Turns out David Stanley once purchased the longest plane ticket ever issued in Canada by Pan American Airways back in 1978. He arranged to make over 50 stops between Los Angeles and Singapore.

Now with nine books to his credit, Stanley has recorded the development of tourism in the South Pacific over the past quarter-century.

“In the early days there was only one large resort on Bora Bora,” he recalls, “and it was fine to camp free, for as long as you liked, on the beach in the center of Vaitape.

“Do that today and you’ll be visited by the gendarmes within 10 or 15 minutes.”


“Over the past decade,” he says, “book sales have declined steadily, partly because so much is now available for free on-line.

“What Internet users don’t seem to realize, however, is that the bulk of travel websites are either paid advertising by businesses or hobby websites run by individuals. The discipline of a professional book editor is almost always lacking. I haven’t seen a website yet that tells the whole story the way a good travel guidebook should.”

Visit www.abcbookworld.com for a complete list of David Stanley’s titles.
Most oar-powered crossings connect the Canary and Caribbean Islands (5,000 kilometres). Six people have died trying; dozens have needed deep-sea rescue. “The number of successful ocean crossings is low,” writes Julie Angus, in her memoir, *Rowboat in a Hurricane: My Amazing Journey Across a Changing Atlantic Ocean* (Greystone $22), “especially when compared to other extreme endeavours such as climbing Mount Everest and skiing to the South Pole.”

Julie Angus’ compelling story of her 145-day oar-powered journey from Lisbon to Costa Rica shows she can narrate as well as she can navigate. While risking her life making a trans-Atlantic crossing with her partner Colin Angus—who was completing a round-the-world expedition using human power only—she vividly describes being hit by two hurricanes and two cyclones, encircled by a great white shark, battered by a huge amorous turtle and almost demolished by a wooden fishing boat at full cruising speed.

Their slow-moving rowboat also narrowly avoided a collision with a twenty-eight-thousand tonne tanker. Only the rowboat’s lightness saved it by causing the bow wave of the tanker to toss it aside.

There are wonderful moments as well as terrors—such as an unexpected solar eclipse, the appearance of exotic birds, whales, porpoises, dorado and pilot fish which survive by following larger fish and living on their leftover scraps. A group of four pilot fish that attach themselves to the boat become cherished pets and are given names—Ted, Fred, Ned and Oscar. Ted and Fred swim 6,000 kilometers beside the boat, accompanying them all the way to Costa Rica.

Angus’ adventure started with an internet search for a boat designed for rowing on oceans. The search turned up a seven-meter-long boat, weighing 350 kilograms empty and 800 kilograms when fully loaded. She flew to the north of Scotland to inspect it and arranged for its delivery to Lisbon, the point of departure.

The boat had two tiny cabins—a forward one to serve as a cupboard and an aft one, as big as a small closet, for living quarters. Between the two cabins was an open deck with sliding rowing seats positioned in tandem. Sealed compartments below deck held supplies.

As for a bathroom, “I soon learned that the best way... was to hang my derriere over the side while sitting on the outer rail. The life-lines made a secure backrest and it was much more relaxing than the bucket.”

In rough weather a six-meter rope with one end secured to the boat acted as an umbilical cord in case one was washed overboard.
For all the drama and the rich textual detail, this voyage had a serious purpose.

With bachelor’s degrees in psychology and biology, and a master’s degree in molecular biology, Julie Angus hoped to get a more intimate sense of the life and dynamism of the Atlantic, and to see for herself the environmental damage documented by others.

Rowboat in a Hurricane therefore describes with dismay and alarm the amount of trash floating in the water, most of it plastic. It is eaten by jellyfish, which in turn are eaten by other creatures so that the toxins move up the food chain, making killer whales the most contaminated species on earth.

The voyage reinforced Angus’s sense of the interconnection of land and sea, of how the health of life on land depends on the vitality of the oceans.

Human activity has caused fish stocks to dwindle, turtles to become endangered, and coral reefs to die. Thus this book is a testament both to human courage and to human destructiveness.

Angus deftly weaves personal detail into the story, fleshing out her small cast of characters. Her fiancé, Colin Angus, a distinguished sailor and explorer, had not been her first choice of shipmate because she feared the strain on their relationship. However, when her chosen female partner opted out, and Colin’s male companion in a separate adventure also parted ways, the couple seemed fated to undertake the Atlantic crossing together.

Happily, the journey strengthened the relationship and they were married in August of 2007, two years after their departure from Lisbon. Following their Atlantic crossing and wedding, the Courtenay-based couple undertook a human-power journey from Scotland to Syria, on bicycles and in boats. Julie Angus has since received National Geographic’s Adventurer of the Year Award.

