the challenging elements in support of those who are forced to face such a challenge daily.

Disregarding the cold temperature, a reported crowd of 400 marchers gathered at Dundas and Sherbourne planning to march to an unannounced location. The aim was to send a message to the incoming mayor and anyone else who would listen: the notorious state of affordable housing in Toronto needs to be altered.

However, before the march began, the boys in blue ditched their traditional garb for yellow bicycle jackets and congregated (along with their bicycles) outside the protesters' meeting place in anticipation of the forthcoming protest. During the protest, the police actively tried to reserve order by keeping protesters within the prescribed marching territory. There was a sense of antagonism between marchers and police with both sides having the knowledge that one mishap could instigate a disturbance.

As the protesters marched on, an underlying curiosity about their unknown destination grew. Then unexpectedly, the squatting location was announced, and while

surprising the police the "squatters to be" swarmed a house at 558 Gerard St. E. In the most tumultuous moment of the day, onlookers cheered while police scrambled to prevent protesters from entering the empty house. Alas, the crowd was too great for the police to prevent everyone from entering the house.

Nevertheless, moments passed, and flaring tempers eased. The police relinquished their protection of the empty building freeing OCAP and its supporters to inhabit and tour the unoccupied house. During this time, OCAP members went on to explain their dismay with Toronto housing. For example, since 1996 there have been at least four incidents of homeless people dying on the cold streets while houses such as this one remain unused. OCAP claims those in positions to affect the handling of Toronto housing are catering to the rich and those who want to tear down intercity buildings and replace them with luxury condos.

Continuing on with the unexpected, the squatters were rescued by the grits during the latter stages of the protest. GTA Liberal MP Dennis Mills put his career on the line by saying he would exercise his power to make this house available to those who need ac-

commodation, and if such a feat is not accomplished in thirty days, he will retire.

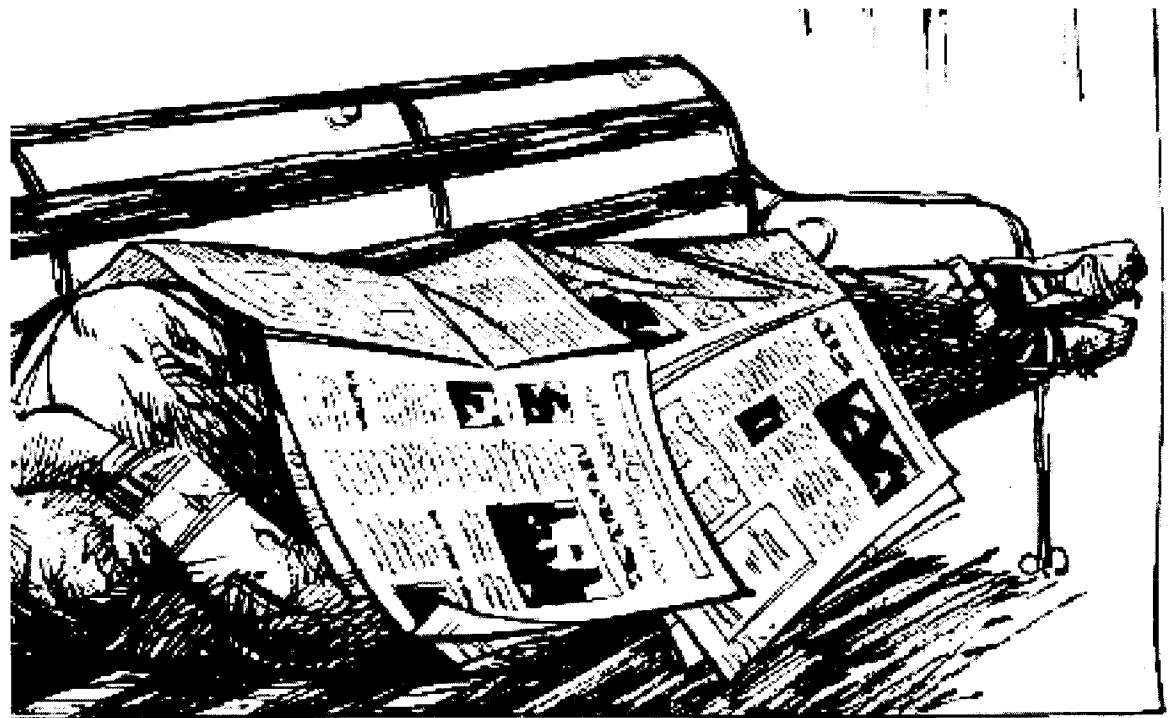
This was a fitting ending to OCAP's protest: their demands for politicians to start to use their clout in an effort to improve the housing

availability in the GTA were heard by at least one politician. Using his career as collateral to ensuring that something would be done, Mills stepped up to the plate. The next step is to see what will happen in the next month. Will time give improved housing in Toronto or just

prove that politicians continue to make idle promises? By December 8 the answer should be clear.

— By R. Reid

with files from the IndyMedia Centre



THE PRESS CONTINUES TO COVER THE HOMELESS

Waydowntown is where the inhumanity begins

Jake Mitchell looks at how four co-workers cope with the desensitization that results from a corporate existence

If the timeworn adage "art reflects life" got tossed out the window by the techno fantasy film *The Matrix*, then the stogy old proverb has come home to roost with Gary Burns's latest film - now out on video - *Waydowntown*.

A natural follow-up to his previous filmic inquiries into the doldrums of suburban life, *Waydowntown* explores what happens when the dull, predictable existence of the downtown office worker goes awry. Set in Calgary's downtown office towers and shopping complexes, interconnected by the "plus 15" elevated indoor walkway system, the film follows four young co-workers, Tom (Fabrizio Filippo), Sandra (Marya Delver), Curt (Gordon Currie) and Randy (Tobias Godson) on day number 24 of a bet to see who can survive the longest without going outside.

With a month's salary on the line this winner takes all film pits the

hearts and minds of four young workers against a corporate landscape of power. As we quickly discover, being trapped for that long in an indoor complex is beginning to get to all of them.

Sandra, charged with the lunch-time duty of keeping an eye on a bored, elderly kleptomaniac who happens to be her company's founder, starts to go stir-crazy by breathing recycled office air that she is convinced is full of bacteria and mold. Randy is getting a bit jittery and irritable but is otherwise hanging in like a real trooper. Curt's sanity is directly linked to his success in the pickup circuit which he's been shut out of by the bet. His creepy demeanor and exploitation of a vulnerable co-worker is testimony to the working of a desensitizing office culture. Similarly, all of Tom's interactions become financial transactions; a question of getting what he wants from a person with the greatest expediency possible. He's a twenty-

something mod not five months on the job, is worried he's going to end up like the depressed, suicidal, corporate-lifer Bradley (played by Canadian indie film icon Don McKellar) who occupies the adjacent cubicle.

Bradly, who spends the whole film crying out for help stapling motivational phrases to his chest (Don't Make Excuses, Make Improvements ... Don't compromise, Prioritize etc.) acts as Tom's oil, eventually forcing him to come to terms with the changes the environment is making in him. In fact, it takes Bradly's failed attempt at tossing a marble-filled pop bottle through the office window and jumping to conclusion, for Tom to see how he has become a desensitized monster himself.

