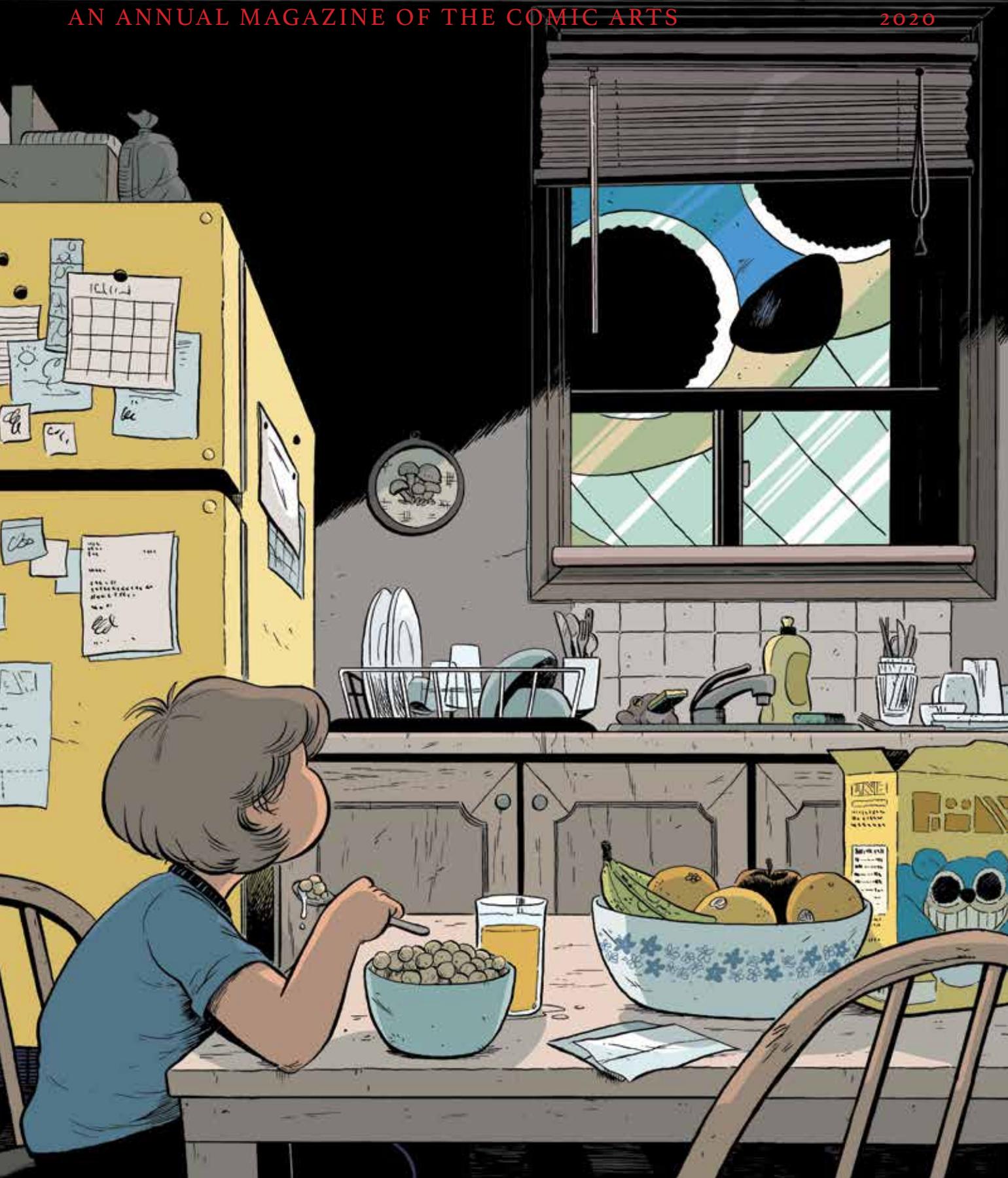


CONUNDRUM

AN ANNUAL MAGAZINE OF THE COMIC ARTS

2020





drawing by James Collier



photo of Gary Topp from: www.garytopp.com



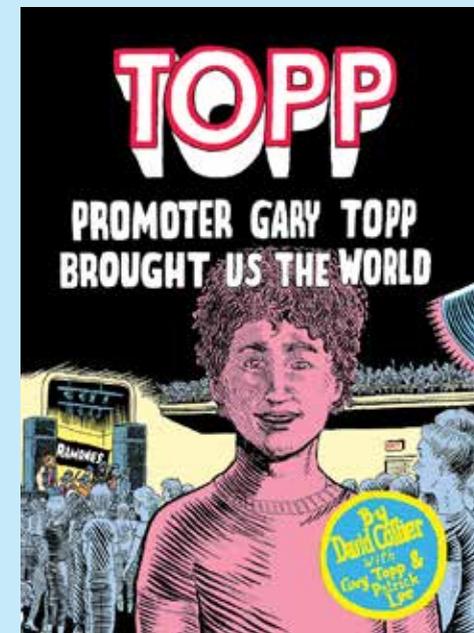
Have you started thinking about your next project?

My old boss from when I was seventeen contacted me when I was working on *Morton*. He wants me to do a book about him. A lot of people have been bugging him to do a book and he wanted me to do it. This guy started The Roxie in Toronto. When I was a teenager I was part of the crew that unloaded stuff and did security during shows, and sometimes even worked the spotlight. It's a really interesting story about him – and it's about me too.