Joan Givner’s latest novel is Ellen’s Book of Life (Groundwood $17.95)
HAVING WRITTEN ABOUT Frances Barkley—the first white woman to reach Canada's West Coast—Cathy Converse examines the secretive life of M. Wylie Blanchet, whose boating memoir The Curve of Time is into its eleventh printing.

Cathy Converse

Following the Curve of Time (Touchwood $24.95) focuses on where Blanchet traveled and her family background. Although it is not touted as a biography, it leapt quickly onto the BC Bestseller list and has remained there for months.

It would be nice to learn Blanchet was a doting single mom, as well as a generous free spirit, sensitive to First Nations peoples. It would be nice to believe she and her brood happily undertook idyllic cruises, as a sort of Swiss Family Robinson On The Water.

Artists, however, are seldom exemplary humans. The egocentricity required for originality more frequently produces monsters than saints.

Converse’s well-intentioned profile reveals that Blanchet was admirable but far from likable. “She was not a Waterford Crystal kind of woman,” Converse writes.

Translation: M. Wylie Blanchet was a piece of work. Her children must have sometimes felt like captives aboard the family's crowded 25 ft. by 61/2 ft. cedar launch. One of them openly dismisses her famous book as a false connection.

Blanchet, as Muriel Liffton, had a tomboyish childhood within a well-to-do High Anglican family in Quebec. She inexplicably left her studies to marry bank employee Geoffrey Blanchet, whose boating memoir was posthumously published.

Whereas he was highly emotional, she could be intensely pragmatic. This marriage wasn't made in heaven. After Geoffrey Blanchet fell ill in his early 40s and subsequently retired, the couple and their four children drove west in a Willys-Knight touring car, serendipitously discovering and buying a cottage at Curteis Point on Vancouver's West Coast in 1922.

Unoccupied since 1914, this strange and abandoned little house, which they dubbed Little House, had been designed by Samuel Maclure. It was a case of finders-keepers, and ‘Capi’ Blanchet kept it for the rest of her days.

In 1923 the family bought their 25-ft. gas boat, the Caprice, for $600, after it had been sunk at anchor by ice discharged by the Brentwood ferry. The boat was only one-year-old but its engine had to be overhauled after it was raised to the surface.

Blanchet's affinity for mechanics and boats was therefore born of necessity. The engine would remain in use for 20 years until 1942.

One more child was born in B.C., then tragedy struck. Geoffrey Blanchet died, or disappeared, under very mysterious circumstances, in 1927, after he embarked on the Caprice and stopped at nearby Knapp Island. The boat was found by a Chinese gardener on the island. It was presumed that Blanchet's husband drowned while going for a swim, but this remains mere conjecture.

Each summer thereafter for 15 years, the indomitable ‘Capi’, with five children to raise, rented her house to a family from Washington State and Huck Finn-ed it along the coasts of Vancouver Island.

For someone who had capably home-schooled her kids, Blanchet left behind a suspiciously paltry paper trail.

Ultimately the portrait that emerges from Converse is one of a no-nonsense person who stubbornly resisted the advice or charity of others.

When Blanchet developed emphysema and her doctor recommended moving to a drier climate, her response was to nick her head in the oven for twenty minutes a day. “Unfortunately, long-term exposure to oil stoves,” Converse writes, “can cause the very condition she was trying to remedy.

Once, when Blanchet and her daughter Janet were driving to Victoria and they passed a house with a well-stocked woodpile, Capi Blanchet derisively suggested those people had to be from the Prairies because they had failed to note the beach was littered with wood.

Blanchet scavenged all her firewood from the beach. "Two friends once brought her a giant box of Presto logs," Converse writes, "so that she would not have to burn wet wood and scrape from the beach.

‘Capi’ thanked them but later said it was one of the silliest gifts she had ever received; it was like bringing coals to Newcastle.

But burning driftwood permeated with salt produces an acid that eats away at brick and causes chimney damage. "Also, burning wood that has not been seasoned for six to nine months generates soot and creosote," Converse writes, "which can markedly increase the risk of a chimney fire."

On September 30, 1961, M. Wylie Blanchet was found dead at her typewriter, having suffered a heart attack at age 70. The never-solved disappearance of her husband casts a macabre shadow over Blanchet's life, even now.

Possibly M. Wylie Blanchet and Emily Carr could have been friends. Neither liked the outside world, and the outside world often responded in kind. And the attentions of men were not at the top of their agenda.

Just as Converse benefited from the work of Beth Hill, who first published The Remarkable World of Frances Bankley 1769-1845 in 1978, this time Converse is indebted to Edith Iglauer for one of the few recorded interviews with Blanchet [for a Raincoast Chronicles profile].