The main message is clear: it's not just corporate office life that's to blame for the social degeneration the four experience; it is the physical environment built to supports

their day to day existence that is equally dehumanizing. But what is striking about this dehumanization is that it's universal.

The interconnected buildings of Calgary's downtown where the film is shot might as well be anywhere; in fact nowhere in the film is the place named, which is exactly the point: Corporate power imposes a sameness manifested in the ubiquitous shopping mall and office culture which is thoroughly inhumane.

At times overly symbolic with obvious visual cues like Tom's desktop ant farm, the film's essential quality is that it makes a clear jab at corporate life without being preachy. Jaded popcorn munchers beware: frank but not overly serious, *Waydowntown* is not your typical self-important-self-righteous politico manifesto that you may be expecting.

Downright hilarious at times,

Burns has managed to craft a film which finds a comfortable balance between entertainment and message. It is bound to strike a cord with the legions of folks who are given two measly weeks of vacation a year and forced to spend the rest of their time at work, running around in circles for others, all the while sucking down no-fat lattes and power bars just to get by.

Fault it for its lousy techno-synch soundtrack, its at times amateurish feel or its decidedly low expectations of the viewer (we get it Burns really; no need to spoon-feed us the trite allegory) *Waydowntown* is still well worth the video rental fee.

Ed. note: To save money, you can pick up a copy at the Sound and Moving Image Library in the Scott Library at the Keele campus.

— By Jake Mitchell

Bilingual? We have a job at the latest Sweatshop!

Les étudiants constituent une masse ouvrière dans laquelle les compagnies piochent sans scrupules lorsque le besoin s'en fait sentir. L'industrie du télémarketing est la première à le faire.

Throughout the ages, man has required the employment of people in demanding, repetitious positions. Whether it is the 18th century cotton picker breaking his back under the hot sun, the factory hands of the industrial revolution attaching bolt #19 on the assembly line, or the burger flippers feeding the appetite of the nation. Millions of people have found themselves in these unenviable positions to make ends meet. One of the more recent additions to this roster of repetitious, soul-destroying jobs is that of the Customer Service Representative.

Le service à la clientèle par téléphone comment ça marche? Tout appel débute par une voix enregistrée: Ici Emilie, Mélanie et tutti quanti. Avec un peu de chance et beaucoup de persévérance vous finirez par pouvoir parler à quelqu'un. Vous passerez alors du service automatisé impersonnel aux sévices d'un lobotomisé faussement amène. C'est en tout cas l'opinion de cet autre grand intellectuel qu'est celui qui appelle. Qu'en est-il vraiment du pauvre bougre qui lui reçoit l'appel?

The working conditions are indeed more comfortable than the food service industry. Call center representatives are usually provided a chair, the temperature of the office regulated for comfort, and there's often a coffee machine within close proximity of the work place. Ergonomics are usually left out of the equation however, and the effects of a headset worn 40 hours a week on the hearing faculties are not advertised in the employment ads. The headset has become the tether which binds the proletariat to the yoke of wage slavery, except the headset is chosen to be worn by those who man the phones.

L'écouteur est au représentant ce que la laisse est au clébard errant. Ça n'est pas facile, on se sent prisonnier, puni. On se rebiffe au début, on s'insurge, puis on s'habitue, on se fait une raison. On peut tout de même se détacher pour aller licebroquer mais fais gaffe fiston t'es chronométré comme on va voir. Le super boulot tout nouveau tout beau devient vite répétitif, on est rapidement endoctriné, conditionné, abruti par leurs fadaïses sur la compagnie, ta nouvelle famille. Foutu pour huit heures, heures perdues...

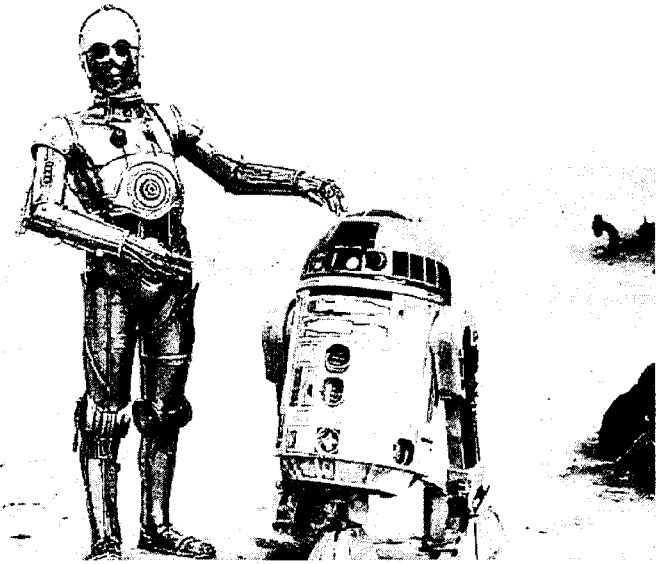
A call center employee, though possessing is or her own name, loses their

personality through the myriad of scripts, force-fed lines («Thank you for choosing...»), sales techniques and the constant threat of disciplinary action for taking a washroom break that's 30 seconds too long. In fact, you will be hard pressed to find a job that involves such a strict monitoring of staff performance: calls are force-fed at steady intervals, every call may be taped and analysed, and every break is recorded. It is little wonder that the sickness rate is double the manufacturing industry average. Given that call centers now employ more people than the steel and coal industries combined - that sickness rate represents an incredible amount of lost productivity to society as a whole and is an indicator of the stress involved in call center work.

Ambiance frénétique, ça sonne partout, tout le monde jacasse, court après un fax. Un appel, un problème. On se répète, infatigable, appel après appel. Une pause de quinze minutes toutes les deux heures, et une demi-heure pour manger, non payée vous l'aviez deviné. Il est malaisé de rester détaché et ne pas encaisser personnellement les humeurs des clients.

However, as students, we have to take what we can get in order to pay for rising tuition. Of course we have yet to possess the pieces of paper that will grant us access to more interesting and challenging jobs, and thus most of us will find ourselves watching the clocks in positions which involve not much more than repetition of the same tasks on a constant basis. From 1993 to 1995, the number of businesses using call centers jumped from 41% to 81%. Furthermore, 70% of all business transactions take place over the phone. As more and more students must supplement loans with part time work, and as more and more businesses require call centers to back up new internet ventures and products, we can only expect the percentage of youth employed in call centers to continue rising steadily.

Glendon est d'autant plus concerné par « le phénomène CSR » que la majorité (?) des étudiants est bilingue. Or, c'est un atout indéniable que de pouvoir s'exprimer en français ou en anglais dans ce secteur - à Toronto du moins - , ne serait-ce qu'en regard du salaire. Ce type de travail semble en tout



Like a good telemarketer, R2D2 never complained about his working conditions.

