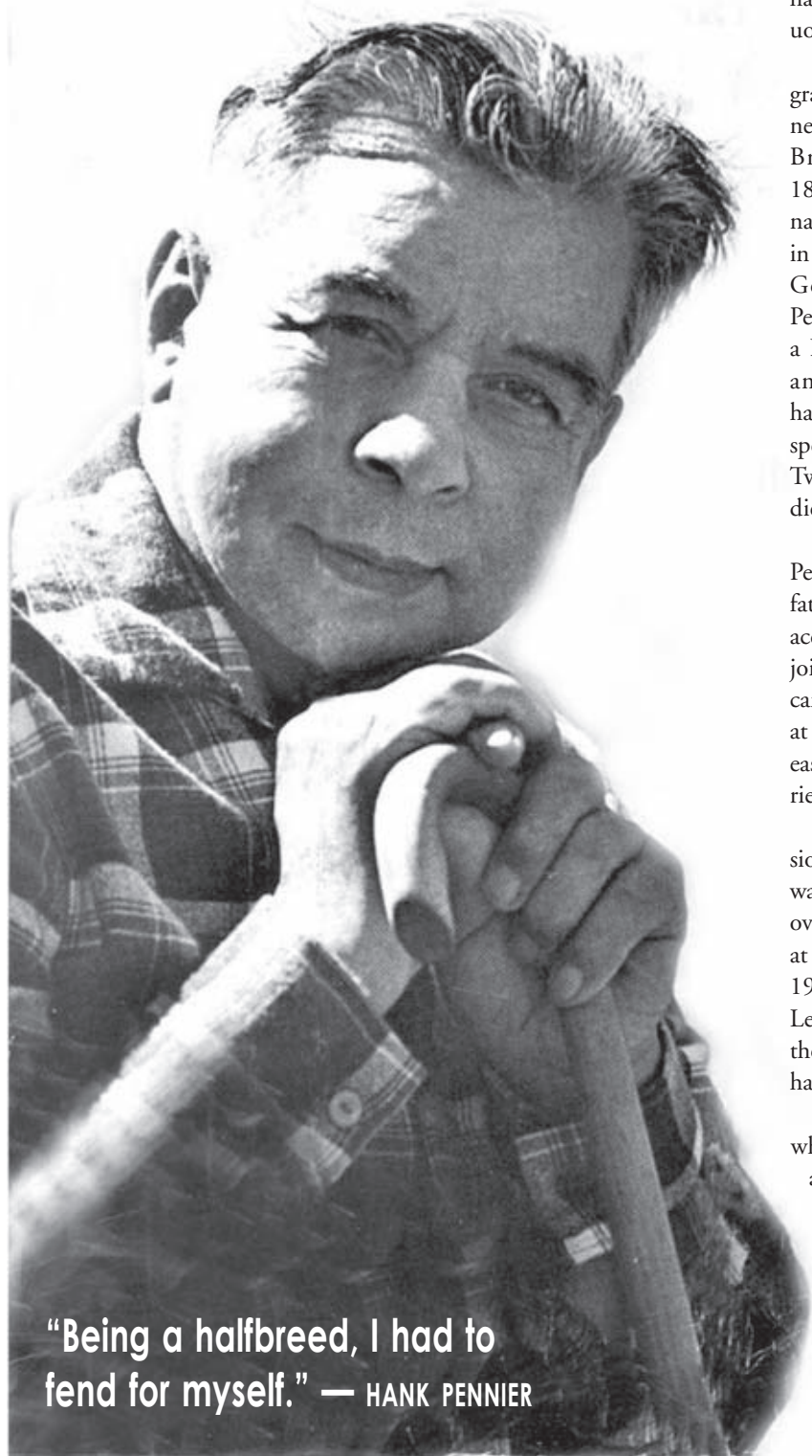


This article is the sixth in a series celebrating enduring B.C. books.

Mixed blood & mixed feelings

One of the first unfettered Métis memoirs from British Columbia—not a white-washed “as told to” biography—is *Chiefly Indian: The Warm and Witty Story of a British Columbia Halfbreed Logger* (1972) by **Henry Pennier**, a Fraser Valley logger and raconteur.



“Being a halfbreed, I had to fend for myself.” — HANK PENNIER

After languishing on the edges of political correctness for three decades, this rough-hewn classic has been rescued from oblivion and repackaged and retitled by a scholarly press as ‘Call Me Hank’: *A Stólo Man’s Reflections on Logging, Living, and Growing Old* (UTP \$24.95), edited by **Keith Thor Carlson** and **Kristina Fagan**.

“About the only good thing about being a halfbreed,” he once said is, “I could buy liquor.”

Hank Pennier was the grandson of a Quebec businessman who had arrived in British Columbia in the 1870s, then left his Aboriginal wife and their son George in order to return to Quebec. George Pennier, Henry Pennier’s father, grew up on a Harrison River homestead and married another halfbreed [Pennier’s term and spelling] named Alice Davis. Two of their eight children died.

Not long after Hank Pennier was born in 1904, his father was killed in a hunting accident. Raised on an 87-acre homestead adjoining the Chehalis Reservation, Pennier became friendly with his new step-grandfather at Union Bar, a settlement about three miles east of Hope, and heard many Aboriginal stories from him.

Pennier was an altar boy at St. Mary’s mission school, operated by the Oblates, but he was forced leave that school at age 13 due to over-enrolment. He attended a public school at Hope until age 15, then started logging in 1922. Two years later he married Margaret Leon, “a Harrison River Indian too except there is just a little Chinese in her,” and they had eight children.

“And all of us are halfbreeds,” he said, “not white men and not Indian yet we look Indian and everybody but Indians takes us for Indians.” It was Pennier’s great hope that one day racial differentiations could be eradicated, “but I know I won’t be around then. Too bad because then there won’t be any halfbreeds either and that will be a damn good thing.”

By the 1960s, serious logging injuries had left Pennier reliant on a crutch and cane,

unemployable, but buoyed by a lively sense of humour and full of stories as a rustic philosopher. Although he was reduced to bingo, Reader’s Digest, television and social assistance, Pennier retained a proud sense of accomplishment for having worked extremely hard and for having gained recognition as an excellent field lacrosse player.

In his late 60s, while living on Nicomen Trunk Road, east of Mission, Pennier received a visit from a Welsh-born linguistics professor from Simon Fraser University, E. Wyn Roberts,

who hoped to tape-record some “Indian stories” for a linguistic project involving the Halkomelen language.

Pennier was congenial but not easily controlled. He basically wanted to tell his own stories instead. After several meetings and textual collaborations, Roberts essentially abandoned his initial plans for his linguistic approach and decided to serve as Pennier’s unofficial agent.

Impressed by Pennier’s intelligence and wit, Roberts approached Jack

Richards, an editor at the *Vancouver Sun*, suggesting a weekly series featuring Henry Pennier’s anecdotes and stories. Richards, in turn, connected the Roberts/Pennier duo with West Vancouver publisher and photographer Herb McDonald. *Chiefly Indian* appeared when Hank Pennier was 68. He died when he was 91.

Pennier’s self-penned memoir, complete with some original spellings, erred on the side of being colourful and frank, but it provided many heartfelt comments by Pennier on his halfbreed status.

“Outside of my work I could not join the white society, socially, and if I went to an Indian party and there was liquor involved I was taking a chance of being jailed regardless of whether I had supplied them with liquor or not,” he wrote.

“If I had an Indian in the car and also a sealed bottle of whiskey or a sealed case of beer and a cop stops me on a routine check I would be charged with kniving [conniving] which has several meanings like the intention of giving him a drink sooner or later.”

0-8020-9426-0

“And all of us are halfbreeds,” he said, “not white men and not Indian yet we look Indian and everybody but Indians takes us for Indians.”

BC

BOOKWORLD

Autumn Issue Vol. 20, No. 3

Publisher/Writer: **Alan Twigg**
Editor/Production: **David Lester**

Publication Mail Agreement #40010086
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: BC BookWorld, 3516 W. 13th Ave., Vancouver, BC V6R 2S3

Produced with the sponsorship of **Pacific BookWorld News Society**.
Publications Mail Registration No. 7800.
BC BookWorld ISSN: 1701-5405

Advertising & editorial:
BC BookWorld, 3516 W. 13th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V6R 2S3

Tel/Fax: **604-736-4011**
Email: available on request.
Annual subscription: **\$12.84**

Contributors: Grant Shilling, Mark Forsythe, Sheila Munro, Joan Givner, Sara Cassidy, Louise Donnelly, Hannah Main-van der Kamp, Heather Ramsay. Barry Peterson (photos).

Writing not otherwise credited is by staff.

Proofreaders: Wendy Atkinson, Betty Twigg
Design: Get-to-the-Point Graphics

Deliveries: Ken Reid

We acknowledge the assistance of Canada Council and the Province of British Columbia, through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women’s Services.



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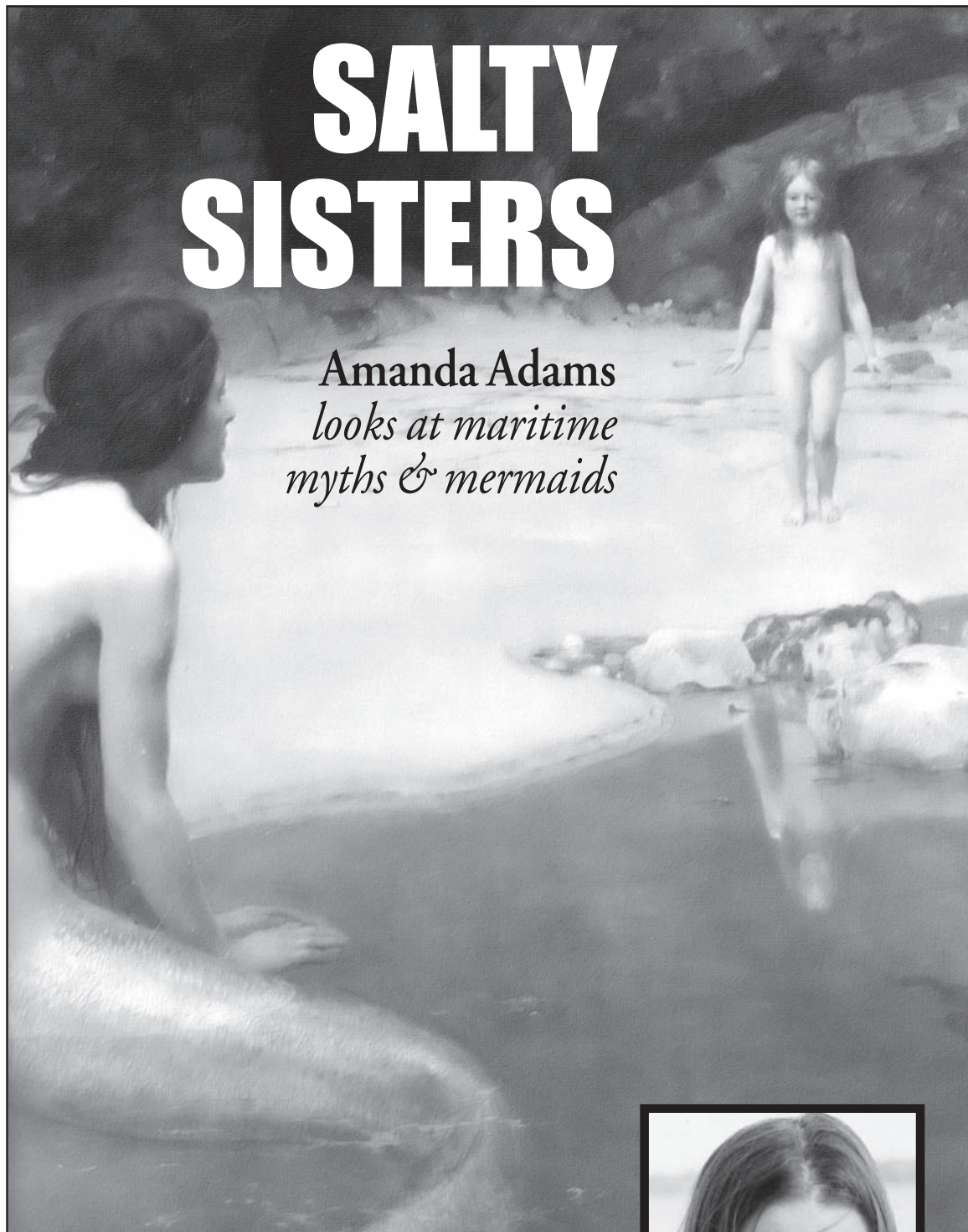
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Amanda Adams
looks at maritime
myths & mermaids



“Do I dare to eat a peach? I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach. I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. I do not think they will to me.”—T.S. ELIOT



Amanda Adams: No boyfriends, please

The mermaids were aloof in T.S. Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, but their sisterly songs have long enchanted **Amanda Adams**, a UBC-trained anthropologist who has gathered images

and lore for a cross-cultural study, *A Mermaid’s Tale* (Greystone \$32.95).

“All of us are attracted to the mermaid’s open-sea liberation,” she says. “We know how freeing it feels to swim topless in the ocean, sea foam pushing up under our arms like a housecat nudging for affection.

“We feel the wet hair down our backs and the shape of our shoulders in the setting sun. These ephemeral moments of connection to the air, the sea, the light, are the kind you experience when you’re alone or in the company of women friends, not when your boyfriend is sitting behind you on the beach, drinking a beer and waiting for your return. They require a sense of the infinite. As does the mermaid.”

Adams blames the medieval church in twelfth-century Europe for transforming sirens and mermaids into evil temptresses. According to Adams, the mermaid always possessed elements of danger and moodiness, but she had not yet been acquainted “with passionate sex and an insatiable hunger for love exceeding all human limits—not until, that is, some leaders of the clergy decided she should be.”

1-55365-117-0

Risk peace



Mary-Wynne Ashford

EVEN WHEN SHE WAS PRESIDENT OF THE International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War—which won the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize—Victoria physician **Mary-Wynne Ashford** knew disarmament wasn’t the only answer.

“We have to examine the roots of war and try to understand why, for over 5,000 years, human groups have repeatedly chosen violence to dominate others,” she says. “And perhaps more importantly, we must investigate what makes some societies choose not to use violence to dominate others.”

With futurist and sustainability consultant **Guy Dauncey**, Ashford has highlighted non-violent success stories of heroic individuals who have risked peace in **Enough Blood Shed: 101 Solutions to Violence, Terror and War** (New Society \$23.95). It focuses on how ordinary people make a difference.

“Working with Guy Dauncey has been a great pleasure,” she says, “because he is not just a problem solver, he is a problem seeker. He loves finding an issue that needs to be turned on its head and addressed in a new way.”

0-86571-527-0

Ruby, don’t take your gun to town

Raised in Surrey, **Ranj Dhalwal** has had more than a little first hand experience with the Indo-Canadian “underworld,” the subject of his debut novel, **Daaku** (New Star \$21), the Punjabi word for outlaw.

“When you open this novel you enter the daaku’s world,” he says, “and when you close it you leave it—unlike the life of a real daaku whose only exit is death.” The story follows Ruby Pandhar, “a teenaged street soldier gunning for a generalship,” who eventually struggles to extricate himself from the world of thugs, drug lords and terrorists.

Born in Vancouver in 1976, Dhalwal says he is disturbed by the number of Indo-Canadian gangland murders in Canada and believes stories such as *Daaku* are necessary to raise public awareness. He devotes some of his spare time to organizations that deal with at-risk Indo-Canadian youth.

1-55420-027-X



Ranj Dhalwal

YEAR OF THE DOG

“PEOPLE BORN IN 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994 AND 2006 ARE ALL BORN UNDER THE SIGN of the dog,” says **Stanley Coren**, citing the 12-year-cycle Chinese calendar, “and are supposed to have certain dog behaviours and personalities. This makes them honest, loyal and champions of justice. They can also be stubborn, worry too much and dislike crowds or noisy parties.”

Stanley Coren’s books about dogs have been translated into many languages and he has appeared on television programs that include *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Good Morning America*, *Dateline NBC* and *20/20*.

While hosting a national television program called *Good Dog!*, Cohen also teaches at the Vancouver Dog Obedience Training Club and currently shares his home with a cavalier King Charles spaniel, a Nova Scotia duck tolling retriever and a beagle. The UBC-based neuro-psychologist has also just published **Why Do Dogs Have Wet Notes?** (Kids Can \$14.95). According to Coren, dogs generally have an intelligence level on par with a two-year-old child. They can learn more than 100 words and signals; cats can manage about one dozen commands with the intelligence of an 18-month-old human.

1-55337-657-9



Stanley Coren

“Agents now tell their fiction-writing clients to write narrative non-fiction, compelling stories of autism, alcoholism, abuse and Alzheimer’s (and we’re not even through the A’s).”

— MARTIN LEVIN, BOOKS EDITOR, THE GLOBE & MAIL

BY JOAN GIVNER

A Kidnapped Mind (Dundurn \$24.99) by **Pamela Richardson** with **Jane Broweleit** and **Walking After Midnight** (Raincoast \$32.95) by **Katy Hutchison** both fall into the category allegedly recommended by literary agents [see quote above]. They are compelling non-fiction narratives that revolve around turbulent teenagers.

Pamela Richardson’s story begins when her former husband gains custody of their four-year-old son. As a criminal lawyer, his legal knowledge and his influential friends enabled him to sway the presiding judge. Although this is a highly subjective first person account, written after the former husband and son have died, it seems clear that Richardson’s depiction of the arrogance and blindness of the judicial system has some foundation.

Judges persisted in favouring the father, in spite of evidence of his alcoholism and neglect. Their rulings were bolstered by reports by court-appointed psychologists who recommended that the child remain with his father even while they acknowledged the father had “a drinking problem” and suffered from Adult Attention Deficit Disorder. From the beginning, he used the child as a means of tormenting his former wife, obstructed her legal access, and poisoned her relationship with her son.

Some brave friends testified to the father’s misdeeds while many others (including one of the mother’s lawyers) backed off, allegedly intimidated by his threats of violence. When the courts belatedly recognized the damage facilitated by earlier decisions, it was too late.

Court decisions can be reversed but not the years of damage they have caused. Richardson brought in experts on Parental Alienation Syndrome and used her considerable wealth in a last desperate attempt to force him into rehab programs. She never gave up the battle for her son, but she was helpless to prevent his downward spiral. At the age of sixteen he jumped to his death from the Granville Street bridge. The book-jacket description of this story as “heart-breaking” is no hyperbole.

In contrast to that downward spiral, Katy Hutchison begins her true story with a tragic event and proceeds upward through healing and redemption. The event, which received a great deal of media coverage, was the murder of her husband by teenagers at an out-of-control party in Squamish.

Bob McIntosh, a lawyer and captain of the Canadian triathlon team, was celebrating New Year’s Eve 1997 with his

family and friends, when he decided he should check out a disturbance at the home of a neighbour who was away on holiday. He found more than 100 teenagers, high on liquor and drugs, engaged in a rampage. One partygoer struck McIntosh on the head, knocking him to the ground, another kicked him in the head. McIntosh died instantly.