His grandfather escaped anti-Semitism in Poland and moved to Northern Ontario in 1905 and set up this clothing store. Gary's father took over the clothing business in Northern Ontario, but his father didn't want Gary to follow in his footsteps. Gary screened films and then he started promoting shows. He brought the Ramones to Toronto in 1976 and The Police the next year or maybe '78. All these bands who later became big and they all stayed loyal to Gary and his business partner, Gary Cormier. They were known as the Two Garys. By the time I was eighteen I'd seen every band I'd ever wanted to see. It was such a great experience.

All the people who worked there were like a family. I practically had groupies, all these punk girls who would come and hang out. It was the late '70s and early '80s. It was quite a time. I was so young, but I was around these older people who taught me a lot and didn't fuck me around. There are some good lessons there.

www.tcj.com/hopefully-you-reach-a-few-people-here-and-there-a-david-collier-interview/



As with all of Collier's work, his latest graphic novel is a combination of memoir and biography. This time, he explores his involvement in the cultural landscape of Toronto in the 1970s and 80s, specifically focusing on the life of Gary Topp, a concert promoter and founder of the pioneering Canadian repertory cinema.

Topp emerged from an immigrant background, abandoned the family textile business, and became an influential figure in the lives of an entire community. He was also Collier's first boss and mentor. Though outspoken and opinionated, Gary Topp inspired love and devotion, not only in those who worked for him, but also in the acts he booked—including the Ramones, The Police, and the Dixie Chicks.

This graphic novel looks at a rapidly disappearing past and uses Topp's ability to see beyond the mainstream for a look at where our culture is heading.

ISBN 978-1-77262-032-0
7x10 inches, 140 pages
black & white, trade paperback, \$20

July



Illustration: Ted Dave

1. What is it about Crane's work that captured your imagination?

I first heard about Stephen Crane when I was a kid. I was fascinated by the album cover artwork on The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and curious about the various people standing around the band. I researched the many movie stars, vaudeville performers, musicians, artists, and authors featured on the album art: Aleister Crowley is there (twice apparently), as is Edgar Allan Poe, William S. Burroughs, and Stephen Crane. I read Crane's book *The Red Badge of Courage* and was moved by his simple and effective storytelling style. He was a pioneer in realism and a journalist who wrote empathetic stories of disadvantaged people in unfortunate situations. He passed away when he was 28 but, despite his young age, left behind an impressive amount of influential writing.

After reading *The Red Badge*, I moved onto Crane's other stories including "George's Mother", which I adapted into the graphic novel *Drippy's Mama*. I love Crane's characterizations and found that the protagonists in "George's Mother," *The Red Badge*, and "The Open Boat" could be performed by some of the cartoon characters I play around with.

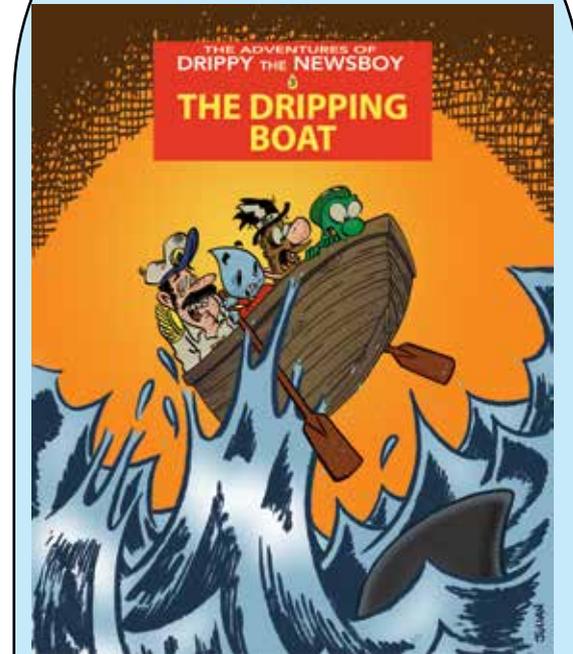
I also use my adaptations of the Crane books as examples when I visit schools as artist-in-residence. I teach students and their classroom teachers ways to collaborate as a group and transform the particular novel they are studying into a full-length comic book. I use the Drippy books as well as the original artwork, thumbnails, and sketches to demonstrate to students what an adaptation can look like. In this way, they engage with learning and can make connections to school curriculum such as comprehension, literacy, and art.

2. Why did you choose to parody "The Open Boat", instead of one of Crane's other works?

I wouldn't necessarily call my adaptation of Crane's "The Open Boat" a parody. I am trying to stay somewhat faithful to the original story's rather serious themes, though there is some humour along with the drama in the comic. I've chosen "The Open Boat" because the plot presents a compelling conclusion to the graphic novel trilogy I've planned out for Drippy and his gang. The trilogy begins with Volume I: *Drippy's Mama* whereby all the characters in Drippy's world are introduced. This is followed by Volume II: *The Red Drip Of Courage*, which is an anti-war story. However (spoiler alert ahead): In *The Red Drip*, many of the characters introduced in *Drippy's Mama* are slaughtered, leaving behind just four of the original Drippytown gang: Drippy, Harry, Zot, and Bleeker. These are the four shipwrecked and unfortunate souls who struggle for survival in *The Dripping Boat*.

3. Crane's writing has been compared to an impressionist painting. How has Crane's writing style impacted the style of your Drippy comics?

I am struck by the way Stephen Crane uses realistic language for dialogue, which he contrasts with poetic, sometimes epic, narration. Additionally, his protagonists are regular people who speak in plain language and harbor complex personalities. I attempt to emulate this by drawing characters who are fairly simple and cartoony in design but who are emotionally complex and caught up in detailed and dramatic environments of heavy cross-hatching and black & white contrasts. I transfer Crane's realistic dialogue from the pages of his books into the speech balloons in the comics. In this way, I depict the simple authenticity of figures who are trapped within a complex ground. A form of Gestalt shift can be achieved when we extend the figure/ground metaphor from cartoon characters performing in a comic book to people, such as you and me, in the real world.