Some Statistics on Telemarketing

- On an average business day about 40% of the more than 260 million calls on AT&T's network are toll-free, adding up to 24 billion calls per year.
- 70% of all customer interaction occurs in the call center.
- The number of US companies using call centers in 1993: 41%. In 1995: 81%.
- There are 69,500 call centers in the US, growing to approximately 78,000 in 2003.
- Many temporary workers lack access to critical benefits such as health care and retirement, and are frustrated with the prospect of losing an assignment without notice.
- A full 75% of the workers we interviewed told us they felt they had «no other choices» available to them. These workers were ultimately seeking permanent employment. They valued a steady income and access to benefits over the flexible work schedule that temporary work offered.
- For mor info visit: www.callcenternews.com

cas idéal pour les étudiants dans la mesure où il leur permet de travailler avec un emploi du temps relativement flexible et d'être payé à l'heure. Cela accomode une population qui a besoin d'argent mais qui ne peut dans la plupart des cas travailler à temps plein. Le revers de la médaille: les employés à temps partiel ne bénéficient d'aucun des avantages accordés aux employés à temps

plein, ces valeureux qui font carrière. Les étudiants con-

stituent une masse ouvrière dans laquelle les compagnies piochent sans scrupules lorsque le besoin s'en fait sentir. Quand il s'agit de réduire les effectifs, ce sont ceux qui payent les pots cassés, les employés à temps partiel sont les premiers à se faire licencier. Merci d'être venu.

Next caller!

- By Alfonso Grufman & Frank Bolivar



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« L'arrière-pays » des merveilles ou les métamorphoses du « je » : Alice par Srimoyee Mitra

« Eh bien ! Tu es quoi toi ? dit le Pigeon . Je vois bien que tu essaies de me raconter des histoires !

Je, je suis une petite fille, dit Alice, pas très sûre d'elle car tous les changements qu'elle avait subis ce jour-là lui revenaient à l'esprit.»

Alice au Pays des merveilles, Lewis Carroll

La nouvelle production de Srimoyee Mitra au théâtre de Glendon, Alice, met en scène un univers onirique dans lequel se rencontrent les personnages mythiques des contes de Perrault et de Lewis Carroll qui évoluent dans une temporalité sans âge. Cette pièce est une invitation au voyage rythmée par les métamorphoses fantaisistes et fantasmagiques d'Alice qui, baignée de candeur, semble flotter sur l'identité de son « je ».

Dès le premier monologue, le spectateur se voit plongé dans un monde où la fiction délirante rencontre une réalité trébuchante : Clelia, Alice ? Ici ou ailleurs ? La pièce commence alors à osciller et lance son refrain avec l'essentielle - voir même l'existentielle - question : « Who are you ? ». Dès lors, le scénario embrasse le mouvement du point d'interrogation.

C'est dans un pays des merveilles à l'image de nos rêves les plus enivrés que cette jeune fille aux yeux étrangers traverse des épreuves dignes d'un voyage initiatique à la fois spirituel et

sensuel. Le décor haut en couleurs - dessiné par Dan Cohen et réalisé dans le cadre d'un cours de Duncan Appleton - crée une atmosphère tourbillonnante qui accompagne les métamorphoses de l'héroïne.

Le jeu de lumières, quant à lui, montre une « seconde » scène avec des ombres toutes féminines qui dansent en arrière plan pour célébrer les courbes du désir. Le tempo rapide de la pièce est accompagné d'une bande musicale qui, à elle seule, nous raconte une histoire qui se passe entre l'aéroport de Bombay et des univers électroniques d'une densité toute urbaine, moderne.

À « l'entrée » de ce monde extra-ordinaire se trouvent trois sylphides qui ne sont pas sans rappeler les chœurs des tragédies antiques. D'hier et d'aujourd'hui, ces trois grâces sont aussi de partout. Qu'elles revêtent la tenue asiatique traditionnelle ou qu'elle se transforment littéralement en « jeunes filles en fleur », elles donnent forme au souffle du désir qui, semble-t-il, attire Alice jusqu'ici. Pas tout à fait femme et plus vraiment petite fille, Alice se voit confrontée aux vertiges d'une identité qui se cherche.

C'est à la rencontre de l'Autre, soit de tous ces personnages du pays des merveilles que la jeune fille semble se perdre pour mieux se retrouver. En effet, la chenille,

le lapin, la Duchesse, le cuisinier et le Chat - pour ne citer qu'eux - sont autant de figures symboliques qui, sorties tout droit des livres de notre enfance, participent à la formation d'Alice. Et chacun de ces personnages délicieusement ambigus relance le refrain : « Who are you ? » avec des variations sur le thème de la quête d'identité : « You are not an Alice yet ! », « All these questions are very foreign ! ».

Si le pays des merveilles est ici réexploité avec une audace pétillante, il est, tout comme Alice, soumis à la métamorphose. J'aimerais alors souligner l'heureuse création de Srimoyee Mitra : le « 36 martyrs delight » qui ressemble étrangement à un « arrière pays » des merveilles. Dans une brasserie que les chansons d'Edith Piaf inviteraient à imaginer parisienne, quatre femmes - Clytemnestre, la reine des Indes, Talia et le petit chaperon rouge - nous donnent à voir l'envers du décor. Dans cet espace porté par les vapeurs d'alcool, les masques tombent, les femmes racontent leurs blessures et le côté obscur de la réalité est mis à jour. Le merveilleux se conjugue au cauchemar et l'érotisme s'imprègne d'une tâche de sang.

- Par Julie M. Sage.



Ci-dessus, deux scènes de *Le Visiteur* adapté par Guy Mignault

Freud revisité : *Le Visiteur* de Schmitt

« Les grandes questions sont universelles, les réponses culturelles. » — Hubert Reeves

Le théâtre français de Toronto présentait dernièrement, *Le Visiteur*, d'Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt, dans une mise en scène de Guy Mignault. La pièce relate l'histoire de Sigmund Freud alors qu'il occupe encore son appartement à Vienne avec sa fille Anna. Nous sommes en 1938, c'est l'anschluss.

Opiniâtre, Anna exhorte son père valétudinaire à s'exiler, mais Freud se sent solidaire des autres juifs et ne peut se résoudre à fuir. Au cours d'une perquisition au domicile des Freud, la gestapo, qui a tout pouvoir, arrête Anna afin de lui faire subir un interrogatoire. Alors que le vieux psychanalyste se retrouve seul et désarmé, surgit le personnage ambigu du visiteur.

Est-ce une incarnation de Dieu ou s'agit-il d'un simple illuminé échappé de l'asile ? On demeure perplexe face à ce personnage que l'on ne peut jamais saisir tout à fait. Confronté à cette apparition, Freud se perd en conjectures.

Les rôles s'inversent, c'est le visiteur qui guide le célèbre psychanalyste et l'emmène à l'introspection. Freud

est décontenancé, dérouté. Leur dialogue passe rapidement de la simple conversation à l'intense réflexion. Là encore, c'est le visiteur inconnu qui mène le débat.