The core of this book is Katy Hutchison’s determination to endow the pointless waste of a life with some transcendental meaning, and to move beyond the melodrama of villain/victim. She started out, equipped with compelling visual aids, speaking to high-school students against the dangerous habits that lead to the death of an outstanding athlete and lawyer, to the bereavement of four-year-old twins, and to two teenagers being convicted of murder.

Recognizing that her husband’s murderer was a mere teenager, capable of rehabilitation, and with a suffering mother of his own, she reached out to him. She followed up a video message to him with a meeting in which she repeated her message: “All I want for you is what you took from Bob—a happy and productive life.”

She succeeded in establishing a close relationship with her husband’s killer, supporting his parole appeal, and allowing him to participate in her speaking engagements. Her work in restorative justice has garnered various awards such as The Cour-

age to Come Back Award and The Women of Distinction Award.

These books are not without flaws. They are frequently self-indulgent, sentimental, humourless and self-serving. Yet they have the merit of focusing attention on our legal and justice systems. Both will likely gain attention in the media, largely because both women have televisual potential—a fact exploited by the placing of their photographs on the front as well as the back flap of their book jackets. In the case of the Raincoast book, video clips of the author performing on camera were distributed to the media; in the case of the Dundurn book, the main author was described as a former television host. Their stories will gener-

ate lively discussions among readers, and particularly among earnest book club members. No doubt they both have a good chance to get onto *Oprah Winfrey*. But the phenomenon of which they are part invites certain questions.

The moral fables and cautionary tales of the Middle Ages, the saints’ lives, the conduct books of the nineteenth century, have always enjoyed a wide appeal. Only recently, however, have agents touted such books above literary fiction, as Mr. Levin suggests. And the displacement and devaluation of literary fiction (as of all other art forms) is a worrisome trend. It might be useful if agents were to remind their clients that along with such worthy non-fiction subjects as Parental Alienation Syndrome and Restorative Justice, they consider promoting literary fiction and risking some restorative creativity.

Whatever high-minded purposes lie behind these books—consolation, inspiration, moral instruction—they are not strong as literature. I wonder if the proliferation of such books feeds a genuine hunger in the reading public? Or does it fulfill a need created by public relations and marketing departments?

Kidnapped 1-55002-624-0;
Walking 1-57224-503-4

Joan Givner has written on biography and autobiography for many years.

TELEVISUAL AUTHORS WITH TRAGIC TALES

History belongs to the survivors and those who can get on Oprah.

Katy Hutchison (above) is recovering after her husband’s murder; Pamela Richardson (right) is recovering from the suicide of her son. Both have remarried; both are going on tour.



END PAPERS

Annabel Lyon
from Danielle
Schaub's
*Reading Writers
Reading*
(U. of Alberta)

D is for Danielle

Having completed her exhausting task of meeting and photographing more than 160 Canadian authors, Israel-based Canlit instructor **Danielle Schaub** has finally released *Reading Writers Reading: Canadian Authors' Reflections* (U. of Alberta \$60) with 36 B.C. profiles, including relative newcomers Lisa Grekul, **Annabel Lyon** (pictured above), Hiromi Goto and Vera Manuel and veteran standbys such as Spider Robinson, George Bowering, Nick Bantock and William New.

0-88864-459-0

E is for Edwards

Melissa Edwards has collected full-colour, quirky maps of Canada that have appeared in *Geist* magazine since 1995 for *The Geist Atlas of Canada* (Arsenal \$24.95), a compendium of place names according to subjects such as meat, doughnuts, Atwood, world's largest and hockey. 1-55152-216-0

F is for Farrell

A two-time winner of the *Vancouver Courier* fiction contest and a recipient of the 2002 Maclean-Hunter Endowment Prize for non-fiction, **Jenn Farrell** has now published *Sugar Bush*

& *Other Stories: Stories of Sex, Discovery, & Emancipation on the Canadian Shield* (Anvil \$18), a frankly confessional collection of short fiction. 1-895636-76-0

G is for Gustafson

Paula Gustafson, who was born in Abbotsford, died on July 11, 2006 after a brief battle with cancer. As one of Canada's foremost writers about crafts, she produced a monograph, *Salish Weaving* (1980) and edited two volumes of *Craft Perception and Practice: A Canadian Discourse* (2002, 2005) in her capacity as editor of *Artichoke* magazine. She was a recipient of the first Jean A. Chalmers Fund for the Crafts Award for critical writing on Canadian crafts and produced a history of the Crafts Association of British Columbia called *Mapping the Terrain*.

H is for Hancock

After a 25-year-hiatus, outgoing animal lover **Lyn Hancock** has resurrected her animal companion story, *Tabasco: The Saucy Raccoon* (Sono \$12.95), illustrated by **Lorraine Kemp**, to recall how she once took her newborn pet raccoon on a cross-Canada book promotion tour. It is published by **Diane Morriss**, who remembered reading *There's a Raccoon in my Parka*, Hancock's bestseller about her first pet raccoon, Rocky, written back when Morriss was a child. 1-55039-156-9

A is for Adderson

Nine more stories from **Caroline Adderson** add to her growing reputation for compassionate writing in *Pleased to Meet You* (Thomas Allen \$26.95), her fourth work of fiction since 1993. Twice winner of the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, Adderson has been lured into the screenwriting game of late, but continues to gain critical acclaim for her fiction. Her new book will be reviewed in our next issue. 0-88762-129-5

B is for Birney

Esther Birney was a substantial literary character in British Columbia beyond her marriage to **Earle Birney**, managing a long-running series of literary lectures at Brock House. A major contributor to **Elsbeth Cameron's** 1994 biography of Birney, which depicted him as an egocentric womanizer, Esther Birney died on July 20, 2006. A new anthology of Earle Birney's poetry is due this fall, to be reviewed next issue.

C is for Carolan

In 2005, **Trevor Carolan** began co-producing a revival of the *Pacific Rim Review of Books* with **Richard Olafson** of Ekstasis Editions in Victoria. This year he has accepted a new position as the Banff Centre's Director of Literary Arts.



Trevor Carolan at the Malcolm Lowry Marker in Deep Cove, North Vancouver



Lyn Hancock

Daaku

a novel by Ranj Dhaliwal

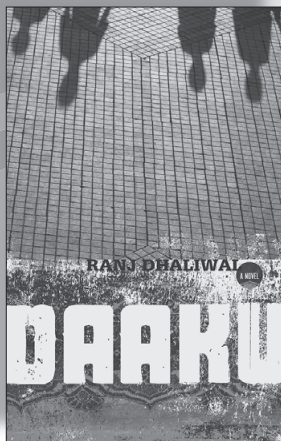
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through the Indo-Canadian gang scene

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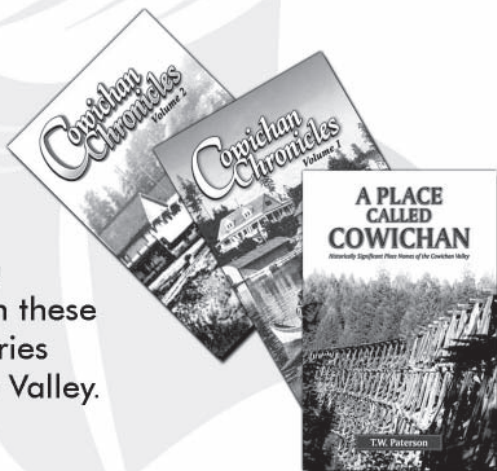


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ENDPAPERS

I is for Ingeborg

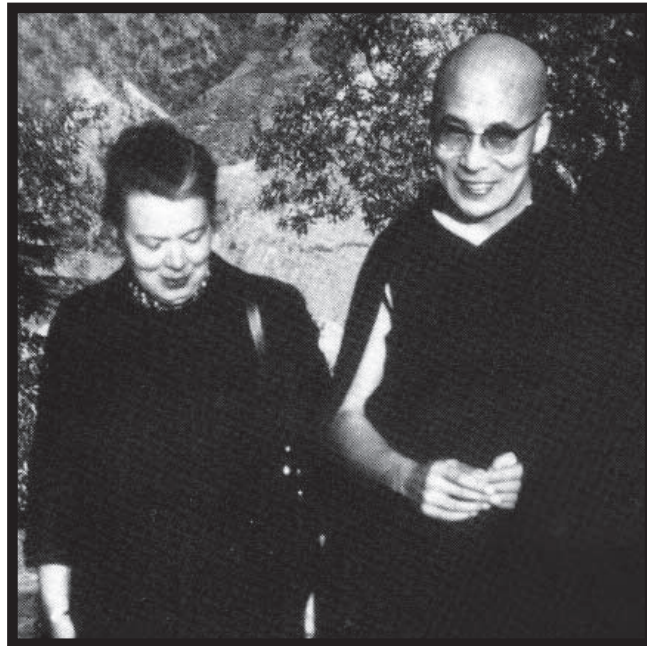
Ingeborg Woodcock not only knew how to keep her prolific husband **George Woodcock** in line, she steered much of his thinking. The daughter of a Polish mother and a minor German aristocrat, she was born Ingeborg Hedwig Elizabeth Linzer in 1917 in Austria. She fled Nazism in 1938 and arrived in London where she was briefly married to British journalist **Frederick Roskelly**.

In 1943, as Ingeborg Linzer Roskelly, she met George Woodcock, a like-minded member of the Berneri anarchist

lowing her own death on December 11, 2003, in accordance with their mutual wishes, Ingeborg Woodcock has bequeathed an extraordinary \$1.87 million gift to the Writers' Trust of Canada. As the Woodcocks envisioned, monies will be used to provide more than \$100,000 annually to Canadian writers facing financial crises.

J is for Jones

Coastal fishing maven **Bob Jones** has co-written *Island Fly Fisherman* (Harbour \$21.95), with **Larry E. Stefanyk**, and co-edited *A Compendium of Canadian Fly Patterns* (Gale's End Press \$58.25), with **Paul C. Marriner**. Six years in the making, the latter is a full-colour, spiral bound hardcover that was completed as a volunteer fund raiser for the Youth Branch of Fly Fishing Canada, marketed only by mail and the Internet. It prompted guide fishing author **Ian Colin James** to write, "Rounding up alley cats with a leaf blower would have been much easier than putting this



Ingeborg Woodcock, seen here with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India, has bequeathed \$1.87 million to benefit Canadian writers in perpetuity.

circle. After World War II, they left the London literary scene to homestead in Sooke on Vancouver Island, partially attracted by the notion of emulating Doukhobor pacifists. The nearest Doukhobor settlement was at Hilliers, near Parksville.

Not suited for subsistence farming, George and Ingeborg Woodcock lived temporarily with **Doris** and **Jack Shadbolt** at their home in Burnaby. Both childless, the two couples became lifelong friends, often sharing their Christmases together. George Woodcock proceeded to write and edit more than 120 books. As a Buddhist friend of the **Dalai Lama**, Ingeborg Woodcock persistently maintained her idealism after George Woodcock died in 1995. Fol-

lowing her own death on December 11, 2003, in accordance with their mutual wishes, Ingeborg Woodcock has bequeathed an extraordinary \$1.87 million gift to the Writers' Trust of Canada. As the Woodcocks envisioned, monies will be used to provide more than \$100,000 annually to Canadian writers facing financial crises.

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More info at abcbookworld.com

K is for Kluckner

Having gathered his paintings of heritage buildings from around the province after several decades of widespread travels, **Michael Kluckner** was first runner-up for the BC Historical Federation Book Writing Competition with *Vanishing British Columbia* (UBC Press), his compilation of watercolours and local history.

For information on this year's competition, see advertisement on p. 34.

JOAN GIVNER



*Ellen is back, this
time with literary
ambitions in...*

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L is for Leacock

Arthur Black has become one of only three recipients to have earned Canada's top humour prize three times in its 60-year history by winning this year's Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour for *Pitch Black* (Harbour \$32.95). Another three-time winner is British Columbian **Eric Nicol**. Last year's lone Leacock nominee from B.C. was **Bob Collins'** self-published *Summer of Wonder: The Misguided Romance of Hap Fitzpatrick* (Stone Pillow Press).

M is for Matthews

Carol Matthews has worked as a hospital social worker, as Executive Director of Nanaimo Family Life and as an instructor and dean at Malaspina University-College. *The First Three Years of a Grandmother's Life* (Ryerson \$15.95) is her self-illustrated collection of columns from the perspective of a first-time grandmother in *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* magazine. 1-894503-58-9

N is for Neufeld

Elsie K. Neufeld lives on Sumas Mountain, just east of Abbotsford, from where she has edited *Half in the Sun* (Ronsdale \$21.95), a first-ever anthology of fiction, creative non-fiction and poetry by 25 Mennonite-related writers of British Columbia including **Andreas Schroeder, Patrick Friesen, Barbara Nickel, Oscar Martens, Carla Funk** and numerous emerging writers.

1-55380-038-9

O is for Osborne

Tom Osborne's follow-up to *Foozlers* is another madcap romp through the Lower Mainland, *Dead Man in the Orchestra Pit* (Anvil \$18), this one about three small-time crooks planning a major heist to coincide with a Grey Cup weekend and a Queen Elizabeth Theatre production of *La Traviata*. 1-895636-72-8

P is for Payton

Prompted by a dream, **Brian Payton** decided to travel around the globe and meet the eight existing species of bear. His memoir *Shadow of the Bear* (Viking \$36) investigates the mythical relationships between man and bear, as manifested in culture and lore, and recounts some of the dangers threatening the world's bear populations around the world.

0-670-04409-1



Pacific Mills' loggers, Queen Charlotte Islands, 1945. From *Up-Coast* by Richard Rajala.

Q is for Queer

Queer being a multi-use adjective to describe the first English language version of *Roy & Al* (Arsenal Pulp \$14.95), the popular ribald cartoon strip by gay German cartoonist **Ralf Konig**, packaged as a series of vignettes partially narrated from the viewpoint of two dogs whose owners are frequently depicted, ah, dating.

1-55152-206-3

R is for Rubinsky



Holley Rubinsky

Set in the B.C. Interior, *Beyond This Point* (M&S \$24.99) by **H o l l e y Rubinsky**, who lives in Kaslo and Arizona, examines the lives of five women, including an unhappily married teacher, an abused young woman who is retreating from prostitution with a child in tow, a mother of a rebellious teenage daughter, a young widow and the long-time lover of a healer named Gabriel at the Centre for Light Awareness in Neon Bar. 0-7710-7854-4

S is for Stankiewicz

Political philosopher **Wladyslaw J. Stankiewicz** was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1922. "Walter" Stankiewicz fought with the Polish Army-in-Exile in France (1940) and in various Allied campaigns. He began teaching at UBC in 1957 and lectured at more than 50 universities around the world. Several of his approximately 20 books have been translated into other languages. Married to **Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz**, he died in Vancouver General Hospital on July 21, 2006. An overview of his work can be gleaned from *The Essential Stankiewicz: On the Importance of Political Theory* (Ronsdale, 2001).

T is for Tullson

Diane Tullson's third juvenile fiction title *Zero* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$12.95) gives a subtle portrayal of an otherwise successful teenager named Kas who struggles to conceal her eating disorder. The novel includes an afterword that outlines the warning signs of anorexia and bulimia, as well as some common misconceptions about the victims of eating disorders.

1-55041-950-1

U is for Up-Coast

Richard A. Rajala has provided a history of logging from Bella Coola to the Nass River in *Up-Coast: Forest and Industry on British Columbia's North Coast, 1870-2005* (Royal B.C. Museum \$49.95). It chronicles how and why small-scale operations tied to the needs of salmon canneries and early settlements were eclipsed by giant pulp-and-paper companies such as Pacific Mills at Ocean Falls.

0-7726-5460-3

V is for Vij

You can eat your Vijtables at Vij's, the Indian restaurant in Vancouver that began as a 14-seater in 1994, or you can learn to prepare your own chapattis, pilafs and chutney from *Vij's* (D&M \$40), the cookbook prepared by proprietors **Vikram Vij** and his wife **Meeru Dhalwala**.

1-55365-184-7

W is for Windh

After gathering ten years of photos for *The Wild Edge: Clayoquot, Long Beach and Barkley Sound* in 2004, Tofino-based geologist and photojournalist **Jacqueline Windh** has compiled *The Wild Side Guide to Vancouver Island's Pacific Rim* (Harbour \$24.95), an illustrated guidebook for visitors to Long Beach, Tofino, Ucluelet, Port Alberni, Nitinat and Bamfield.

1-55017-398-7

X is for Xmas

Born in B.C. in 1953, **Virginia Bruckner** published *Gifts from the Heart: 450 Simple Ways to Make Your Family's Christmas More Meaningful* three years ago and won the Canadian Cancer Society's Community Champion Award. Proceeds went to cancer research. It has been re-packaged as *Gifts from the Heart: Simple Ways to Make Your Family's Christmas More Meaningful* (Insomniac \$19.95).

1-897178-30-1

Y is for Young

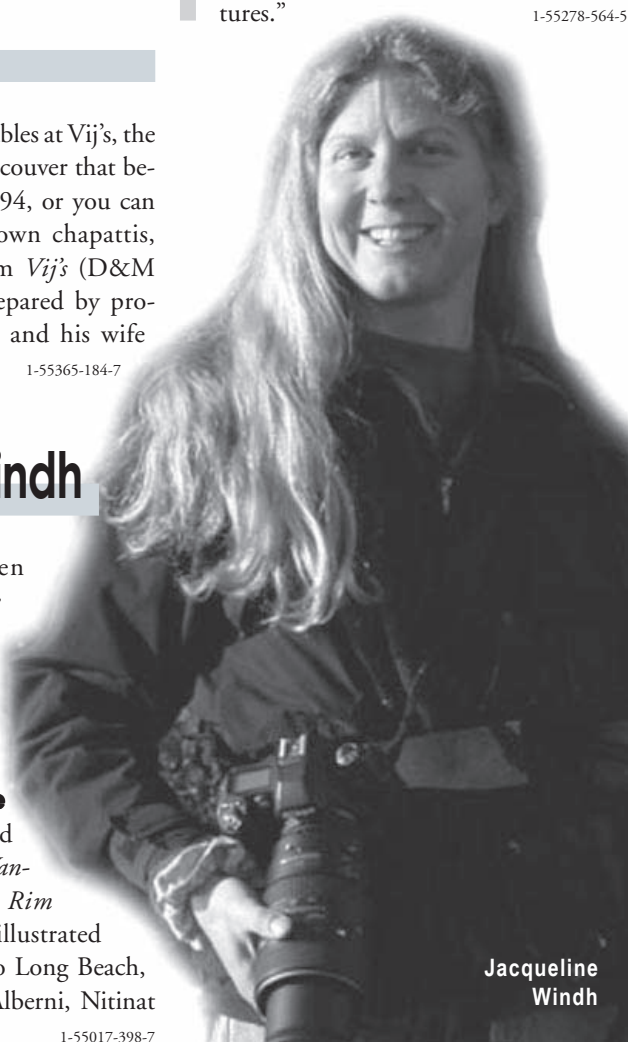
Victoria poet **Patricia Young's** debut fiction collection of fourteen stories for *Airstream* (Biblioasis \$24.95) has gained her the first "Metcalf-Rooke Award," as editor **John Metcalf** shifts his focus from The Porcupine's Quill to a new literary press, Biblioasis, based in Windsor.

