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Urban romp not for the squeamish

HOGTOWN BONBONS

By Greg Kramer

Riverbank Press, 150 pages, \$14.99

REVIEWED BY PETER O'BRIEN

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book," said Oscar Wilde. "Books are well written, or badly written. That is all."

Readers wanting to pick up Greg Kramer's *Hogtown Bonbons* would be well advised to keep that snippet of wisdom in mind. This book is not for the squeamish or prudish.

Originally serialized in *Xtra!*, Canada's gay and lesbian newspaper, the book is a wild ride through a frenetic, drug-addled, maniacal world. We follow street-wise characters Phoebe Spadina, Mrs. Adelaide Simcoe, Gerrard Pape and a cartographer's assortment of others through their social and sexual escapades around the city.

There is a Church Street County

Fair which may or may not be the site of a murder, a cross-country bus ride involving a slowly rotting fish, a lesbian named Liberty Hanna who falls into a state of temporary hyper-heterosexuality, and a wild party at The Gentleman's Quarters infiltrated by a group of non-gentlemen. Oh yes, and a "post-gendered omnivestite," a group of crazed Christians (the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latent Gay Saints) and the Y2K concerns of the lawfirm Brunswick, Tecumseh & Yonge.

Above all, or perhaps beneath it all, there is a great collection of vignettes within these illustrated pages. Kramer, author of *The Pursemonger of Fugu* and *Couchwarmer*, is a master of hallucinatory humour and effervescent insights into what makes us flit or grovel from one adventure to the next.

If you want to meander through a comedy of manners or fight Germanic angst, look elsewhere. If you'd rather read a fun book populated by colourful characters on the fringes of big-city life — with sprinkles of Thomas De Quincey and William Burroughs — this may be what you're looking for.

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