The final volume of the Drippy the Newsboy series based on the writings of Stephen Crane.

Join Drippy, Harry, Bleeker and Zot in *The Dripping Boat*, as they battle waves, wind, wits, and wills. Following a shipwreck, the four find themselves stranded on a lifeboat, frantically trying to reach an invisible shore. Rub a dub dub, four men in a tub...but how many will return? First published in 1897, "The Open Boat" was based on Crane's experience of surviving a shipwreck off the coast of Florida while traveling to Cuba to work as a newspaper correspondent. Crane was stranded at sea for thirty hours when his ship, the SS Commodore, sank after hitting a sandbar. He and three other men were forced to navigate their way to shore in a small boat.

Drippy the character emerged in 1999. Lawrence had been working as a comics editor at a Vancouver weekly publication called Terminal City. When the paper folded, Lawrence and a couple of other ex-employees rallied to put together their own monthly newspaper, *The Drippy Gazette*. The mandate of the monthly publication was to feature artist interviews and events, and keep the Vancouver comics scene together. While the newspaper lasted 12 months, the mascot of the paper lived on in Lawrence's work.

ISBN: 978-1-77262-045-0
7.5x10 inches, 64 pages
black and white, trade paper, \$12

April



photo: © Justine Latour

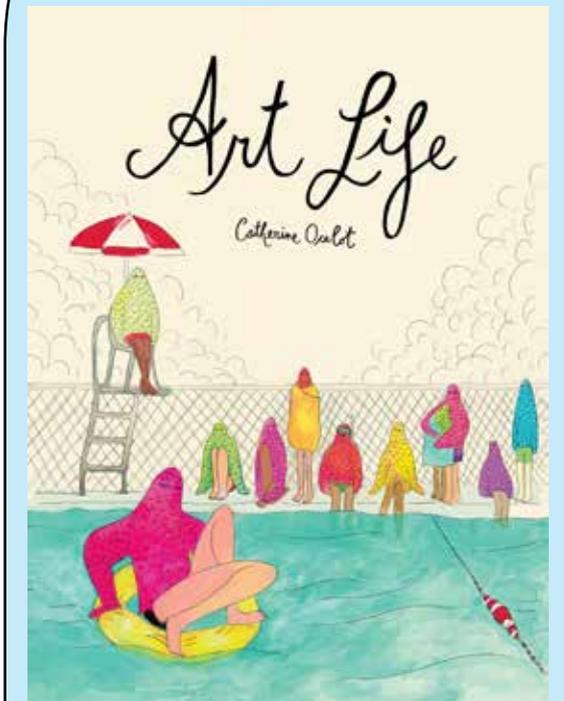
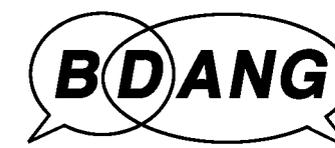
“[Catherine Ocelot] brings us behind the scenes of the creative practice, giving us a glimpse of the hurtles that present themselves along the way. The chapters build on one another in a sort of coming-of-age story where each scene becomes a challenge for the heroine to overcome, whether it’s hoisting herself up a tree, pitching a project to her publisher, or developing a theoretical viewpoint that will get her approach to be taken seriously. But the goal of these tests is perhaps not so much to become a successful artist, but simply to fight the necessary battles and avoid becoming jaded.” — Spirale magazine

1. The fantastical characters who live in your work is part of its charm. Why do you choose to depict your characters as animal/people hybrids?

The book is for the most part a sort of artistic coming-of-age story, in which I search out others and listen to their experiences. I try to learn by observing, evoking the idea of studying a species: the artist. These bird costumes can be seen as a way of representing the themes of the persona and protection from the outside world—both ideas present throughout the book. How to be permeable, to take in influences while remaining whole and protected are very much of interest to me; it’s a difficult balance to achieve as an artist. Finally, as I also speak about my fear of falling in the book, the feathers are there to soften my eventual fall, which happens when I’m standing on a branch and try to hoist myself up on a tree that isn’t mine.

2. This graphic novel examines the nuances and complications of life as an artist. Was there a particular incident that motivated you to start working on this project?

Perhaps not one incident in particular, but building an “art life” for myself and making the choice to make art took some time. For all sorts of reasons, it wasn’t something that was a given for me; it was a difficult decision to make. And before making it, I questioned myself at length. This book is a bit of a summary of those questions and related observations. And since part of my process is to engage with others, making a work around encounters with other artists made a lot of sense to me. Communication and dialogue are central to my work, and the way the book is formatted helps show how my character evolves thanks to these encounters.



Translation by Aleshia Jensen

Catherine Ocelot wonders about her place as an artist, digging into the layers of what it means to live this Art Life. In her search for answers, she talks with seven artists from different disciplines who express their doubts, their struggles, their ambitions and their sometimes-wise and sometimes-funny observations. The author stages these encounters with finesse and wit, and echoes them with scenes from her own life. Art Life is a tragicomic tale tinged with fantasy that explores the impact of others on oneself, led by an artist who slowly comes to understand herself.

ISBN: 978-1-77262-046-7
6.5 X 9.25 inches, 208 pages
full colour, trade paperback, \$20

April



1. *Langosh & Peppi: Fugitive Days* is based on your own travel experiences. When you first set out, what were you hoping to learn or experience?