Leurs propos s'élèvent alors au-dessus du dogmatisme et prennent tout naturellement une dimension métaphysique. Le visiteur et son hôte se retournent sur eux mêmes, s'interrogent sur l'homme en tant qu'être, son rôle, la place de la divinité, les attributs de celle-ci.

L'invasion de l'Autriche par l'Allemagne nazie est un chapitre spécifique et bien connu de l'histoire de la seconde guerre mondiale que Schmitt utilise comme un canevas. Sur fond d'anschluss on ne parle plus d'un homme ou de quelques hommes en particulier mais bien de l'humanité, l'humain et ses croyances, l'homme et ses errances.

La pièce en tant que telle est remarquablement interprétée, à noter surtout la belle performance de Dennis O'Connor dans le rôle de Freud et l'aisance de Martin-David Peeters qui jouait le personnage de l'inconnu dandy. La prestation de Patricia Marceau

est honorable et seule l'interprétation de Martyn Rodez dans le rôle du gestapist manque de conviction ou tout au moins de crédibilité.

Le texte et ses interprètes forment un ensemble cohérent qui ne laisse pas indifférent, il fait réfléchir, c'est rafraîchissant. Les idées reçues sont battues, l'ignorance la bêtise et l'intolérance montrées du doigt. Une pièce critique fort à propos dans un monde qui devient fanatique et bigot.

- Par Julien Daviau

Poet : Un voyage à travers la poésie de Daniel Jones

Voilà le meilleur moyen de faire jouer tout les acteurs d'une troupe de théâtre au même temps : les saynètes, ou plutôt, ce sont des récits de vie que nous ont proposés les élèves de Bob Wallace lors de leur représentation de « Poet ». Un décor épuré, juste une machine à écrire qui en dit long sur le sujet, l'objet de la création, l'interface qui a permis à Daniel Jones de nous offrir sa poésie. Puis des chaises, une, deux, presque une dizaine. Elles sont peinturlurées, souillées, comme raturées. On assiste presque à une danse de chaise, un ballet de sièges qui permettront aux acteurs de prendre la pose.

Les personnages sont caractérisés, leurs comportements vestimentaire et gestuel marquent un haut degré de recherche et imprègnent le plateau d'une noirceur moite et inconfortable. On ne peut envier ces figures, mais on les écoute en compatissant aux histoires dont ils ne semblent pas se plaindre. Le verbe est cru, mais le ton est juste. Certains sujets prêtent même à la franche rigolade, jusqu'au retour de situations glauques renforcées par une musique pesante et omniprésente.

Ce soir là, les éléments naturels avaient même prêté main forte aux sonorités de la mise en scène puisque l'orage s'en est mêlé, laissant le tonnerre résonner après les répliques capitales et la pluie fouetter les vitres tels des martinets cinglants.

L'utilisation de la projection vidéo est également un élément scénique de choix, transportant le public dans un

monde plein de réalité visuelle. Toronto reste le lieu privilégié de la vie trépidante des personnages rendant l'action très proche des spectateurs. De même, l'utilisation d'un éclairage feutré extrêmement tamisé et sombre permet de rendre l'ambiance intimiste, nous sommes dans le salon du narrateur et il nous fait part de ses expériences passées.

Ce sentiment est d'ailleurs encore plus présent lorsque le drap se déploie et rapproche l'écran à quelques mètres de l'assistance. Magnifique effet que cette toile blanche qui se dénoue et se déplie, ondulant dans l'espace scénique et contrastant les tons noirs et opaques des costumes et du décor. Un des personnages devient tout à coup une vierge opaline enrubannée du tissu évoqué plus haut, unique occasion de percevoir une once d'espoir dans le monde tordu de Daniel Jones.

Une mise en scène baignée de riches idées et servie par une brochette d'acteurs très compétents : un cocktail d'étonnant parfait pour un spectacle sans prétention qui mérite une pleine considération.

- Par David Bouqurel

Our Black Box Nest

Theatre Glendon, tucked away in the back of the school, for some is nothing but a hallway with double doors at the end; a weird booth thing with flashy lights, a summer-time cafeteria for when the school rents out your space for their money. But for a few others, for those who make an effort, for those who walk in and stay, that faded-black auditorium is much more.

For some, it's an excellent way to meet people, to sweat, to speak-out, to draw on years of hidden practice and talent. For some it's a center, a hub, around which the rest of Glendon slowly rotates. It is a place of intense connections. It is a place of heightened reality. It is a place where people spend weeks or months in cramped quarters, living breathing, eating, sweating, and bleeding together. It is a place for friendship, dreams, longing, love and loss. It is where the ancient gods of

Greece still live, the phantoms of abuse might materialize, where the laughter of a thousand pent up minutes might burst out... it is for the poets, the narcissists, the resilient, the hopeful, and the broken.

And it's damned near free entertainment of surpassing quality (but be warned, mindless entertainment isn't the goal there).

Thank you for the years Erskine.

- By Todd Cleland

Glendon students take their work to a new scene

On Thursday November at the Gladstone, Glendonites and friends got together to enjoy an eclectic mix of music, poetry, spoken word and visual arts. Conceived by our own Gab Sirois and Kristin Foster, 3rd Rail was a great evening to feature local

artists with a wide range of music from Blue Grass to experimental music, with a diverse audience to boot, the first incarnation of this art night was an all-round success.



Poèmes à trois voix

Solitaire invétééré, imaginaire éthéré, si les femmes étaient des anges, Dieu se serait suicidé. Tant bien que mal, il n'aurait pu résister. Ne pas manger de ce pain signifierait athée. Mais le vin est si doux, les âmes sont déjà damnées. Un peu, beaucoup, pas trop ou plutôt ne t'arrête

pas, continue, ne cède pas, résiste, encore, irrationnel, intemporel, magique, lyrique, c'en est fini, j'ai failli.

L'encre trouble monte à la tête, celle qui prête sa couleur aux journées sans heures. Imprime les moments indélébiles de mots cachés, pudiques mais subtils.

Marque l'humeur, la pensée, la parole; ressasse les souvenirs depuis l'ouverture de la corolle. Effacer n'est pas permis, ne plus la voir sera omis, le sort en est jeté, soit la mort, soit la vie.

Par Lui.

Mademoiselle.

Cet autre est venu jusqu'ici. Suspendu à un fil d'étoiles, il a frappé la courbe de sa vie. Avec éclats, l'ange noir est arrivé sur ses deux ailes, à elle. Dans un irrémédiable battement d'yeux, il s'est posé à ses côtés. Elle, sylphide

sculptée entre les lignes, n'a pu refermer ses paupières alors carrées. Effroi. Elle crie.

La Nuit, ils se perdent. Puis ils s'attendent dans la chaleur de l'instant. Elle se sent assise au bord de l'infini et elle l'y retrouve. Une main.

Deux mains. Ensemble ils volent le temps, ils dansent sur demain. Vertiges de l'enfance, parfums de l'ailleurs, lumières éclatantes. Quelques instants. Il a effleuré ses deux ailes, à elle.