1-897231-01-6

Z is for Zio

As a resident of Sidney, married to the Japanese-born painter Kimiko, **Steve Zio** has published his first novel *Hot Springs* (McArthur & Company, \$24.95), about a former website developer named Jason who searches for new connections while visiting hot springs in Canada, England and Japan. Links to Zio's promotional website are provided at the end of each of the 23 chapters to enhance the text with musical offerings, paintings, an interactive map, photos "and other innovative features."

1-55278-564-5



Jacqueline Windh

"When a Yankee trader tells you that you are a tough negotiator, you know you have been taken to the cleaners."

—TOMMY DOUGLAS

*"When the limelight was over
we came to realize just what
we lost in our lives."*
— ALLAN SAFARIK

On October 15, 1975, Pat Lowther's body was discovered five kilometres south of Britannia Beach at Furry Creek, badly decomposed.

Police concluded several months later that Lowther was bludgeoned to death with a hammer wielded by her jealous husband; a would-be poet.

✍

As a student at Simon Fraser University, Allan Safarik first met Lowther in 1970 and later published several of her poems in his *Blackfish* magazine, as well as an obscure collection of poetry, *The Age of the Bird*.

As Pat Lowther's reputation as a poet began to eclipse her husband's reputation as a would-be author, Safarik sometimes visited the Lowthers' hostile home environment. Separated by about ten years, Pat and **Roy Lowther** were sleeping at, and occupied, opposite ends of the house, remaining under the same roof for their children, while constrained financially.

"Pat stood up and dropped a section of the newspaper on top of my working area and held her finger to her lips to warn me to stop what I was doing," writes Safarik. "It soon became obvious that we weren't alone."

"Roy, quiet as their cat, Tinker, had snuck up the stairs and manoeuvred himself into a position behind a tall book shelf so he could listen and observe us before we could detect his presence. When finally he came out from his hiding spot he gave me the creeps. Soon he went back down into the basement again and Pat heaved a sigh of relief."

Safarik refers to Roy Lowther as demented, abusive, diabolical and a madman. "He wrote doggerel," Safarik claims, "and was completely convinced that he was a misunderstood genius. It burned his ass to think that people saw more in Pat's work than they saw in his feeble output."

Safarik is convinced that the final straw that led to Lowther's murder was her invitation to a poetry reading at the Ironworkers Hall on Columbia Street, along with headliners **Patrick Lane**, **David Day** and **Peter Trower**. Already perturbed by his wife's dabbling in an extra-marital relationship with a poet in eastern Canada, Roy Lowther was furious not to be allowed onto the stage to read.

Four days before the event, Pat Lowther was dead by the hands of her hammer-wielding husband, who had been diagnosed prior to their marriage as paranoid schizophrenic. According to *BC BookWorld* reviewer **Joan Givner**, "The acquisition of a briefcase became in his eyes the hated symbol of her growing professionalism. He confessed that after he disposed of the body, he flung the briefcase as far as he could into the bushes."

"It is a sad irony that the brief-case seems to have been the one private repository of her working papers for a writer who had no office, room or desk of her own."

SAFARIK ON LOWTHER

In "Watermarks," the final chapter of his **Notes from the Outside: Episodes from an Unconventional Life** (Hagios \$19.95), publisher **Allan Safarik** recounts his friendship with poet **Pat Lowther** and his difficulties coming to terms with her murder.

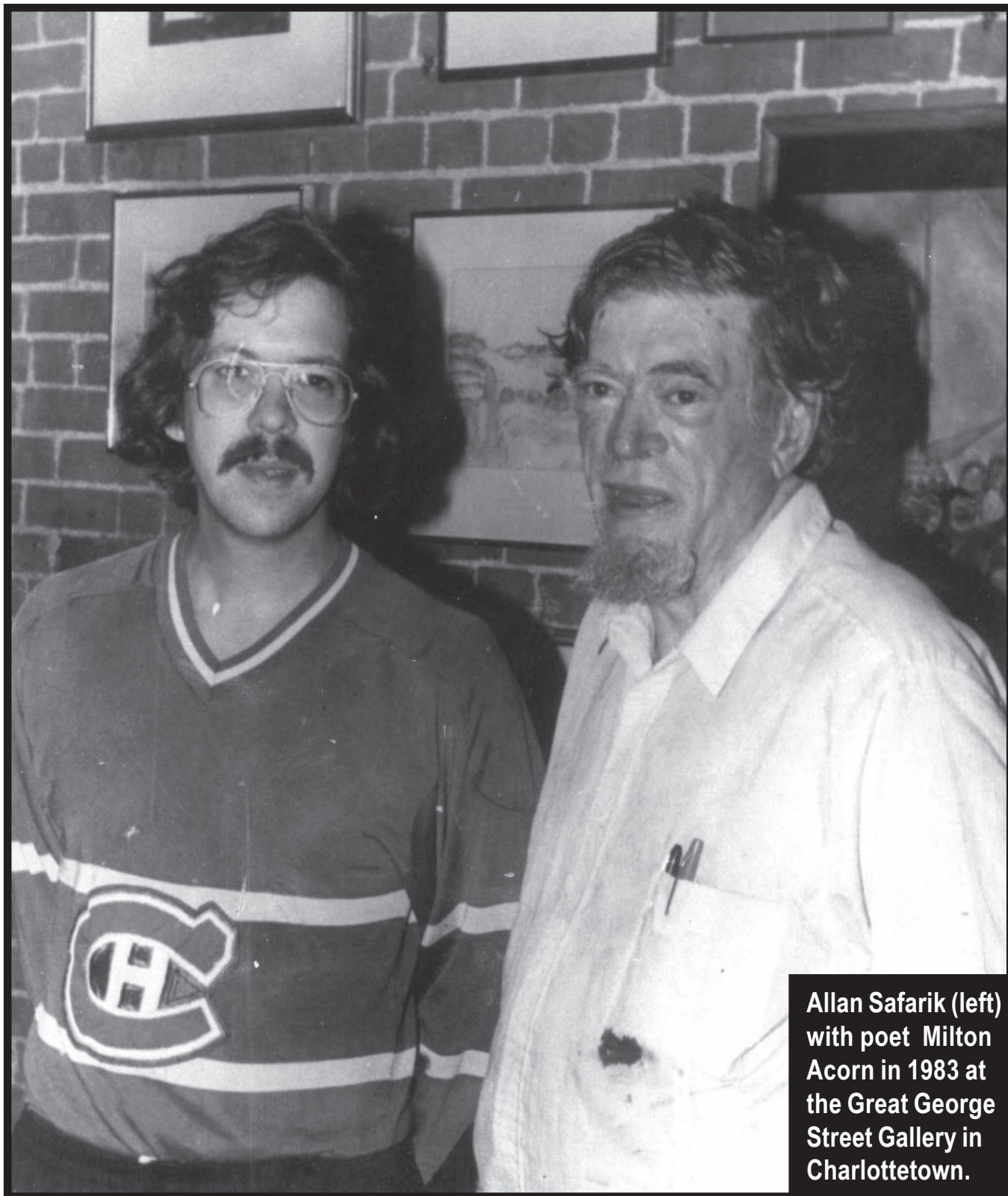
After family members prompted authorities to investigate more closely, police discovered 117 bloodspots on the walls of the couple's bedroom. Roy Lowther had taken the couple's mattress to Mayne Island, having washed on both sides, but reddish stains remained.

Following the murder trial in 1977, Safarik became a common target of inquiry for journalists and media people and made numerous appear-

ances at literary events to honour Lowther, who became venerated as a tragic, **Sylvia Plath** figure for Canada. "I was burnt out on the subject and tweaking my memory gave me nightmares," he says. Rumours and misinformation appalled him, and Safarik resented the way Lowther had been turned into a "celebrity victim" by a sensational trial, so he decided to no longer speak publicly about the Lowthers.



Pat Lowther (1935-1975)



Allan Safarik (left) with poet Milton Acorn in 1983 at the Great George Street Gallery in Charlottetown.

Roy Lowther died in prison in 1985. After many years of silence, and his move to Dundurn, Saskatchewan, Allan Safarik was contacted by Anne Henderson, a documentary film-maker who was working on a project about Pat Lowther's daughters **Beth** and **Chris**. After Safarik reluctantly agreed to participate, his teary-eyed reunion with the daughters was captured on film.

"My encounter with Beth and Chris in Jericho Beach Park thanks to Anne Henderson set me free from my feelings of denial. I broke down in tears but I was able to talk freely with Beth and Chris on camera and give them copies of their mother's publications that they had never seen."

Relieved to be presented as the main authority on Lowther in "Watermarks," Safarik has broken his silence to start anew. "In a sense we never had a chance to miss her properly," he writes, "because we were always talking about her."

✍

Notes from the Outside: Episodes from an Unconventional Life also includes Safarik's recollections of **Dorothy Livesay**, **Milton Acorn**, **Anne Szumigalski**, **Joe Rosenblatt**, **Patrick Friesen** and **William Hoffer**, along with other personal essays about growing up in Vancouver and starting *Blackfish Press*.

0973972742

LOOKING UP & LOOKING BACK

Paul George, seen here on Lyell Island in the 1970s, has recalled 25 years of conservation struggles in a new book.

“The more I explored South Moresby [in Haida Gwaii], the more obsessed I became with saving the place.” — PAUL GEORGE

RICHARD KRIEGER PHOTO

Fellow activist **Guy Dauncey** has likened **Paul George**’s history of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, **Big Trees Not Big Stumps** (WCWC \$39.95) as “the War & Peace of the B.C. environmental movement.” Given Tolstoy’s own radicalism as a campaigner for minority interests, he might have approved of such hyperbole, as well as George’s tireless role as a defender of nature. “If this book motivates even one person who has never experienced the mystic nature of wild places like Gwaii Haanas, Stein Valley, Carmanah Valley or Clayoquot Sound to be trekking gently through some wilderness,” says Paul George, “I’ll consider the book a success.”

1-895123-03-8

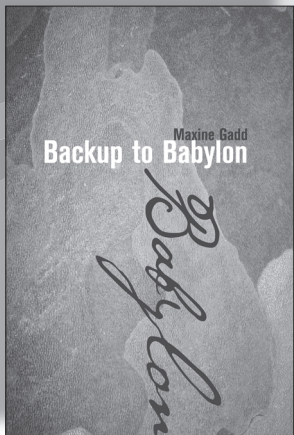
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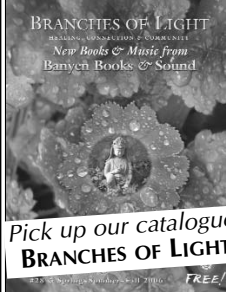


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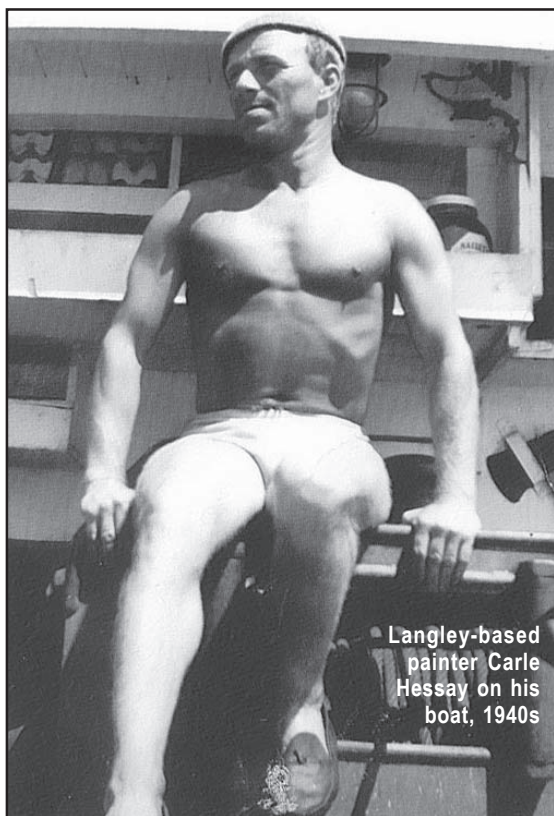
ESCAPE ARTIST

Carle Hessay: Opera lover, gymnast & fighter against Fascism.

Carle Hessay was a Jack London-like character who died from a heart attack while dancing at a New Year's Eve party at the Sasquatch Inn in the Fraser Canyon town of Spuzzum on January 1, 1978.

Born as Hans Karl Hesse in Dresden, Germany on November 30, 1911, he had fought against the Fascist forces of Franco during the Spanish Civil War and as a Canadian soldier in World War II. During the former war, when his ship docked in Spain, he was captured and imprisoned, but because he spoke several languages, Hessay was put to work translating letters.

"This gave him more freedom than the rest of the prisoners under their Moorish guards," says his publisher **Maidie Hilmo**, "so he was able to organize a small escape party. They stole a small boat and escaped to Africa, and after a gruelling and thirsty ordeal in Africa, he finally made his way back to Canada. A few of his paintings record the Spanish Civil War. One is called *La Passionaria* (Dolores Ibarruri)."



Langley-based painter Carle Hessay on his boat, 1940s

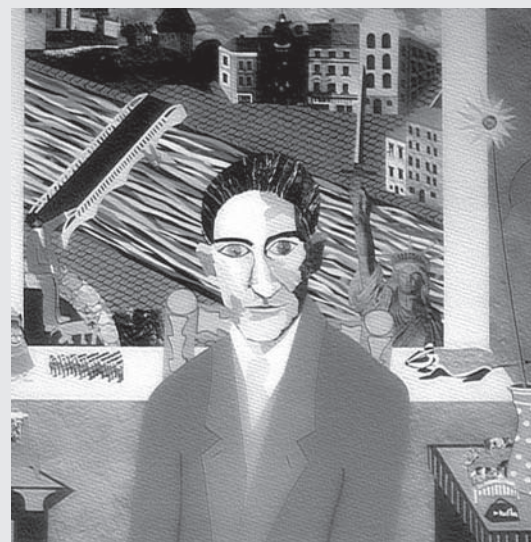
Hessay also travelled the world as a seaman, became an accomplished gymnast and chess player, worked as sign painter in Langley, B.C. (after he first arrived there in 1950) and became a highly skilled painter of semi-abstract landscapes.

According to Vancouver School of Art historian **Leonard Woods**, Hessay was an exceedingly vivacious character, always willing to entertain by performing hand-stands or diving feats. This gleeful nature and unconventional behaviour belied his sophistication as an artist and opera-lover, and concealed his knowledge of science, mythology, ancient philosophers and the Bible.

Having served as the principle speaker for a celebration of Hessay's art in Dawson Creek in 1984, Woods has provided the text for *Meditations on the Paintings of Carle Hessay* (Trail: Trabarni Publications & Victoria: Treeline Press \$39.95), a slender coffee table book, edited by Maidie Hilmo, that records Hessay's considerable artistry.

1-895666-27-9;

See www.abcbookworld.com



Franz Kafka collage by Ernest Hekkanen

Franz as a cop-out

Ernest Hekkanen's 36th title, *The Life of Bartholomew G*, was about a man who becomes foolishly obsessed with Kafka. In his 37th title, *Kafka, The Master of Yesno* (New Orphic \$25) Hekkanen criticizes the way scholars "have turned Kafka into an industry at universities around the world." He concludes that "Kafka took the easy way out through tuberculosis and death rather than fulfill his promise as a truly great writer."

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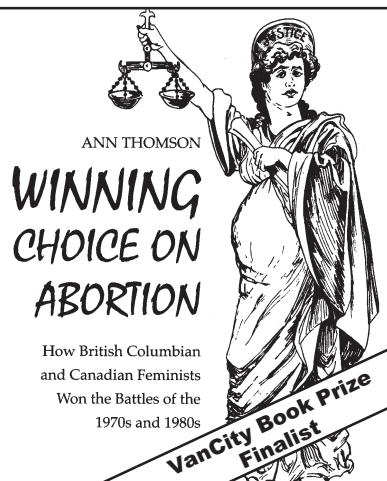
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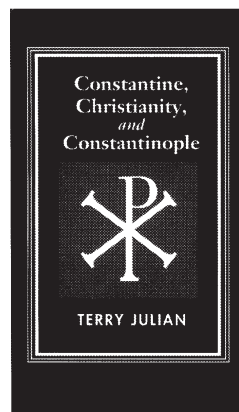
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Dreams come true

THANK YOU is not sufficient to express how grateful I am for the full page article (BCBW Summer) about *To Touch a Dream* (Ronsdale), my wilderness adventure. I am also a subscriber to *B.C. BookWorld*. At 65 years of age I have been an avid reader since time began and, as such, when I read the article it made me want to read this book! The article was enticing. I am grateful with all my heart for the recognition.

To Touch a Dream is about the fact that anyone can make their dreams come true. It just happened to be my dream at that time to live in the wilderness. Now my dream is to write more books. None of us could survive without the support you give us.

Sunny Wright
Sardis

Da Vinci Code lacks “homoiousian” nuance

As a follow-up to your coverage of my book (BCBW Summer), *Constantine, Christianity and Constantinople*, I would like to mention that its contents debunk how *The Da Vinci Code*, both the novel and movie, have interpreted Roman Emperor Constantine.

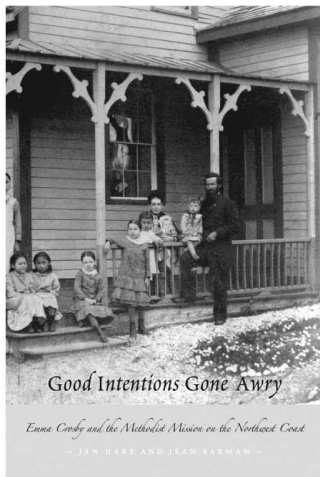
A character, Sir Leigh Teabing, in the real Chateau de Villette near Paris, states correctly that in 325 A.D. Constantine convened the first meeting of Christian bishops called the Council of Nicaea. But Dan Brown gives the misinformation that the Council endorsed the idea that Jesus was divine.

Most scholars agree that the Council of Nicaea was called by Constantine to try and resolve the problem of the relation of the divine Jesus to God. Arius, a bishop in Alexandria, taught the subordination of the person of Christ to the person of the Father—a challenge to the Trinity.

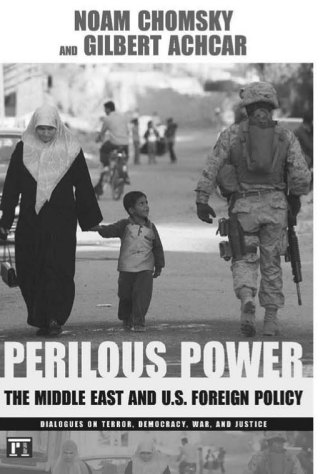
Simply put: Jesus was not co-eternal and of one substance with God but had been created by Him as His instrument for the salvation of the world. After much discussion Constantine suggested the Greek word “homoiousian” [of the same substance or essence] to resolve the issue and this was accepted by the Council. It has come down to us today as “of one substance with the Father” in the Nicene Creed used by most Christian churches.

