

A Review of Issue 7, Summer 2008, in *Broken Pencil* 41  
By Christopher Pratt

*The Puritan* is Ottawa's quarterly fiction magazine – or it used to be, seeing as though the editors have now widened the journal's availability to include Toronto. The cover of the seventh issue of *The Puritan* features a red hospital bracelet floating over a black void – a fairly spare departure from recent editions. The choice soon becomes clear: the stories are almost all united by a strong attention to mental and bodily harm, taking place in and out of hospitals, STD clinics, crash sites, slaughterhouses, and psych wards. Few of the included works offer happy endings; this is strong, dark, (mostly) realist fiction that doesn't pull the punches. The fiction varies in tone from terse, 1<sup>st</sup> person minimalism (Mark McCawley, Stephen Leonard, Laurie Graham), forays into the comically surreal (Steve Venright, Stuart Ross, Elaine McCluskey), gambits with fragmented timeline (Erich Mulhall, Jeanie Keogh), to full-blown, traditional narrative (John Lavery, John Ottey, Jessica Wilbanks). No interviews this time around, unfortunately.