Par Elle

Marle

Un silence pesant. Assis à terre, je tète sur une cigarette tandis que mon cul se pèle. Je tente de faire le vide de mon trop plein émotionnel. Je me trouve temporairement apaisé. Mes paupières s'abaissent. Timide, une larme qui, n'osant pas s'afficher, se retenait depuis plusieurs jours, se forme doucement, elle se risque. Pas pressée, elle roule tranquillement, s'arrête un moment puis reprend finalement sa descente. Gagné par

la témérité de son homologue de droite, l'oeil gauche lui emboîte le pas.

Une seconde larme déboile. Beaucoup plus lourde que la première, celle-ci dévale tout schuss la pente de mes joues creuses. Voilà maintenant qu'elles se précipitent les unes après les autres. Il a suffi d'une pour que le reste suive. Le barrage de mon orgueil a cédé. Ces pleurs, plus rien ne les contient, ne les retient. Flot lacrymal impétueux au débit sans cesse accru. Je n'entendais

rien, voilà que je ne vois plus très bien.

Il fait si froid. Malgré le sel, les larmes gèlent, formant de petites stalactites qui peu à peu grossissent jusqu'à former des pieux aiguisés. Je les palpe. Leur volume devient envahissant. Je romps l'un de ces pics, puis, l'enfonce résolument dans mon coeur désormais glacé. Sous la violence du choc, mon palpitant explose. J'ai le coeur brisé.

Par Moi.

La Thaïlande, terre de métamorphoses

« Rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout se transforme »
Antoine Laurent Lavoisier



Une des beautés de séjourner à l'étranger est qu'une nouvelle culture est habituellement synonyme de nouveaux congés. Hong Kong ne fit nullement exception à la règle avec le Nouvel An Chinois qui permit à tous les étudiants en échange de partir aux quatre coins de l'Asie.

Avec les trois même joyeux lurons qui furent mes compères de voyage lors de ma courte expédition en Chine, nous avons décidé avec stratégie la destination de notre nouveau périple. Une visite à l'agence de voyage et un coup d'oeil rapide sur les vols les moins chers et nous étions partis. Dans quelle direction ? Mais en Thaïlande mes chers enfants ! Pays internationalement réputé pour _____ (à vous de compléter par l'une des options suivantes: sa cuisine, ses prostituées, ses drogues, ses full moon parties, ou encore ses plages. Le choix est difficile, je sais !)

Sitôt arrivés à Bangkok, notre souhait le plus cher était de fuir au plus vite cette ville aux chauffeurs de taxi survoltés et crosseurs sur les bords. Après 5 heures d'autobus, nous avons finalement réussi à troquer l'humidité suffocante de la capitale pour un petit coin de paradis nommé Ko Samet. Encore aujourd'hui, la simple mention du nom de notre île de rêve nous redonne le sourire aux lèvres.

Les 5 jours passés à cet endroit m'ont ouvert les yeux sur un bon nombre de leçons de vie bien différentes de celles que ma mère me donnait lorsqu'elle prenait ce ton qui semblait dire "Ah ma fille, si tu savais...". J'ai alors appris que derrière certaines serveuses thaïlandaises se cache parfois... un homme. En effet, la pratique du changement de sexe est en pleine expansion dans le pays. Ne vous fiez donc jamais aux apparences ! L'habit est bien loin de faire le moine en Thaïlande. Derrière tout bon "barman" thaïlandais se cache en fait... un "pusher". Bienvenue au pays où sexe et profession se modifient en moins de temps qu'il n'en faut pour crier 'ganja' !

Mes deux compagnons de voyage masculins n'ont pu échapper à cette vague de métamorphoses. Ces hommes, dont la conception du bonheur se résumait à une cigarette dans une main et une bière dans

l'autre, se transformèrent en de véritables aventuriers que rien ne semblait arrêter. Il n'y a pas un mètre carré de l'île qu'ils n'ont pas conquis au volant d'une motocyclette en état de décomposition assez élevé merci.

Dangereusement armés (d'un couteau suisse, on s'entend), ils pouvaient passer des journées entières à jouer à Giligan's island et à s'attaquer à de pauvres noix de coco sans défense pour en extraire leur lait. On dit que les voyages forment la jeunesse. Après avoir vu de mes propres yeux deux hommes de 25 ans redevenir des gamins insouciant à Ko Samet, il ne reste aucun doute pour moi de la véracité de ce dicton.

Pour tirer ces messieurs de cette transe enfantine, la gente féminine se devait de prendre les choses en main, non sans peine et misère. Car tel que nous étions partis, on aurait pu se réveiller, 15 ans plus tard, toujours au même endroit mais... dans la peau d'un Robinson des temps modernes. C'est justement ce qui est arrivé à notre nouvel ami italien, Gino, un ancien chauffeur de train pour qui le séjour à Ko Samet s'est transformé en un voyage sans retour.

Portés par cette frénésie thaïlandaise, nous avons décidé de continuer notre chemin sur des routes parsemées d'éléphant qui gambadaient en liberté pour nous rendre jusqu'au pays voisin : le Cambodge. Mais quelle ne fut pas notre surprise lorsque, une fois arrivés à Phnom Penh, une crise diplomatique éclata entre la Thaïlande et le Cambodge. Les frontières étaient alors fermées et nous étions bloqués dans le pays. A ce moment, deux options se présentèrent à nous. Nous pouvions faire le tour, en larmes, des ambassades de la capitale cambodgienne (c'est-à-dire 3 ou 4) dans l'espoir qu'une d'entre elles accepte de nous faire sortir illégalement du pays ou bien profiter des hamacs, de l'hospitalité et des spécialités de la ville au moins aussi illégales.

La suite au prochain numéro!

- Par Isabelle Coté

NEWS IN BRIEF

Awarding winning Canadian author Yann Martel will read from his best-selling novel "Life of Pi"

Martel's reading is part of York's fifth annual Canadian Writers in Person series, which gives students and the public alike an opportunity to get up close and personal with their favourite Canadian authors.

"Martel is one of Canada's most impressive literary talents," said series organizer John Unrau, an English professor in York's Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies.

Life of Pi (Knopf Canada, 2001) is the story of Pi Patel, who becomes shipwrecked when the cargo ship carrying his family from India to Canada sinks in the Pacific Ocean. Pi is cast adrift in a lifeboat with the unlikeliest of travelling companions: a zebra, an orang-utan, a hyena, and a 450-pound Royal Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. Pi is witness to the playing out of the food chain. When only the tiger is left of the seafaring menagerie, Pi realizes that his survival depends on his ability to keep from being Richard Parker's next meal.

Born in Spain in 1963, Yann Martel won the Booker Prize in 2002 for Life of Pi. His work includes "The Facts Behind The Helsinki Roccamatios and Other Stories" (1993) and "Self: A Novel" (1996). He has just ended a year as Samuel Fischer-Gastprofessor at the Free University of Berlin, and is currently writer-in-residence at the Saskatoon Public Library.

The reading will be given in Stedman Lecture Hall "D" at the Keele campus on Thursday, Dec. 4, at 7:30 p.m.

The series is sponsored by the Master's Office and the School of Arts and Letters at Atkinson.