Terry Julian
New Westminster

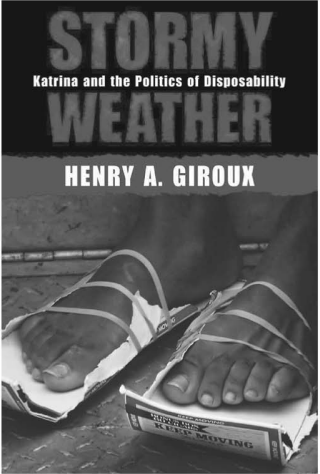
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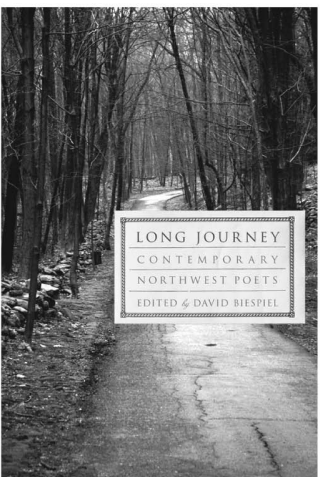
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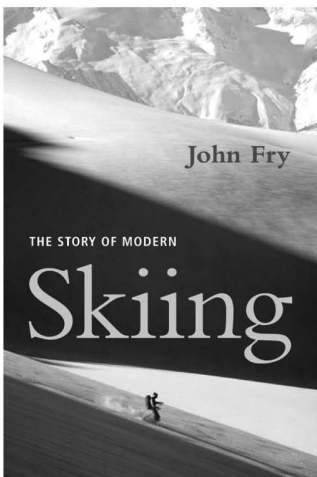
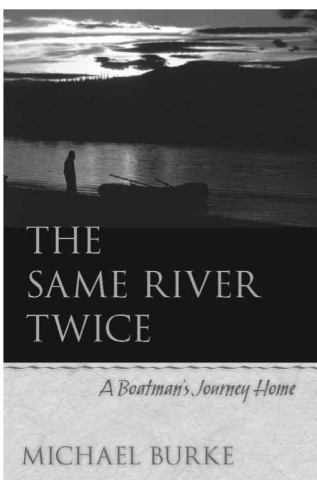
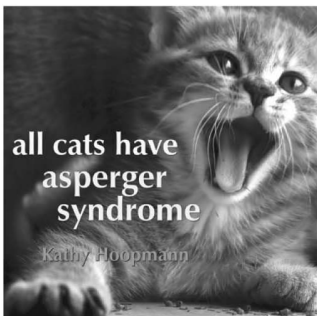
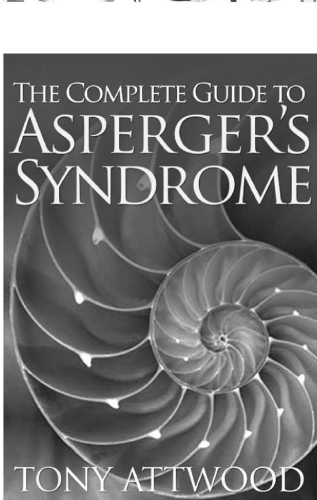
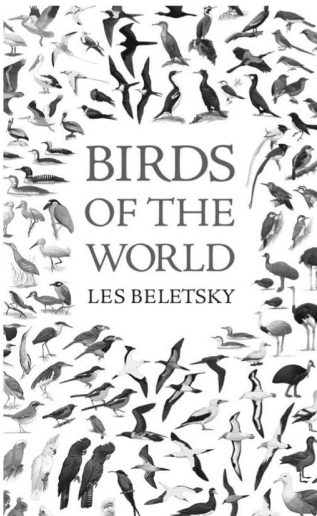
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MYSTERIOUS MISTRESS GETS A MAKEOVER

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*what's a nice girl
like you doing in a
cult like this?*



In *Madame Zee*, novelist Pearl Luke looks sympathetically at someone who partnered with two fraudsters and disappeared in the early 1930s.

Madame Zee by Pearl Luke
(HarperCollins \$32.95)

Fifteen years ago, *BC BookWorld* columnist George Woodcock responded to biographer John Oliphant's extensive study of Vancouver Island's notorious Brother XII—aka Edward Arthur Wilson, the dictatorial cult leader who charmed and frightened and conned his followers on Vancouver Island in the late 1920s and early 1930s—by commenting, "he [Oliphant] makes plausible two extraordinary characters, right out of melodrama, in Brother Twelve and Madame Zee. It strikes me that in these pages there will be material for a good deal of local fiction."

Pearl Luke has proven Woodcock prophetic. Her second novel, *Madame Zee* invents a personal history for the former prairie schoolteacher who renamed herself Madame Zee and became the mistress of Canada's most remarkable cult leader.

For the most part, Luke's much-reviewed novel has been favourably received as a bold, fictional experiment to suggest Madame Zee's 'scarlet woman' reputation might have been ex-

aggerated. According to Pearl Luke's fanciful character study, unsubstantiated tales of Madame Zee wielding a riding crop to terrorize her fellow cultists might have been mere gossip. Instead Luke imagines Zee sympathetically as a sensitive woman beset by visions.

Some facts are provided in a postscript: Madame Zee was born as Mabel Edith Rowbotham in Lancashire, England, in 1890. She taught school in a series of prairie towns before marrying a former North West Mounted Police officer, John

Skottowe, a branch manager for the Union Bank of Canada. His fraudulent manipulations at the bank forced the couple to flee to Seattle, where the marriage dissolved.

Mabel soon hitched her wagon to a former stage hypnotist, Roger Painter, who had gained a fortune as "the Poultry King of Florida." After Mabel Skottowe changed her name to Madame Zee, the couple visited the Brother XII's utopian settlement at Cedar-by-the-Sea, near Nanaimo, in 1929. Mabel stayed on and became the cult leader's mistress and overseer of the colony.

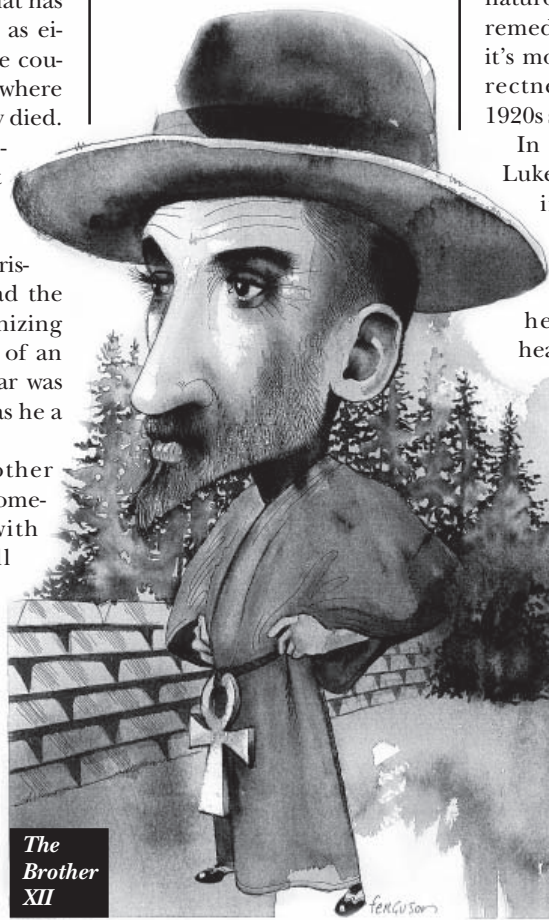
Zee and the Brother XII lived separately from the colonists, many of whom had donated most of their savings to the theosophical (and racist) cause. After a spate of legal battles, the Brother XII and Madame Zee absconded with the Foundation's savings on a boat that has been variously described as either a yacht or a tug. The couple reached Switzerland where the Brother XII reputedly died.

Woodcock summarized: "In his own occult field he was clearly adept, and he wrote a persuasive prose to go with his charismatic personality. He had the kind of shipshape organizing mind one might expect of an old navigator. But how far was he a fraud and how far was he a sincere maniac?"

"Even followers Brother Twelve most mistrusted sometimes talked of him with affection....We are all tempted by the enigmatic, by that voice whispering from another text about human evil, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

★
John Oliphant suggests in his newly re-released biography, *Brother XII: The*

Strange Odyssey of a 20th Century Prophet and His Quest for a New World (Twelfth House Press) that Brother XII's death certificate might have been faked; Madame Zee might well have lived happily (and clairvoyantly?) ever after.



**The
Brother
XII**



Biographer John Oliphant

Pearl Luke spends most of her novel trying to suggest how a rural schoolteacher born as Mabel Edith Rowbotham might have become the notorious Madame Zee. There are the visions that begin after her sister's death in childhood, her growing interest in theosophy and Madame Blavatsky, the prejudice she encounters in the teaching world, and disillusionment with her marriage. We only get to her actual encounter with Brother XII and his disciples (by far the most fully-realized part of the novel) in the last hundred pages.

Unfortunately, in the long build-up to the main event, there are too many unanswered questions, too many implausible scenes, too many indistinguishable characters who fail to sustain our interest. Luke has done her research meticulously (as she mentions in her afterword) and there are some interesting forays into the world of spiritualism, clairvoyance, and other manifestations of the occult, but overall the story isn't historically plausible.

When free-spirit Mabel is booted out of one school for wanting to teach about Hanukkah, when she practices mindfulness and meditation, when she becomes a healer and naturopath, dispensing herbal remedies at Cedar-by-the Sea, it's more new age political correctness we're hearing than 1920s sensibility.

In the Brother XII section, Luke does come up with some intriguing speculations about Madame Zee's motivations, and she is adept at exploring her heroine's ambivalence, healthy scepticism alternating with irresistible attraction to her chosen guru. In the end though, it is the evil character described in Oliphant's book I will remember as the authentic Madame Zee, not the compassionate, misunderstood psychic Luke has created here.

Madame Zee 0-0020-0513-1 ;
Brother XII 0-7710-4848-4

[For more information on the Brother Twelve, see Edward Arthur Wilson at www.abctbookworld.com] Sheila Munro regularly reviews fiction in these pages.

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PEOPLE

THREE PASSIONS OF EMILY

Emily Carr was an ardent gardener, she shared “oodles of love” with Ira Dilworth and she had heartfelt respect for First Nations.

A lack of intimacy in **Emily Carr's** life has long been a troublesome subject. Was she the victim of childhood abuse? an overwhelmingly egocentric artist? a lesbian? Who did she love?

The reasons for Carr's prickly manners will likely never be unravelled, but **Linda Morra** has at least revealed the extent to which Carr yearned for, and appreciated, friendship and intimacy.

By gathering the twilight correspondence between Emily Carr and her literary mentor, **Ira Dilworth**, regional director of CBC radio, Morra has unmasked the sentimental side of the West Coast's most enigmatic artist in Cor-

responding **Influence: Selected Letters of Emily Carr and Ira Dilworth** (UTP \$60).

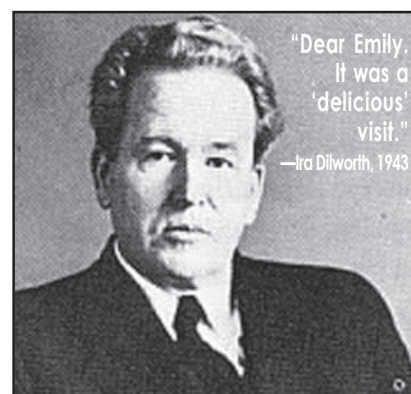
Of the more than 440 extant Carr/Dilworth letters written between early 1940 and Carr's death in March of 1945, 195 were written by Dilworth and 250 by Carr.

“God bless you, Emily!” wrote Dilworth, while sending her “oodles of love.”

For five years the pair were devoted to one another, as if they had been lovers in the flesh. Carr's often hasty and randomly punctuated letters reveal her intrepid and uncompromising nature. She once told Dilworth that for a “letter

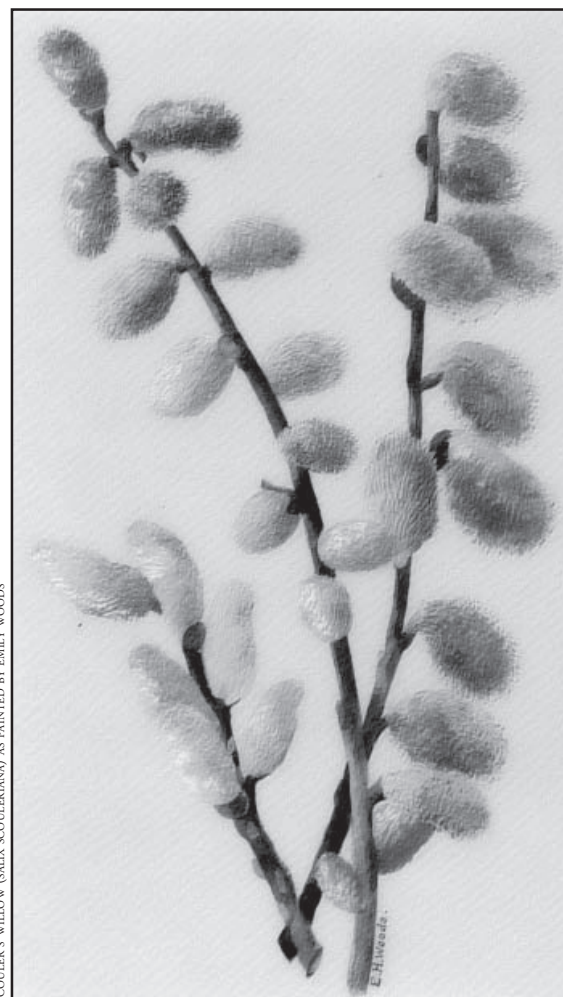
to be a correspondence [there] must be a spontaneous loving outpour from one to another[.] How can you ‘respond’ if there is not a ‘co?’”

In Emily Carr's last will and testament, addressed to Dilworth, she concludes, “Forgive me dear for all the times I have been unreasonable or petulant



Ira Dilworth brought Emily Carr's first book to the attention of Oxford University Press; he edited her later books and was her literary executor.

“Dear Emily. It was a ‘delicious’ visit.”
—Ira Dilworth, 1943



Poor old Willow how they sentimentalize, how they exploit you through your catkins. Even standing ankle deep in water as you do in spring, human hands reach to grab the army of furry coated little catkins that you send out while it is yet cold to drive away the end of Winter. Your wrenched and broken boughs people take home and stick in jugs where they collect household dust. Perhaps the catkins will sit there till you make more next spring. They cannot go on with flowering, they cannot die, they are paralyzed. People prattle about “swamp kitties” and paste one fat catkin for a body and one smaller on top of it for a head, onto cardboard pencil a tail and whiskers to the thing and call it a cat. Please notice these pigmy monstrosity, catkin cats always have their backs turned as if they intimidated, “Pshaw! can't we be honest catkins? Why must we mock cats.”

—by **Emily Carr** in *Wild Flowers* (RBC Museum)



Robert Wiersema: a first novel about the hellish and bizarre aftermath of a hit-and-run accident.

MIRACLES WILL HAPPEN

"The key to the book was that it was unplanned, that I had no idea... where it was going," says **Robert Wiersema**

BY CHERIE THIESSEN

Before I Wake by Robert Wiersema (Random House \$32.95)

Having established his reputation as a prolific book reviewer and event coordinator for Bolen Books in Victoria, **Robert Wiersema** has now published, *Before I Wake*, a first novel about the hellish and bizarre aftermath of a hit-and-run accident.

The impetus for *Before I Wake* was a *Vancouver Sun* article that Wiersema read about a religious family caring for their little girl reduced to a catatonic state. "They began noticing strange things happening around their daughter," he says, "like weeping madonnas and bleeding crucifixes."

"Word began to get around that perhaps their little girl was miraculous. So this family began taking reservations from believers around the world, and once a week they would take her out to the backyard, under a tent, and allow these pilgrims access."

In the novel, Simon and Karen Barrett struggle to maintain their marriage, barely able to cope with their grief, after their three-year-old daughter Sherry has become comatose, struck by a hit-and-run driver. Simon initially behaves contemptibly, abandoning his wife and daughter in the hospital within hours of the accident in order to seek comfort with his mistress.

"It's essential that, early on, readers hate Simon," Wiersema says. "And they do. The terms that I've had female readers use to describe him are often obscene, and certainly passionate."

Karen has previously sacrificed herself, working during the couple's first few married years to help put Simon through law school, waiting patiently to have her beloved child. She becomes madonna-like in her devotion and forgiveness. When her husband leaves home to live with his lover, Karen is doubly devastated, but Mary, the beau-

tiful and younger "other" woman, who works for Simon, is relatively unconcerned about the consequences of her affair.

Henry Denton, the hit-and-run driver, cannot escape the image of Sherry flying up in front of his truck; so he tries to blot out this recurring image by attempting suicide. But his hoped-for death is arrested by an unseen hand. He must remain in a living Purgatory until he, too, finds a way to resurrect himself.

Sherry should have died when taken off life support, but instead she inhabits an eerie

limbo. Henry's words immediately following the accident were prophetic. "I didn't kill that little girl," he said. "She just floated away." Believing Sherry has gained the power to heal while suspended in her unconscious state, sick and dying "pilgrims" begin to visit Sherry's bedside.

Ruth, a home care nurse assisting Karen, is the first to be healed by Sherry. One day she suddenly realizes that her crippling arthritis has disappeared. She instigates the parade of the sick and the dying to the home. Should Karen allow these poor souls access to her daughter?

The domestic situation is complicated by the twisted plans of a misguided soul, a false priest who attempts to discredit Sherry's miracles and, when that fails, to destroy the family.

Writing this novel, Wiersema was amazed by the way his characters shaped the plot. "The key to the book was that it was unplanned, that I had no idea, from day to day, where it was going," he says. "I was surprised, for example, when Simon left the hospital to collapse at Mary's. Similarly, I was surprised when Henry tried to kill himself, and when he couldn't."

Many readers may be concerned that the book is too depressing, but miracles can mitigate sorrow, and, according to Wiersema, *Before I Wake* is mainly about forgiveness and redemption. He hopes Simon's journey back to the family, and to a new level of understanding of himself, will keep the reader hooked as Wiersema orchestrates his tale with the shifting points of view of the main characters, placing the reader outside the family, almost—you could say—looking down at them and their lives. It's ultimately an optimistic view from up here, if you don't feel dizzy zooming in and out of so many people's heads.

Magic, miracles and mirages aren't for everyone. 0-679-31373-7

Cherie Thiessen is a freelance writer on Pender Island.