When I set out, I was following love. I had no specific experience in mind, or particular things I wanted to learn, I just wanted to spend more time with my sweetie. Of course, I was interested in seeing Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe, but I also hoped to be shown these parts of Europe by friends who lived there, and could take me to the out-of-the-way spots. I love markets, alleys, wastelands, train stations, and quaint stuff like little cafe's and sweets shops in suburbs. I am exhausted by galleries and museums, but can go all day on a tourist excursion to get some treats from a shack that only locals eat at. I ended up seeing more than I ever expected, and also meeting more amazing people than I could have hoped for. I also witnessed very troubling events that

I could not have foreseen, such as the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees into Europe, and their subsequent ill treatment.

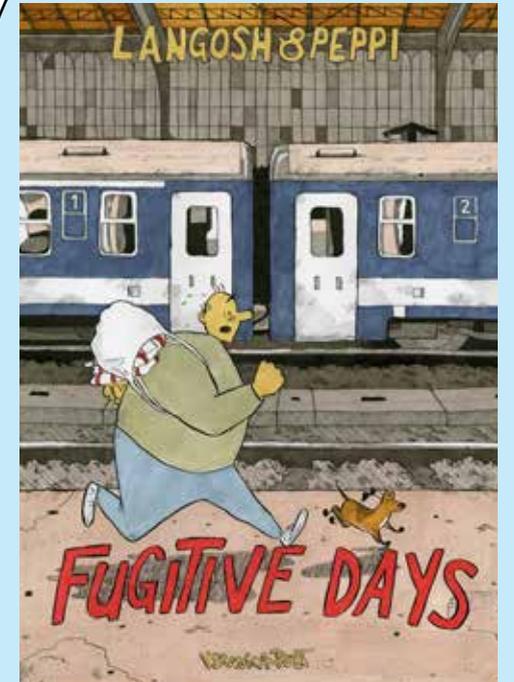
2. Hergé's influence comes through in your work in a delightful way – is there a particular Tintin story that still stands out to you as having a significant impact on your development as a cartoonist?

Well, first of all, thank you! I read Tintin as a girl. Like many of my early cultural influences I have a difficult time with many aspects of his work now (his racist cultural depictions are cringe-worthy at best) but I cannot deny that his artwork has had an influence on me. There is no particular story that stands out, but his drawings, especially the covers, are so beautifully clean and evocative. He captures movement and expression beautifully and I enjoy how he has such well-defined characters. I felt there was a lot to learn from that... a well-defined

character is essential to storytelling. It doesn't matter if it's comedy, drama, or what. The character is what draws you in. When I was traveling, I thought, I am here in all these far-flung places, making my way around in rather unusual ways and poking my nose where it doesn't belong, and that is very Tintinesque... I wondered what would it be like to see Tintin as an older, down-on-his-luck type? On the wrong side of the law and all that? What if his youthful swagger was worn down and he was just sort of running scared and confused?! That is where the idea for Langosh and Peppi came from.

3. Part of Langosh's character involves fully understanding the stark difference between being transient by choice and being displaced from your home. Was there a particular incident in your journey that helped you make this realization?

Yes, there were several. To put it into context, in the story Langosh has legal troubles in his home country so that there is a serious emotional barrier to returning home, as well as a barrier to remaining legally in Europe. Due to the travels of Langosh through different environments, this situation is put into comparison with the lives of various other people who have fewer privileges. You asked about a particular incident that illustrates the contrast... what comes to mind is visiting Roma shanty towns in Belgrade, where there is a very different definition of "home" as well as the displacement of civilians in their own country. There was also the shameful treatment of Syrian refugees by the central European nations (and the world) in general, especially Hungary. Compare the difficulty of returning home to a potential arrest, to having no ability to return home at all, because your home is destroyed. The contrast of being able to buy a train ticket out, and of being held against your will in a country that is openly hostile to your presence.



This debut graphic novel tells the story of the 2015 European "migrant crisis" in Budapest, Hungary through the perspective of Langosh and Peppi, a vagabond and his faithful dog. The pair brings to mind an older, down-on-their-luck Tintin and Snowy with adventures to match. A semi-autobiographical work based on Post's own experiences, Langosh and Peppi escape the pressures of conformity by exploring out-of-the-way places, where they stumble on the vestiges of the war torn region's hidden past. We follow them through streets, alleys, tunnels, train stations, cheap rooms, abandoned buildings and the countryside and witness the effects of various social, political and interpersonal situations through their eyes.

The story illustrates a sort of "Huckleberry Finn" existence, of travelling freely with no responsibilities except finding food and shelter, and meeting fascinating people along the way. However, Langosh and Peppi soon discover the stark difference between choosing a transient lifestyle, and being forced from one's home and country. We meet people whose tragic personal struggles are enmeshed with the national struggles that continue to divide and destroy so many lives, see families torn apart due to ignorance and fear, and witness the disturbing global rise of nationalism. Influenced by Hideo Azuma, Joe Sacco, and Julie Doucet, Post examines the modern dilemma of what it means to be human and to call a place home.

ISBN: 978-177262-044-3
7x10.25 inches, 240 pages
b/w, trade paperback, \$20

May



Part Silk, Part Steel

by Antoine Duplan

Anna Sommer looks as light as a feather, but don't assume she's fragile. Her ink-black eyes could drill a hole right through a person. Her paper cutouts have a deceptive delicacy. They're as graceful as cherry trees in bloom, and as likely as blossoms to hide toxins and bees. The wintry pallor of her "Big Girls" is imperfectly covered by dresses in solid colours and complex floral designs. Troubling emblems surround them: mirrors, mushrooms, apples, eggs, lilies, ankle boots, a sepia-stained octopus... The women turn a familiar gaze back at viewers, lascivious and amused. Snow Whites in furs, malice-tinged Alices and unsettling Sleeping Beauties are cloaked in a disturbing strangeness to express the mysteries of femininity.

