

## EDITORIAL

IN “FLIGHT FROM THE CONGO,” George Elliott Clarke reminds us that Halifax’s leafy, pleasing Stairs Street—a mere twenty-minute walk from my own home—is named for William G. Stairs, a Halifax-born explorer who murdered any number of African men while in the Congo in 1887 as part of Henry Morton Stanley’s infamously violent Emin Pasha Relief Expedition. Though the events described by Clarke took place 125 years ago, some of the things he describes still resonate: Halifax continues to be a place where one can appreciate the “hammering clamour of bells,” “munch Sicilian bergamot pears,” and “take a lass.”

Reading Clarke’s description of a group of men who abduct a woman, feed her liquor and rape her, I cannot help but think of Rehtaeh Parsons, a local girl who took her own life last April after allegedly being raped by four boys who later circulated online photographs of the incident. She was seventeen when she died.

Peter Austin’s poem, “Epitaph,” describes the gut-wrenchingly similar events leading to the 2010 suicide of American teen, Phoebe Prince, who hanged herself after prolonged cyber-bullying: the “practiced ease” with which Austin imagines her schoolmates turning “to text / And phone and Facebook” so as to circulate sexual slurs is all the more horrifying because it feels so close to home.

But on this deliciously crisp, sunny September afternoon in a city that is also home to Canada’s oldest farmer’s market, and is currently humming with the raucous joy of newly-returned students, there are other things in this volume that are also close to home. First among these is Robert Watson’s “Mr. Macintosh,” a sweet poem about the remembered kindness of an elderly man who shares “an eponymous apple” with a young boy for whom the taste of apples subsequently recalls delight and “shy innocence.” And so, next weekend when I join the throngs of students sorting through bushels of Macs at the market, I will smile and spare a thought for “Mr. MacIntosh.” And the next time I hear Halifax’s “hammering clamour of bells” and watch the “tatters of foam” thrown upon her beaches, I will spare

a thought for the women whose lives have been taken in this vibrant, green city that was also Stairs’.

Carrie Dawson