Jack Whyte



Bill Deverell

JACK'S HARDBACK

Jack Whyte has launched a new trilogy about the original nine Templar Knights, commencing with the madness and cruelty of the First Crusade in 1088. His 456-page **Knights of the Black and White** (Penguin \$36) follows the fortunes and misfortunes of Hugh de Payens, who, as a disenchanted member of a powerful, secret allegiance of French knights, decides to dedicate his military skills to protecting pilgrims on the road to Jerusalem, so he founds The Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ. 0-670-04513-6

BILL'S THRILLER

First introduced in **Bill Deverell's** *The Dance of Shiva*, crafty defence lawyer Arthur Beauchamp reappears in Deverell's 14th title, **April Fool** (M&S \$36.99), recently selected by the Crime Writers of Canada for the 2006 Arthur Ellis Award for Best Novel.

While his new wife decides to live atop a tree in order to protect eagles from loggers, Beauchamp is again retrieved from retirement from fictional Garibaldi Island to defend a notorious jewel thief on murder and rape charges. Deverell lives on Pender Island and near Quepos in Costa Rica.

0-7710-2711-7

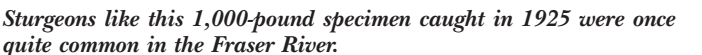
ALSO RECEIVED

Crazy About Canada by Vivien Bowers
(Maple Tree \$19.95) 1-897066-48-1



Sensational Scientists: The Journeys and Discoveries of 24 Men and Women of Science by Barry Shell (Raincoast \$24.95) 1-55192-727-6

Nikki Tate



Two other Schwartz titles to be released this fall include **Abby's Birds** (Tradewind, \$22.95), illustrated by Elizabeth Shefrin, and **Yossi's Goal** (Orca, \$7.95), a sequel to *Jesse's Star*, which chronicles the further adventures of a Russian Jewish immigrant family living in Montreal in the 1890s.

0-88776-765-6
*Louise Donnelly is a
 freelance writer in Vernon.*

NIKKI TATE GAL-ERY

Horsewoman Tate, who also pens the StableMates series and rode a portion of Nevada's old Pony Express route, delivering letters to schools from BC kids, infuses Jo's tale with horse lore and gritty detail.

In his first novel, Michael Poole recalls the Great War and a great love.

LOVERS IN A DANGEROUS TIME

Rain by Morning by Michael Poole
(Harbour \$24.95)

As the number of Canadian soldiers killed in combat in Afghanistan climbs, Canadians are asking—why go to war? That question, and what **Michael Poole** describes as the enduring stigma of desertion in World War I, are the basis for *Rain by Morning*, an old fashioned romance of lovers in a dangerous time.

Set in the fictional town of Silva Landing on the Sunshine Coast in 1913, *Rain by Morning* tells the tale of a dangerous liaison between young Nathan and Leah, as their love at first sight endures against unlikely odds, parents' wishes, war and distance.

War is hell but its nothing compared to lovers spurned, or at least delayed. Leah is shipped off to a convent school while Nathan considers going to university. Poole develops Leah's voice—one of the novel's great strengths—while she is in the convent. In a letter Leah writes to Nathan we get a glimpse of her character and future:

"I don't believe I take uncharitable dislikes to people, but I cannot help feeling anger and resentment toward Sister Robuchaud, the Mistress of Discipline. I believe she takes pleasure in punishing us. She plays favourites, and I am certainly not one of them. She told me that I have a "rebellious and independent nature" which she intends to break. If she keeps riding me, there will be trouble and I won't stand for it."

Poole is particularly interested in the role of individuals in the service of institutions and country, and the ethical and moral decisions one is faced with in serving those forces. In his previous book, *Romancing Mary Jane: A Year in the Life of a Failed Marijuana Grower*, Poole explored the ethics and perils of growing pot on the Sunshine Coast.

As Poole mentions in his author's notes no shortage of books have been written about World War I, but what has gone missing in action are accounts of

Canadian nurses. Fair enough, but it is worth noting that Ernest Hemingway's classic *A Farewell to Arms* set in World War I is the great love affair of a nurse (granted not Canadian) and a wounded soldier.

Once out of the convent Leah and Nathan enjoy a brief idyllic fling among the hidden estuaries and islands of the West Coast before returning to Silva Landing to face their uncertain

future. Leah is shipped off to a nursing school. When World War I breaks out, she is sent to a hospital near Etaples, France. Nathan, a conscientious objector, takes on the dangerous work of a high rigger in a logging camp.

In France Leah experiences the horrors of war first-hand and only occasionally hears from Nathan. Her faith tested, Leah reaches out to a young British deserter she discovers while out on a bike

ride and she chooses to feed him. Her actions lead to her eventual banishment from the military and nursing, but not without a fight. When she returns to Nathan, who has been injured in a logging accident, she is more determined than ever that he not go off to fight in a war she has witnessed.

Alienated by his community for remaining behind while others serve, Nathan is angrily confronted by townsfolk he has known all his life. In an exchange with Leah he indicates that his will has begun to weaken: "Look, Leah I'm just so goddamned tired of it all, sick to death of nasty looks, the remarks, having to explain myself, all that crap."

She replies: "As chance would have it, I know exactly how you feel. You see, Nathan, I didn't leave France voluntarily. I was thrown out for breaking the rules. I was an outcast, pointed at, scorned, just like you."

United as outcasts, Leah and Nathan set

off together in a borrowed boat. Nathan hopes to work in a gypo logging camp but the bulls (cops) are regularly on the lookout for deserters. As their despair increases Nathan and Leah hope to find some refuge on Broughton Island. Once again they are confronted with the isolation of their ideals when their friend on Broughton Island turns down their request to hide out because her son is off fighting in the Great War.

Leah and Nathan are forced to head back to Silva Landing. Nathan is resigned to going overseas until a note arrives from an old friend who asks if he would consider going into hiding in a deserters' encampment on the mountain above Silva's Landing. Poole provides the novel with a powerful and necessary twist at the end, based on an actual

incident at a real deserters' camp on the Sunshine Coast.

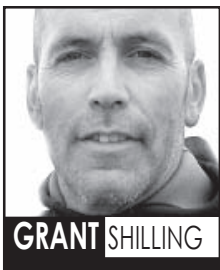
The characters for Poole's necessary novel are inspired by those deserters who lie buried in an actual deserters' cemetery, now mostly overtaken by forest, located on a Sunshine Coast mountain.

As Poole writes in his notes, although descendants of those conscientious objectors still live in "Silva Landing," so enduring is the stigma of desertion in World War I that their lips remain mostly sealed to this day about the events of 1918. In attempting to give voice to their silence Poole has provided us with much to think about when considering the overseas conflicts of today.

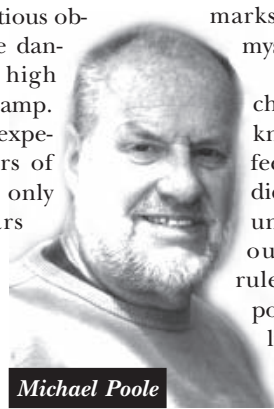
Rain by Morning is a welcome novel of ideas that only occasionally trips up on its exploration of various themes in the guise of characters.

1-55017-412-6

Grant Shilling lives in Cumberland, burial place of World War One conscientious objector Ginger Goodwin, a labour martyr. He is the author of The Cedar Surf: An Informal History of Surfing in British Columbia.



GRANT SHILLING



Michael Poole

Ambiguous Selves by Melanie Fogell

This investigation into individual identity explores notions of Jewishness in Israel and in the Canadian Diaspora. Fogell fascinates the reader with her candid discussion about life in the era of fragmentation.

ISBN: 1-55059-327-7, \$26.95, pb

The Canadian Journey
by William Rayner

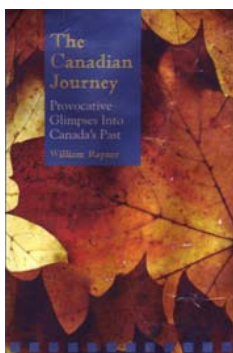
By recounting the deeds and misdeeds of key Canadian politicians, workers, soldiers, and voters, this episodic book covers the scope of Canadian politics.

ISBN: 1-55059-313-7, \$26.95, pb

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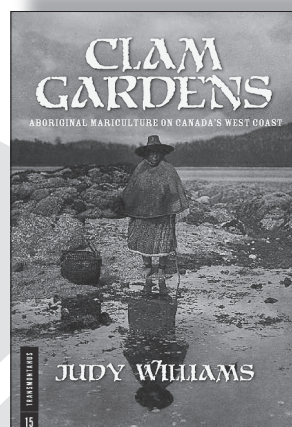


Clam Gardens TRANSMONTANUS 15

Aboriginal Mariculture on Canada's West Coast

by Judith Williams

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THE SOUNDS OF GIRLS SWIMMING WITH HORSES

Elizabeth Bachinsky's wallop of teenage angst, boredom and risky sexiness

Home of Sudden Service by Elizabeth Bachinsky (Nightwood \$16.95)

A slight book that packs a wallop of teenage angst, boredom and risky sexiness, this collection is set in the back seats on the back roads of Mission, Cultus Lake and all those roads that end at Hope. It's an unusual and highly accomplished use of form by a young poet on the subject of loose girls and the freeway culture of malls, necking, cruelty and tragedy.

Elizabeth Bachinsky demonstrates more skill in a couple of sonnets and villanelles than poets twice her age do in a couple of books. She writes: *"Your faults are mine and mine / yours. When we kiss, you light my vacancy. / yours is the trailer park fire of the mind, / a vinyl-sided wet dream."*

About her teen love of horses, growing up in Maple Ridge, Bachinsky writes:

"Is it possible that such a beast can swim? / He weighs a ton (at least) but here / he is, his expectant ears pricked forward, / forward, as he glides through murk. / The trees

have made room for us, / surround our sounds, the sounds of girls / swimming with horses. / How far we are from the town. / How we animate ourselves."

Not all of the numerous teenage moms and dads in the Fraser Valley feel stuck; there's the kids in the title poem who awkwardly work it out, hesitant. But for every one of those tentative "gonna-make it" kids, there are teenage moms at the Valley Mall who know pregnancy means "his loving is over."



HANNAH MAIN-VAN DER KAMP

A chilling poem called "Wolf Lake" recounts the rape and murder of a teenage girl in the victim's voice, so poignant because the lake where her body is dumped is the place where she and the murderer used to swim as teenagers.

"This boy / I'd camped with every summer since we were twelve, / the lake so quiet you could hear the sound / of a heron skim the water at dusk, or the sound / of a boy breathing."

Most striking in this explicit collection is the contrast between the accomplished technique and the harsh realities of



Elizabeth Bachinsky: malls, necking, cruelty and tragedy

life voiced in colloquial language. The poet betrays herself; posing as a tough girl with a smart-ass mouth, she unwittingly reveals the sensitivity required for finely tuned writing. Miss Fraser Valley gets out of her tacky gear and turns out to be an Alice Munro in poet guise.

0-88971-212-3

The Village of Sliding Time by David Zieroth (Harbour \$16.95)

A successful long poem is an immersion, a trance, an emotional time capsule which leaves the reader changed, "been away." This is

characteristic of all good writing but the long poem form is particularly suited to the rambling nature of childhood memories.

The poet/child is in no hurry and can unfold details and take detours. David Zieroth begins this account with the night of his own conception, continues through early childhood to schooldays and ends with his family's move to B.C. Taken by the hand by his young alter-ego who has "the gift of sliding time," he leaves North Van and revisits the Manitoba farm where Zieroth grew up in the 1950s, disproving the adage, "You can't

go home again."

Zieroth skillfully avoids cynicism and nostalgia, engrossing the reader in a memory album that is not narrative, although narratives are implied, as he describes his young father as "learning unselfishness among the nest of us." He also recalls:

"The women and their connection/with eggs of hens, ducks, geese/ carrying in their red hands/ the delicate life/ always close to the hurt things first/ the first to know."

A halfbreed muskrat trapper and his family are "no-mads/ never worried about/ seeds washed away/ or choked out." Loneliness, family ties, farmyard slaughter and schoolboy pranks; this is a loving but not mawkish reminiscence. The undertone is an awareness of death that insures against the sentimental.

With tenderness for the boy he was, the poet returns to his sixty-something West Coast identity and has learned, "I haven't left behind what came with me." It amounts to an engaging and highly readable memoir.

1-55017-388-X

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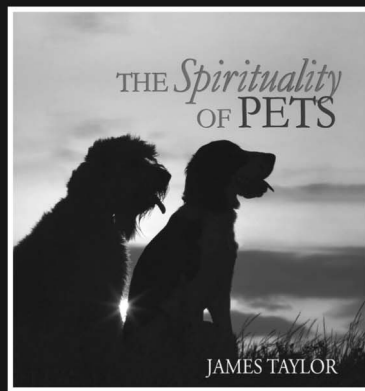
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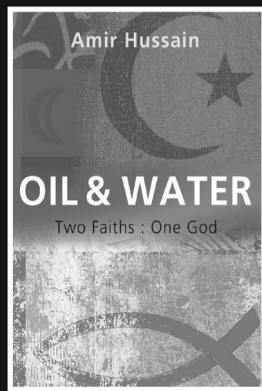
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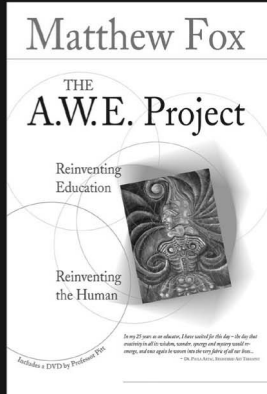
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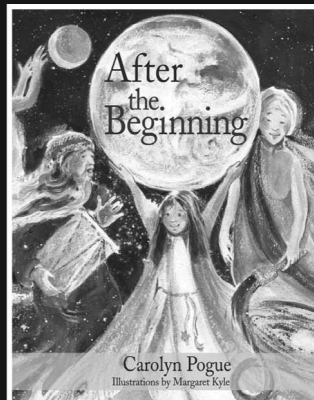
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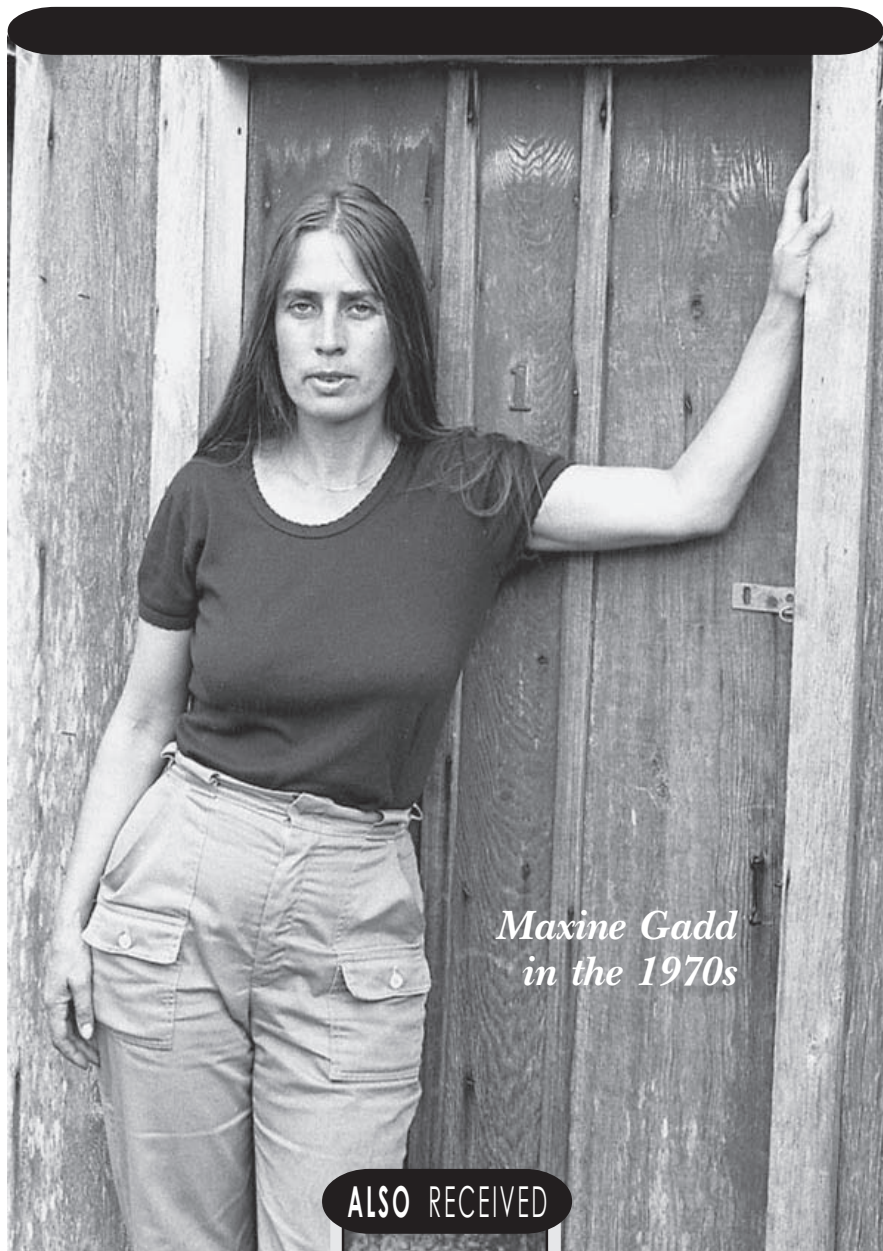
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Maxine Gadd
in the 1970s

ELAINE BRIERE PHOTO

ALSO RECEIVED

Backup to Babylon by Maxine Gadd
(New Star \$20)

Hallucinatory when not nightmarish, richly textured and cheerfully anti-conventional, this collection of three shorter works brings back the late sixties in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. So did New Star Books take a risk extracting these pieces from the mothballs to give them a fresh exposure? Well, no. Mostly it's energizing to be startled by this bygone craziness.

Who remembers the Woodward's Food Floor? Or who cares to remember? *Backup to Babylon* is street-smart mythology that frequently champions the poor or the marginalized. Though concrete poetry does not give the same amount of buzz as it once did, the over-the-top rawness (influenced by the Kootenay School of Writing way back when?) is still strikingly original.

Sometimes completely unintelligible—probably purposefully so—**Maxine Gadd's** poems can also be evocative as in a lovely coastal poem entitled "spring moves fast now." In another piece about coldness, this one entitled "I will sell my soul? for warm hands," the poet evokes hardships that today's neo-hippies could not imagine.

This writing is the opposite of carefully worked finesse. Gadd is anarchic, a poet who likes to "praise bad things." She writes: "so i / must go for it again / for an answer/ compatible / with my humanity / before daybreak / in the black winter



George Whipple

The Peaceable Kingdom by **George Whipple**
(Penumbra \$18.95) 1894131924

Whiskey Bullets: Cowboy & Indian Poems by **Garry Gottfriedson** (Ronsdale \$14.95) 1-55380-043-5

Tacoma Narrows by **Mitchell Parry** (Goose Lane \$17.95) 0-86492-450-X

Flicker by **Rob Budde**
(Signature Editions \$14.95) 1-897109-05-9

Ink Monkey by **Diana Hartog** (Brick Books \$18) 1-894078-50-0

Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse by **P.K. Page**
(Porcupine's Quill \$ 16.95) 0-88984-288-4

Strike/Slip by **Don McKay**
(M&S \$17.99) 0-7710-5543-9

Save A Baby, Hereo (an anthology of sorts) Edited by **Christine Gibson** (No Thanks Prod.) 0-9738594-0-7

night" It's good to have her voice recovered and collected.

