

### MINGUS IN THE PRESS



#### Front Page Masthead:

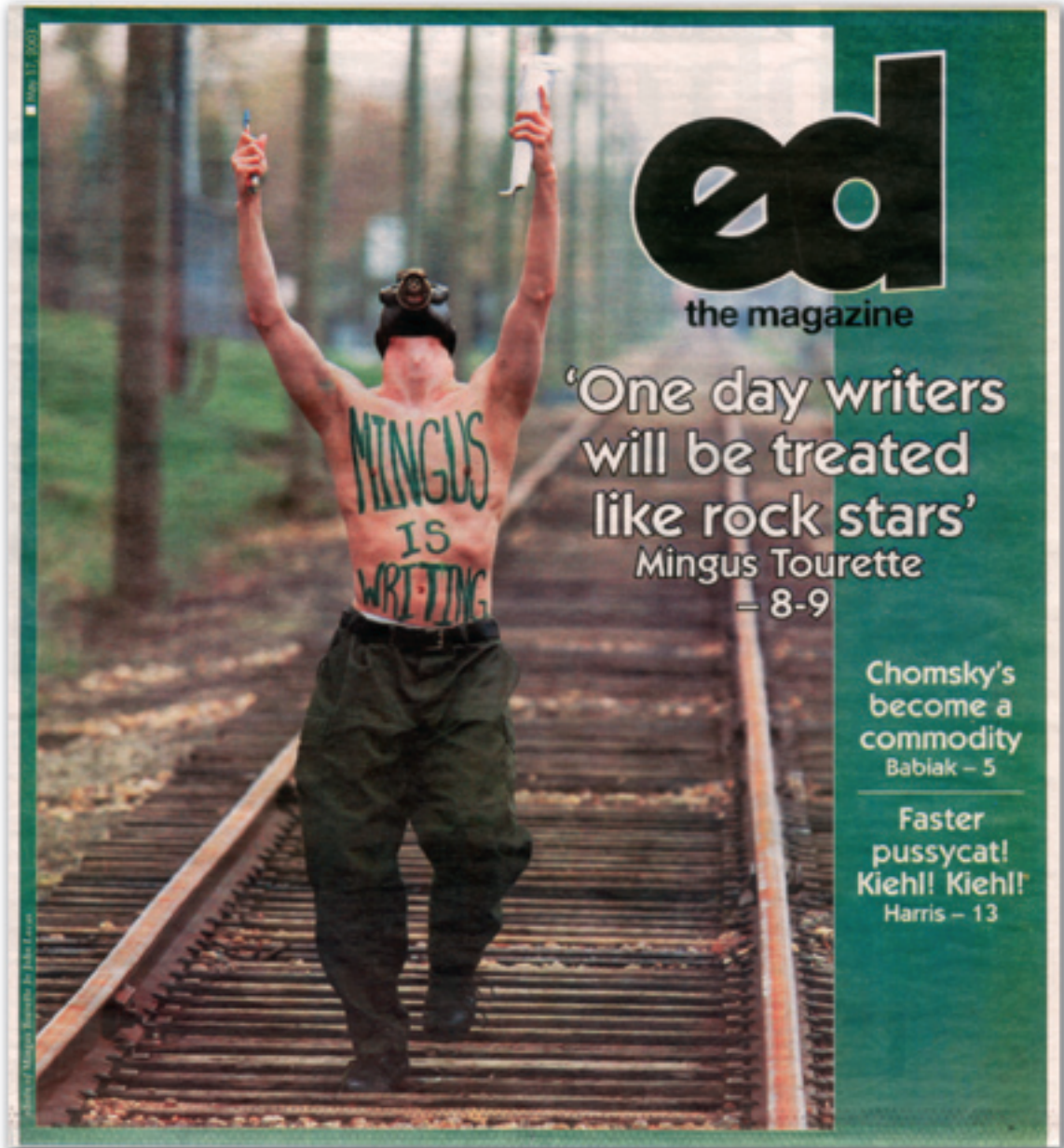
The Edmonton Journal



#### Feature Article: ed the magazine

A Publication of The Edmonton Journal.

MINGUS IN THE PRESS



Front Page: *ed the magazine*

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MINGUS IN THE PRESS

art ATTACKS  
eye for the unusual

Writing  
on the wall



**Grffiti on pavement**  
Outside the Edmonton Remand Centre, 9660 104th Ave.

Across from the Remand Centre, chalk and spray-painted graffiti are scribbled onto a sidewalk south of the 87th St. train overpass. But the graffiti is created by friends of prisoners, sending messages to the inmates. Those who take the time to cross 87th and climb the stairway on the east side of the bridge will see brighter and bolder graffiti on a path along the north side of the jail.

University of Toronto professor Doug Frayne studies graffiti. He said this phenomenon is quite normal. "Whenever you have prisons, and the prisoners can see the people outside, they'll have sign language, or artwork, or paintings on cars that they drive past," Frayne said. "This is like sending smoke signals to somebody in particular. Probably it is quite personal between the individuals and the prisoners inside."



**Welcome greeting in Chinatown**  
Lucky Town Market, 10402 97th St.

An image of a bustling square on the Lucky Town Market serving in Chinatown shows a woman standing with a straw hat slung over her arm. She looks beyond the fruit and veggie on display before her into the intersection of 97th Street and 106th Avenue with a peaceful look on her face.

