

THIS IS WHY YOU TURN IT INTO PAPER:

Making a book from forgetmagazine.com.

by

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ABSTRACT

This report provides an overview of *Forget* magazine's editorial environment; and reveals an editor-in-chief's account of how and why *Forget* magazine explained itself editorially. This project report also explores the editorial rationale behind the making of a book from material published online at <http://www.forgetmagazine.com>.

More specifically, this report focuses on the relationship an editor has with those around him, and on how they make decisions together, how and why they send messages to their readers; it focuses on the way a magazine comes to decisions in its specific editorial environment. This report also examines the reasons behind those decisions and attempts to document the truth about the way *Forget* magazine assessed itself at an important moment in its history.

Mike Lecky and I founded *Forget* magazine at <http://www.forgetmagazine.com> on Valentine's Day 2001. *Forget* has since published more than 400 pieces online by more than 150 authors, and become among the most respected web magazines in the world. *Forget* continues to publish regularly on the Internet. Work discussed in this project report was published online at the aforementioned website address between February 14, 2001 and February 14, 2003.

This report differs from most others because unlike most other publishing project reports the author of this report was making the final decisions about the product to be produced. This report also differs from most others because it attempts to bring the reader inside the process of making editorial decisions without the veil of academic distance.

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to Valerie Frith, for being my friend and teacher;
and for the numbers 9, 6, 3, 7 and 2.

This report is also dedicated to *Forget*.
Rumble young man rumble.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you:

To Mom and Dad, Kevin and Kellie.

To everyone near to *Forget*. To everyone at *Grain*. To Stephen and *Geist*.

To everyone around SFU, particularly Shyla, Joanne, John and Valerie.

And to those who spend their time in Coquitlam, Port Moody, All the Vancouvers, Victoria, Nanaimo, Madeira Park, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, Boston, New York, Yellowknife, Summerside and Charlottetown.

And to you, the reader:

Sorry about the awful red cover on this thing.

Not my choice.

But.

Thank you for coming.

You may be seated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval.....	Page II
Abstract.....	Page III
Dedication.....	Page IV
Acknowledgments.....	Page V
Table of Contents.....	Page VI
Introduction.....	Page 1
This is the Beginning. This is not the Beginning.....	Page 6
Dramatis Personae.....	Page 8
Division/Long Division.....	Page 16
You Don't Have to Say Yes (You Could Say Maybe) or The Publishing Proposition.....	Page 36
(No) Conclusions.....	Page 41
Epilogue.....	Page 42
This is the End. This is not the End.....	Page 44
Postscript.....	Page 45

INTRODUCTION

The process of building Forgetmagazine.com was like rolling a snowball down a hill. The initial push came Valentine's Day 2001, when, as much out a desire to work with my favourite web designer, Mike Lecky, as to found a more dangerous and unpredictable *Geist*, or a Canadian *McSweeney's* (or something in between and beyond), together we launched *Forget* magazine: a magazine defined by its readers and its writers more than by its editors; a spirited orange thing that published poetry, fiction, journalism, comedy, creative non-fiction, memoir, biography and lastly (but especially), drunken editorial notes. All the magazine's material would have a few important things in common: it would be Canadian, and we would publish it in a dissonant environment defined by the voices we chose to publish rather than the way we chose to edit those voices.

We would pay little mind to the common thinking on the purported desire of web readers—this would be a new kind magazine on the Internet for writers and readers. We would not do the things that websites normally did, like place links all over. We would not assume that only short content could be enjoyed. We explored and tested our publishing environment in much the same way I had done while editing the student newspaper at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The Cadre is a member paper of Canadian University Press (CUP)—a national organization of student newspapers that contains more than 70 papers from British Columbia to Newfoundland. As editor at *The Cadre* I was afforded the opportunity to attend CUP's national conferences in Winnipeg in 2000, and in Vancouver in 2001 and this where I met many of the people who would build *Forget* into a magazine.

At the Winnipeg conference in January 2000, I was immediately struck by the high

level of talent amongst the student newspaper employees in attendance. At least 60 papers sent delegates, and with over 200 writers in attendance it was an active and exciting place to be. A common complaint was the difficulty young writers had in finding a place to publish their work as they wrote it. I left Winnipeg with the notion that if someone built a Canadian publication online, and promoted it to these people as their own, one could soon be overwhelmed with enthusiastic writers submitting copy.

At the same CUP conference in Winnipeg, I spent a lot of time with Darren Stewart, CUP's Ottawa Bureau Chief, and we discussed working together in the future. He would become *Forget's* most senior editor and the person who promoted the magazine the most to writers. Darren's faith in the possibility of *Forget* was largely based on his reaction to *The Cadre*. He loved it—here I will quote from a story written by Jeff Coll, published February 14th 2002, *Forget's* second birthday, on the history of Forgetmagazine.com. Jeff was *The Cadre's* Production Manager during my time there, and a frequent contributor to *Forget*,

Kent made people like CUP's Ottawa Bureau Chief Darren Stewart so enthusiastic about *The Cadre* that whenever Darren saw any of the other *Cadre* staff who had come to the conference, he bubbled with excitement around them.

<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021403j.htm>

Published 14 February 2002.

Darren and I agreed that to captivate CUP's membership, a magazine would have to be urgent and inviting, it would have to be bold and accurate, make big promises and deliver on them. If the writers for a student newspaper may seem a little sophomoric, we knew that, directed, their collective energy would be something amazing. Also from Jeff Coll's story "what [Kent] seemed to really want was a web version of *The Cadre*—a cultural magazine of sorts—except with better writers and a more appreciative audience."

I resolved to buttress the connections made through my time at the CUP national

conference throughout my last year as *The Cadre's* editor. Mike's initial design of what would become Forgetmagazine.com would first be shown at the second CUP national conference in Vancouver, in January of 2001, less than one month before we launched the site. I showed it to every writer I met there, and explained that here would be a place they could write new and different kinds of things; and not have their work hacked at automatically, or cut up for space; that here was a place for them. From Jeff Coll again:

From the computer room, Kent showed me a mock-up of the *Forget* design that Mike had done, noting that the margins would need to be increased, but otherwise it was perfect. In less than a month, the first article would appear on ForgetMagazine.com with that very same design.

<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021403j.htm>

Published 14 February 2002.

Six months after we launched *Forget*, a review appeared in *Broken Pencil* magazine, Canada's magazines of zines and the alternative press. ([About Forget.Press](http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm) <http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm>) It said, in part, "[*Forget* magazine] has the real power to link communities." This notice stimulated another area for content for *Forget*: a small, hard to impress, very dedicated group of authors determined to put out their own publications. This group was willing, if convinced in an idea, to contribute frequently and promote enthusiastically. They were used to deadlines, and dedicated to writing, and many soon became regular contributors to *Forget*.

Seven months on, I had moved from PEI to Vancouver and enrolled in Simon Fraser University's Master of Publishing program. A few months later, in *Quill & Quire* magazine, *Forget* was said to be a website that "every writer under 40 is aware of" and I was referred to as a "Jack McClelland in the making" ([About Forget.Press](http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm) <http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm>). We were soon flooded with content from

new sources: from MFA programs across the country, and literary magazines, writers' groups, and underground comic creators; content was everywhere like snowfall, we had merely to gather it up, roll it on to a website.

To say we were not planning on explaining what we were thinking when we started *Forget* would be a massive understatement—and it was never necessary. We did not need to define ourselves explicitly because we received such good material so quickly and so often, we let it define us. So, if anything, you should arrive at this report knowing we had the feeling we could do no wrong, publishing-wise, but had absolutely no inclination (or perhaps, ability) to give a coherent reason for this particular stance, or even a really solid statement of our editorial intentions. The submission guidelines for *Forget* (<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021201.htm>), you will note, are as much misdirection to the writer as anything else, a joke with the punch line: you figure it out.

So, this report starts just after we decided to move into a house dedicated to making sense of our magazine, and ourselves. In the *Forget* house we sorted out the hundreds of articles we had published, and tried to assemble them into a book to represent us; to help us figure out how to carry on and up. We decided that the only way to do those things was to fully immerse ourselves in the process of weeding out content not perfect for the book: to live the magazine's material all over again in a new format; reconnoiter it, and give it (and by extension us) a more coherent identity on which to continue building.