Anna Sommer was born in May 1968 in Staffelbach, a village near Aarau in German-speaking Switzerland. Her mother taught drawing, her father was a furrier. Their tools – pen and knife – would trace her path. The German-speaking regions held comics in disdain, so she was spared the corrupting influence of Mickey Mouse. Her exposure was limited to Tintin and Max and Moritz. Did she learn about narrative flow from Hergé? Did Wilhelm Busch's distinctively Germanic cruelty sharpen her nib, dry point and blade? Her work owes more to German Expressionism than to comics, more to Otto Dix than Asterix. She mentions the influence of Félix Vallotton's woodcuts, with their balance of black and white, but also shadow and light, truth and deception.

Sommer started out as a printmaker, partly "by accident," because the building she lived in also happened to house a press. She liked the technique but was disappointed by the look of her newspaper illustrations: "too grey, too nebulous." She switched to the easier medium of pen and ink, its speed well suited to figurative storytelling.

In 1990, she moved to French-speaking Switzerland. She published a first drawing, a dry-point engraving, in *Good Boy*, a free monthly fanzine produced by Frédéric Pajak. Sommer would go on to contribute to all his editorial projects: *Culte*, *L'Éternité hebdomadaire*, *L'Âge bête*, *Le Guide noir*, *L'Imbécile*, *9 semaines avant l'élection*. She came into herself in this thriving scene. She drew posters for the legendary Dolce Vita, Lausanne's first alternative rock venue, and contributed to *Vibrations*, a world music magazine. With the appearance of the magazine *Strapazin* and the Fumetto festival, German-speaking Switzerland at last opened its doors to comics. Sommer led the way. She joined *Strapazin* in 1994 and, after being spotted by JC Menu, was published by L'Association in 1996.

Sommer was a catalyst to a trio of graphic art reformers, Frédéric Pajak, Mix & Remix and Noyau, known as the Étoiles Souterraines (underground stars). As the trinity's fourth star, she shone with a distinctive light. She now shares her life with

Noyau. They complement each other: he, the man possessed, dipping his fingers into the inkwell and scrawling swollen, distorted figures; she, the ingénue with the sharp tools, coldly dissecting human relationships.

Conceived during the Summer of Love in 1967, Sommer has made love the focus of her work, but her approach is more bitter than sweet. Her unsentimental scenes of conjugal life and seduction have less to do with the gender wars of radical feminism than with the sense of distance that creeps in between lovers. The men are swaggering cowards, products of centuries of conquest. An ancient tradition of domesticity has endowed their partners with skills of critical observation and irony, a mocking serenity, and an intense sense of the fantastical. After complex mating rituals, they finally draw close, and the artist stages them in a Kama Sutra of unfamiliar positions – stretch marks, flaccidity, sullenness, household chores and crumpled socks included.

Sommer has abandoned kirigami and its delicate graces to return to comics. With just two tools, a pen and correction fluid, the work is a welcome change after the constant movement required by cutouts – the wielding of knives and scissors, the back-and-forth between table and paper stacks. In just under a hundred pages, *The Unknown* tells the story of a middle-class, middle-aged couple with all the usual neuroses, trapped in everyday lives that bristle with frustration and existential anxiety. The lines are clear and segments follow and intercut each other without being isolated in frames. A woman finds an abandoned baby in a changing room and secretly adopts it, a teenager lets herself become obese, and a playful pup acts as the go-between.

Cutting out her thin slices of the human condition, serene and cruel, Sommer reveals herself to be both light as silk and scalpel-sharp.

— translation by Helge Dascher

ANNA SOMMER THE UNKNOWN



Translation by Helge Dascher

Drawn with guileful clarity and bite, *The Unknown* is a story of deceit, self-deception and the search for happiness.

One day, Helen finds a newborn abandoned in a changing room in her boutique. She decides to keep it, nested in a cardboard box and hidden even from her husband.

Vicky and Wanda are boarding school roommates. Wanda talks Vicky into turning tricks. Meanwhile, Vicky can't keep her secrets from Wanda – not her affair with their history teacher, and not the pregnancy she tries to sabotage and yet stubbornly carries out. As the two narratives converge, coincidences and secrets are revealed. Incisive, wicked and breezily unconcerned by taboos, Anna Sommer lets readers put together the pieces of her morally ambiguous fable.

ISBN: 978-1-77262-047-4
104 pages, 7x9.5 inches
b/w, trade paper, \$17

INTERNATIONAL IMPRINT

June



1. When you created Martha, Beth, Maureen and Liz, you were exploring feminine archetypes against a 60's backdrop. Which character was the hardest for you to tap into? Why?

Since *Weeding* is a twist on the soap opera genre, exploring the most common female archetypes kind of came naturally. I wrote the characters of Beth, Maureen and Martha based on some of the most common female archetypes in literature: the Bitch, the Mother and the Sage. Beth was the Bitch, Martha the Mother and Maureen the Sage. From that perspective, I would say that I feel much closer to Beth. I think she makes it evident that she is uncomfortable or doesn't identify with the female stereotypes of her time, which is a position that resonates with me very strongly. She follows her own logic and set of values and doesn't really care what other people think. It's not that she is unkind or anything, but she will stand up for what's best for her and her friends, even if it means experiencing disapproval.

Martha was quite easy to tap into since she reminds a lot of my own mother—she is selfless, gentle and caring. Martha's character is influential and quickly becomes the martyr of the story. The mother is a stereotype that most people are familiar with, so it was easy to imagine what she would become.

