

TDR the danforth review

focusing on the canadian small press scene and other matters of insignificance

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Guest Fiction Editor: Nathan Whitlock

(He's the one with the trombone.)

Nathan Whitlock's short fiction won the 2000 Writers' Union of Canada Short Prose Competition for Developing Writers, and was shortlisted in **THIS Magazine's** 2000 Great Canadian Literary Hunt. He regularly reviews fiction for **Quill & Quire**, and has just left **Descant**, where he was Managing Editor for a while. He lives in Toronto. He has his driver's license, and can borrow steel-toe boots, if need be.



What do you like and dislike about contemporary Canadian fiction? (Name names.)

Like: *How Did You Sleep?* by Paul Glennon and *19 Knives* by Mark Anthony Jarman (though I think Jarman needs to get a little less macho and Glennon needs to become a little more so); the H.G. Wells-ish middle section of Yann Martel's new novel; "The Poet and Novelist as Roommates" by Sheila Heti; the brief excerpts I've read from *Lenny Bruce is Dead* by Jonathan Goldstein; the excerpt from *Rocket Science* by Julia Gaunce that was in *Descant* last year; Anansi promotional campaigns (postering!).

Dislike: distance; absence; desire; obsession; flora; generations; summers by the lake; fictitious punk/rock bands with cute names (you sound like the Air Farce, people); characters who are artists; omnibus novels (some intrigue, some upheaval, some sex, some recipes, some poetry, some philosophy, some internal monologues, some revisionist Canadian history, a little Toronto, a little Sri Lanka); aesthetic intoxication (anybody who's writing has been described as 'painterly'); sentimentalism (whether from Jane Urquhart or Stan Rogal); Cartesian lab notes (the Coach House Gang, and anyone who believes that the/ory le/ads a/r/t); **Globe** fiction reviews (1500-word plot synopses); the dearth of parody (notable exception: "The Ondaatje Memos" on [cardigan.com](#)); workshops (distinctive voices are rare enough without group criticism); comfort (see: Kafka, axe, frozen sea).

I apologize if I sound like a crank.

Describe the types of stories you'd like to see in TDR.

I can't really improve upon Geoffrey Cook's call for work "that is free of cliché — intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and technically" — I will only add "and that contains the exact balance of hubris and humility, ambition and awe, chocolate and blood, this and that."

Name a favourite fiction writer, and say why.

Here's a few (no big surprises): Nicholson Baker, for his ability to transform cheerful, dorky middleness into something unsettling. Italo Calvino, for the same reason, though not so dorky. Chekhov and Cheever, for unequalled depictions of paralyzed lives that make you lie awake all night, on your roof. James Joyce, for the three or four chapters of *Ulysses* that laugh dismissively at everything written since (and loudest, it seems, at my stuff). Donald Barthelme, for cutting the apron strings. And William Steig, author of *Shrek!*, *The Amazing Bone*, and many more, for assisting in a few hundred bedtimes and counting.

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