I found a big house in East Vancouver (2977 East 29th St.) and invited Matthew Dorrell, one of *Forget's* senior editors and its copy chief, to live there. He and his sister—Megan who became a contributing editor for *Forget* and is a big part of the story that follows—moved in; and over the five months covered in this report we worked every day on *Forget*, on maintaining our website, editing copy for the website and the book, making a book

out of the already published material, soliciting our friends, colleagues and favourite writers, and promoting the entire thing with readings and events.

It was big house with lots of rooms. We had many long staying guests. It is true that only Matthew, Megan and I *lived* in the *Forget* house (or rather *paid* to live there). But Mike Lecky stayed on the couch. Miguel Strother slept in the living room. Darren Stewart slept on the floor. When they were there in person. And they were always there via email; long, late and frequent phone calls; and, moreover, in restless kinship and spirit.

The *Forget* house became a place where writers and editors, colleagues from the publishing program at SFU, mentors, students, fellow travellers and suspected sympathizers stopped in, and helped us form the book we discuss herein; all of whom/which, at the same time, helped us define *Forget*.

The house drew traffic and noise from a less pleasant source too: the intersection directly outside our large front window. From Matthew's note to accompany the first update to the *Forget* website from the *Forget* house (Frankie the Noise was one of our two cats):

On the front stoop we are sitting in the sun with Frankie the Noise, thinking about signs to plant in the front yard, facing the intersection. Advertising. (*Shop Forget*) For the passing crowd in their SUVs and their souped-up Hondas. Their cellphones and their subwoofers.

My sign would say (*Hey, why don't you turn the fucking music up?*)

(<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/072102note.htm>)

Published 21 July 2002.

You start this report in the middle of these discussions. You start on the floor in my bedroom, in the *Forget* house, with Matthew and I engaged in an argument about the order of the text. We held up the snowball for a while in that house; directed it; shaped it; and let it go again.

MATTHEW AND I ARE ARGUING ABOUT *FORGET*. About the order and the content of the book we are making from the website we make (all of the things we publish, and intend to publish, are called *Forget*). He is looking disdainfully at the articles, stories and poems lined up in columns on the floor of my bedroom. He is leaving my room now. We have come to no agreement except disagreement. I am lying on my bed now thinking how hard this is. *Every word matters. Every thing we print should reveal something about us.* I think, this is what it is to be editors of a publication: to explain ourselves; and pull taut the tension between our personal opinions versus the voice we want as a magazine; to fight over every word. I am thinking how hard it is to explain oneself, how ridiculous it is also creeps into my mind, but it is losing the battle with how hard, how arduous.

There are so many beginnings. There are even more endings. This is why we turn it into paper.

THIS IS THE BEGINNING. THIS IS NOT THE BEGINNING.

What we—not just Matt and I, all of us— have undertaken is a relatively simple idea, born out of the 20 months of Forgetmagazine.com: to take a selection from the pieces accumulated on that web site with an intent to publish them in a book, or a magazine, or a series of chap books; or in print at least. That is: to acquire a manuscript for print publication from the material we have already published electronically. *Turning these things that only exist on web space into paper.* And to, at the same time, use the process of anthology to make an authoritative statement of our principles as a magazine— for us mostly, so we can move forward. As of 15 November 2002 we have whittled the accumulated work from the website down to 40,000 words. We have broken it into chapters, placed interludes between the chapters and attempted to give the manuscript the feel of the website. Or the feel of *Forget* at least. *This is how we will look on paper,* is a mantra I repeat often, if silently.

This is the story of why we want to make books; and how we are doing it. This is the story of the people I know and trust with the words and ideas in *Forget* magazine, of which I am Co-Founder and Editor-In-Chief. This is the story of how we acquired, from the near-300 published articles online at Forgetmagazine.com, the near-50 pieces currently intended for print. This is the story of how we grouped those articles into chapters, why we did it; why each piece was chosen and placed in the order of its particular chapter; and the story of what each chapter brings to the publication; and the story of how and why we arrived at the decisions we did.

This is the story of conversation.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

IT IS HARD NOT TO COUGH IN HERE; and I am smoking so much opening the windows will do no real good. Matthew is hacking and looking kind of sour. He seems to always look sour since we moved in here. Maybe his weight is a heavy load. Maybe he is on to me.

Matthew Dorrell, Senior Editor of *Forget*

This report begins just before Matthew, his sister Megan and I moved into a house in East Vancouver and decided to dedicate our lives and the life of that house to the idea of *Forget*: publishing the website, the book, and other unspecified projects that include readings, albums and publishing chap books and zines. We spent almost all our time together in that space—dubbed, rather non-artistically, the *Forget* house—and more than most of that time we discussed the *Forget* book. Argued about it.

The fact that Matthew came from Prince Edward Island to Vancouver to live with me and make *Forget* (in all its forms) speaks volumes to his commitment to the idea of *Forget*, and the future possibilities of it as a concern. Plus he is hilarious and wise. After a particularly bad series of plans and arguments over the *Forget* book in August, Matthew summed up the general mood of the house in his note to accompany an all-poetry update to Forgetmagazine.com:

Tonight, at BC Place, not far from here, Damon Allen completed a 109-yard touchdown pass.

If you'd like some perspective, I'm about two yards tall. A CFL field, excluding the endzones, is exactly 110. A 109-yard pass, thrown from the one yard line, is the longest possible toss in the CFL – in any football league. Allen is only the fourth quarterback in CFL history to skip the usual tribulations of moving the ball upfield in fits and starts, and throw a touchdown pass from one end clear to the other. He threw for a career high 492 yards in the game and led the Lions to a come from

behind 48-37 win over the previously unbeaten Alouettes. We meant to attend – forgot.

Missing "maybe the best game ever played at BC Place" was the capper to a recent series of mostly insignificant fuck-ups; a last paper cut, right between the fingers where the skin webs, that makes you howl and stop shuffling papers so recklessly for a moment.

Long enough to get this right: three excellent poems from three good people.

(<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/082102note.htm>)

Published 21 August 2002.

We have much in common, Matt and I, including an abiding love for fiction, poetry and the Canadian Football League. But, more importantly, we disagree constructively on much of what we call our life at the moment: *Forget*. And it is this battle of our two wills, I believe, that drives us in new and better directions.

If I am making the decisions for us, Matthew is the shepherd of every text we get and knows the *Forget* archive as well as anyone. I trust his judgment implicitly in terms of what is good and bad. Matthew is also among my favourite writers. And not just mine: he is the youngest ever winner of the Milton Acorn Award for Poetry—the most prestigious prize in the Prince Edward Island Literary awards. And so, he changes my mind daily. We have spent almost five months now living under the same roof, immersed in this publishing life, and I have learned many things about the publishing process, not to mention life, from him, and from myself as reflected from him. This is his story as much as mine.

*

DARREN CALLS ME ON THE PHONE SOMETIMES to tell me what I have done wrong. He doesn't say it like that but he always wants to know why I have published something or more importantly why not. He was the first true believer and is the most senior member of *Forget's* team. He is my publishing anti-depressant.

Darren Stewart, Senior Editor of *Forget*

It is through and with him that I made the most important early connections for the health of *Forget*, to Canadian University Press (CUP)—an organization that represents over 70 student newspapers across Canada (and with that literally 100s of writers) and does a variety of things for its member papers including publishing a national newswire.

Darren was Ottawa Bureau Chief for CUP when *Forget* began and, as such, had daily access to the editors and staff of student newspapers from BC to Newfoundland. They all needed his copy for their national news sections, and as they were publishing his material he received copies of all the student newspapers across Canada. This intimate access let us have first glimpses of new writers and ready access to those writers we might like to publish online.

No one recruited more writers for *Forget* than Darren. People flock to Darren; want to do what he does; and care about what he cares about. Dozens of CUP writers submitted to *Forget*, because he told them to do so; because he burns so brilliantly with passion for what he believes in, you can't be near him and not want to know him. He's magnetic in the best, most full sense of the word.

From Darren's note, that accompanied a wild and drunken update to Forgetmagazine.com from Victoria, written and released on a weekend when we visited Darren in his native habitat, argued some more about the book, gave two readings and published Matthew Dorrell's magnificent Grey Cup 2002 story (more on that later).

Inevitably on days like this I rethink the decision to ignore my knack for math. I could go back to school and learn to fix things, learn to build things, become an architect, heal people, make something of myself. Come home each night, feet up, grab the latest copy of *Saturday Night* magazine, throw on Pearl Jam's "No Code", sip a glass of middle class booze, be warm and fat and wait, like everybody else.