1-55420-024-5

Writing the Tides, New and Selected Poems by Kevin Roberts
(Ronsdale \$16.95)

A big book at a very attractive price (how does Ronsdale do it?), *Writing the Tides* covers more than three decades of varied and accessible poetry for arm-chair travelers. While not stretching the boundaries of language, **Kevin Roberts** is always personal and never obscure.

"Cobalt 3," a group of poems about his experience of cancer treatment, is highly recommended reading for everyone whose lives have been touched by cancer.

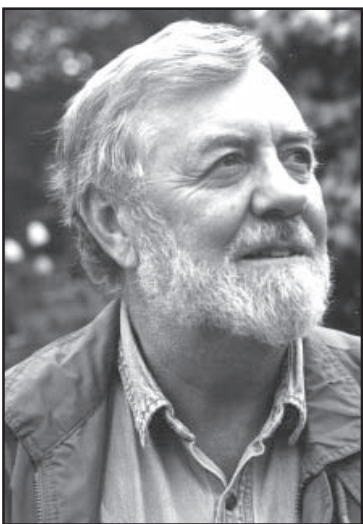
"At first you're frantic / swim madly for shore / but you're too weak / in the tide rip's / all mindless muscle / you tread water."

Writing the Tides concludes with about fifty new poems: surfing and aging in B.C., Australia and Thailand.

Roberts concludes, "And so we all surf, sit in rows / seek the perfect wave . . . to dance us down to some imagined shore." 1-55380-036-2

Hannah Main-van der Kamp keeps an open mind in Victoria and the Sunshine Coast.

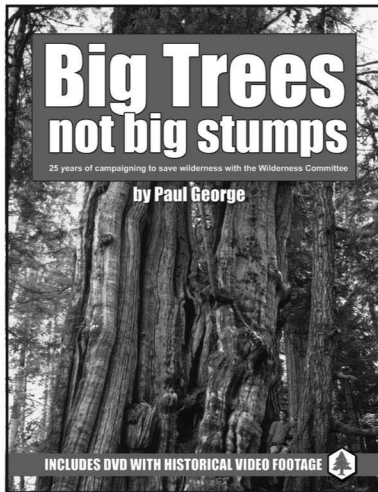
Kevin Roberts



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— **Rex Weyler**

"I will put Paul George's lively Wilderness Committee history right alongside my copies of Rex Weyler's 'Greenpeace' and the Encyclopedia of B.C. —essential reference works about where we live."

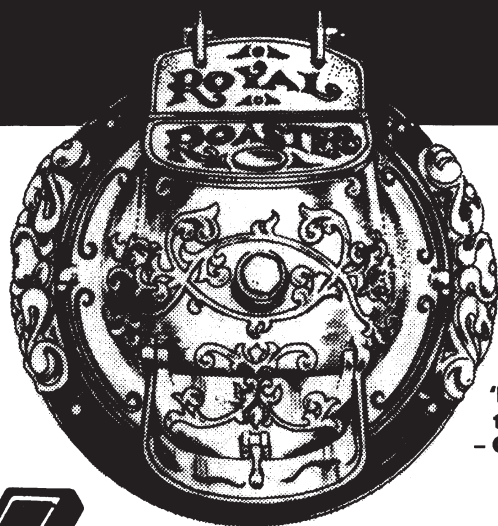
— **Alan Twigg, BC BookWorld**

"This book is as warm, deep, and solid as Paul George himself. A lovely contribution to BC citizens, to Canada, to a saner world."

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LOOKOUT

WE CAN WORK IT OUT

Work Less Party founder
Conrad Schmidt
believes anyone not
owning a car should
be allocated gardening
space equal to two
parking spaces.

BY MARTIN TWIGG

FIRST HE STOPPED WORKING ON Fridays at his job as a software engineer; then he abandoned his Jeep. Now **Conrad Schmidt**—creator of the World Naked Bike Ride in Vancouver in 2004 to protest climate change—believes that work sharing will lessen our imprint on the earth and help us enjoy life more.

Schmidt's call for a common-sensical revolution, **Workers of the World Relax: The Simple Economics of Less Industrial Work** (Sandhill/Work Less \$15), contains short essays on work, happiness and consumerism in a global economy. Its inspirational message can be condensed to: "Work less, produce less, consume less and live more."

Whether he's riding naked on his bike to garner attention for climate change, or baking a cake for the BC Progress Board to spread awareness for the benefits of a shortened work week, Schmidt typically presents his ideas in a friendly, easy to understand and non-threatening fashion. But behind each public stunt is a well-informed political philosophy that has led him to found the Work Less Party.

Without gimmicks and marketing ploys, *Workers of the World Relax* explains how and why our cultural emphasis on production and consumption is having disastrous consequences for the health of the Earth, as well as our own mental and physical well-being. Citing the likes of environmentalist David Suzuki and economist John Kenneth Galbraith, Schmidt uses footnotes, photos and lucid prose to convince the reader how the reduced work-week can become the antidote to industrial overkill.

"As people in middle to upper income brackets work less," he writes, "more opportunities to move up the income scale will present themselves. Not only will people have the potential to earn more, less people will compete for minimum wage jobs. This will also help inflate wages. In reality, if we work less, the value of our labour increases along with wage negotiating powers."

Less time spent working can translate into more time spent eating and exercising properly, reducing stress, enabling citizenry to become more active in democracy and generating more informed public debate.

It's not just fanciful theorizing. "In countries like France, Germany, Denmark, Holland and Sweden," he says, "which already incorporate reduced work weeks, there is a trend for the media to cater to well-informed readers. [Whereas] in nations with longer workweeks, the trend is for information to be presented in the form of catchy

headlines and fifteen-second sound bites."

The United States is the hardest working country in the world in terms of average hours worked. Its media is frequently criticized for catering to the lowest common denominator. Many Canadians are alarmed by statistics that reveal a high percentage of Americans still believe Saddam Hussein had connections to Al Qaeda, or that he possessed weapons of mass destruction. Schmidt points out something new; the five nations with the highest percentage of people working longer than 50 hours a week—the United States, Japan, UK, Australia and New Zealand—were all willing to send troops to Iraq.

Schmidt's focus is not only limited to his "work less" maxim. He touches on energy use, transportation, city planning and comparative studies of cultural levels of happiness. While many of his points may seem familiar, such as the negative environmental effects of the cattle in-

dustry and our need for locally sustainable agriculture, some of Schmidt's arguments appear quite novel and may surprise even the most radical of activists.

Schmidt, for example, views the energy crisis as a potentially good thing. His greatest fear is not the world running out of oil, but rather the discovery of a new, cheap energy replacement that will allow us to sustain our environmentally destructive levels of production and consumption.

"Today, as in the 1970s, many respected academics are predicting that rising oil prices will result in the collapse of the economy and civilization. As usual, they are wrong. I am not saying a collapse is impossible; simply that it will likely be a consequence of cheap energy prices and not high energy prices. A rising cost of energy is a good thing."

In his modest but empowering 143 pages, Schmidt does not limit himself to the role of doomsayer, a common pitfall in much activist writing. Instead he levels constructive criticism at the myriad of problems facing our dangerously wasteful society and responds with policy alternatives that are thoughtful, well-researched and, most importantly, practical.

0-9739772-0-5; wlp-publishing.org

The five nations with the highest percentage of people working longer than 50 hours a week—the United States, Japan, UK, Australia and New Zealand—were all willing to send troops to Iraq.

A MEETING IN MONGOLIA

Renaissance man Galsan Tschinag, still living in the High Altai Mountains of central Asia, has published more than 30 books, mainly in German, although he makes a point of also publishing some titles in his native language. As both a shaman and a political leader, he reflects his complex culture in a new autobiographical memoir of boyhood, *The Blue Sky* (Oolichan \$24.94). Oddly, Tschinag is one of the few headline acts at this year's Vancouver International Writers Festival currently published by a B.C. publishing house. His translator Katharina Rout of Vancouver Island will accompany him during his interview with Mark Schneider on Granville Island, October 21, at 1 pm, and later that same day at the Poetry Bash, at 8 pm. Galsan Tschinag will also read on Tuesday, the 24th, at the Vancouver Westside German school, and lecture at UBC on Wednesday, October 25th as part of the Mongolia Lecture Series sponsored by the Inner Asia Institute, to be followed by literary events at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo and Camosun College in Victoria.

Here Katharina Rout recalls meeting Galsan Tschinag in the remote steppes of his own domain.

In 2001, I fell in love with Galsan Tschinag's work. My first e-mail reached him two days before the fall of the Twin Towers, his reply to me two days after. He called my hope to translate *The Blue Sky* one day a small sun, shining from the West, and sent me a large herd of good spirits. Coming from a practising shaman, the wish for good spirits meant a great deal.

Two years later, I met Tschinag when he was in Germany on one of his many reading tours. Immediately he inquired about my family and began sharing the story of his. He spoke of life, death, family, love, and the heart. Before dinner, I learned about his horses, after dinner, about how as a shaman he heals people, even with a life-threatening injury inflicted by a horse. A bit of Mongolia had arrived in Germany. He takes some Altai soil with him wherever he goes.

In 2004, my husband and I went to visit Galsan in Mongolia. From the first moment, we were impressed by the hospitality. His children had been instructed to guide and take care of us. In Ulaanbaatar, they put us on the plane to Ölgii, where we were met by another son who had spent two days coming down from the Altai to pick us up. From Ölgii (elevation 1700 metres) we travelled by jeep towards the distant mountain range. We were near the Russian border, and skirmishes in response to political borders that arbitrarily cross ancient tribal lands were common.

After hours of driving through the steppe and foothills—there are hardly any roads in Mongolia—we reached a windy mountain pass with a large *ovoo*, a cairn of sacrificial stones that marked the beginning of the traditional land of the Tuvans and, as the Mongolians say about this part of their country, the roof of the world. The air smelled of sage, and before us lay an awe-inspiring ocean of greenish-blue velvety moun-

tain backs, broad valleys left behind by glaciers, and snow-covered peaks in the distance. 'Altai,' Galsan Tschinag has written, comes from 'ala,' multi-coloured, and 'dag,' mountain. As the winds drove clouds across the sky, the mountains seemed to move under the changing patterns of sun and shadow, and it was easy to understand the Tuvans' veneration for the Altai.

For the next few hours we kept climbing. From time to time, a Kazakh or Tuvan yurt could be seen in the distance. In a few valleys, herders were making hay from small patches of green: struggling for every blade of grass. Towards evening we arrived in the Tsengelkhayrkhan mountain range. Towering over three yurts on a ridge at the end of a valley near the Black Lake was the 4000 metres high sacred mountain. The Tuvans call it *Haarakan*, Great Mountain, because awe and respect forbid them to spell out the proper names of what is divine or dangerous. This was the furthest the jeep could go. To meet us, Galsan Tschinag had left the neighbouring valley and ridden across a mountain through hours of a lashing rain storm. We saw him from afar astride his white horse waiting on the ridge. He welcomed us into a yurt especially made for us—a brand-new, shining white yurt we were invited to take back to North America. We were offered different kinds of cheese and fried dough, and invited to drink from the silver bowl that has come down to him from his ancestors—as has his snuff bottle, his silver flint and the silver sheath of the dagger he wears on his silk saffron belt over his blue velvet coat when he is in the Altai. His son came to play a concert for us on the horsehead fiddle. He had brought the mail with him from Ölgii, which included an invitation by the President of the

Republic of Tywa, who hoped Galsan Tschinag would join him for the celebrations of the republic's tenth anniversary; he would be offered a place of honour next to Putin. Clearly, we had arrived at the court of a prince. And we were honoured because translations build

bridges—honoured by a man who is a most extraordinary bridge builder himself: As a shaman, he mediates between his community and the spirit world; as a chieftain, he connects Tuvans with each other; as a writer, he forges links between the oral tradition and epics of his people and the literate world outside; as a politician, he negotiates a future for his minority Tuvans among a sometimes hostile majority of Kazakhs and Mongolians; as a translator and teacher, he crosses, and enables others to cross, the linguistic borders of Tuvan, Kazakh, Mongolian, Russian, and German; and as a host, he opens his small yurt in the Altai, and his large yurt—the Altai and the steppe itself—to guests from abroad.

The next day, we continued our journey on horseback. Across steep, rocky terrain and a ridge more than 3000 metres high we rode for hours to reach the juniper valley, the summer pastures for a number of Tuvan and Kazakh families. There

we watched Galsan Tschinag work as chieftain and shaman, and as host of a group of Europeans who, like us, had come to the Altai to learn about the Tuvans.

Every day Galsan took us to visit Tuvan and Kazakh families in the valley. Each had prepared a spread, mostly of meat and dairy products, but also of fried dough and sweets, and each offered us salted, buttery milk-tea and—since it was the foaling season—both fermented and distilled mare's milk. In one yurt, a whole wether had been slaughtered for the occasion. These were celebrations, but they clearly were also opportunities Galsan Tschinag created to braid together the Tuvan and Kazakh families who have to share the sparse resources of the land. He was always given the seat of honour at the North end of the yurt, and while the guests were offered delicacies such as the fatty tail of a sheep, he inquired—in Tuvan, Kazakh, or Mongolian—about the well-being of

each family and their animals. As a result of four catastrophic winters and unusually dry summers, the nomads in the Altai had lost two-thirds of their herds in the previous decade. Galsan Tschinag's visits and the European visitors he has brought into the Altai for the last fifteen summers have created employment and income opportunities. We never left a yurt without him handing over a substantial stack of *tugrik* bills, but we also watched him engaging with every adult in the family; introducing the children to us; stroking, massaging, and caressing the sick and aged; praising (and translating into German) outstanding events and achievements; and making everybody feel encouraged and important.

In the process, we heard people's stories. We learned how mothers on horseback carry their baby's wooden cradle when the family moves: on a leather strap around the neck. More importantly, we learned how a family's history can be

read from the second, thinner yak-leather strap stretched across the cradle. It allows visitors to avoid asking painful questions and instead find gentle and empathetic words. For every birth of a boy, a sheep's right ankle bone is tied to the strap, for every girl, a left one. For every child that has died, the bone is removed, but the knot remains.

Bones connect life and death, the material and the spiritual. They were read by our host, by the shaman who provided guidance and support, and who taught us to read in the book of nature. A rock face, so forbidding from a distance, shows fracture lines close up: nothing is forever, everything changes. Birds that breed their young at a lake near the foot of *Haarakan's* glacier grieve when one of the couple dies. The shaman translated: love is the key to life, and the cause of suffering. Do as the birds.

The morning we started our two-day trip back

to Ölgii, people gathered to say farewell. Each was blessed by Galsan Tschinag, the shaman, with the traditional sprinkling of milk. And because my husband and I were the first North Americans to come to the Tuvan land in the High Altai, we were given special gifts to take home. The Cold War is ending, people had repeatedly said to us in the days before. When we laid our customary three stones on the *ovoo*, we had reason to be grateful indeed.

Before I left, Galsan made one final observation: "I am convinced that our corner could quickly turn into a Karabakh or Kosovo," he warned, "if in a country such as ours, with a colourful mix of peoples and a leadership that glorifies violence and war, the Tuvan people were to glorify their own and denigrate their neighbours' cultures." Bridges have to be built from both sides of a river, though. While Galsan Tschinag promotes foreign-language learning among the Tuvans, he also gives one manuscript a year for publication, royalty-free, to a Mongolian publisher, hoping to sew the seeds of respect for Tuvan culture among his fellow Mongolians. His stories, he says about all his books, are not his stories alone: they are the stories of his people.

And they are stories for the world.

MONGOLIAN RHAPSODY

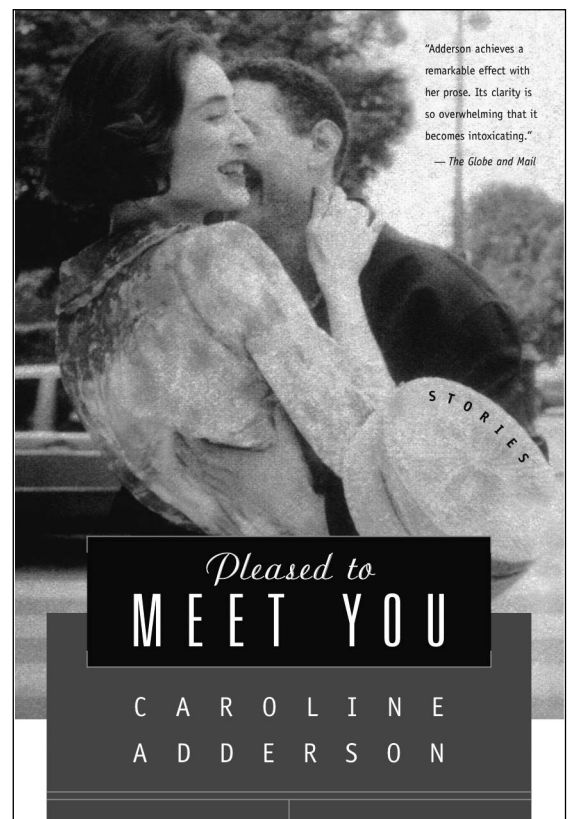
Galsan Tschinag (left) with a Tuvan wrestler



Katharina Rout and Galsan Tschinag

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Emily Carr in her garden in Victoria, 1918. From *Emily Carr* (D&M).

or weepy. I have loved you truly & shall as long as I can [...] Thank you for the love you have given to me. God bless you—goodbye.”

0-8020-3877-8



At age 69, having suffered a stroke, botany enthusiast Emily Carr wrote 21 vignettes about wildflowers. Bequeathed to Ira Dilworth, these jottings have remained out of the public eye until the publication of *Wild Flowers* (Royal BC Museum \$17.95).

Accompanied by illustrations by **Emily Woods** (1852-1916), one of Carr's early drawing instructors, Carr's unflowerly prose about flowers originally served her as a self-proscribed tonic for her bedridden condition.

Carr's manuscripts and Woods' artwork are held by the British Columbia Archives. An unpublished story by Carr entitled 'Small's Gold' is also included in Morra's volume.

0-7726-5453-0



According to **Gerta Moray**, Emily Carr made more than 500 works of art in response to First Nations communities. Moray spent two decades tracing Carr's career for *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr* (UBC Press \$75).

Released to coincide with a Carr exhibit touring Canada in 2006 and 2007, *Unsettling Encounters* suggests Emily Carr consistently worked to champion First Nations peoples and their traditions.

Images of EMILY CARR with her animals, according to Gerta Moray, have distracted attention from her seriousness as an artist.

She maps Carr's first encounters with First Nations communities during her painting trips through 1913 and analyses the work that resulted.

“We do not immediately think of Emily Carr as a person who read the

anthropology of **Franz Boas** and **Marius Barbeau**,” Moray says, “and who pored over reports of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition published by the American Museum of Natural History.”

