

# Time and Place

a cultural quarterly



**Ninth Floor Press**

We are all of a particular time and place. The space we occupy influences who we are, what we think, how we act, re-act, and what we create. **Time and Place** is about capturing the creativity of a particular moment of the artist's life.

If you wish to contribute a piece to **TIME AND PLACE**:

There are no restrictions as to subject matter or content (the right not to accept a contribution is reserved, mind you.) Each contribution must have an accompanying paragraph detailing the significance of the time and place you were in when the piece was inspired, created, formed, birthed, or otherwise captured, along with a brief biography.

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Please send your submissions to [ninthfloorpress@gmail.com](mailto:ninthfloorpress@gmail.com)

Contribution guidelines:

Writing: Words of any type (prose, poetry, fiction, non-fiction,) no more than 700.

Art: Acceptable formats are PC compatible (.tif, hi-res .jpg, .pdf, 300 dpi.)

Photography: Colour, Black and White (.tif, hi-res .jpg, .pdf, 300 dpi.)

*Editor: Ed Shaw*

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*Cover photo: Nancy Benoy, 2015*

# **TIME AND PLACE**

**a cultural quarterly**



*Leo DragToe*

## **Orchids**

Nothing we say can ever be mended  
baby, get yourself some sun  
blues in this life  
can not be transcended  
sorrow falls to everyone

over desire, under the bridge  
the sound of your voice  
the tattoo of your kiss  
orchids are blooming again in the spring  
orchids are blooming  
my love.

I wanted to see you and keep it together  
baby, we were on the run  
I wanted to tell you  
the things I'd been missing  
hold you close beneath the sun

tides are still rolling, pulling apart  
bridges are broken  
from here to your heart  
orchids are blooming again in the spring  
orchids are blooming  
my love.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time & place associated with this poem. The poem itself happened some time ago in the shady, faded, ever-present past. It is the culmination of words, emotions, thoughts and feelings that occupy the space between a wicked nightmare and a dream. This poem is a direct result of the heartbreak and orchids.

*Leo DragToe, lives in Hamilton, Ontario. In a world of  
mindless, soulless formality, he is trying very hard to smile and  
scuff his shoes.*

*Jo Boudreau*

## **Desire**

I've been asleep,  
for all of what I know as dying.  
And in the dream,  
I seem to fail at what I try.  
But I try.

As I awake,  
Each day my eyes grow slightly wider.  
They let me see  
the road I drive to my desire.

Desire,  
It's inside her.  
Desire,  
Let the thought of her inspire.

As you gaze into your mind,  
through an unseen eye  
do you let it redefine her?  
Could you set your soul on fire,  
as you walk the line;  
to suffer for desire?

Desire is the moment of inspiration being captured.

*Jo Boudreau is a song writer, performer, and visual-ist from Hamilton, ON*

*[themonarchproject.ca](http://themonarchproject.ca)*

## **Active Addiction to Recovery**

**(an addicts perspective on time and place)**

For a drug addict, learning to live clean, it is about letting go of the old pattern attached to previous times and places. Like the pick-up spots that can still bring a rise to my blood pressure, not from anticipation any longer, from fear. Fear of an old life that could easily take me to darkness again. Hotels with memories of rooms where dealers became very attractive with the ease of getting more without paying with cash, not seeing I was paying with my identity and my self worth instead. Too many side streets where I used, hiding behind my mask of being a functioning addict with a family, a business and the respect of my peers. Arrogance, and a need to maintain the altered state of mind taking me to places with public washrooms, where I could lock myself into the familiarity of feeding my insanity. Confident that when I walked out the door no one would suspect me, of all people, to be the one who just took a hit from a pipe. Places like a crack house where there was nothing but two chairs, a mattress and something fungal like growing on the ceiling in one room. A place to simply ignore the deep despair that lived there, knowing it was only a matter of waiting for the drop off, feeding my demon and then leaving to the safety of my typical family home. That place where I lived and I used, made dinners and used, packed school lunches and used; did laundry and banking and all the things to make my life appear it did not revolve around the obsession I had with substance. Eluding and deluding myself as I chased that high that was now simply a necessity. Something controlling me in a way that the more I willed myself to stop, knowing my value lines had been moved down too far, the more manipulative the disease became.