Instead. Wake up. Feel the brunt of sloppy shouting. Messy passion for different combinations of words. Fuck, you can smell that passion, even the next morning. Couldn't give that up.

(<http://forgetmagazine.com/112902note.htm>)

Published 11 November 2002.

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WE ARE WARRIORS, MIGUEL SAYS, and then how Al Purdy should be read with Franz Kafka. How we could, like our man Al, even if we never met, never forget. (See the Al Purdy poem, "Women" if you don't get that reference and read more CanLit). He calls me from Japan sometimes and tells me what he thinks of the state of our endeavors, Right or Wrong. He is a shot in the arm.

Miguel Strother, Senior Editor of *Forget*, aka "Miki"

Were it not for Miguel, there would be no *Forget*. The idea itself could not have been formed absent my relationship with him. Together, years ago, we discussed a lack of magazines that appealed to all of our interests. Miki always complained that it was not possible to find a magazine that could publish a sports story one day and a poem the next, and that we could start one if we wanted. It is possible to read poetry and sports stories online at *Forget* now, and that has a lot to do with him. On his own since the age of seventeen, he has an instinct for survival and triumph that glows off him sometimes in the right light. It's as true as it sounds false: sometimes Miki glows.

From a letter written by Miguel to me, published on *Forget's* first birthday, you can see a little of the importance of our relationship to the foundation of all these ideas:

It's an eternity since we hovered in yellow smoke and begun spinning tales of life, the universe and everything. For a while those carefree days of sonic youth seemed long

gone, but I assure you we have only just begun. Remember when I was searching and you wrote me this:

"For me, I want to make beautiful things. Things that have legs. Things that people will look out down the long-road and realize there was an attempt to Contribute, rather than just take. I want to be like that guy who published his little zine on his own his entire life (you know the guy they made a doc. out of, we have spoken of him many times). I want to make lasting, beautiful, expressive things. Free from the restraints of business and commerce. Culture is unbelievably important to me. So are words. I can't think of anything I love more."

You've told me I've been one of the biggest influences on your life Kent, and I would be hard pressed not to admit the same of you. Now we are reading Kafka, Eliot, Ovid, Cohen, Huxley, Jonson, Purdy, Pound and Plato. We are creating more than ever before. Not just the jargon of some prescribed program, but mixing our own medicine. Soon we will break them all free and the truth is, as it always was, we can not be stopped. We are a movement, but won't rest until we are a legion.

<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021902.htm>

Published 14 February 2002.

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IT IS NOT EASY TO LIVE WITH PEOPLE you do not know well. It is even harder if those people are trying to publish a magazine, in various formats. Megan has been there for five months with us. Sometimes taking pictures, sometimes writing poems, sometimes telling us when we are way far-gone and need to come back. Her experience as a bookseller; her temperament—nothing bothers her, not even Matt and I yelling at each other down a flight of stairs in the middle of the night over *Forget*; and the fact that she is a voracious, anxious reader make her important in *Forget* today, and throughout the process described within.

Megan Dorrell, Contributing Editor and Photographer for *Forget*.

She has the room next door to mine and often, more often than she would like, I wake her up to ask her something that I need to know *now*. She always wipes the sleep from her eyes the same way and then answers in her flat honest voice.

*

YOU NEED KNOW THIS ABOUT THAT KID MIKE LECKY: *he's beeled*. He can design, write, draw, set to type, make waves and oceans from puddles. *Kid is beeled*.

Mike Lecky, Creative Director of *Forget*, aka Mike Saturday

Designer, Writer, Student, Petty Thief. Small-Time Vandal. Punk Rock Kid.

Mike and I will be designing the *Forget* book as we do with all things *Forget*; but the impact he has on the selection of work for the book is as hard to classify, as it is important. It is his spirit—that anything is possible if it is done with style and class, that disparate forms of information and graphical content can be gathered and presented in experimental and intriguing ways online and in print to give readers interactions with text that may form a challenge at first, but are ultimately rewarding—that imbues much of what we do, and have done, and the dissonance between his point of view, and his frame of reference and my own, have much to do with what is the *Forget* formula. Whatever that is.

Well, here is a glimpse of the formula, Lecky-style, from our first attempt at a “masthead”, during a week Mike felt “the people” had started asking too much of us:

It should be noted, or perhaps it is best forgotten, that at one point we had promised to publish every week day, promptly between the hours of 12:00 AM and 4:00 AM Atlantic Time. Not only did we promise to publish on this regular schedule, but we promised *real content*. We're sorry, but we no longer promise this.

(<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/051401.htm>)

Published 14 April 2001.

*

SOMETIMES IN THE MIDDLE OF *GEIST* MEETINGS I try to guess what Stephen Osborne will say/think of some point raised. I am almost always wrong. He has already been kind enough to allow his work to be included in the *Forget* website, and soon the *Forget* book. and he has been an important mentor and advisor. Through a close study of his magazine, and its history, I have learned a lot.

Stephen Osborne, Editor of *Geist* Magazine, author of *Ice & Fire*.

He read the initial manuscript and discussed it in depth with Matthew and me. Notes from that meeting will be included and discussed at some length, as it has sent us, in many ways, where we are now. This was done by not so much doing what Osborne said, but more doing what we felt was right in light of what he said. This distinction is of the utmost importance because we did not want *Forget* to be *Geist*. Stephen is/was not in the decision making process described within. He was consulted before and after decisions, as a gauge and a barometer. His input, and years of experience, became, in a way, an arbiter for us and for me. He is my mentor, and thus, he is *Forget's* mentor. He reminds us of our history, and reminds us to have a sense of urgency: from Osborne's "Envoi", published early in our second year,

We would return separately to the real world, where dialogue breaks off, conversation is always on hold and wisdom is never given time enough: where again we might meet and talk from time to time, with friends in restaurants and living rooms, or with colleagues in meeting rooms and bars; but never again would we loiter as we pleased through distant precincts, inventing history with our small talk; never again would we savour our own unfettered company: never again would we perambulate a city.

(<http://forgetmagazine.com/022002.htm>)

Published 2 February 2002

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THE J STANDS FOR JAMES.

Kent J. Bruyneel, Editor-In-Chief of *Forget*. Contributing editor of *Geist* Magazine.

I am thirty-one years old. I was born and raised in Coquitlam, British Columbia. I went to business school at the University of Prince Edward Island and edited a student paper there called *The Cadre*. I have made chap books, magazines, books of stories, zines, since I was a child (In the Coquitlam Public Library [CPL] there was a file containing all the books and zines I made when I was a little boy. The CPL was at the end of my street when I was a boy; I was allowed to use their photocopier and a librarian started keeping copies of all the things I published. She promised that the file she kept of my work would be there for the rest of time. I have not seen it in ten years. I went there today 13 November 2002 to buttress this assertion for this report. The file no longer exists. All the work I made before the age of ten; and that file contained the only copies. I checked today, as I stated, but they are gone now, and lost to the ether. It was heartbreaking. *If only I had made websites as a child, I thought, not paper, they'd have lived forever.*).

I believed that in order for *Forget* to be something more than just a website—to be *something*—would require a benign neglect of those web things that make reading online difficult, or distracting. We never link to anything, in hopes of it linking back. *We don't trade links*. We do not send out emails to people we don't know. We don't keep track of hits or stats or visits or anything like that. Or flash Flash ads or promises across screens. Why bother? We publish good work in a way that is easy to read and respond to. We are different from the other “web magazines” because we pay little attention to their conventions. We wanted to re-invent everything every time. It is, after all, called *Forget*.

DIVISION/LONG DIVISION

WHERE TO START. ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS?

It's true, merely printing off the archives pages (<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/archives.htm>)—which contains the name of every story, author, and the date of publication—didn't occur to us until we had done far too much work. We had already printed off all the material in the website and put it into folders labelled by genre: sports, news, fiction, memoir, non-fiction, ha-ha, poetry, About *Forget*. It never occurred to us that having the list from the website would make things easier, or clearer.

We were writing out lists and running back and forth to the computer before it occurred to me. I felt a great sense of relief watching the archives pages coming out of the printer. *This is our first real move to paper*, I thought, *and it means something*. It was not a mere minor organizational tool as we first thought; in fact it was the first key in the delineation between what was/is the website and what would be the book. A document I quickly understood or invested with some heavy weight.