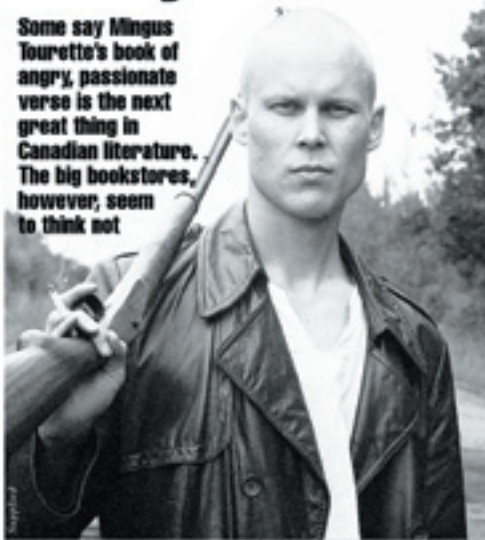
Behind her is a crowded walkway leading to Angkor Wat, a Buddhist temple in Cambodia. The temple, built as a Hindu place of worship in the 12th century, is now part of the Angkor Archaeological Park world heritage site.

The sewing depicts life and architecture for removed from that found in Edmonton, a city only just approaching its centennial. It serves equally as a welcome to those visiting Chinatown to capture a taste of home and as a reminder of Canada's varied heritage.

Julie Molins ■  
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Poetry in furious motion

Some say Mingus Tourette's book of angry, passionate verse is the next great thing in Canadian literature. The big bookstores, however, seem to think not



Mingus Tourette and his poetic license

Mingus Tourette may be the most emboldening voice to emerge on the Canadian poetry scene in decades.

The 29-year-old Edmonton poet, who was profiled in **ed** a year ago, wields his pen like a weapon in verse after unrepentant verse in his new book *Must* — a collection he hopes people will care enough about to someday broeze or burn.

The angry intellectual's verses have already won over one leading commentator, book television's Daniel Richler (son of Canadian book icon Mordecai), who says he was struck "again and again with their steely and imaginative violence."

In one passage, for example, Tourette writes:

after the hiss of burning sugar cubes  
it's all about the stomach pump  
and the violence  
you  
it's a bad night  
when I'm phoning the hospital  
and telling them to beef up security  
for about 12:30  
cause I'm on my way.  
And in another:  
simply said  
I empathize with everyone these days  
for fighting, indeed — we got to be at  
the murdering eye-by-eye.



**Must**  
Mingus Tourette,  
with foreword by  
Mordecai Richler  
32 pages, \$14.95,  
paperback  
Zygote Publishing  
Available September  
2008. Preview at  
www.must.com or  
www.zygotepublishing.com

Tourette's verses, which attack religion, politics and even that "Victorian fruitcake" Billy Shakespeare, have "something to mortally offend everyone," Richler says approvingly.

And this gritty breed of poetry may be the vanguard of an emerging Can Lit west, according to a communications professor at Simon Fraser University.

"You get the feeling this is a new energy coming to authors and publishers," says Rowland Lorimer, who studies publishing and its relationship to cultural industries. "We're really seeing the beginning of the changing of the old guard."

Young, angry and scrappy describes this new generation of Canadian poets, most of whom wouldn't be recognized outside their local haunts. Inspired by kindred spirits like Canadian urban poet Jon Paul

Florentino, they are relentless in their pursuit of mainstream success.

Each one is Holden Casfield, Charles Bukowski and Fight Club's Tyler Durden rolled into a stick of lyrical dynamite. And each one must reconcile dueling senses of excitement and resentment over North America's culture of celebrity.

"Poets are third-rate citizens," Tourette says, sucking on a Camel cigarette.

"It's f---ing horrible that who Britney Spears is dating is more important than what George Browning, poet laureate, is writing about."

Lorimer believes an even bigger roadblock to wider awareness of these writers is the hesitation of major retailers to keep such controversial company. But there may be a positive side to the poets' need to tirelessly advance their own cause.

"It's more legitimate to have come through a channel that doesn't really exist and to have pushed hard to get media attention," he says. "If Random House published (your book), it wouldn't have the same edge, or be seen as so important."

Richler says there seems to be a de facto censorship on the part of big bookstores that rarely order titles from small presses. Subsequently, "there's a significant gap between the amount of poetry published in Canada and the amount of attention it receives."

For Tourette, being shut out of Chapters and Amazon for lack of a distributor means *Must* could die before it has the chance to find an audience. Indie retailers like Audryns and Greenwood may be the book's only lifeline — if you don't count Tourette's personal website-com book store, www.must.com.

The steady-eyed author says he'll do whatever it takes to get the collection into the public consciousness.

"There will be one-night poetry events at small-town, gin joints, there will be screaming matches in the ram-fuelled saloons of the big cities," Tourette says. "You just need to put the right spin on it and put a little bit of rock-star appeal into it."

In 2005, for example, the Griffin Poetry Prize made front-page news when presenter Scot Thompson concluded his monologue by waggling a sextoy in poet Anne Michaels's face. At the time, Michaels was so appalled she left her seat. But these days, Tourette says he'd fully expect her to nip the toy from Thompson's hand and beat the hell out of him with it.

"Cause as far as I see," he says, "poets are done being f---ed with."

Misty Harris ■  
CanWest News Service

**BACKGROUND**  
Mingus Tourette was profiled in **ed** in May 2007. www.edmontonjournal.com, click on Online Extras

ed the magazine

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