A disease of justification and false perception, leading me to believe I could stay in control. In a place of powerlessness to a substance, feeling weak and knowing I was failing myself and every potential in my life. Times of false hopes, finding strength and will and periods of clean time, only to have addiction get the best of me again, and again. Falling into a cycle of despair, exhaustion and defeat; deepening with every failure to break it. Finally, coming to a place of surrender; surrender to the fact I am an addict. My disease is powerful and the assertion of my most stubborn self-will is not where I find recovery. It is actually where the root of my disease lives.

In a place of self reflection, I find peace as I learn control is an illusion and when I let go, and live in the moment, addiction has no power over me. When I stay in this time where there is gratitude and faith, I have a choice in my perception and even when my addiction wants me to feed fears and depression and need to escape I can choose to reach out, to reflect and to know life on its own terms serves me. Letting go of the desire to use and the patterns that kept me in places and times I never thought would be mine. I can glance back and appreciate the lessons I have learned, the experiences I can share to feed the hope that we do recover.

In the place where addiction lives there are good people. People who behave outside their morals and values because of the screaming voice of the disease drowning out any inner voice whisper. Now that my inner voice can be heard above the noise in my mind, I can step out and see all the places of beauty. Places rich in purpose and simplicity. I pass many landmarks that I could view as representation of pain and risk, but I choose to create new realities and embrace the opportunities life allows me clean.

My addiction waits at the door of each place I enter, but I choose to acknowledge it and ask it to leave. There is no room or time for substance use anywhere I find myself now. I am too busy being, and appreciating, and experiencing what life is meant to be. Any moment can become anything I choose it to be and when mistakes are made the lesson can be the next moment. Living in recovery, quieting the voice of my disease I hear my connection to my true self and everything genuine about the world and the possibilities that live in all places, in any time I choose.

*Lisa Colbert is a certified life coach, author and speaker inspiring perspective change through mindfulness and conscious living. She offers addiction recovery support as a natural transition in her own recovery. Lisa has taken her lived experience and education to support people with substance dependence and their families. Addiction is a progressive disease that steals self worth through its power. When an addict surrenders to help, the process of recovery begins. When there is a deeper understanding of this, more addicts will become open to help. Lisa writes and speaks to break the stigma of addiction and to reinforce the message we do recover.*

*Susan Robinson*

**Interval # 8**  
(acrylic on canvas, 2015)



Interval-noun-The time coming between two events, points in time.

We discovered Hamilton during a phase of transition. Finding myself free of my ten year tenure at the Art Gallery of Ontario (due to layoffs), Will and I hit the road. In the following months, we filled our time with music, art and adventure. Along the way, I grabbed a brochure for Hamilton. We went to Supercrawl and didn't look back. It was like coming home to a place we had never been. The creative community was welcoming and we found a wonderful apartment downtown. It was here, in January 2015, where I created my series of abstract paintings which captured the excitement and creative energy of our new Hamilton home.

*Susan Robinson is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design. She does drawing, painting, photography, short film production, sculpture and jewelry design. She lives in Hamilton with her partner, singer-songwriter Will Gillespie.*

## **Keeping Count**

My son was sick for days, finally sending us to the hospital. He was weak and pale and full of fever so they admitted him, keeping him under strict observation. For three nights I slept in hard chairs, not bathing, barely eating, just watching my little boy. Watching and counting. Counting the days since it started, counting the hours till more meds, counting the degrees his fever had waxed or had waned

On the third night his colour returned and his fever came down. They keep him that last night in a ward room. We are moved late while the other patients sleep. Another child has come in that needs the larger, private room and when my boy wakes in the morning he will go home, healthy again as I always knew he would be.

I am tired in a way that I haven't known for years, but I can't sleep. I lay awake, wrapped around him and soak him in. I watch his eye lashes flutter, I rub my face against his hair, smelling the sweetness of him, I listen for his breathing, soft as a kittens purr.

Beside us in the ward room there is a baby. He is the same age as my own baby, my one year old who is left at home, but he is smaller, weaker. He doesn't have her wholesome roundness, her plump cheeks and pink glow. He is small and he is quiet.

The first thing I notice about him is that the sides of his crib are not up high enough, a little boy that age could climb out of that crib, he doesn't though, he doesn't seem to move much at all. The next thing that strikes me, and it lands like a punch in my gut, is that his parents are missing. All the children have attendants in this place, they all sit sleepless, strained faces. Like me they are all watching and counting, though they each count different things.

No one stands near this little boy, no one fusses over his labored breathing or his crib that doesn't quite fit him, and I can't stand the thought that he is alone here. Leaving my baby alone for three nights just about broke my heart, but she isn't a baby, not really, and she isn't alone, she is with her father who loves her. This boy is truly alone and it's all I can do to stop myself from pulling back the curtain that separates us and picking him up.