Literary translation a fascinating hobby for Glendon Professor

Professor Michiel Horn of the history department has made a hobby out of literary translation over the past nine years, work he says he finds "endlessly fascinating, and I am more than willing to bend any listener's ear on the subject."

Recently, Horn completed a translation into English of a story in Dutch by Maarten 't Hart, whose novels and collections of short stories and essays are bestsellers in Holland, Germany, and several other European countries.

The story, "Midsummer in April", has as its theme global climate change.

Horn has completed another translation of a novel, which will be published in 2004.

Among the more recent books he has written are: "Academic Freedom in Canada: A History" (University of Toronto Press, 1999), and "Becoming Canadian: Memoirs of an Invisible Immigrant" (University of Toronto Press, 1997).

The World Needs a Hug

Jacqui looks at societies' need for violence and how this affects all of us

When was the last time you sat down to a hockey game with a cold beer in one hand and a slice of pizza in the other knowing you were going to see a really good game of hockey rather than the WWE on ice? How about playing video games on the web or on your chosen gaming console without playing a game that interested you because it involved high speed chases, gun fights or some kind of large breasted woman in a bikini?

The truth is that society is has become poisoned with a ruthless desire for blood.

While watching a hockey game the other night between two teams a player was thrown into the boards and then fell to the ice in an awkward angle. What did the crowd do? They cheered and booed and rose to their feet. They either screamed threats at the referee for not making a call or they screamed threats at the instigating player for the hit or they just screamed for the sheer exhilaration of seeing a fellow human being be equished into the boards like a 'bug on a windshield.'

Now there are some people, (I shouldn't discredit the whole human race) that believe there is too much violence in today's society and are trying to do something about it. What do they do? They protest. Most protests, peaceful or not make someone or some party involved angry.

We look at our world today and we can see that it is becoming more and more desensitized to violence. Not only are we becoming desensitized, but we are actually starting to like it. Believe it or not there is not one person on this earth who can deny the thrill of a good competition. Competition usually means win at all costs and in our world most competitors have no problem playing dirty to get to the top.

When it comes to politicians, municipal, provincial, or federal it doesn't matter the name of the game has become win at all costs. It could mean buying a candidate out of the race or slandering their person to no end. Many times politicians have come dangerously close to crossing that fine line between slandering and down right mud slinging to come out the better person in a debate. This accomplishes nothing as the real issues are lost in the childish bickering and name calling. If you sat down the average Canadian and asked them what a political parties principal beliefs are they probably couldn't answer but they could answer a question of who that party is

against the most.

Issues of violence or underhandedness are not limited to politics or the NHL no, they extend out into everything we do in life. It could be as simple as two children in a park, one playing with a toy the other with nothing but admiration for the toy. A long time ago these children would happily play with the toy together and not give it a second thought. Now, because of societie's antisocial upbringings, the child with the toy would most likely go off to be on his or her own with the toy or just keep on playing being totally oblivious to the fact that there is another little child who wants to play as well.

A child sitting in front of a video console will curse a blue streak should their character not drive

fast enough, kill enough, or shoot quick enough for their liking. Games such as 'Turok: Dinosaur hunter' where even the prehistoric creatures aren't safe. The object in this game being to kill the dinosaurs you come across and leave their vividly bloody corpses in your wake. On television it is the same situation, more and more television shows involve sex, drugs, affairs, murder, shootings, scantily clad women, buff guys and profanity. TV shows such as 'Nip/Tuck', a show about promiscuous plastic surgeons with little to no respect for the human image or themselves, only go toward the lack of appreciation to human life. (The age old saying 'sex sells' is becoming more and more true with the passing days!) Then there are the movies that are coming out that are so full of senseless violence and rage that it is impossible to list them all because Pro Tem would run out of paper!

It hurts to think our society is unintentionally bringing itself to an age of pain and suffering. It seems that people are so accustomed to it that it starts to matter less and less whether the problem gets fixed or not. So go out my dears and listen to the people, places and things around you and keep in mind what you are being exposed to. Then come home and for the love of all things good, give someone a hug!!

- By Jacqui Simon



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In-between Days

Just in time for the cold season Gerard Stocker reviews a hot prize-winning novel set in a hot country.

It is a commonplace that the immigrant experience in Canada has become the defining feature of our literature, maybe even our society during the past twenty or thirty years. So much has been made of the uniqueness of this phenomenon to Canada that we forget that some really bad books have been produced under its aegis (Fugitive Pieces anyone?). Furthermore we forget that there are other places in the world where comparable social situations obtain.

Where Canada is on the vanguard, though not uniquely, is in being a place where the palpable sensation of in-between-ness that radiates from many of the immigrant-written novels published today has begun to bleed over into every corner of contemporary life.

As corruption and the sweep of global capitalism redefine the notion of ownership all over the world a feeling of being between identities grows in intensity everywhere. Some find the feeling liberating and comically celebrate their new hybrid identities. In places where the new ownership means large scale theft and the marginalization

of entire cultures the feeling is felt as a tragedy.

Set in multi-racial Kenya, M.G. Vassanji's new book *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* tries to take the measure the latter.

Vassanji's narrator, the eponymous Vikram Lall, is born into an in-between world as a child of Kenya's sizeable Asian community, a community that sees itself as occupying a place both between whites and blacks and between Kenya and India. From his exile in idyllic Korrenburg (a thinly disguised Cobourg), Ontario, where he has fled since being declared number one on his country's "List of Shame", Vikram tells the sorry tale of his life.

Born the son of a shopkeeper in pre-independence times he passes his childhood in the Rift Valley, where he and his sister form a lifelong friendship with a local black child, Njoroge, the ramifications of which occupy much of the novel. He moves to Nairobi as a young man, making a name for himself in government during that heady first decade of independence ('63-'73), a

time when Kenya's tyro economy posted real growth rates of 8% a year. As he ages he becomes hopelessly entangled in Kenya's sordid slide into a corruption so deep that the country is now considered among the most corrupt places on earth.

While it's true that the action of the novel describes a downward arc, Vikram's memoir in fact teems with as many stories within stories as a Salman Rushdie novel – although without the Rushdie's poppy Bollywood delivery. Tales abound of daring courtships, thwarted loves, and wayward aunts and uncles. Keeping company with these are potted Indian mythologies, histories of Kenya's railroading past (as important to the national imagination as they are in Canada) and a brace of horrific murders.

It's hard to believe that Vassanji can keep so many balls in the air at once. And to be honest the contraption does take a while to get moving. Once it does however, you can see how necessary are all the interconnected stories to what the author is trying to describe.

Another reviewer justly compared his work to Tolstoy. Like the Russian master his genius does not lie in expert turns of phrase or a cutting modern style, but rather relies on a certain looseness of composition to give the characters room to breathe and achieve a full human roundness. This quality, which Vassanji shares with his fellow Canadian Rohinton Mistry simultaneously impugns simplistic notions of "style" while redefining what the goal "good" writing should be – a revelation of what "good" is. As Tolstoy did, he underlines the horror of the present by fastidiously delineating the steps that connect it to the very real, happier (though by no means perfect) past and outlines the full scale of bestiality by juxtaposing it with a living breathing humanity.