Moray's view of Carr—a notoriously bad speller who required Dilworth's help in her literary endeavours—re-jigs the eccentric Victoria-based landlady into a far-sighted artist with anthropological intentions and humanitarian sentiments.

“...the Emily Carr that I portray thought of her paintings of Native villages and totem poles as a record, addressed not only to the settler population, but also to future generations of Native peoples in British Columbia.”

0-7748-1282-6



Earlier this year **Ian M. Thom**, **Charles Hill** and **Johanne Lamoureux** edited *Emily Carr* (D&M \$75) to coincide with the cross-Canada Carr exhibit co-created by the National Gallery and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

1-553665-173-1

For a complete list of books by and about Emily Carr, visit www.abcbookworld.com

HATS OFF TO TILLY

Anyone who can resist the lure of Hollywood in favour of parenthood deserves some respect, so hats off to **Meg Tilly** for turning her back on a Golden Globe-winning career and returning to live in B.C. in 1994.

Rather than be known for her roles in movies such as *The Big Chill* and *Agnes of God*, nowadays Tilly would prefer some credit for writing a riveting and explicit novel, **Gemma** (Syren \$15.95 U.S.), about the abduction and sexual abuse of a 12-year-old girl. Due in October, *Gemma* explores the dynamics between a sexual predator and his prey whose resilience has already been tested by abuse suffered at the hands of her alcoholic mother's boyfriend.

Nabokov's *Lolita* was never so bold. All-too-believable, *Gemma* relates a cross-country journey made by low-life kidnapper Hazen Wood with his captive, Gemma Sullivan. Wood is captured halfway through the book. After a miscarriage, Gemma must find the courage to speak out against her abuser in a Chicago trial.



This adult story contains graphic scenes of sexual and physical violence, including a rape scene with the heroine clutching her teddy bear.

Among those acknowledged by Tilly for their support are film director **Mike Nichols** and the Vancouver Young Adults Kidsbooks book club.



Tilly also has a forthcoming children's book, *Porcupine* (Tundra Books), due in 2007. It's about a family who moves from their home in Newfoundland to the grandparents' home after the father dies in Afghanistan. It culminates in the daughter's realization that a family can be made in many different forms.

Tilly's debut novel, *Singing Songs*, originally published by Penguin Putnam in 1994, is being reissued this fall by Syren. It's about a young girl, Anna, trapped in a dysfunctional family, and contains a new foreword by Tilly, reflecting on how the story came to be written.

Gemma 0-929636-61-9

TIL MUSKEG DO US PART

A honeymoon skiing trip with caribou escorts for Karsten Heuer & Leanne Allison



To get their marriage off on the right foot, newlyweds **Karsten Heuer** and **Leanne Allison** decided they should walk and ski alongside a herd of Porcupine caribou for five months, travelling more than 1500 kilometres, over four mountain ranges and dozens of rivers in northern Yukon and Alaska.

Heuer, a wildlife biologist, and Allison, a filmmaker, joined

123,000 caribou for their annual 2,800-mile trek from winter feeding grounds to their calving grounds on the oil-rich coast off the Beaufort Sea in 2003.

The couple endured mosquitoes, blizzards, grizzlies and wolves to produce Allison's award-winning NFB documentary *Being Caribou* and Heuer's conservation memoir, **Being Caribou: Five Months with the Arctic Herd** (M&S \$26.99), in their efforts to

protect the herd in advance of expanded oil drilling.

"Throughout the process of writing this book," he says, "and while Leanne edited and co-directed the film, we both wondered whether it was a eulogy we were producing or a successful call to action. Time will tell, I suppose, but unfortunately time is running out."

Although the migrating caribou are protected in Canadian territory, the Bush administration in Washington is eager to exploit oil supplies beneath the calving grounds within the Alaskan Wildlife Refuge. Heuer claims drilling in Alaska would reduce the United States' dependence on foreign oil by only 4%, or approximately six months worth of oil.

Approximately sixty percent of the Porcupine caribou calves are born in the refuge area that oil companies hope to develop.

Heuer previously worked in the Banff and Jasper national parks in the Rockies, in Slovakia and Poland, and in the Madikwe Game Reserve in South Africa. A recipient of the Wilburforce Conservation Leadership Award, he wrote *Walking the Big Wild: From Yellowstone to the Yukon on the Grizzly Bears' Trail* (2002). The U.S. edition of *Being Caribou* won the Grand Prize at the 2005 Banff Mountain Book Festival.

0-7710-4122-5

CHAUCEr BY CHOICE

Purists might dismiss **The Rap Canterbury Tales** (Talonbooks \$24.95) as Chaucer for Dummies, but **Baba Brinkman's** hip-hop-hearted transpositions of Middle English into performance raps, illustrated by his brother and stage manager Erik, are justified by the Vancouver rapper.

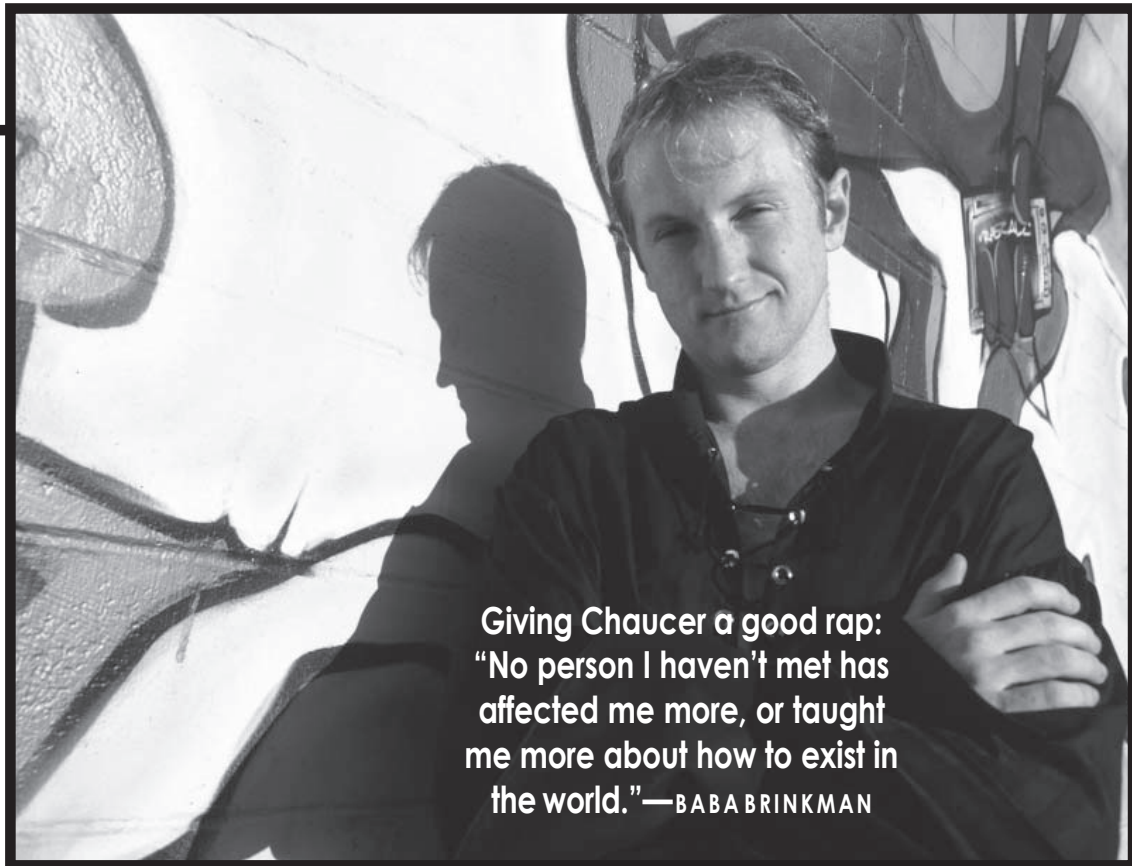
"*The Canterbury Tales*," says Brinkman, "has been preserved in dozens of manuscripts from the fifteenth century, but there are no surviving pages that were written during Chaucer's lifetime.

"Since we have no text written by his own hand, every edition of Chaucer's poetry must therefore admit the possibility of editorial corruption, either by the copying scribe, or in printed versions by the editor....This edition is no exception, but its primary purpose is to offer an *interpretation* of the *Tales* for the general reader."

Brinkman, who has tested his material at the Edinburgh Festival, cites rap music as the embodiment of what poetry should be, and once was. He notes that Chaucer presented his various tales in the context of a storytelling contest to unite a contingent of pilgrims riding on horseback from London to Canterbury.

"The clearest analogy for this storytelling contest model in hip-hop culture is the phenomenon of the freestyle battle," he writes, "a live performance event that underlies the majority of recorded rap lyrics either in style or content."

0-88922-548-6



Giving Chaucer a good rap: "No person I haven't met has affected me more, or taught me more about how to exist in the world."—BABA BRINKMAN

The photographer did his best, but **Robert Strandquist** wasn't keen to smile. So we sent Tamara Letkeman over to his house to make a nuisance of herself. Here is her report from the trenches.

THE INCONVENIENT TRUTHS OF AN UNCOMFORTABLE SOOTHSAYER

BY TAMARA LETKEMAN

Robert Strandquist twirls the ice around in his glass of black coffee, the cubes clinking together in a pleasant staccato. The home he shares with his partner of five years, Maria, is neat and well-ordered, from the woven placemats that lie on the little wooden table where we sit to the pieces of antique stained glass leaning against the panes in the bay window from which pale winter light spills through.

Strandquist, in his early 50s, is also neat, with close-cropped salt-and-pepper hair and a well-trimmed, seal-coloured beard. Nothing about him or around him hints at one of the strongest recurring themes in his fiction—the world in collapse. The colours of the world are dark these days, he says. “And if you want to paint a picture, that’s your palette. Nobody believes in anything anymore.”

Darkness is emphasized in *The Shift*, a three-part, apocalyptic short story that appears in *A Small Dog Barking*. “There’s no moon in the sky,” he says, “and that’s basically a metaphor for God: There’s no God in the sky.” Meanwhile Strandquist does yoga, practices Zen, and is inspired by Zhuangzi, a 4th-century B.C. Taoist philosopher, whose ideas strongly influenced Chinese Buddhism.

For Strandquist, to deny the existence of God—or Allah or Yahweh or Brahma, whatever name you use—is absurd. “We blithely walk around thinking that there is no God,” he says, and because of it we are teetering on the brink of oblivion.

Darkness is never far away. Had he not discovered meditation in 1980, alcoholism might have killed him. As well, during his first two years of being a full-time writer, he was beset by terror and anxiety, constantly grappling with the question: Why am I doing this?

Brian Kaufman, Strandquist’s editor at Anvil Press, prefers to view Strandquist as a kind of soothsayer. “His stories seem to talk in the sense of parables. They’re like a warning sign telling us we’re going to hell, and we’d better do something fast.” Novelist **Bill Gaston** concurs, calling Strandquist a West Coast Kafka. “I guess because one senses in his work, as a sort of backdrop, an existential burden, that there’s a kind of nasty trick going on.”

According to Strandquist, this



BARRY PETERSON PHOTO

Robert Strandquist wonders if perhaps men have gone and buried their heads like so many resigned ostriches, leaving women to run the show.

dystopian mess we’re in has much to do with the destruction of indigenous cultures by western colonialism and imperialism and extends to what Strandquist calls the destruction of our indigenous selves. It comes from the West’s penchant for trashing religions—particularly Islam. This is a sin, Strandquist says, that will come back to haunt us.

“We have no right to be so destructive when somebody’s got something that they value so much they’ll give up their lives to protect it,” he says. And then, with a wistful air, looking down at the table, brushing away invisible crumbs, he adds, “I wish we had something that we valued that much in our culture. If we did, we’d be way better off. We wouldn’t be teetering on the edge of oblivion.”

Concurrently, Strandquist suggests western culture has reduced the modern-day male to the likes of Homer Simpson, a notorious “goof” who is an alien to his children. “Most men are like **H o m e r Simpson**. And that’s a ruined thing; that’s not a complete form. It’s a mutation of something natural.”

Strandquist believes women are generally more on the ball, but he is not confident that either sex has what it takes to bring the world forward—or set it right.



“We’re so close to the abyss,” says the soothsayer, “we’ve got to save us from ourselves. Here we are on this great ship that’s about to run into an iceberg.”

Nor does Strandquist have the answers either. “His fiction’s complaint [has] no particular object or centre,” says Gaston. “Nor does it offer solutions, so in this way it feels so accurate.” The appeal of many of Strandquist’s characters, Kaufman says, “is they’re just like you and me, and you see how close any of us are to falling through the cracks.”

Leo, the protagonist in Strandquist’s novel *The Dreamlife of Bridges* (Anvil Press, 2003), gets caught in a tailspin through the

continued on page 18

Robert Strandquist has unleashed his third book in five years,

A Small Dog Barking

continued from page 17

loss of job after job, and home after home, until he eventually ends up on the streets. His son has committed suicide, and his tools—the only possessions he still retains once he’s homeless—get consumed by fire. For renewal to happen, for healing to happen, we have to start all over again. “And in the deepest sense, we have to start from nothing,” Strandquist says. “We have to throw it away, throw everything away and begin again.”

Growing up, Strandquist bounced around B.C. with his family, and his early education was a disaster. He failed classes. He went from a middle-class high school in Kelowna to Surrey where there were students smoking in the halls. Disheartened by his new surroundings, he started skipping classes and eventually dropped out when he was in Grade Ten. Three years later, Strandquist entered Douglas College in New Westminster and steered himself towards the arts, including writing, even though he was functionally illiterate.

“It’s kind of fascinating why I chose to do something that I didn’t know anything about,” he says. “I would have been much wiser to choose music or engineering, which is what I was really interested in.” Eventually, at the University

of Lethbridge, and later at UVic, he realized his course had to be writing. “It lit a fire under me that’s still going today.”

Now holding an M.F.A from UBC, Strandquist has banished his demons. The terror he felt upon becoming a full-time writer has dissipated, and he no longer asks himself, why am I doing this? It’s as if he’s come to an understanding with God, struck a deal with Him, and has every intention of holding up his end of the bargain.

“It’s a reciprocal thing with nature,” he says. “If you make a decision to go in a particular direction, then the impulse is yours, but all the rest of it is up to nature—or Brahma, or whatever.” There is a certain kismet to his thinking, a karmic philosophy that keeps his “ass in the chair.” It tells him God is working away on his behalf to help him in his chosen pursuit, and so prevents him from abandoning it to do something else when things get tough.

“I’ve learned the hard way. You get something good happening and for whatever reason, you decide it’s not the right thing anymore, and you go off in this direction and, boy, do you pay a price. So that’s why I keep writing. This little voice says, just do it. So I do it.”

1-895636-69-8

Tamara Letkeman is a Vancouver writer.

Mete had noticed bar codes appearing on things long before the scanners appeared in the stores. In prison he tried to make the connection, but the iceberg it was the tip of floated just out of reach. In jail you live in your head, but Mete had always lived in his head. Jail wasn’t a big change. He tried to make the connections but there were none. Church was a conspiracy to keep you from God. Families ensured you never had intimacy with anyone. Justice, a jury of your peers, just one more extinction event. Lazarus raised from the dead should not be in charge of the nursery.

One night the wrath of God trampled all over his imitation Persian rug, breaking several of his fingers, landing him in a cell where he was immediately raped by a chalk outline. Jail was where you were force-fed time. The biggest thing that never existed, they pushed it down your throat. It was all you had to think about, that and your crime, if you were lucky enough to have one. In the early days family visited, bringing their baskets of memories. As their visits became more strained, they wanted him to confess to the poor woman’s murder. They were tired of making the trip, but naturally they denied it. Mete was glad when they stopped coming. It was like when everyone knows something they’re not telling you, something they know about you, something too appalling to tell you about yourself. Tidy resolutions, adherence to irrefutable absurdities.

Just remember to take cell doors at a crouch, and the chairs kill your back if you try and relax in them, all the while trying to block the clatter out, elbowing suspicious bowls of meal. Everywhere, propaganda proclaimed that revenge had been eradicated from the face of the earth, but they never told you about the vial they’d lost somewhere in the files.

Already one parole hearing was a file folder; his test score grid didn’t line up to the machine’s, so they turned him down. When they told him, he just nodded like they made all the sense in the world, relaxing his muscles, taking it in. The warden had to placate the guards’ union, the government mandarins, the news media, his wife. Somebody had to pay for it all.

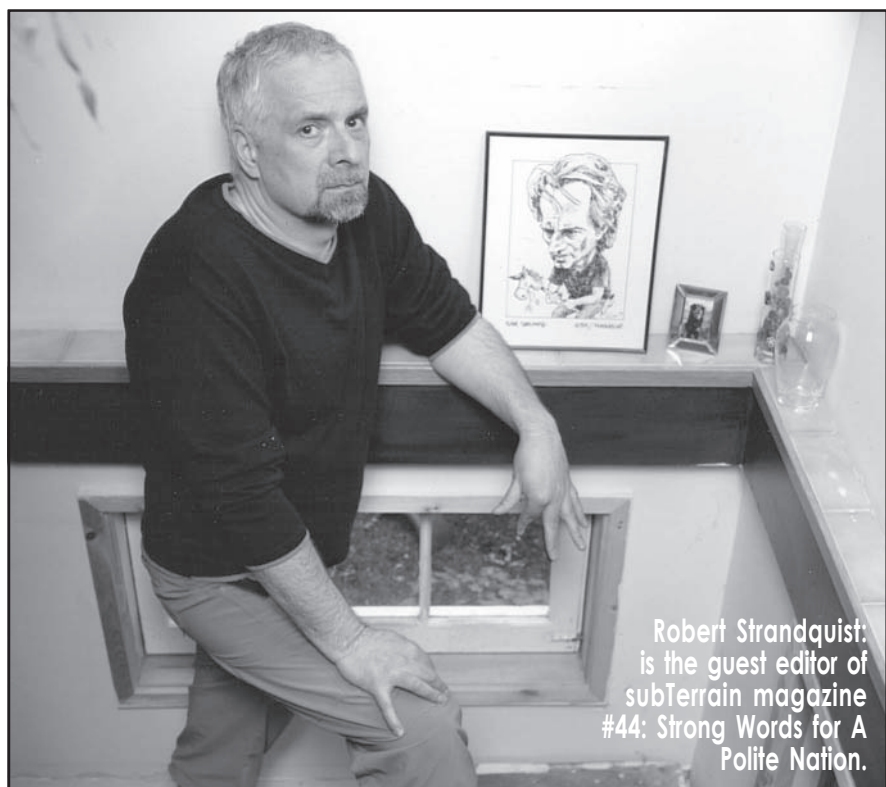
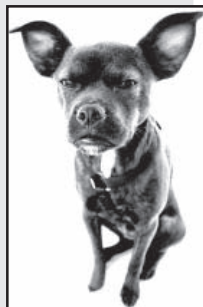
DNA was no sooner coined when it turned up in forensics. He could see it coming and then it overtook him, like bar codes. Ambitious smalls were always making everything smaller; it was the great stone, the great uphill. What occurred occurred because of the completely unrelated connections between things. It was the warden, claiming rashly, in public, that no wrongly accused men were being held in his facility.