He cries with a hesitant, mewling sound, nothing like the bellow that comes from my own children when something isn't right. My kid's voices demand to be heard with an undeniable entitlement. This boy's whimpers are apologetic, he knows no one is listening for that sound, no one is waiting to rush to his side.

The nurses come in from time to time and he is quiet when they are near. Even when they poke him with needles he stays still and calm. Clearly this tiny boy is used to the routine. The rubber band around his arm the jab into his skin, none of it phases him. I hear the nurse's voices as they coo sweetly to him. They stay by his side for a few moments, longer than they likely have time to spare. They are watching and counting, measuring his state for their charts. They say they love the little guy, but it isn't love.

They feel for him, they feel sympathy, tenderness, affection. When they leave, as they inevitably must, it takes only a few minutes for the sad whimpers to return.

I want to pick him up. My breasts ache from the long absence from my own toddler who is still nursing and the desire to hold that baby boy, to console him, is so strong that I begin to leak milk. It dampens my shirt as my tears dampen the pillow. His whimpers turn to moans and I listen, staring at the curtain that separates us. Watching, counting each sad little sound, hoping sleep will find him, hoping that there, in his dreams, he is no longer alone.

I wrote the story after three sleepless nights spent at the McMaster Children's hospital. Those three nights came on the heels of a week of near sleeplessness while we rushed back and forth from doctor offices and ER rooms. The emotions are obvious, I hope the sleeplessness isn't.

*Sarah Scott writes and edits grant applications for health researchers at McMaster University. She started writing fiction while on maternity leave and in the brief 8 months since, she has received a writing credit on a Samsung add campaign featuring Joseph Gordon-Levitt, a video testimonial included in a series of social action videos made by Participant Media and the University of Southern California and recently one of her short stories was published in an online journal. Between working and raising her two young children she hopes to find time to complete the final edits on her first novel.*

*Ed Clayton*

## **Moon Days**

I hate the moon.

That fucking orb.

Sits up there. All glowy.

Taunting.

Red moon blue moon lunar eclipse

All manner of shit going on with it.

“Rare chance to see lunar bla de bla tonight,”

Ya? Well I’m no witness.

Fuck you moon and your tidal magic.

Shimmer on down someone else’s dark waters.

Let the young ones at you.

Wrap your nocturnal passage round their smiling skin.

Let them burn brightly under your kitschy ominousness

Me? I’ll be at the end of the street

with the curtains closed.

Goddamned moon.

April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015: Written after missing another – much ballyhooed - “blood moon” lunar eclipse.

As you age, your nights begin to end earlier and eventually it becomes apparent that you no longer can actually see the moon. Instead you find yourself reading about its continued existence in the morning paper.

*Ed Clayton is a poet and long-time Hamiltonian who loves full moons, albeit vicariously.*

*Dylan Hudecki*

## **The Best Picture I've Ever Taken**



"The best picture I've ever taken". What a loaded statement. This conjures so many expectations from the reader and I'd say it's impossible to live up the quote really. Does the photographer REALLY mean that? Or can this quote be likened to a flippant teen "that's the coolest dress (or story/show/song enter subject here) ever!" Are they saying, I really like this picture? It means a lot to me and whenever I look at it I'm really glad and fortunate that I captured it. Can you smell the candy? Can you imagine the tangy worm on the back of your tongue? Enjoy.

*Dylan Hudecki is a photographer by habit, musician by existence, husband by luck, dad by fate, teacher by genes, friend by happenstance. Born in #hamont in the wonderful & wild '76.*

*Jeff Griffiths*

## **Ellen**

My dad didn't want to leave me at home.

Mom sifted through her purse. "He'll be fine. I trust him."

Dad shook his head. "He's 13 for Christ sakes. Not the most responsible age." He looked at me. "What are you gonna do then."

I shrugged. "Nothin."

He got into the car, lit a cigarette and waited. Dad looked like Burt Reynolds with Dirty Harry's attitude. Through trial and error I'd somewhat figured out how far I could push him.

My sisters climbed into the back seat of our Ford Country Squire, mom beside dad in the front. They were going to the drive-in to see Jaws. Dad gave me a stare as they backed out. I waved and looked at mom.

Mike rode up as they turned off our street. "Wanna jump off the roof?" He let his bike fall on the grass.

"Sure," I said.