One of the main problems of going to paper from web is that all of the material has only ever been on the web, so it does not have the feel of text headed for paper. Text published on a website does not have the same special problems that text headed for print has: one does not need to worry about page count online so there is no question about not publishing something because it is too long, text on the Internet is all the same. In fact, on the *Forget* website all articles are treated *exactly the same*: put inside the so-called content frame (where the text actually occurs on/in the web page), then archived in reverse chronological

order from their date of publication. And the articles published on the websites all treated the same in the webpage that makes up the *Forget* archive—in one big list. But not now. Not in the book.

In the book we would have to jump away from this chronological listing of all the material we have assembled. Fit it into a new frame, put covers on it and call it something—is it still *Forget* magazine? *Forget* Books? The Best of Forgetmagazine.com? But unlike the website, unlike the archive as it exists online, each story was not, in our hands or in our book, only one click away. Now the articles would not go together and form a magazine simply because we put them in chronological order; but because we thought they should go that way; because we put them there. The order would have to *make sense*. And it would have to *say something* about us.

FINDING ORDER

We decided on grouping the different sections by “feel”; chapters perhaps. We also quickly dismissed placing the material in groups based solely on genre—this also seemed too automatic to us and did little to enliven our audience to the spirit of *Forget*. Once we decided to work off the archives list, and once we had the articles sorted into genre, we began general discussions of what we wanted to accomplish by this: choosing the best, or the most fit, articles for print publication. It was 17 July 2002.

Stephen Osborne, during my first meeting with him, sometime in late-May, asked me two questions:

- 1) What is the Publishing Proposition? What is this: a best of, a selection from, an anthology, a greatest hits; a sampler; an introduction; a goodbye?
- 2) How will you sort all the material so that it feels like a book?

So, with those questions in mind, we set into trying to unpack our intentions as

much as our material. But it seemed to me that we needed to start by sorting what we had, if for no other reason than to assess what we were dealing with: how much poetry, how much news, how much fiction, how much sports?

We sorted and piled and realized there was enough material in our archives to publish at least three books. The idea that we would have to re-read everything we had already published was so intimidating to us. July was quickly fading, and we realized that we would be at this for months. There was so much, and because the website had never been more popular than it was then, we were getting more and better submissions every day. It became a problem to try and commit to our past when our future looked so much better some times. This was a recurring “problem”, continually receiving great material for the website that then would have to enter into our decisions for the book. *The website was in constant motion when we were trying to stop time.*

We did nothing to stimulate press notice or more content, but both kept coming all during the time of this report. In September we went to a party at Shyla Seller’s house. Upon entering, we saw Stephen Witteck—a stellar contributor to *Forget* whose work would end up in the book—who yelled at us to get out and find a copy of the *Georgia Straight* because we were mentioned in its pages. We did: the *Georgia Straight* picked *Forget* as its “geek of the week” for 26 September 2002 – 2 October 2002. (Something that induced more cringes than smiles at the *Forget* house). The *Straight* also called *Forget*, a “good substitute for actually going outside” ([AboutForget.Press http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm](http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm)). This brought another incredible flood of content and attention. More and better stuff kept flooding our inbox, making the decisions we had already made seem less certain.

Where and how do we cut the “acquisitions” process off? Should we keep trying to shoehorn new good material into the manuscript until the last possible moment? Until the

printer says “enough”? Osborne said beard-smiling that “you always wanted to leave the door open”, but we needed to define the period we were acquiring from even if only to be able to end the acquisition process, and keep moving forward. But how long? O Lord, How long?

Shortly after the *Georgia Straight* article—when they had presumably found another “geek of the week”—*Forget* was featured in *This Magazine*’s reviews of the best of the CanLit web. The mostly pedestrian (and blindly positive) review noted, among other things, “*Forget* doesn’t accept Haikus or anything footnoted” ([AboutForget.Press](http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm) <http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121002.htm>). Taking that assertion directly from *Forget*’s submission guidelines, *This* missed that a haiku was published within our first two weeks of publication (<http://forgetmagazine.com/022201.htm>); and that the submission guidelines were not exactly...uh...straight forward. We mostly enjoyed the *This* review because it closed with the line “rumour has it some kind of *Forget* book is in the works.” The implied vagary about the book made us laugh, being that the entire book had never more vague than it was then. We thought it was nice *This* got that part right.

Soon thereafter, we were also queried by several local publishers in regards to “the book”. *When would it be done? What would it be, exactly?* We had no answers, really. We didn’t even know when to stop putting things into this book. Would people buy a 500-page book from us? Could we ever stop this arguing? Maybe it would never stop long enough for us to figure it out. *Some kind* of book was right—But what kind?

*

That July, we began by naming the chapters after stories held within. We debated what to call the chapters. Darren believed that naming the chapters after certain essays might put too

much emphasis on the one story within the chapter. I concurred, but we could find no other method to organize the work. Ideas like calling the chapters the seasons of the year, or calling them by number were quickly rejected because they added little to the picture: they sent no messages, or at least not the messages we wanted to send. Also during this time Darren and Miki chose their favourite essays from the website and in concert with the choices Matt and I had already made, we had at least gotten through a first round of selecting. We had about 80 pieces under discussion, knowing full well that even this number would have to be reduced.

We were all concerned about achieving a balance similar to the website; about presenting a complete picture of what *Forget* has been and would be. Issues abounded.

POETRY

From the beginning we were concerned with how poetry would fit into the book. We were worried that poetry, when happened upon by the browser, might arrest the process of entering our book, it might interrupt the flow of the book and leave the reader feeling just surprised rather than surprised and delighted. It was important to decide how to treat the poems that I felt were so crucial to the book. Should we put them all together? On the advice of Osborne and others we realised this would only make the poems stand out: excluding them from the magazine. Megan thought it would make it easier to skip the poetry altogether. I wanted to avoid that. It is part of the magazine, and therefore ought to be part of the print matter. What we decided after much consternation was to mix the poems into the chapters liberally, divide them equally between the sections but place them strategically so as to not shock the reader. No two poems would run together.

THE FIRST DIVISIONS

At first we had decided the book should divide into four chapters. With roughly 80 articles under strong consideration it seemed to make sense to divide that number in four. We were also most concerned about how to start each chapter, and how to end it. This was amplified in our discussions about beginning the first chapter—how and where do we want the reader to start? And about ending the last chapter—where do we want to leave off (until next time)?

LONGER STORIES

Because so many of the pieces in the book would be short (less than 1000 words) we needed to choose and edit carefully any long pieces, anything over 2000 words, we wanted to include. The concern being that with so many short pieces the longer pieces would stand out, so they would have to be among the strongest works included.

This problem was new to us. Because, as I have noted, there are no differences between the way a long article and a short article are posted on the website, we never worried that the longer pieces would carry more weight. But now in books, when one long story could represent a large percentage of the entire publication the decision of what longer pieces to include became more critical. Webpages do not have word, space or page limits; those things had been irrelevant to web publishing as we practiced it. Print publishing, specifically anthologizing something larger, is by its very nature a process of exclusion of material and limitation of space and page. It was a new reality for us web publishers, and I decided, perhaps the most important difference between the two media: there is infinite space for words in cyberspace and finite space for them in print.

INTERLUDES

Questions arose about what to do in the spaces between chapters. We wanted to use this space to do what an “About” page normally does on a website: tell something about ourselves, about the people who are *Forget*. Osborne liked the idea of using a transition piece in between each chapter—interludes he, then we, called them—but he stressed that they must be noticeably different from the rest of the pieces. The interludes should be obvious as such; otherwise they would be lost between chapters and confusing to the reader. As always, with the interludes, the question of what to use was based on the question: *what message are we sending here?*

An important early discussion revolved around where to place the submission guidelines. I wanted them included. We began thinking they would be an appendix, then Megan suggested they might be better as something before the first chapter, an interlude even. We dismissed using them as an essay in a chapter, or the first essay, because that would be the wrong message. Putting them first, before the first chapter seemed the best message to me: *This is what we wanted*, we would be saying; and then the chapters that followed would add, *this is what we got*. The submission guidelines would be our first interlude.

COLUMNS

We also had many debates over how to treat the larger works in the *Forget* archives: the “columns.” There are many of these and they have helped to make the material on *Forget* more cohesive and the editorial mix easier to accept. What follows is an introduction and discussion of the major works published on the *Forget* website and our reasoning for their inclusion/exclusion in the book.

