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McClatchy reviews The North End Poems

a raunchy collection of narrative poetry that exudes masculinity and harsh words without mercy

KARLA MASS: The week's most talked about book

by **Karla Mass**
Friday, April 18, 2008
McClatchy Interactive
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"THE NORTH END POEMS" BY
MICHAEL KNOX

Nick Macfarlane and his friends K, Scotty and Ronnie are four of the coolest characters to ever set foot in the world of dramatic poetry. The pack are inseparable and unlucky in love, with the exception of Nick, who is crazy in love with Carla, a smart girl from the other side of the tracks.

The guys share barroom brawls and stale relationships with fathers who are wounded by grief and regret; and here in Hamilton, close attachments are often ignored or avoided. Hard work and booze (Nick calls it aggravation in a bottle), are substitutes for love and loyalty.

Poet Michael Knox launches a raunchy collection of narrative poetry that exudes masculinity and harsh words without mercy. Characters bear their souls with sharp voices and relentless, no-holds-barred dialogue. His use of metaphors and imagery are as sharp as his characters' tongues: The Macfarlanes, The Boys, The Girls and The Rest. They have something to say and even more to reveal about themselves and each other. Gut-wrenching, first-person accounts of life in and outside of Hamilton are powerful.

There's not much to the north end of Hamilton. The factory town boasts steel-toe-boot-wearing, blue-collar workers

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18,

2008 - 7:00PM

ECW poet Jacqueline Turner to appear at UBC's Robson Reading Series

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2008 - 7:00PM

Anne Emery at Spring Garden Road Memorial Public Library

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2008 - 11:30AM

Martin Hunter at The Word on the Street Toronto

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2008 - 11:30AM

Jonathan Bennett at The Word on the Street Toronto

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2008 - 2:00PM

Anne Emery at Word on the Street Halifax

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2008 - 4:30PM

Derek McCormack at The Word on the Street Toronto

who punch a clock at the industrial steel mill; ships that dock at a nearby harbour in clear view of the industrial yard; and railroad tracks that criss-cross throughout the neighborhood.

Nick spends a lot of his free time in a boxing ring with his sparring partner, Lincoln. This tough guy knows how to throw a punch, and he provides Nick with an outlet for his pent-up frustrations ... something most of the young men living here desperately need.

Boxing

Nick picks headgear from the rack
pulls the moist lump of it around his head,
pumps two sixteen-ounce gloves together
and slips through the ropes.

Lincoln hasn't even got his wrists
wrapped,
he sits on a bench and doesn't look once
at Nick's footwork while he binds them.

The only time Lincoln is expressionless
is sparring. The stark beel clenches his
focus,
punctuates the present,
and he flies to meet Nick in the centre.

Marriage
Ronnie

I learned marriage from my father
though I'm not married

When you're with someone you hate
you accept and forget
to stay sane ...

Knox examines fatherhood and love under a poetic microscope. He dissects pent-up feelings and unresolved issues that permeate the relationships between Nick and his father, Jimmy, and Ronnie and his father, Ronan. Ronnie and Jen have fought since the beginning of their relationship and now they simply avoid each other, while Johnny and Helen attempt to move forward, each convinced that the other stole their youth. Stanzas end as they began ... with characters stuck in a state of complacency.

The characters and conflict are so familiar in Knox's lyrics, readers may catch a glimpse of themselves in similar unhealthy attachments. His poetry is therapeutic and a reminder that difficult love is sometimes unavoidable. Knox delivers a knock out.

APRIL IS NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

The North End Poems
Author: Michael Knox
Publisher: ECW Press
Publication Date: June 2008



**The
North
End
Poems**

by
**Michael
Knox**

\$16.95
CAD
DETAILS



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