My house was a bungalow. It was a snap to climb the TV tower and onto the shingles. We liked to jump onto the front lawn and roll like paratroopers. I felt indestructible.

I was on the roof for my second jump. The street lights had just flickered on. I glanced at my neighbour's house. Ellen and Jack had moved in six months earlier in January. They were young, no kids. I could see half of the side door, the top of their lavender Volkswagen Beetle, and the bathroom window. The bathroom light came on and Ellen strolled in naked. She put her hand on the window sill as she stepped into the tub. I froze for a few reasons. She lifted her head and looked straight into my face.

I ducked behind the peak of the roof. I caught my breath and looked over. Jack was beside Ellen. She had a towel around her. They both saw me. I knew I was dead, just not when or how my dad would do it.

I climbed down the TV tower. Mike was waiting.

“Why didn’t you jump?”

“I saw Ellen next door getting into the bathtub.”

Mike’s eyes bugged. “Decent. She’s not bad. What did you see?”

“She saw me.”

Mike’s face said he was glad it was me and not him. “Shit. You’re in for it.”

We went to Mike’s house. My stomach was on fire. We sat in his bedroom. He was reading a MAD magazine while I stared at his model airplane that hung from the ceiling.

At 10 I decided to leave. I had to go home sometime.

Mike tossed the magazine onto his desk. "Ok. Call me tomorrow." He looked at me. "Do you think the neighbours will tell?"

"Maybe, maybe not," I said and left.

My dad was smoking on the front steps as I walked onto the lawn. He threw his cigarette on the sidewalk and crushed it with his foot. "Looks like we got a peepin' tom on the street." He was shouting, loud enough for the neighbours to hear. "What in the hell were you thinking?"

I didn't have an answer. Not one he'd believe anyway. "It wasn't on purpose." I said and pushed some stones with my shoe.

"Get in the god damned house." He pointed at the door.

He didn't smack me. I passed my mom and sisters in the living room. Mom kept her eyes on the TV. My sisters said nothing, no snickering. I knew they were scared for me.

I stayed in my room for the night.

No one said anything about it the next day. I wished my dad had hit me and ended it. It hung in the house. I'd heard people talk about the elephant in the room that no one mentioned. This elephant was dead and was rotting.

On Labour Day weekend, Mike and I were sitting on our bikes in front of my house. It was nine and pretty much dark. I was wearing a jacket. I zipped it up.

Ellen and Jack had stopped talking to me. They looked right through me when I saw them. They had gone to a cottage for the week. My parents were taking in their mail. I'd heard my dad say that Jack's brother was supposed to stay in their place for the weekend.

A Chevy Impala came up the street and pulled into their driveway.

"That's Jack's brother." I said to Mike. I wanted to sound like I knew the score.

Mike was staring at the car. "Holy shit," he said through his teeth.

Three blond girls got out. I never knew their ages but best guess was 18 and up.

Mike punched my shoulder. "Are your parents' home?"

Five minutes later Mike and I were hanging onto the chimney, leaning out as far as we could to get a better look.

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I'm not sure why I did the things I did when I was a kid. But I did.

*Jeff Griffiths lives, writes, and plays drums in Hamilton. His short fiction has been published in various literary venues including Time and Place. He teaches Creative Writing 1 and 2 and Prose Styles for Mohawk College.*

## **Pond**

I was half way around the lake the first time I heard the bell.

It's just a little lake, a big pond, wrapped in escarpment limestone and fed by three little waterfalls.

I hung my hat on the hook when I got home and I looked in the mirror. The mirror is really for putting your hat on. It's for going out, not for coming home. My ears looked the same as always.

At that specific time I didn't really know much about bells or the ringing of bells and I guess I liked them as much as anyone, but I didn't have any bells in my house then and I still don't.

My hat is all green except for the leather strap at the back with the bronze snap.

At the library it said that the most famous bell-makers were the Whitechapel family, in England, and they made bells for four hundred plus years. They learned a way to tune them by walking into ponds and getting their ears as close to the surface of the water as they could. They took all their clothes off and waded in.

I was three-quarters around, on my way back the next time I heard it. I stopped moving my boots and tried my best to listen. All I could hear was a bit of wind knocking the branches together high up in the trees. The branches sounded hollow or frozen.

It said - in the library - that one of the Whitechapel boys got sick making them. It said he took his own life because his bell rang sour. He couldn't tune it just right, even standing naked in the water, almost underneath.

The last time was right in produce at the A&P. I don't know why but I had a feeling not to let on that I heard it, not to say *did you hear that* to anyone. I tried thinking about the wind and the branches... the water.