- *The Drug War*. By Alejandro Bustos. An 18-part examination of the American war on drugs and its effect on other countries, particularly Latin America.
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/060501.htm>

Of all the columns, it was easiest to decide that “The Drug War” would not be included. Though I believe it to be excellent work, it has several attributes that make it a bad fit for print. First of all, much of the writing is time sensitive, and we did not want to include work in the book that would seem dated in print. Timeless work was what we sought for print. Next, and most importantly, we decided the series was so well received, in part, because every assertion made in the stories was backed up by a link to a source: we called this “Supporting Documents” and ran the links with descriptions at the end of each piece. It is one of the few occasions that the Forgetmagazine.com has linked to other sites on the Internet. We do this occasionally as a rhetorical device or more frequently, as here, for support of argument (we do not link to build audience, or so a site will link back). I believe the “Supporting Documents” lent heft to Bustos’s work because any reader online could check what had been stated instantly, with one click. We could not offer this luxury off-line and short of listing the links in print after each entry—something we thought would be tedious and not serve the print *Forget* at all—we decided to exclude the full body of “The Drug War”. This discussion also led to a more general rule: anything that required hypertext—and by that I mean mostly a link to another webpage—would not go in the book. *That is among the reasons we have a website, we decided, to publish things that only work in that medium.*

- *Whose Riel?* By Dr. Kevin Bruyneel. A 10-part examination of the life of Louis Riel.
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/040201.htm>

Deciding the fate of the Louis Riel series was not so easy. It is as authoritative an examination as Riel has ever received online and is some of our finest Canadian Culture writing. However, it is a long series—over 10,000 words—and would not break apart easily. Secondly, it is intended for print in my brother's book—*Politics On the Boundaries*—and its exclusion led to another general rule: anything that would be, or had been printed elsewhere would not be included in the book.

- *The Canadian Football League*. By Matthew Dorrell. A 10-part, comedy-based, cultural study of all that makes up the CFL.
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/051601.htm>

I felt, and feel, that *Forget's* finest work may be Matthew's study of the Canadian Football League. Though the league has existed in this country for over 100 years it is rarely discussed as anything but just a sports league. We wanted to show the culture and the history of the league: how very Canadian it was. And just because "The CFL" contains laughs, I do not believe this undermines what we are saying about the CFL in this work. That this is our league, our history, our culture, and it should be revered.

For a long time, in fact right up until we met with Osborne, I was convinced that we should run all of the series in the book. So it would be committed on paper forever as an example of the originality, the humour, the Canadian-ness of our magazine. Osborne in our meeting with him said, "The CFL' is all the same joke." I decided it was many jokes, maybe some he did not get. In the initial manuscript we had piled the entire CFL into one chapter. When my friend and colleague Anicka Quin read the manuscript she said "I know [The CFL] is not only for sports fans, and I read it that way, but there was too much of it together, I couldn't get into it." We decided to break up the CFL work, and as with the poetry, divide it between the chapters.

- *Inside the Belly of the Beast*. By Darren Stewart. A 10-part series on the political machinations within our nation's capital, from the Canadian University Press's Ottawa Bureau Chief's standpoint—kind of a neophyte-goes-to-Ottawa.
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021301.htm>

“Belly” is a look down the halls of Ottawa through the eyes of someone not yet darkened by experience. As with the CFL, “Belly” too contains some laughs, but, again, I believe this does not undermine its importance as a piece of our magazine. When I re-read Darren’s work it reminds me of what we can do: that we can tell stories from the most obvious of places—Ottawa, Ontario, the nation’s capital and political focal point from whence a thousand books and articles have been launched—and still do it in a different way, in our way, in the *Forget* way. We decided to include a “best of” from this column and began by choosing four of the pieces to be run in two blocks. We had also originally placed this column in one block in one chapter (the same chapter that held the CFL in fact). Osborne found this tedious also. We decided that to use this column most effectively would be to sprinkle it liberally throughout the book.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

(OR THE NAMES, THE FACES AND VONNEGUT’S SISTERS)

Naming the chapters has proved to be among the most difficult decisions we have made. This was also aggravated by the movement of pieces from one chapter to the next. We have arrived at approximately 15 stories per chapter; at this point the book is 192 pages. And through consultation with Osborne, we decided that three chapters made more sense, had an easier flow to it. By this time we have selected the final 50 essays to be included in the print work, this is down from the 80 chosen by myself and Darren, Miki, and Matthew. This process has much to do with our readers as well. Particularly Megan, Anicka and Shyla; who

read when they are asked and always tell the truth.

It is immensely reassuring, in an almost ineffable way, to know that this manuscript has passed a certain kind of test. The American novelist Kurt Vonnegut Jr. said he wrote everything for his sister's sharp eye— if he could get past her capacity for critical analysis and honesty, it is said the man himself called it her “bullshit detector” — his editor and his audience would pose no serious challenge. While it is true that Megan is a “contributing editors”, and Shyla and Anicka are “contributors”, what they are to me is Vonnegut's Sisters. All of the people in this process had what you would call a peremptory challenge, things that either needed to be out or needed to be in. What is amazing is how close and fast we came to the 50. And how it has taken ten times longer to put the 50 into an order.

What follows is a summary of the titles within each of the book's chapters. With the name and author of the story will be a brief description of the piece and comments on how it fits into the flow of the work and, most importantly, *what it says about us*: about *Forget* as an entity. These decisions are just barely made with some of us still not convinced. Also you will find some of the reasons I made the decisions I did included with the names of the stories.

The first chapter is currently entitled, “bad men who love jesus” from the name of a poem by matt robinson. When Matthew and I read the poem we thought instantly that it would make a good chapter title. The first title for this chapter was “This is Where Everyone Belongs” after a poem by Greg Younger-Lewis. We decided against using Greg's title because it is a political poem and we did not want to lean in that certain direction with the first chapter. Miki thinks the former is better than the latter, this is what he said about the “bad men who love jesus” title, or the message the poem sends at least:

This title says to me (based on the poem):
Macho, place stuff <Canadian>, eclectic spirituality.

What does it say to you?

What makes this title bind all of the pieces below together?

These are the kinds of things we say to each other in the process of building our manuscripts. We bounce them back and forth off each other, asking questions, stretching the tension. I like that the title says “eclectic spirituality”. It also says to me that we are not perfect souls, but that we are redeemed in some way. By our love.

BAD MEN WHO LOVE JESUS

1. The Hungarian Bulgarian Goodguy Dance – Susan Juby
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121301.htm>

This is non-fiction, memoir, that I feel most approaches the submission guidelines. It is a story about memory. It is the story of the author going to see a dying friend and trying to remember some connections to their shared past. It is funny heartbreaking and beautiful. It also sets the right “literary tone” as Osborne advised. We had a political poem here first (This is Where Everyone Belongs) then a comedy, nostalgia, Candiana letter (Al Waxman is Dead) but it was decided during our meeting with Osborne that we needed to give the reader the right clues directly off the bat. Leading off. This is the kind of magazine we are: *a literary one; one that tells difficult stories with humour and eschews the maudlin for the divine*. To me, it is the absolute perfect foot for our reader to begin on. *Fellini said, “Only serious people can laugh.”* Hear, here.

2. Right Now I Have TWO Bunnies – Lee Henderson
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/061702.htm>

This is a straight comedy, non-fiction piece from one of *Forget’s* contributing editors and most popular authors. It is the story of Lee taking care of his sister’s bunny that has recently been neutered. A little strange and very smart. Rides the same funny territory as the first essay but ends up in the “wacky” as Osborne would say, or the “new” as we would. *We use words like fuck here. This is not just a litmag.*

3. The Lawyer Party – Adam Lewis Schroeder
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021402.htm>

This is a longer piece of fiction that was originally the last essay in the first chapter. It is the story of a cocktail party. Osborne believed we had this “too deep” in the chapter. He believed that Schroeder’s “name” was an important one for the book and that we should have it closer to the lead. Osborne also thought, as do I, that we needed to bring the fiction aspect of the magazine out front in the book as on the website. *We do this too. Quiet like a conversation in a hospital. Loud like the emergency room.*

4. Al Waxman is Dead – Kent Bruyneel
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021501>

This is a letter from me to Matthew Dorrell written on the day Al Waxman died. It is about my time in Toronto's Kensington Market, my feeling for Waxman. In *Forget* terms it takes the form of a "C.C. ForgetMagazine", essentially a letter from one person to another with a copy sent to *Forget*. This was the first letter we published and I believe the format, which we have used dozens of times since, should appear high in the order. It is also our first real Canadian story, about a Canadian icon, and this has also been a large part of our magazine and should be up front. *This is a Canadian c/Culture magazine. Some of it you have to be Canadian to get.*