It was the urine sample of fate, a piece of meat on the head of a pin. Some pinching and probing, and a few tests and sword dances later, the odds were in his favour, ranging in the billions to one. The DNA tests were conclusive and the warden was out on his ass, but it took months before Mete staggered down into the valley a free man. There had been no hoopla, nobody on the outside waving in. City administration threatened him and lawyers shouted. A priest whispered that he should forgive God. And the only free shrink found him repellent.

He rented a room in his old neighbourhood and relaxed in his gonch. What it was simply went on. The public found his vague innocence troubling. Slowly he resigned himself to the traumas in the walls and the not insignificant reigns of garbage. It didn’t matter; he’d become an old madman long ago, anyway.

One night after he’d turned out his lamp it all started again. He thought he was having a dream: his door flying open, six Navy seals framing him in watertight pistols. They called him a terrorist motherfucker, bound his wrists with zap-straps and were about to drag him down the stairs when a bright light in the crowd realized they were in the wrong room, on the wrong floor. This revelation was followed by a considerable pause. One of them reluctantly reached out with his bayonet and, with a flick, cut the zap-strap. Covering each other, they withdrew. A minute later there was a crash on the floor below, a cry of protest cut short. A small dog barking.

—Excerpt from **A Small Dog Barking** (Anvil Press).



Robert Strandquist is the guest editor of subTerrain magazine #44: Strong Words for A Polite Nation.

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WHISTLING PIXIE

It is impossible not to feel sympathy for **Tim Lander** when he describes sleeping under the Burrard Bridge and waking to discover his false teeth were stolen.

AFTER DECIPHERING THE TINY ITALICIZED TYPE in Tim Lander's self-published memoir *The Magic Flute*, the lingering impression one feels is admiration.

The sophisticated manner in which the guileless Lander portrays himself simultaneously as a harmless simpleton and a gentle wise man makes the 68-year-old street poet seem like an over-grown sprite or an undiscovered Tarot card character who invites complex interpretations.

"I was an aged man," Lander writes, "a paltry thing, travelling every week with my pack on my back, my hat on my head and my piccolo in my pocket, over on the ferry from Nanaimo, to play around the market and craft shops of Granville Island."

For years Lander refused to submit to Nanaimo's humiliating by-law that requires all buskers to audition in front of a by-law officer to obtain a license, and name tag. Unwilling to play his penny whistle or piccolo legally on the streets of his hometown, he began busking in Vancouver instead.

"At night I would unroll my sleeping bag on a thick, soft growth of ivy under the Burrard Street Bridge, with the ever-present noise of traffic thudding above me.

"I reckoned that if I made a few dollars, why spend it on a cheap bed? I had no shame in sleeping like a hobo. I'd always secretly admired the 'gentlemen of the road' and by nature I'm a penny-pincher."

While some youngsters have belittled him as a haggard version of Father Christmas on the streets, most passers-by have responded kindly.

"If you can play me some Jethro Tull," says an Aboriginal man in a Pink Floyd t-shirt, "I'll see if I can find you a buck." Lander replies he's just an old hippy who only plays music off the top of his head. The man gives him his box of take-out food anyway.

Another time a cop encouraged him to keep playing, even after a noise complaint was made.

Then one morning Lander woke under the bridge, put his hand in his hat and discovered his false teeth were missing. It was a few weeks prior to Christmas and the malicious thief had ruined his ability to make his meagre living. He searched desperately in the brambles to no avail. He couldn't play his flute properly without his teeth.

"Then, thinking about what had happened...I realized that is was absolutely the funniest thing that had ever happened to me," he writes, "and the humour of the whole predicament filled me with light."

Lander decides he can play his piccolo *even better* without his teeth. "I could do things with the note that I never could do before. This was my Zen moment, this was my satori. My flute and I, we had discovered each other like two lovers."



Lest anyone underestimate Tim Lander, or even pity him, he is perfectly capable of dropping sly references to Yeats when he's not conducting his erudite, one-man campaign to assert the validity of the humble chapbook as the purist vehicle for poets, "not dependent on the good will of the government."

Lander remains leery of what he calls "the hierarchical filter of the Canada Council system of Approved Editors and Publishers."

"Chapbooks can be printed in small quantities, as needed," he says, "and they do not require a huge outlay of cash. They are cheap, unadorned, designed to be traded with other poets, and they are affordable to the kind of aficionados of poetry who attend readings, the educated underclass."

Chapbooks have added the advantage of displaying the hand, judgement and design sense of the poet. Most of Lander's chapbooks over the years have been deftly illustrated with whimsical, minimalist sketches.

Having just published his first 'legit' book called **Inappropriate Behaviour** (Broken Jaw Press \$19), he was recently alarmed to read the page proofs and realize he would soon be spreading thoughts from between six and thirty years ago.

The psychic remedy for this trauma was to release his umpteenth chapbook, *Elegy Ritten in an ORL Nite Café*. As always, it contains Lander's advice regarding copyright: "Do not reproduce without love."

George Orwell tried to get to the root of things in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Tim Lander tries to get to the root of things on a daily basis.

Few writers in our midst have the strength of character to run the risk of saintly behaviour, of being ridiculed as naïve.

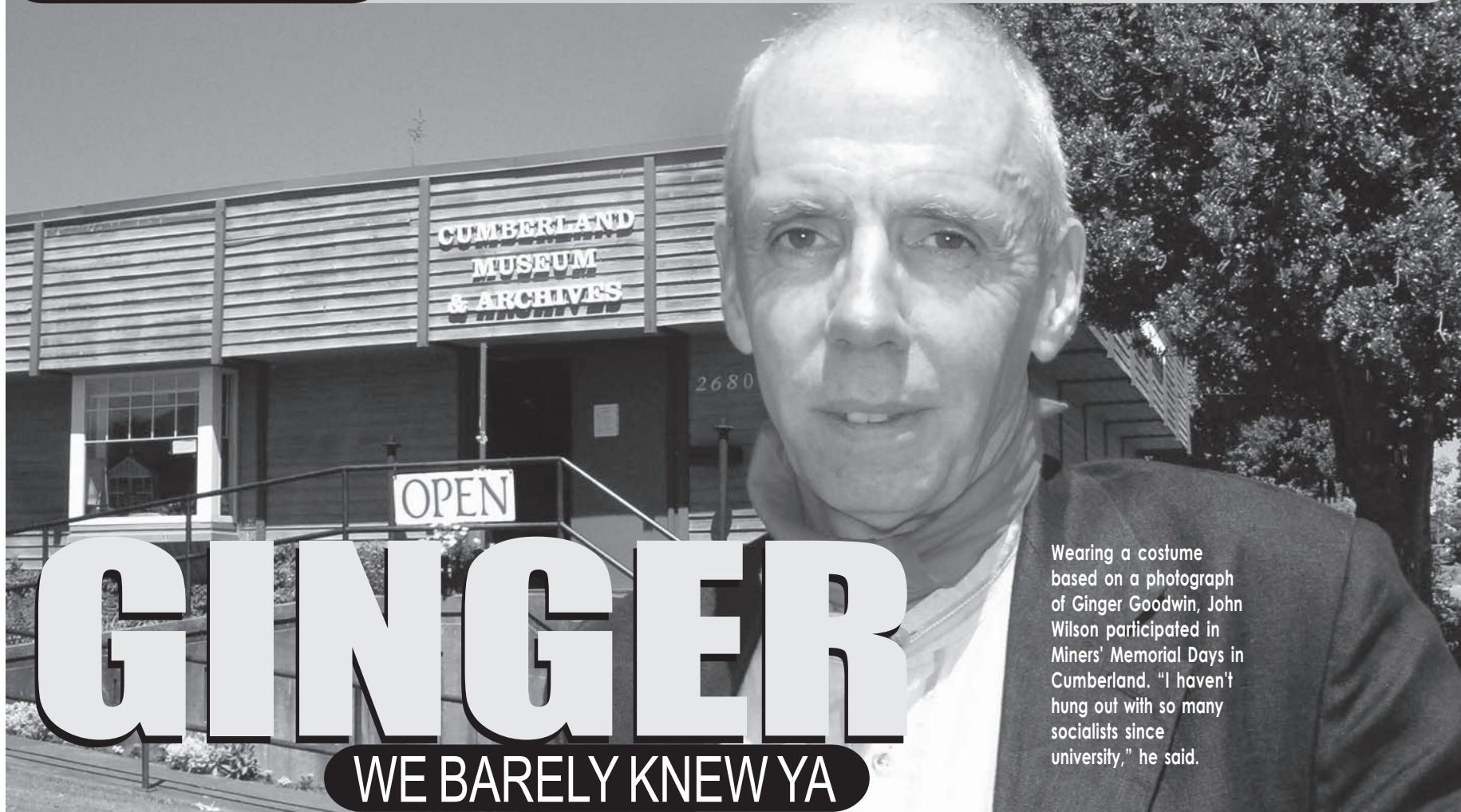
But Lander, who grew up in England, describes himself as a coward, not as a rebel. He knows he can't change the world.

"I am an old man, time moves on, and the rock musicians with their enormous amplified sound systems are telling the politicians how to run the world, and the politicians pretend to listen, smile for the cameras, and go back to their agendas. What magic, what truth can emanate from all that digital, solid state circuitry and strutting, grandstanding rock and roll tub thumpers?"

"... Still the ancient struggles will not go to sleep and the armies march away to war, to disappear like water in the sand.

"The tide of entropy and the breaking wave of history are irresistible, but a line of music in the street can give the harassed mind a small beautiful place to dwell.

"The magic of the flute is a small magic, like a little white flower among the pebbles by the roadside, a life-line thrown to the poor benighted people of the city in the deep heart of their suffering."



Wearing a costume based on a photograph of Ginger Goodwin, John Wilson participated in Miners' Memorial Days in Cumberland. "I haven't hung out with so many socialists since university," he said.

AFTER 18 TITLES FOR YOUNG READERS ABOUT COMPLEX POLITICAL SITUATIONS ABROAD, **John Wilson** has brought his fiction formula close to home with *Red Goodwin* (Ronsdale \$9.95), an introduction to the life and times of the socialist folk hero Ginger “Red” Goodwin who was forced to seek refuge in the woods around the coal mining community of Cumberland due to his activities as a union organizer.

Following the death of his father in World War I, young Will Ryan is sent to live with his uncle, a mine manager at Cumberland on Vancouver Island. Will’s chance meeting with the outlaw Red Goodwin in the forest prompts him to consider the legitimacy of the miners’ unionized protests and Goodwin’s radical view that the conflict between Britain and Germany has capitalist origins. Along the way Will befriends a Chinese boy and learns about racism, and he falls in love with a beautiful Scottish girl whose family is helping Goodwin survive in the woods.

Wilson’s preceding young adult novel *Four Steps to Death* (Kidscan \$19.95) revisits the horrific encounter between the troops (and egos) of Hitler and Stalin during the battle and siege of Stalingrad, 1942-1943. Resulting in more than one million deaths, this 229-day impasse was the turning point in World War II, after which the Germans never won a major battle. Wilson revis-

its the city now known as Volgograd through the experiences of a German tank commander named Conrad, a patriotic Russian soldier named Vasily and an eight-year-old boy named Sergei who tries to survive in the rubble.

In an afterword, Wilson notes the starving and freezing remnants of the German army under Field Marshall von Paulus finally surrendered on February 2, 1943. “The dead were burned in piles on the open steppe and the survivors marched off to a captivity from which few returned,” he writes. The battle of Stalingrad remains under-acknowledged in the West because American, British and Canadian troops did not participate.

Wilson’s forthcoming young adult novel is *Where Soldiers Lie* (Key Porter \$15.95). Set in the exotic world of British Imperial India, it charts the adventures of Jack O’Hara through the tumultuous summer of 1857. With barely time to adjust to his new world

after being wrenched from his home in Canada, Jack is plunged into mutiny, siege and massacre. Jack manages to make new friends, but will any of them survive?

Red 1-55380-034-6; Four Steps 1-55337-704-4; Where Soldiers Lie 1-55263-790-6



According to **Sally Rogow’s** research for *They Must Not Be Forgotten: Heroic Catholic Priests and Nuns Who Saved People From The Holocaust* (Holy Fire Publishing \$11.99), some 155 Catholic institutions in Italy opened their doors to Jewish refugees

and made it possible for the majority of Jews in



Sally Rogow

Italy to be saved from the Holocaust. In France, close to 12,000 children were saved by priests and nuns. In Poland, even though providing assistance to Jewish people was punishable by death, some priests and nuns hid Jewish children.

While Rogow documents specific cases of heroism and compassion, her book reminds young readers that Nazi racial laws deprived Jews of their citizenship, stripped them of their civil rights and robbed them of their possessions. During Krystallnacht in 1938, Jewish shops were destroyed by government troops and paramilitary units.

In 1939, at the outbreak of World War II, Jews were forced to wear the Star of David. In Eastern Europe, they were robbed of their belongings and forced to live in ghettos. Beginning in 1940, Jews in all occupied countries were arrested and deported to concentration camps. By 1942, the killing of Jews in gas chambers was underway.

According to Rogow’s press material, 5,962,129 Jews were murdered, more than 1,000,000 were children. 63% of European Jews were killed. Death rates per country: Poland 3,000,000; Hungary 596,000; France 200,000; Belgium 36,800; Italy 7,630.

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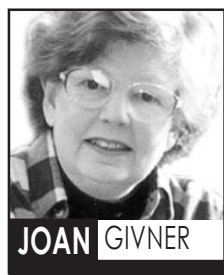
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Estella Hannah Carroll, the subject of **Linda J. Eversole's** biography **Stella: Unrepentant Madam** (Touchstone \$19.95), arrived in Victoria in 1899 to spend Christmas with a friend. The Christmas dinner was a sumptuous feast of game and poultry prepared by two cooks, lots of champagne, spirits, music and merrymaking lasting well into the night.



JOAN GIVNER

It was actually more than a seasonal festivity, for the friend was celebrating the transfer of her home—an upscale brothel—to a new owner. When the new owner fell downstairs in the early hours of the morning, she died instantly. Stella was shocked, but the accident provided a wonderful business opportunity.

In San Francisco she had acquired all the skills necessary for running a “parlour house” with a very genteel clientele. However, that city was already well-served with high-class brothels, and Stella was ambitious. Her early life had been hard. At fourteen she’d become the protector of three younger siblings, and she’d raised them in a sod house in Kansas. Now she aspired to be nothing less than the top madam in her city, presiding over an elegantly furnished house and offering fine food, good wines, and beautiful women. Victoria seemed the ideal place.

The establishment that fell so conveniently into her lap was on Broad Street between Yates and Pandora, an area of small, quiet brothels and saloons. There she occupied the two upper floors of the Duck building, named for Simeon Duck, a colourful character known as a freethinker and believer in the spirit world. A businessman who served in the legislature periodically, he appreciated the profits that came from renting buildings for “sporting houses.”

Stella operated her place like a boarding house, renting out rooms and making money from food and liquor while the girls kept their earnings. The city fathers turned a blind eye to the red light district in the city centre, as they did to the quiet places at the south end, which catered to the influential businessmen who were members of the Union Club. Then everything began to change.

Simeon Duck died. The San Francisco earthquake brought an influx of madams and their employees to Victoria, and the moral reformers gained ground. The Temperance and Moral Reform Association was joined by groups such as the Purity League and the Christian Temperance Union. In 1906 Alfred James Morley was elected Mayor. A racist and avid proponent of Asiatic exclusion, he also closed saloons on Sunday, and decreed that no house of prostitution should be allowed to sell liquor. He became Stella’s nemesis.

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE BUBBLY AT STELLA’S PETTICOAT JUNCTION

How a Victoria madam prospered in the skin trade.

The Broad Street madams moved to other locations, and Stella migrated to two properties on Chatham and Herald Streets. The opening of the Empress Hotel in 1908 brought an increase in business, but she was subjected to constant harassment for violations of the liquor ruling. She appeared in court so often that it was said Magistrate George Jay saw more of her than her customers did. He got so fed up that he hardly listened to the evidence against her. On one occasion he found her guilty more or less because she’d been found guilty of the same charge the previous month. At this, her lawyer James “Tod” Aikman sprang to his feet:

“I object. I would point out to Your Honour that you cannot consider the previous convictions.”

“Oh yes I can.”

“Oh no you can’t.”

So it went on until Jay handed down a \$90 fine. Aikmen declared his intention to appeal.

Jay’s reply was “Next case.”

She was sentenced to jail several times but managed to avoid doing time, though on one embarrassing occasion she was escorted to the prison at New Westminster. She arrived to find that the Attorney General, William Bowser (later premier of B.C.) had

Stella Carroll’s first brothel in Victoria was on the top two floors of the Duck Block on Broad Street, notorious for its brothels and saloons at the turn of the century.



Biographer and novelist Joan Givner has written critical studies of female characters, including Katherine Anne Porter and Mazo De La Roche.

Police mug shots of the prostitutes Lizzie Cook and Martha Roberts who both worked at Stella’s Herald Street brothel.

ordered her released. There were no federal prison facilities for women anyway.

In September 1908 Stella purchased her most splendid home. This was Rockwood, designed by the architect John Teague for the pioneer brewer, Joseph Loewen. It was a 12-acre estate adjacent to the Victoria Gardens Hotel in the Gorge area. It suited her purpose very well. She could keep the Herald Street establishment but if things got too dangerous she could transfer her entire operation to Rockwood.

In spite of the grand houses, the beautiful gowns and jewels purchased during European travels, Stella’s personal life was far from decorous. She gravitated to violent men and the police were called several times to defend her from the assaults of husbands and lovers. The worst incident was a shooting at Rockwood. It was probably not the accident that she and her lover subsequently claimed, and it resulted in the amputation of part of her leg. After a long convalescence, she returned to work, racing in her horse-drawn buggy between her businesses. But eventually, her businesses went downhill, debts accumulated, and she lost all her Victoria properties. Even Rockwood was registered in the names of her brother and sister.

In 1920 she returned to California and operated a legitimate boarding house. She even married again, for the fourth and last time. In spite of an outburst of jealous rage against her sister at the wedding (the groom complimented the sister a little too enthusiastically), the marriage was a happy one.

Stella was devastated by her husband’s death twelve years later. When she died at the age of 73, she was poor, lonely, and in pain. She lived alone in a small rented frame cottage with bare floors and poor furnishings. For company she had only cats and rabbits, and memories of the days when she swept to the entrance hall to greet her guests, calling out, “Company, ladies,” to signal the arrival of clients.

This is a beautifully produced book full of fine photographs, many of them the legacy of Stella’s personal vanity. She was photogenic as well as handsome, and adored posing in her elaborate outfits on all ceremonial occasions. The pictures are also the result of the author’s tireless efforts in seeking out material. Eversole spent 20 years researching Stella’s life, traveling to California to meet the descendants of Stella’s siblings, and gathering archival documentation. In the manner of all good biographers, she manages simultaneously to tell a life-story and evoke a historical period, and to make both narrative strands very lively.

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