The mirror is really for going out, for getting ready. It's not for coming home.

---

It is not me ... in the green hat, gazing into the mirror. Not even carefully avoiding mirrors, mirrors on walls, mirrors in store windows ... in public places, a few even still left at home; mirrors everywhere. It is not me. I do not hear bells at all. I do like ponds very much.

*Keith Toms lives, writes, and plays songs in Hamilton, ON*

## **Chestnut Reflections**

Imagine a chestnut. Like the one you played with in the school yard. You used your father's screwdriver or a bic pen to dig a hole through it. It was important to keep the hard shell intact. You could not be the chestnut champion if you started with a crack. You stole your little sister's dirty white shoelace. You stuffed the good end through and tied a double knot. You rolled your chestnut in the bottom of your t-shirt until it shined like an apple. You swung it around your head like a lasso. You were ready.

You went to school the next day, counting the minutes until recess. You didn't care about nouns and verbs. You had a new chestnut. You wanted to beat Franklin and smash his two week winning streak. A small crowd of kids gathered in the corner of the playground. You walked to the patch of dirt they circled. Sarah laid her chestnut in the dusty dent in the middle. You watched Franklin raise his chestnut straight up. He cracked it down quickly. You cheered as Sara's chestnut disintegrated yet felt sad seeing her thin black shoelace lay wilted like a dried up worm.

You knelt beside Sarah and nudged her over. You looked into Franklin's eyes and placed your shiny chestnut in the shallow hole. You smiled. You waited for the first smack knowing your chestnut would survive. You flinched as a chunk of shell bounced off your forehead. You saw surprise on Franklin's face. Half his shell was gone. You laughed as he dangled his wry chestnut from the bright white shoelace swinging back and forth like a pendulum marking the time. You waited for Franklin to position his chestnut, shell-side up. You slung your chestnut over your right shoulder, stared at your bull's eye and held your breath.

You arced your chestnut full force. You heard an odd but distinct clink. You missed your target. Your chestnut hit a small rock buried in the dirt and exploded. Everything went black.

You tied a blue and green rope to your harness. You clipped on a red helmet . You were ready to climb 300 feet of pink and grey granite. You were tired but you told yourself you could do it. You could not back down. You climbed the first 200 feet. Your rope was threaded through carabiners. Your belay partner held the other end of the rope. You eyed the sharp rocks far below. You were not scared. You started up the sketchiest part of the climb. You did not think this was crazy. You thought this was fun. You lived on adrenaline rushes. You focused on the next rock you would grab, and missed. You slipped. Your heel hit a ledge. You flipped upside down, free falling twenty feet until your rope went taut. You accelerated like a whip and slammed into the wall. Your chestnut exploded. Everything went black

On June 1, 2014 I took a twenty foot fall while rock climbing at Bon Echo Provincial Park in Northern Ontario. Although everything went black, I entered an altered state of consciousness and vividly remember this particular time and place...dangling upside down 200 hundred feet in the air feeling like my brain had exploded. After sitting on my couch, oh my beloved couch, for five months recovering, I decided to retire from rock climbing and pursue other interests like hiking and writing, both of which keep your feet on the ground!

*Kelly Buwalda lives in Dundas where her head is now exploding with ideas for writing. She is grateful every day that she is ALIVE!*

## Hamilton Gothic

*i.*

When the smokestacks are burning blue, that's the blast gas. When the smokestacks are burning orange, that's the coke ovens. When the smokestacks are burning the colour that you see behind your eyes after staring at a bright light for too long, that is the signal. You have trained every day for this.

*ii.*

You're out on a walk and an old lady asks you for a cigarette. This is the third time today; you wonder if you look like someone who smokes. You say no and breeze past, idly tapping your fingers against the side of the cheap King pack in your bag, wondering if she knows. You think about the mystery businessmen in their suits and exotic cars out front of the West Town diner, flicking cigarette butts out onto the street. No-one begs them. You do not meet their eyes.

*iii.*

Your street is closed for an art festival. There are painters and seamstresses, potters and printing houses, and two stages. On one stage, the shows listed include Harlan Pepper, Mimi Shaw and a special guest performance by Steven Page. As you pass the second stage, you see the young guy in plaid standing on stage clutching his guitar in stoic silence while everyone in the audience wails and cries. They are buying his CDs. Someone presses a hard plastic case into your hand, eyes red and chest heaving. It cuts your palm and you feel tears well up inside you.