5. Briefly, the Heart – Lesley-Anne Bourne
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/082302.htm>

The first poem to appear in the book. We believed it was important to have poetry early, but not too early in the text. This poem, heavily influenced by bpNichol, is one of our stronger works from a mid-career writer certain of her own voice, and therefore, as the first poem, sets a high bar for those to come. *Start with this one.*

6. New York – Kevin Bruyneel
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/091501.htm>

This is a straight non-fiction account of how my brother dealt with the loss and anger he felt about the events that took place on September 11th 2001 in his adopted home of New York City. I believe it is tender without being sentimental, and political without being didactic. This is how we want to introduce ourselves politically with the message that ends this story: *peace for all*

7. How I Inadvertently Came to Understand the Appeal of Stompin' Tom Connors, Canadian Icon – Matthew Dorrell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021901.htm>

This is a creative non-fiction piece on why Matthew does not care for the reputed Canadian legend, and how he has had occasion to be forced into a grudging complicity with those who do love him. It is funny and self-deprecating. This piece is meant to insure that the tone of the chapter does not overwhelm the fact that we love, above all else, to laugh. *We can be Canadian and not accept all Canadian things.*

8. bad men who love jesus – matt robinson
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/092602.htm>

matt robinson's poem, from which the chapter takes its name, is, as Miki suggests, full of "eclectic spirituality." It is a story of the drunken wandering of men on the edge of something. It is the second poem of the chapter and I think follows well Matthew's story. *We are not all good people.*

9. A Portable Cell – Rick Maddocks
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021502.htm>

This essay has caused the most argument between Matthew and me. He believes this work of fiction is not as good as the other essays found in this chapter, despite the fact it is written by one of Canada's most celebrated young authors. I believe, and have decided that it will be the second piece of fiction in the book. Maddocks is among *Forget's* most popular and enthusiastic writers. This story is well suited for this chapter because it, too, is full of melancholy, a sense of longing. *We are all hoping for some place to stand.*

10. Rabbits in the Kitchen-Garden – Tom Howell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/110101.htm>

Tom's memoir is like the first essay in this chapter, very close to the submission guidelines and has a sort of tortured whimsy and twisted hopefulness that counters nicely the desperation of robinson's work, and the sadness of Maddocks. *Remember, remember, remember.*

11. Listen for the Animals – Gillian Jerome
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/040401.htm>

An erotic and adult story of the time the author spent with her boyfriend on a fishing camp. It is a uniquely Canadian love poem. Miki thinks it is the "crème of the poetry crop" and that it should switch places with Bourne's piece. I believe this to be a little less accessible than Bourne's work and that is why it has stayed where it is. *We are about love and sex and hope and dreams.*

12. The Ugly Man and his Daughter – Jean-Gerard Charboneau
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/062502.htm>

This is one of the longer works of fiction in the entire book. Osborne loves the title of this and offered that it might make a good chapter title. We decided against this because it is already a very long piece and to title the chapter after it would put too much more weight on the story. It's a beautiful story, that smashes conventional ideas of family. *This is us too: Ugly and Beautiful.*

13. The Longest Day of the Year – Kevin Chong
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/061802.htm>

This is a very short description of one day in June. I like the fact that it is about the vagaries of life and the fact that it is a short work is well received after the length of the previous story. This comes close to one of the key submission guidelines: *things in culture that are culture that no one thinks about.* Like driving to the store, or getting your haircut, or answering the phone.

14. This is Where Everyone Belongs – Greg Younger-Lewis
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/042801.htm>

This poem written beneath a bridge at the FTAA protests in Quebec City in 2001 is among the most beautiful and difficult things we have published. It is a the story of the unity that developed amid the tear gas, and was from the first day a chapter title until we decided that what we liked about it was the images rather than the messages, or rather we felt the message of anti-capitalism was not one we were interested in promoting beyond a certain level (*it is in the book*). I believe it to be important enough to be in the first chapter, though, and we believe that placing at the end of the chapter also places some weight on it: *This is how the first chapter ends*.

*

The second chapter of the book is currently entitled “Everything is Empty Like the Mall” after a story written by me. It contains more of the senior writers in the *Forget* archives and is believed by all, Osborne, Mike, Darren, Anicka, Matt and myself to be the strongest and most cohesive chapter in the book.

EVERYTHING IS EMPTY LIKE THE MALL

15. On Becoming Canadian – Sigrun Kristinsdottir
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/042202.htm>

This story was originally the last work in the book. Osborne felt that it was too strong to be buried. “On Becoming Canadian” is the story of how the author immigrated to Canada and the lessons she learned about her new home through its cultural idiosyncrasies. I would call it the perfect *Forget* story: Canada through new eyes. We felt it sent the right message to begin this chapter: *We will show you things from all angles, new angles*. It is non-fiction memoir and establishes a tone that dovetails nicely into the essay that follows it.

16. San Francisco – Stephen Osborne
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/011102.htm>

This story of how my mentor spent a Friday evening in California 25 years ago speaks much to our relationship, and the fact that people have been trying to “make it” for years. It is a cautionary tale about a quest for success, and the wages of the idea that one person can be “in.” As Darren and Miki read this piece they said the exact same thing: *He is talking to us*.

17. Mosquito Baseball – Matthew Dorrell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/072501.htm>

We have a section on the magazine we call *Forget Sports* where we search for the cultural aspect of games long lost to the professional athletics (most professional athletics anyway). This is the story of a baseball game played by 13 year olds. Again it stresses the idea that we will write about things that are common, sports, but do it in a new way. Who writes about the sport of children as seriously as the sport of adults? *We do.*

18. Fish – Charles Gregory
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/082202.htm>

This is a beautiful straight poem about the lessons learned by the protagonist from his grandfather. It is a poem about the cycle of life and is touching without being indulgent emotionally. It is a perfect transition from Matthew's cultural/comedy study. It is a short poem, with rather simple language. *We will tell old tales.*

19. Everything is Empty Like the Mall – Kent Bruyneel
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/081001.htm>

This is a creative non-fiction piece about love lost. It was written in the months just before *Forget* began and it is the basis for the submission guidelines. It is a chapter name because Miki and Darren thought it among the best titles.

20. The Saddest Sparkle in the World – Susan Juby
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/021602.htm>

A YA story about the way friendship in childhood can lead to betrayal. *Watch your back.*

21. Toast – Matthew Dorrell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/050301.htm>

This is a straight-ahead poem about a relationship between a man, a woman and a toaster. It is in the same vein as Susan's story in that it is full of a melancholy that does, in the end at least, approach redemption. *This is a love story.*

22. The Yogwan – Brad Cran
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/030502.htm>

This creative non-fiction story was also one of the most discussed and lamented. Some thought its tale of a foreigner in the Orient mean and arrogant. Shyla, and her friend the poet Marc Cochrane, have a long-running disagreement about the sensitivity of this work, divided strictly along gender lines. The story ends with the narrator watching his girlfriend being taken away to an undefined though certainly diminishing state, by the police in an airport. The narrator goes to sleep across what

were their seats. Some have called it mean, and approaching misogyny. I think that is an overstatement. I did not disagree that the narrator is not exactly a sensitive, nice person. So what? Neither are most of us. Art is about cruelty too. *The Yogwan* follows in the same spirit that gave BAD MEN WHO LOVE JESUS its name: *We are the magazine of the brute and the poet. Most of this is not pretty.*

23. In the Vincent Price Room – Richard Lemm
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/081202.htm>

Uses a quote from a newspaper, *undertakers to meet*, to imagine what it is like when a group of those people who deal with death get together and talk shop. Again it is an example of *Forget* examining and having fun with territories most people would not think funny. *Only serious people can laugh.*

24. The Naming of a Tragedy: Insignificant – Kent Bruyneel
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/041801.htm>

This “news” story is a sample of the reportage we have done at *Forget*. It is the story of the American ban on the selling of potatoes from Prince Edward Island. It is a new-journalism piece—almost all the sentences in the story begin with “if”—and Darren thinks it is an example of a story “only we do.” *We do not offer any objectivity in our quest for the truth.*