Maureen is that chaotic evil presence that pops out of nowhere; we're not quite sure what her motives are until much further in the book. She was the most difficult to write. I think it was because I wasn't comfortable with what she represented. I find archetypes to be kind of sexist sometimes. I struggled to keep her character nuanced while also playing with generic dialogue and clichés.

Maureen is kind of a classic fairy tale archetype: a charismatic, witchy woman who has a thirst for power and will bring down other women in order to gain it. Later in the story, the nature of her behaviour and trauma are explained. I think that internalized misogyny and women being in competition is a reality that we all experience, but are uncomfortable talking about. We assume that women who act like this are pure evil when they are often trying to protect themselves. Not depicting Maureen as the evil bitch would have been hard since I'm working around a genre based on stereotypes. But I could at least explain the origin of her evil nature.

2. When you make a new comic, does drawing or writing come first? What's your favourite part of the process?

It is much easier for me to draw without the anxiety of achieving some kind of result, that is why most of my stories are inspired by my sketchbook drawings. They are looser and I'm usually trying to have fun and experiment with different mediums. I often go back to my older sketchbooks if I have a creative block. It keeps me focused on my progress and reminds me of the recurrent themes in my work.

What I usually do is look through my sketchbook for a character that I find interesting, and ask myself about their personality, motives, and environment. Coming from a visual art background, the visuals definitely come first. I start the story from there and draw a few pages. I often don't know what the conclusion will be, or even the denouement. This process allow me to work organically and intuitively, otherwise I feel trapped. I like having the liberty of changing the story at any moment.

The way I wrote *Weeding* was a bit different. At first, I had no intention of making a book out of it. Since I only started making comics two years ago, it was meant as an exercise to get better and faster. I would draw a page every day and post it on social media. At that point I had no idea what the characters would be.

I only knew that the story was taking place in the suburbs and that there was a garden, haha.

3. Magic realism allows a certain amount of flexibility and freedom, but balancing realism with fantasy also comes with challenges. For you, what's the toughest part?

Writing the story was definitely easier than drawing it. *Weeding* is a mix of two antagonistic genres: science-fiction and soap opera. I am not a writer so I don't know if writing the story in a book format would be easier, but I can definitely say that visually, the transition between both genres is really hard to render smoothly. I had to draw my characters in a way that's familiar and generic and reminiscent of a soap opera, but the denouement is fantastical and therefore stylistically opposed. I think there is going to be an interesting switch in my drawing style later in the story and I am quite excited (but also stressed haha) to see what it's going to look like. Also, my practice as a visual artist is very inspired by fantasy and science-fiction so that means I don't usually draw humans, and certainly not in a realistic way! That was quite a challenge to me at first.

4. You describe *Weeding* as "The X-Files Meet The Young and the Restless," and we think that's pretty accurate. If, for one year, you could only watch The X-Files or Y&R, which one would you choose and why?

The X-Files for sure, even though I am quite attached to *The Young and The Restless*! I quite like the characters in *The X-Files*. Dana Scully, the main female protagonist, is also the most rational character whereas her partner, Fox Mulder, is the one who believes in the supernatural. I find this dynamic interesting because women are usually depicted as intuitive and prone to believing in the magical and esotericism. Also, even if it is science fiction, it is still a drama with elements of romance (there is a sexual tension between Mulder and Scully) thrown into the mix, so I wouldn't say it's very far from working as a sitcom or a soap opera! I also have a taste for bad special effects. Sci-fi TV shows of the late 90's and early 2000's are the best because they are a mix between teenage rom-coms, drama and science-fiction. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed* were my favourite TV shows as a teenager.

Watching *Y&R* is too much commitment since it's an hour-long episode every day. And truth be told, there is very little going on most of the time. I think I am attached to the idea of it being a tradition passed down from my grandmother. But watching the entire show would be actually very boring. I could watch all of Almodovar's films though! He is one of my favourite filmmakers and I find that his movies have a telenovela quality that did inspire me for my story as well.



X-Files meets The Young and The Restless

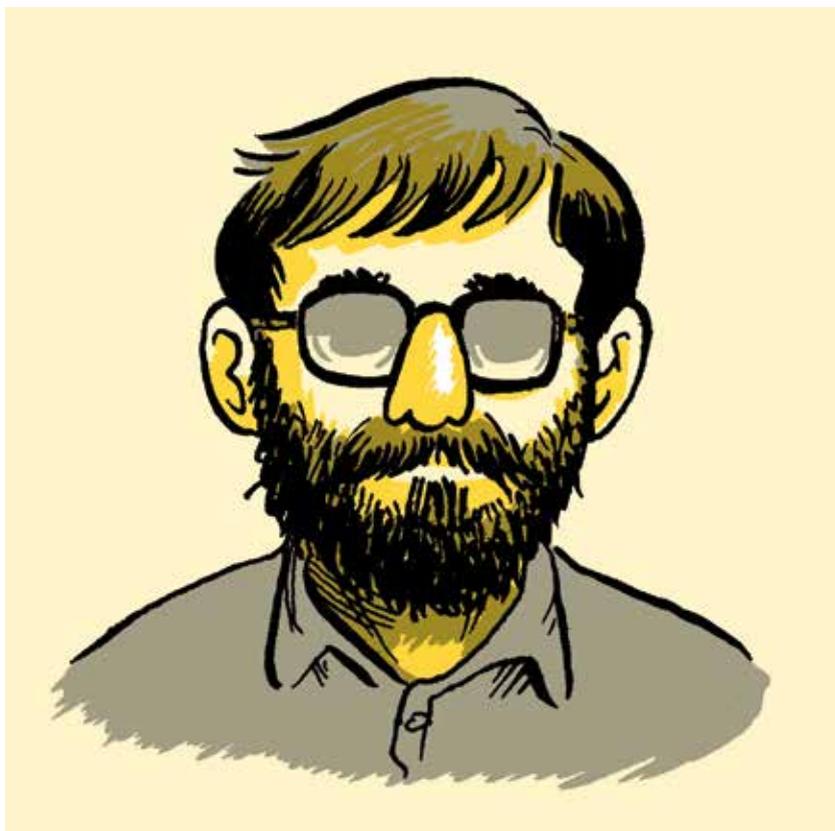
On a typical autumn afternoon, Martha hosts a group of middle-aged women at her suburban home. The day takes a sudden turn when Elisabeth, an estranged friend, turns up unexpectedly—and she isn't the only unwanted guest at the tea party. Martha's sister, Maureen, shows up after years of radio silence, along some painful memories and a lot of confusion.