Often I like to vent about the oppressive seriousness of the Canadian literary climate. I really do believe that as a country we encourage far too many authors whose virtues lie more in their good intentions than in their ability to write. M.G. Vassanji is emphatically not such a writer; *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* deserves the widest readership.

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For Vikram's memoir is partly an attempt to justify himself, and partly an attempt to put his life into an order that explains how he (and his country) have ended up where they are. There is a temptation to assume that corrupt societies have been and always will be so. And it's clear that Vikram, as he wades in deeper, has cynically adopted the view put forward by his brother-in-law:

Bribes were a form of taxation... In most countries of the world, he claimed, people were used to paying this surcharge.

To espouse such a view really does require a willful blindness to both the past and the present. (For those cynical enough to believe that corruption is the law for the entire world, I refer you to the Perceived Corruption Index published by Transparency International, an NGO dedicated to impeding the spread of corruption.)

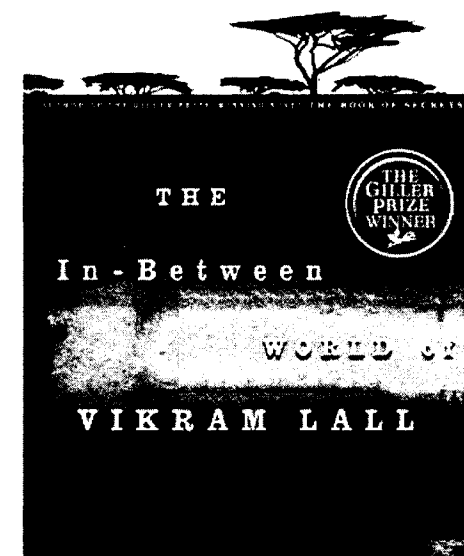
Marooned in Canada, with only his past to keep him company Vikram gradually comes to realize that not only does the storied past he owns contradict the belief that corruption has always reigned, but that by aiding and abetting, however passively, he has helped to poison the very vitality of that past.

Vassanji's novel is a serious book, make no mistake. And like many a "serious" book there is a temptation to judge it on its social merits alone. The author does indeed take a very nuanced approach to anatomizing the genealogy of modern Kenya's kleptocracy, that's why he needs so many stories. He is, so far as my knowledge let's me judge, even-handed while pulling no punches.

The *In-Between World of Vikram Lall* is published in Canada by Doubleday (Hardcover \$35.95)

— By Gerard Stocker

MG VASSANJI



The Intolrable Question of Religion

Exploration of religion is growing says Adil Mamodaly, yet tolerance remains a concern

The topic of religion today has become very delicate yet rampant. At Glendon, with such a diverse population, discussing religion can be hot or simply not. Engaging in conversations about God, what today is more often defined as It, the Self, or this Energy definitely attracts the modern mind but attacks the traditional.

After popping the question "do you believe" or "do you practice", a doubtful or resentful no is often heard. Those who answer yes are sometimes looked at with distaste as if religion was a thing of the past or simply not worth talking about. Can a common ground be found? Absolutely. Will it change anyone's belief? We shouldn't try to. To escape our own ignorant behavior it is imperative that we educate ourselves with knowledge of different religions and cultures. Only that will help us to be tolerant of each other and will help us create an example for the future.

Understandably the word religion is often more hated than the word God; primarily because it is sometimes only understood from the Western

perspective or from a particular doctrine. A distinction must be made between the edict(s) of the religion(s) and the people interpreting the religion(s). Surely the media plays a big role in portraying that difference and whether or not they are successful is in the hands of the educated public.

The definition of religion has significantly changed. When one says the word religion they are often understood for saying Christianity. The meaning of the word religion does not necessarily have a deified representation today. A collective consciousness can be called a religion and science can be a good example of that.

A topic of discussion that comes up quite often is the issue of going to Church. People value autonomy more than authority which creates a rift when it comes to conventional churches. This phenomenon is found in other religions as well but perhaps not to the same degree or extent. By the same token it is important to understand why some people still go to Church. Just as one would rather watch the superbowl with a group of

friends cheering for the same team, one may want to go to Church to express their faith through actions with people that share the same beliefs.

On another note, those who are on the quest for meaning often find themselves in front of a religious buffet, picking and choosing what is appropriate for them and rejecting what is not. Imported religions such as Buddhism have found a new clientele. Perhaps it fills the spiritual void from their religion of birth. If a religion becomes rigid it can turn into fear and a clairvoyant reality cannot exist. More and more, religious traditions are becoming aware of their rigidity because they are losing followers. What is attractive nowadays is the Self.

Fortunately we live in a pluralistic society where we are exposed to a wide variety of world views and are allowed to create and recreate our ideas about 'religion' and 'God'. This democratic value not only imposes that we understand and tolerate each other's differences but that we focus on the similarities. This in my opinion is the foundation in building a bridge.

As University students it is our duty to enlighten our minds with knowledge and discard our ignorance. Build a world on tolerance and compassion rather than fear and shame. Religion is not a thing of the past anymore it is resurfacing faster than we think. Whether we believe in God or believe in the self, we believe. Whether we pray in a Temple, Synagogue, Church, Mosque, or even at home, we pray. To build a bridge of tolerance we must first build the stones of knowledge.

To find out more about religious tolerance, go to: www.religioustolerance.org or read:

Linda Woodhead's "Religions In The Modern World", Routledge, 2002.

- By Adil Mamodaly

Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article sur la Tolérance, 1764.

« Qu'est-ce que la tolérance? C'est l'apanage de l'humanité [...] Qu'à la bourse d'Amsterdam, de Londres, ou de Surate, ou de Bassora, le guèbre, le banian, le juif, le mahométan, le déicole chinois, le bramin, le chrétien grec, le chrétien romain, le chrétien protestant, le chrétien quaker trafiquent ensemble : ils ne lèveront pas le poignard les uns sur les autres pour gagner des âmes à leur religion. [...] Il est clair que tout particulier qui persécute un homme, son frère, parce qu'il n'est pas de son opinion, est un monstre. [...] Insensés, qui n'avez jamais pu rendre un culte pur au Dieu qui vous a faits ! Monstres, qui avez besoin de superstition comme le gésier des corbeaux a besoin de charognes ! On vous l'a déjà dit, et on a autre chose à vous dire : si vous avez deux religions chez vous, elles se couperont la gorge ; si vous en avez trente, elles vivront en paix.»

Holiday shopping seem a little less than fair?

There is now an alternative as Sara O'Shaughnessy explains - a growing Fair Trade movement.

Shopping is a generally noxious activity. Especially around the holiday season when prices are exorbitant and high-strung shoppers contemptuously elbow, shove and occasionally hip-check each other in order to get the latest generic plastic item on sale.

However, there are even more nefarious consequences resulting from North America's #1 activity. As much as we like to deny it, a lot of what we purchase is created in sweatshops, often by child or bonded labour, and under impoverishing international trade conditions.