25. Catching the Slimy – Gillian Jerome
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/091601.htm>

This poem published shortly after the 9/11 tragedies was submitted in a call for pieces about “hope and wonder” from *Forget*. I believe this story of children playing with animals and the earth, re-affirms the idea that *Forget* is also the magazine of hope. It’s inclusion in the book says this: *This is our capacity for wonder. And it is infinite*

26. Rough Riders and Other Canadian Icons – Matthew Dorrell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/081501.htm>

The first of the CFL stories is a discussion of a team returning to Ottawa. It is an historic study of the Ottawa franchise and many of the other team names within the league. I believe it, all it once, affirms our desire to be a well-researched, irregular and entertaining magazine. *Look at our history this way: isn't it stupid, funny, and great?*

26. The Red Hand of Lundin – Stephen Witteck
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/030802.htm>

As close to straight journalism as we have on the entire website. It is a well-researched and disciplined account of ill-tempered corporate actions. It requires some supporting documents but is not overly time time-sensitive. We decided to list Stephen’s sources—or supporting documents—as footnotes or epigraphs. I believe

that following Gillian's and Matthew's work, this story is an important message that we do believe our magazine is there to tell the truth about evil too. *We will root this out. We will make lists.*

28. Inside the Belly of the Beast – Darren Stewart
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/031301.htm>

The story of a neophyte on Capital Hill makes a perfect close for this chapter because it enforces our wonderment, and our curiosity. And it says also that we do not go around taking ourselves too seriously, even when we are serious. I also think it serves our readership by giving an inside look into Canadian politics. All of these things matter to us even the things we would normally find boring. *We are not the generation that does not care. This is a political magazine.*

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The third and last chapter is titled “Wailing Necessities” after a poem by Matthew Dorrell. I also believe “Wailing Necessities” is the subtitle of the book (at least in spirit) and, in many ways the term has become an anthem for *Forget* to me.

WAILING NECESSITIES

29. XSpider-ManX – Lee Henderson
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/042802.htm>

This review of the movie Spider-Man again enters what we feel is *Forget's* marked territory. It is a story full of the grotesque and fantastic. It is among the best satire we have ever published: it lampoons the idea of commercial ambitions amidst the barren and desperate landscape of people on Vancouver's deeply troubled downtown east side—known to be home to the worst heroin problems in North America. Again it is a take on those ubiquitous things that go unnoticed; subjects like drugs and AIDS and homeless people, and malls, that most magazines don't touch. Not in this way. *All this ugliness and money surrounds you, are you paying attention?*

30. Michael is Hungry and Stuck in Traffic – Matthew Dorrell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/030202.htm>

Matthew's fiction comes lightly on the heels of Lee's eviscerating prose. It is the story of a man stuck in a traffic jam with food in his trunk. The agonies and vagaries of life are the stuff of life. *We are the magazine of the traffic jam.*

31. Drunk Tank – Nick Thran
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/070102.htm>

A poem about one night at the Calgary Stampede. It is a uniquely Canadian poem and one that again flashes *Forget's* tendency to get literary work from non-literary places. Like drunk tanks. *Ugliness and solitude will not beat us. We will find our inspiration everywhere.*

32. Al Purdy and the Ether of the Sky – Miguel Strother
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/022601.htm>

A thorough personal and historical analysis of the great Canadian poet. It is a paean and a tribute to a man whose work and spirit informs much of what we do. We are Canadian, like Al, and like him, our feet and eyes move best here. This piece also stresses that we believe Canada to be full of icons and artistic legacy. This is important we decided: *Every Canadian should know Al Purdy and Al Waxman and Milton Acorn.*

33. Testing the Hypothesis that Stories are Nicer when they End with Tea – James Adler
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/070102.htm>

A fiction piece that offers four comedy vignettes that do all end with tea. We believe it flows nicely off of Miguel's serious study of Purdy, and its laughs are further welcomed as an introduction to what may be the most difficult and beautiful text in the book.

34. Vegas – Gillian Jerome
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/061401.htm>

Fiction about the weekend trip of the protagonist and her boyfriend where they go to meet his ex-girlfriend—Vegas from the title—and take drugs, and drink and lose themselves and find Vegas. It is brutal and sexy. The single longest work in the book we knew it would have to be very strong. It takes place in Squamish, BC. *We are the magazine of the Canadian nowhere. The Canadian everywhere.*

35. Chicken – Tom Howell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/092201.htm>

It is a non-fiction account of the night the author's building was emptied by a fire alarm. Coming, as it did, shortly after 9/11 it is a story about the normality in life—illustrated via the chicken and its process for moving forward. One message that we want to send throughout might be called hope; I call it *ever forward, baby.*

36. Wailing Necessities – Matthew Dorrell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/091301.htm>

This poem is the most important and strongest example of what *Forget* believes. Published 9/11/01 it is the story of some far-off tragedy. It is the story of the general nature of carnage and the beauty one finds in disturbing things, like the ambulance siren, or the cheetah in sinewy flight. The title itself also means much to me/us. When Miki heard it he jumped on the table and screamed, *Yes we are wailing and crying and we have no choice and we will never stop and we want to see the corpse and meet the widow and we are the book that is not afraid to be at the scene of the crime without a pen. We fucking bleed on these papers man. Bleed.*

37. The Donut Princess – Shyla Seller
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/042002.htm>

The memoir of a girl working in her father's donut shop where they made their own donuts. A longing for time gone-by and another essay that shows our capacity for wonder, memory and hope. *We will create our own history.*

38. Bread – Charles Gregory
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/082202.htm>

A simple poem that takes the weight and heft of the previous two pieces and uses them as a subtle entry into this poem about the simplest of things. It says simply and perfectly: *We will find the beauty in the unadorned.*

39. Belly of the Beast- Darren Stewart
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/040301.htm>

Another section of the Ottawa Bureau Chief's perspective. We feel it is a perfect fit between two poems.

40. Love – Craig Battle
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/062202.htm>

A very short poem that compares something in the window to something ethereal. It is language and subject matter stripped to their core. It says: *We are the simple from the complicated. The complicated from the simple.*

41. Grade 4 Confidential– Heather Christie
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/030801.htm>

A dark CC Forgetmagazine about how children experience pangs of sexual understanding, or misunderstanding from rock music, or in this case, Canadian rock music. *Make them laugh at that: the darkness in here/out there.*

42. The Grey Cup – Matthew Dorrell
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/112801.htm>

The second section of Matthew's CFL study. This is a three-part series on past Grey Cups and on the 2001 Grey Cup. It is reportage that does not claim to be news, and funny without making mock. *This is our league. Our history. Our moment. This is us. Unapologetic.*

43. Hunting Cats – James Adler
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/121001.htm>

Fiction written from the perspectives of a coyote trolling the suburbs of Vancouver looking for meals in backyards and ditches. Sends another important message about *Forget: we are the magazine of the suburb and the city. The hunter and the prey.*

44. The Doppler Effect – Mark Samcoe
<http://www.forgetmagazine.com/070402.htm>

Closes the book with a strong poem about the narrator's plaintive watching of the jets that train over his home in Saskatchewan. It is a poem that reminds us that life and memory are fleeting, and usually when you stop to listen to them, they are well past you. Mark's poem does not resolve anything, or try to. It is an open-ended work that I believe ends on a message that is dually important, *literary and cryptic.*

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY YES (YOU COULD SAY MAYBE) OR THE PUBLISHING PROPOSITION

We have inherited or at least created along the way some risks and some luxuries. First, all of the material that we will publish in the *Forget* book will still be available on the *Forget* website, so no one needs to pay for it to read it. This we feel is countered by the principal luxury of going from a long-running website to a book. We already have an audience. It is not unusual for one of us at *Forget* to get an email asking where a paper copy of the magazine can be purchased.

We are also very concerned about killing the website or undermining its importance in relation to print; and this is something we have done our best to avoid. We have been concerned that potential contributors will be inclined toward waiting for a print publication rather than sending work to the website. This explains, mostly, why no outside material was solicited for the book. We want to maintain the integrity of the *Forget* submission process—website first, for publication online and consideration for future print publication—and this has also weighed greatly in our decision making.

With the book we will be commenting on the work we have already done, on our past. I believe readers will look at the website, at the thing we are still doing, in a new way. There is very much at stake going from digital, where we are known and understood, or grokked, to print. A website, at least a good one, is a thing in constant motion; a book stops time and takes a picture of a certain moment, forever. It is not permanency we are after. It is permanency we are afraid of.

As many books as a writer has published, those are the books he keeps on writing plus the one in his typewriter. Old books haunt the blood.