It doesn't take long for the guest list to change again when Martha disappears after a simple trip to the backyard for herbs. Martha is the most beloved of the women—but will any of the others be able to look past their own problems long enough to search for her?

A satirical portrayal of feminine archetypes in the social landscape of the 60's, *Weeding* is inspired by soap operas that use unexplained disappearances and repetitive character reanimations to liven up otherwise uneventful plot lines. As a verb, "weeding" means "to remove an inferior or unwanted component of a group or collection." In *Weeding*, Geneviève Lebleu takes this definition to the extreme with a fable about social exclusion in a world where women turn against one another.

ISBN: 978-1-77262-048-1
102 pages, 7x10 inches
full colour, trade paper, \$20

November



1. How has becoming a parent changed your approach to writing through a child's point of view?

A lot of my work is from the point of view of kids, which usually means I'm sifting through a childhood memory and trying to mine it for something that will make an interesting comic. When I became a parent, there was a noticeable shift away from childhood stories. The stories became less about looking inward to my own memories, and more about looking outward at the world. This wasn't a conscious choice, but having a kid affects your view of the world. I think it's made me more mature in some ways, and less mature in others. It's expanded my perspective, but it's also made it hard to put energy and effort into anything other than my kids, so my cartooning has slowed down a lot (though it's gradually coming back). Raising a kid also means spending a lot of time with someone who might have a completely different personality than your own, so I think it's made me a little more empathetic and patient with people than I used to be.

2. What was it like working for MAD Magazine, and how do you feel about its demise?

There's not a lot that can be said about MAD that hasn't already been said by better cartoonists than me. MAD was unbelievably important to comics, comedy, satire, and culture. I was lucky to do some work for MAD when it was still based in New York, run by people who were running it back when I was still a kid. I got to meet some of my heroes like John Ficarra, Sam Viviano, and Dick DeBartolo. MAD art director Ryan Flanders was always helpful and constructive with feedback. I was able to visit the office a couple of times and the staff was incredibly generous with their time. Even though I was only a lowly freelancer, they treated me like I was really one of the Usual Gang of Idiots (insults and one-liners included). When DC shut down the NY office and relaunched the magazine from California, it was very sad. That was the real death of MAD for me. I never pitched anything to the new MAD due to a lack of time (see: babies), but the Burbank staff did

a good job in the little time they had. The new magazine was good, and the spirit of MAD was still alive. And then the Warner/DC suits shut it down. There are a lot of things big corporations do well, and ruining things is one of them.

3. For you, what are the perks of creating a short story (in comics)? Are your goals different than when you're working on a graphic novel or comic strip?

I think short comics occupy a similar space that short prose stories do. Comic strips are like poems, so with those I'm just trying to be succinct and inventive within the constraints of the format. My strips lean towards humour, partly because of the history of comic strips, and partly because there is always something a little funny about the abruptness of four panels. With strips I feel free to simply explore an image, a feeling, or something indescribable. It doesn't have to entirely make sense, it just has to feel right somehow. My short stories tend to be more concept-based. (I.e.: What would the social media reaction to first contact with aliens look like? What if nostalgia marketing was literally a mascot relentlessly pursuing you into adulthood?) In a short story, I'm more interested in the ideas and emotional impact than I am in fully fleshing out the characters and their world. For a graphic novel, there's more time and space to really get to know characters and explore their nuances. I think if you're asking the audience to engage with a longer work, the characters should be more than plinths for your ideas. I think you can get away with that more in short stories and strips, but it doesn't really fly in a longer work.

Personally, I'm at my happiest when I have room to do do short strips and stories alongside a big, long-term project. It keeps me from stagnating. The shorter works provide the satisfaction of actually finishing something. It's rare to maintain that balance for very long, but there's nothing better when you do.



Graphic shorts filled with horror, humour, and the absurd

Award-winning Canadian cartoonist Dakota McFadzean returns with a brilliantly dark collection that offers a glimpse into the cracks between childhood imagination and the disappointing harshness of adulthood. Populated by cruel bullies, exhausted parents, and relentless cartoon mascots, the world of *To Know You're Alive* renders the familiar into something that is alien and absurd. The characters in these stories long to uncover something uncanny in shadowy attics and beneath masks, only to discover that sometimes it's worse to find nothing at all.