*iv.*

You are on the Barton bus. The bus is full. The air is warm and it clouds your vision. The stop announcement board is broken and repeating itself. The bus is in front of the hospital. There is no way to tell how long you have been here. It is getting dark. Next stop: Barton at Victoria. Next stop: Barton at Victoria. Next stop: Barton at Victoria.

*v.*

You take off your coat halfway through the game and a man in your row turns to look at you. "No orange and black?" You're wearing blue and silver. It's not intentional, it's just a grey shirt and blue jeans. But everyone in your row is looking at you. Everyone in the section. Now the players have stopped playing and are staring straight up into the stands. You swear you can feel the weight of their eyes. "Oskee-wee-wee," says the man. His wife joins in. Soon the whole stadium is chanting as they stand up around your huddled body.

*vi.*

One night you wake up sweating. You head out up the escarpment stairs and when you finally get to the top, a peregrine is waiting. It's holding a mouse in its beak. The bird flips it towards you and lowers its body, head to the ground, wings out. There is the faint sound of blankets being shaken out. The leaves fall away from the trees, but they are not leaves at all. Only raptors. Only cormorants. Only mourning doves. They all lower their body with heads down and their wings out. They all have mice in their beaks. You have been chosen.

I came across some Tumblr posts of online writing about their hometowns in the style of Gothic authors. Hamilton has so much strangeness that it seemed only natural to speculate on what our city would be like with more supernatural activity.

*Alex Missett is 26 and was born and currently lives in Hamilton. She never really stops working noisily at her desk. She was the 2013 GritLit winner for Fiction*

*steelcityempathy.wordpress.com*

*Linda Tailon*

# cemetery



The photo was taken on a chilly afternoon in Berlin and a surprise discovery. I like the way the blonde girl is leading the viewer toward a chapel at the end of the path and the figure on the right looks as if he is dissecting that path.

*Linda Tailon is a photographer and artist who lives in Hamilton and Toronto. She loves to play with energy and tension in her work and is inspired by texture. She finds beauty in architecture and visits cemeteries often.*

## **Scenes from the Wrong Side of the Bar, #2**

London is a big city, a very big city – eight million people coming and going about their lives. You just never know who you will run into.

Mid-afternoon, it is quiet in the Camden Stores. Only one or two punters looking over their racing forms, waiting for the 4:20 to begin at Kempton Park. The door opens and in walk two men, one with a poor boy cap slung low over his brow, the other hatless and tall. Up to the bar and, in an unmistakable Mancunian accent, order two pints of Guinness. You pour the pints, your man without the cap pays and a quiet conversation ensues between the two of them.

Standing behind the bar and casually paying attention, there is something familiar about the man in the cap. Something you cannot quite put a finger on but strong enough you cannot let it go either. Perhaps because it is quiet and you are slightly bored – one can only polish pint glasses for so long. Still, you know this man. He is so familiar. His voice resonates in you, brings you back ... but to where?

Slowly, as you work the data coming in your brain it begins to come together. You are sure you know exactly who is sitting at the bar talking quietly to his friend. Lean over, ask your equally as-bored-reading-Hello!-magazine-smoking-a-rolled-cigarette-Dutch co-worker:

“Am I crazy or is that ...”

“Yes it is.”

“Really?!? That’s really ...”

“Yes, it is, there is a studio around the corner.”

“I can’t believe it. I can’t believe he is ...”

“He comes in every so often, hasn’t been in for a while though.”

You turn away from the still-bored-still-reading-Hello!-magazine-smoking-another-rolled-cigarette-un-impressed-in-a-been-there-done-that -sort-of-way- Dutch co-worker to figure out a way to make contact with him; to say hello; to say how much you love his music, how much it meant to you. How his lyrics helped you navigate your disaffected youth: Morrissey!

Turn around to see two half-consumed, abandoned pints of Guinness at an empty bar. See the doors swing shut and watch the poor boy cap bob along the top of the frosted plate glass window at a hurried pace. In the exuberance at recognizing an idol your conversation became increasingly unsubtle, your voice increasingly audible.

Yes, London is a big city, a very big city where you just never know who you will run into. Or who you will run out of the pub.

My wife and I went to England to help friends manage their pub, which lead to managing our own pub. I took notes. The names have been changed to protect the innocent and guilty alike.

*Ed Shaw likes to write. He has published two volumes of poetry. He is slowly working on a compilation of stories about his time behind the bar of an English pub.*

*fortyteenyearold.wordpress.com (if he ever gets around to updating it.)*



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