—Don DeLillo, *Mao II*

I feel there is much to be said for the anonymity possible on the web. The risk that we are now playing in a different arena was duly noted: we would no longer be able to choose our anonymity, or our authorship. We will not be able to change things as we can on the web. We will be locked into this position, this manuscript, forever. Old books will haunt our blood. We could end like the Zen dog, happily holding one bone in his mouth, then seeing its reflection in the water, mistaking what he has for another bone, and dropping the one he has, losing both. By using what we have now for what we want later, to chase the second medium—may be a similar mirage of success as the dog with the bone—we could end up losing both. A cautionary tale. *People will look at everything we have done anew*, I thought. We will, doubtless, lose some contributors, or rather we would, I believe, if our approach was not this: *this is not necessarily an improvement over what we already do*. We are expanding markets. Trying new media. *Printed things get websites all the time*, I thought.

It turns out curiosity—intense, varied, inexhaustible, almost without limit—is an indispensable quality in an editor of a publication. Book publishing may be different, more passive and selective. It may require other qualities. A book editor can, perhaps, wait to be amused.

—Renata Adler, *Gone: The Last Days of The New Yorker*

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On 14 August 2002, the editor of a magazine, upon hearing we were making a book from the archived material at Forgetmagazine.com, said to me: “I can always tell when a website is good, because they go to paper.” He then laughed heavy and lit another of my cigarettes.

He doesn't have to like the print, I thought, *his magazine and its mostly ignored website are both unreadable*. Even if we can't make it in print, I decided, we would always have the website.

This exchange put a sharp point on why we did not want to undermine the website during this process in any way. We will always make good websites, we know that medium, and I think *we can count on that*, as long as we always consider that medium, or that “property”, as an

associate to the print matter, not its servant. When a magazine makes a bad website, they make it *for* their magazine. We did not make the website to serve as a funnel to anything. The website is not *for* the book, the book is *from* the website. A distinction with a difference, and a critical one I decided.

Harper's website is a good example of this phenomenon (*Harpers Online circa 2002*: <http://www.harpers.org>) in the opposite direction. The *Harper's* website is nothing but a service tool for the print magazine. There is no *other* there at all. It is, instead, a place to read some of the magazine's contents, talk to its writers, and make business inquiries, but there is no web content, no web voice, no web magazine. The last thing we want is for the *Forget* website to become like this: a service tool for any other published matter. So even as I never would want to be tied to any one medium, I do not want to disrespect the one we have already entered.

We are not able to pay our writers, but we have a system that has worked for getting the material that makes up our content. Moving to print endangers at least that. I am not saying that the site would ever actually go away. No; it could more likely become like the *Haper's* website: a skill for some other thing. Thereby shattering the submission process that makes up the magazine's unique capabilities. If the website is nothing more than a place to buy the book (or find out where to buy the book, or book details, etc.) and the content is presented in such a way as to serve only the idea of moving books, what *Forget* is will be gone. The spirit of the *Forget* website is that it is free, not just financially but karmically because it asks nothing of the reader except to read. This is why we would never remove the stories from online that will appear in the text—as a way of forcing the reader to buy it; business people have told us it is a “good business tactic”; but we call it the “bait and switch.”

*

About the time we began the process of acquisitions I read a book called *Shiny Adidas Tracksuits and the Death of Camp and Other Essays*. It is a best-of anthology from *Might* magazine, assembled by *Might's* editors. *Might* was published in the early nineties by a coterie of under-thirty Midwesterners living in San Francisco, and it gained a reputation for smartness and satire. I would not know that from reading the cover or from the design of the anthology. *This makes sense*, I thought, *it is a bunch of essays from a dead magazine*.

From the introduction and from much of the work in the assembled book one does feel that this was a magazine that cared about things; was for and against things; took stands; had opinions; picked fights; learned. I was all of the sudden, horrified that we had built a magazine without a soul: a vanity website that in fact only chased after name writers and did not really stand for or say anything. It floored me. It was 23 July 2002. *Surely we can't hide this in our book*, I thought. *Everything we publish has to send a specific message about our tenants*, I thought. *Everything*. I started reading about magazines gone past their prime, killed in transition, in a moment of compromise or succession. *Everything*.

Its talent, authority, civility and charm, even its good-will, were unmistakable. Once any of those elements was compromised, the magazine might continue to publish valuable work, but it was just another magazine. The essence of the enterprise was thrown away.

—Renata Adler, *Gone: The Last Days of The New Yorker*

(NO) CONCLUSIONS

When Megan and Matt's mother came to stay in the *Forget* house that August, she bought us some markers that were specifically for writing on our great big windows. In my room I wrote out the structure of this report in white sharpie on the window that looks out to the corner of East 29th and Earles on the thin edge of East Vancouver, where Burnaby meets it. At the top, even above the title, I wrote: "what is the point of all this?" In one hand, on the right, is written "Selling Out" and in another, on the left, is written "Wailing Necessities." The truth is somewhere in between. More on the left probably. As ever.

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It is hard to know what to say when an author who has been published on Forgetmagazine.com asks: *am I in the book?* I usually say no. Most of the authors who have written for *Forget* are not in the book. I usually say, "No, not this book, but you know this is not the end for us. We want to make books forever. Non-fiction books, books about countries and war that dovetail into books about college basketball and the rhythm a good soprano voice makes in a graveyard at night, novels. Stick around. *Books about everything.*" I usually say "No, but it was close." I usually say, "No, but the thing is, man, the website is better than the book could ever be. Books are inert." I usually say, "Keep sending your stuff to the website." You know, *the thing in constant motion.*

EPILOGUE

Matthew just left to find boxes. We are preparing to move out of the *Forget* house. It is over, or at least, the book discussed in this report is finished and has been sent to several publishers for their consideration. So much has changed it is hard to remember what is the same, hard to remember where we started, hard to remember what the point of all this was.

The traffic is beating back and forth in front of the window. My inbox is full of submissions to *Forgetmagazine.com*. The file that holds the book is open on the desktop of a computer across the room. It is now a different book than the one described above. Jesus, you must be thinking, what exactly was the point of reading all the above then? Well, it *is* over. And we have definitely learned some things.

First, I would like to make it clear the major difference between the book now and the book as described above: we have removed almost all of my own writing, much of Matthew's (still leaving him 3 pieces in the finished book), the longest piece in the book as described above (Gillian Jerome's "Vegas") and cut the entire book down to 128 pages. This was done in order to alleviate the idea that *Forget* was a vanity publishing concern.

At the end of the process described in this report I felt the book might be weighted too heavily in favor of our own writing. I felt it opened us up to valid criticism that we excluded other work based on a bias in favor of our own work. It is important lesson to learn that even though I believe in the writing of Matthew Dorrell et al. I also believe that this book must be unassailable. It must be the best representation of us without scaring anyone off. The voice Matthew and I write with is similar and simply put, that voice was too dominant. We are the editors of *Forget* magazine first, contributors to it, second.

Another important realization was that eventually the process of anthology, or the

development of an editorial framework for an anthology, must have an end. Or at least one must be willing to finally let something go: if the old books are, indeed, to haunt our blood, then at the least we can feel secure in the fact that we made this book within a given time frame. The work discussed in this report was selected from work published between February 2001 and February 2003, so it should only be compared to work from that time. There is no use in always waiting for more and better content, at a certain point one has to go with what one has: trust yourself.

In terms of the most important lesson one can draw from this report, I believe it is the following: a magazine must have convictions, not just poses. These beliefs must come from within the hearts of that magazine's editors, and the editors should understand them together, and, moreover, be able to articulate them. It is important to know who you are, not just what you do. It is not necessary, I believe, to explain those beliefs to the public explicitly, but the editors must know where they are going, and why, even if they don't know how to get there. Conviction coupled with determination is the base from which strong things are built.

When I showed the book as it finally was to Stephen Osborne he said it had "exactly the look and feel" it should have. He thought it represented what *Forget* was. It proved to me that I (we: every name that appears in the story above) knew that now: what *Forget* is.

Something.

In the end, this story is about making an entity, a concern; not a particular form of media.

The point was to not lose what we had, but to figure it out, keep it going and try different things, all kinds of things. It is hard to say what "success" is, for us, in this.

Wait. And. See.

THIS IS THE END. THIS IS NOT THE END.

See *Forget* magazine — <http://forgetmagazine.com>.

POSTSCRIPT

The book discussed in this report will not be published.