Undoubtedly, North Americans will never be able to completely free itself from the need to shop; shopping is how the majority of us acquire basic goods such as food and clothing and whatever else we can't seem to live without. More unfortunately, large conglomerates and multinational corporations will likely continue to dominate the flow of goods between nations, and control the amount of toxins permeating our supermarkets, big box stores, and overall society.

There is, however, a positive alternative. Fair trade is a growing phenomenon around the world that is creating a better name for shopping by omitting the role of large, profit-maximizing corporations. It is an alternative form of trade that aims to provide a better quality of life and a sustainable future for artisans and producers in destitute communities around the Third World by creating an equitable and accessible market for their goods in more industrialized nations.

This means that the producers are paid a fair wage for their products, usually around 30% of the shelf price. Most regular stores pay their producers a far lower percentage that then entrenches them into a cycle of dependency and poverty. The alternative for these artisans often means selling their products locally on the exploitative tourist market at equally demeaning prices.

The 'fairness' of the wage is determined according to what the producer needs in order to attain a respectable standard of living,

which includes adequate housing and nutrition, schooling for members of their families, and the ability to expand their business to eventually achieve self-sufficiency. Usually, a large portion of the wage is paid in advance to assure that the producers can acquire the necessary materials for their products without having to go into debt. Fair trade, as defined by the International Federation for Alternative Trade, must also ensure that the production of goods serves to preserve both cultural traditions and the environment.

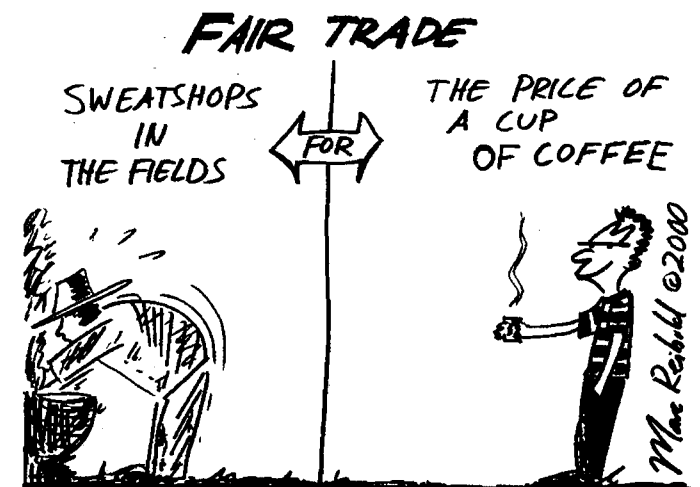
This description of fair trade may sound like idyllic naïveté; in some ways it is. Few things on Earth are incorruptible, and there are some businesses that choose to take advantage of the fair trade image without upholding its tenets. It is nearly impossible to determine what is truly fair and equitable, and it is left up to the discerning consumer to ask the right questions.

But there are at least some fair trade stores that abide by a code of transparency and willingly provide contact information for the

artisans and producers they work with. Among the most reputable and transparent fair trade stores in Toronto is Ten Thousand Villages which carries a large variety of products ranging from coffee, house wares, greeting cards, jewelry to picture frames. Ten Thousand Villages has two locations in Toronto: 2599 Yonge Street (six blocks North of Eglinton) and 362 Danforth Avenue (close to Chester Station).

Shopping at a fair trade store will not save anyone from obscene line-ups or revolting consumer frenzies, but at least it can provide some assistance and dignity to those who are subjected to the worst effects of our consumer culture.

- By Sara O'Shaughnessy



Tattooing: Something permanent on an ever-changing surface

You might want to think twice as Jacqui explains the ins and outs of Tattooing

Many people see tattoos as a rebellion against the individuals' parents or another influential factor. This can be true to a certain extent. Others see tattoos as an expression of their individuality or as a representation of who they are.

Some cultures believe that tattoos of a certain design or picture on a person is a sign of authority or leadership. Throughout time men and women have been tattooing themselves, only some of which are to be shown to others. Whatever the reason individuals get tattoos, one thing is certain with each tattoo - there's a story behind it.

Good or bad, they all have meaning to the bearer. Someone might get a symbol of a dragon to represent strength in character or a mythical creature like a Griffon that also represents strength and courage. Many people will choose to get something that directly relates to them like their Zodiac symbol or possibly their service number or another representation of their status in the Military. There are any number of things that people are willing to tattoo on their body as a statement of identity.

The definition of a tattoo is literally to mark the skin, basically leaving a permanent ink stain on the skin surface. The process is simple and easy, it

involves a needle with ink in it that it rapidly moved over the skin to inject the ink. It sounds horribly painful and makes one wonder why anyone would ever want to do that to their body? Well for many after the first few minutes of the first tattoo you stop noticing the pain and become more fascinated with the process.

A common misconception is the amount of pain one has to go through to get a tattoo. In certain places however, tattoos can hurt more than in other areas. Your back is an example where a tattoo can either hurt the most or the least. Over the spine it can hurt quite a lot as with a tattoo going over any bone area. On your lower back or to the left or right can be considerably less painful if not totally painless. Areas such as your shoulders and arms or just above the ankle can be good places for tattoos but you have to be more confident about showing these tattoos to other people. For those with higher tolerance for pain, the center of the back or upper back can prove to be a good place for a perfectly hideable tattoo.

Hide-able tattoo you ask? Sometimes especially for females it can be more 'interesting' for only a small part of a tattoo to show. With guys it usually looks better when the tattoo is visible, say on a shoulder or leg. One thing's for sure though

it is usually unwise to get a tattoo that says anything that is permanent.

Do not get a tattoo of your girlfriend or boyfriend, wife or husband, they are not permanent as much as you wish them to be but tattoos are. It is also a bad idea to tattoo something on your body that could be offensive to others. It's easy to make a final decision on what to tattoo onto your body - just ask yourself two questions; Can I see myself with this fifteen or twenty years down the road? And, does this tattoo have meaning to me? If you can answer those two questions and feel confident and comfortable with the answers then you are ready for a tattoo!

A caution however is to make sure the place you are going to is credible. Tattoo artists should be licensed and they should follow proper sanitary methods and be

sterile. The artist should always, ALWAYS have gloves on while he or she is tattooing you or handling the needles. For those here at Glendon College there is a very good place, New Tribe, across the street from the City TV building on Queen street, or you can visit them on the web at www.newtribe.ca.

It can not be stressed enough however that tattoos are permanent and to remove them with laser surgery is very expensive and can hurt more than the original tattoo. On the lighter side, tattoos can be fun to have and show to your friends or if they have a very deep meaning for the proprietor they may just be something to look at now and then and think about.

Your body is a temple and should be treated as such but why not spice it up a little with an image or importance to you? Have fun and safe tattooing!!!

- By Jacqui Simon



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Pro Tem is looking for your original and imaginative short stories in English or French which make use of a colour as a meaningful element. They should be between 700 and 1500 words long. Your stories will be judged by a panel of three, through a process of blind review. The top four authors will each receive an Oxford Thesaurus, and the story which we judge to be the best will be published in Pro Tem.

Writing in Colour

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