ISBN: 978-1-77262-049-8
160 pages, 6.5x9.5 inches
duotone, trade paper, \$20

September



1. How did you select the artists that will be included?

The anthology idea began with a conversation with contributor Sarah Mangle at the Halifax Zine Fair in 2016, where she told me all the stories she learned about other queer people in the Valley growing up as a queer kid in Wolfville. I told her she had to make a zine about it, and then I sort of encountered a couple of stories around Nova Scotia history over the next eight months or so that I thought would make great comics, and the idea for a book began to take shape. From there, I tried to select a group of artists from Nova Scotia, some of whom live elsewhere now but who launched their comics careers in the province. I tried to select a group of people whose work I find exciting, who have a storytelling approach to their work and who I thought would tackle historical themes well; it was also important to me that Nova Scotia's different groups were represented, and part of that process involved a lot of research to pair artists and writers, since the comics community is small and doesn't necessarily reflect all the diversity of the province. Andy brought some of the other contributors to my attention, and various fortuitous coincidences brought some of the other stories into the fold.

2. When the artists pitched their ideas, which one surprised you the most?

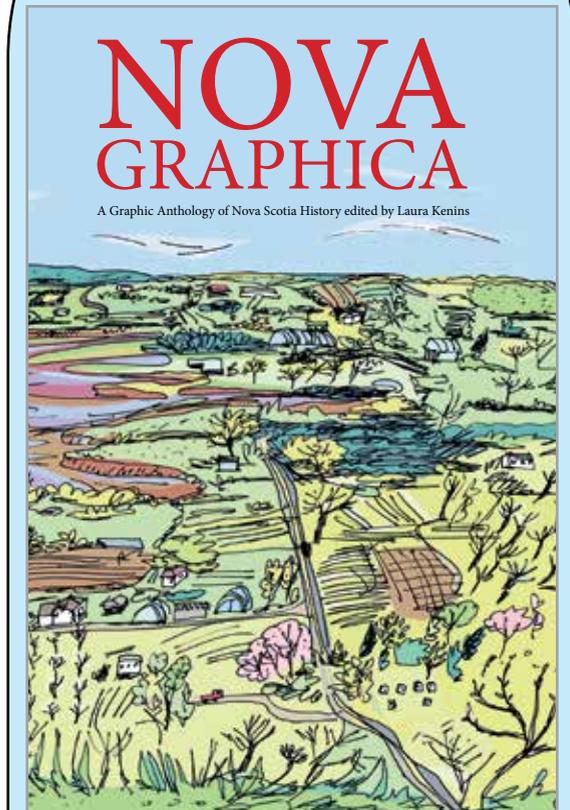
I was surprised by so many of the stories contributors proposed! I really love how JJ Steeves' story about carports and constructing the neighbourhood of Clayton Park in Halifax in the 1960s takes a detail nearly everybody would overlook today and makes it about social history, architectural history, and gender in urban and architectural design. Writer Juanita Peters has been deeply involved in keeping the history of Africville alive, so I was surprised her proposed story was instead on the Springhill mining disaster, which is one of the more widely-known pieces of Nova Scotia history in the rest of Canada, but not so much the biography of miner Maurice Ruddick that she tells, who was celebrated for keeping the trapped miners' spirits up through his singing and lauded nationwide, before his work was diminished when Canadians realized he was black. But I'm surprised by how far-reaching and varied everyone's work is, covering the entire province – everyone seemed to have their own tale of Nova Scotia history they'd been wanting to share with a wider audience.

3. Has living in Toronto shifted your perspective on your home province? If yes, how? And if no, what do you miss most?

Being away from Nova Scotia makes me miss it more! I love being able to get to the ocean or the Valley with a short drive and I miss being close to the ocean. I even miss hurricane season, but fortunately I was in town for Dorian and got to keep my friends' toddlers entertained through a long power outage. I think it's an exciting time in the province right now and I'm especially excited by cultural initiatives like the new AfterWords Literary Festival. Being in Toronto has offered other professional opportunities, as well as the ability to attend or travel more easily to other comics festivals and events locally as well as regionally and in the US, which I know has been a big consideration for many comic artists who've moved from Nova Scotia, but there are many tradeoffs.

Cover: Emma Fitzgerald
Introductory essay: Sara Spike

Rebecca Roher, VIOLA DESMOND
Paul Hammond, MY GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER
Colleen MacIsaac, FIVE-SIDED HOUSE
Kris Bertin and Alexander Forbes,
IN THE PRIMEVAL FORESTS OF NOVA SCOTIA
Sarah Mangle, QUEER IN THE VALLEY
JJ Steeves, BIG ENOUGH FOR HER BUICK
Laura Keniņš, HALF HOME
Sarah Thunder (artist) /Vanessa Lent (writer),
HALIFAX INFANTS' HOME
Rebecca Thomas (writer)/ Rachel Hill (artist), NOT PERFECT
Jordyn Bochon, POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS
Veronica Post, SPRYFIELD ROCKING STONE
Donald Calabrese, COADY



The fiddle-free side of Nova Scotia history

More than the stereotypes of lobsters and fiddles, Canada's "ocean playground" of Nova Scotia boasts a vibrant history of ghost stories, folklore, industry, politics, and vibrant Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ and immigrant communities. Home or formerly home to some of Canada's biggest names in comics over the past decades, this anthology brings together 15 artists, making Nova Scotia's history come to life through a collection of graphic stories that are spooky, funny and thought-provoking.

Nova Scotia and the Maritimes are usually neglected in the study of Canadian history. This anthology will bring offbeat stories from across the province to light in a fun, engaging and irreverent manner. Presenting Nova Scotia history in a graphic format and unique stories that aren't taught in schools, this book will be an approachable, readable collection that appeals to readers of comics and non-fiction alike.

ISBN: 978-1-77262-050-4
140 pages, 6x9 inches
b/w, colour insert, trade paper, \$20

October



SCRATCHES #2:
On the Paper Highway Between Artist and Reader

ISBN: 978-1-77262-020-7
120 pages, 9x13 inches, full colour, paperback, \$30
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Edited by Joost Swarte and Hansje Joustra

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