After World War II, the Caprice was sold for $700 to the owner of a Victoria boatyard. It was soon destroyed by a fire when it was in for repairs.

The original version of The Curve of Time appeared in England in the late 1950s, published by Blackwoods in London, the company for which Blanchet had often written freelance articles. Few copies reached the West Coast of Canada. The unusual title The Curve of Time is derived from some writing she had on board the Caprice by the Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) in which the Belgian Nobel Prize winner considered time as a curve.

Admired by Henry Miller, globe-sailing pacifist George Dibbern explored the Pacific beneath the flutterings of his own symbolic flag, much to the irritation of the Nazi Party, port authorities and his long-suffering wife.

"longing"), Dibbern escaped from impending Nazism and the constraints of conventional society, as well as his failures as a breadwinner, to once more roam the Pacific, apparently with his wife's consent.

For the next 30-plus years, Dibbern's South Pacific sailing adventures were only interrupted by an almost five-year second internment on Somes Island during World War II and a two-year stop-over in B.C.

Dibbern's only published book about his nautical adventures, Quest in 1941, has been re-published by RockRead Press, distributed by Sandhill of Kelowna ($29.95).

"My life is one with the sea," Dibbern said. "We respect each other and I have no other master."

But this proved to be wishful thinking. Dibbern could never eradicate feelings of guilt for being an absentee father of three daughters who barely knew him.

Dibbern, the literal drifter, was born in Kiel, Germany in 1889. He left Germany to go to sea at age 18. During his first foray into the South Pacific, Dibbern spent several formative years among the Maoris of New Zealand before he was briefly interned, with other German nationals, on Somes Island in Wellington Harbour in 1918.

Repatriated to Germany, he struggled unsuccessfully for ten years to find employment and to adapt to family responsibilities. In 1930, with his 32-foot ketch, Te Rapunga (Maori for "Dark Sun," i.e., the sun before dawn, or by a friend in Honolulu in 1937. He did so when Hitler's Third Reich decreed that all German-owned vessels must fly the swastika.

While Dibbern was en route from Hawaii to Canada in 1937, the Auckland Nazi Party, in conjunction with Nazi Parties in Vancouver and Montreal, initiated correspondence to divest Dibbern of his German citizenship due to his 'anti-German views.' Subsequently known as a "man without a country" Dibbern also created his own passport, notarized in San Francisco in 1940, with his credo upon it, "I, George John Dibbern, through long years in different countries and sincere friendship with many people in many lands, feel my place to be outside of nationality, a citizen of the world and a friend of all peoples."

When Dibbern visited British Columbia from July 1937 to June of 1939, he lectured in Victoria and Vancouver, and received praise from veteran maritime reporter Norman Hacking in The Province. Hacking's article was sent to Germany as proof of his traitorous beliefs. Ultimately the German consul in Vancouver wrote to Berlin dismissing Dibbern as an eccentric, and essentially harmless.

Dibbern was a charmer who "took his fun where he found it"—sometimes forming key relationships with younger women, platonic at first, who served him as secretaries for the transcription of his dictation.
Though Dibbern's dreams of a better world remain unrealized, his message of international friendship is as timely as ever. He died in Auckland in 1962 while preparing to return to his wife and daughters in Germany.

Erika Grundmann first learned about Dibbern via a conversation with friends about Henry Miller's review of Quest. After a further conversation with bookseller Diane Wells of Wells Books in Victoria, Grundmann eventually located a copy of Quest from a library in Saskatchewan. She met with Shari Farrell in 1993 and then contacted Eileen Morris. After nine years of research, her thorough biography is the first to document the life of "German George" Dibbern. Although Grundmann is clearly one of Dibbern's many admirers, it's a credit to her work that she provides the grist for varying opinions of her subject.

Was George Dibbern primarily an altruistic and courageous figure? Or was he manipulative and self-indulgent? There's always more to a man's life than can be measured by conventional yardsticks. And the truth about Dibbern's life and work may be as elusive as the image of the Wind. — Christopher Moore, author and historian

M asterfully lacing together newspaper accounts, local histories, archival records, and, most importantly, memory, to tell her family's story, Irene Howard shows us in the process how our own family stories can be a remarkable piece of everyone's history.

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DIMITRI ROUSSOPOULOS is author and/or editor of some eighteen books.

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TRIUMPH OF IGNORANCE AND BLISS
Pathologies of Public America
James Polk
Understanding the contemporary United States is essential for all readers who want to know how to act for change. This work, in the tradition of Herbert Marcuse, by one of his students, helps us a great deal.

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JAMES POLK teaches philosophy at the University of Southern California.


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How one Prince Rupert family produced the ‘Rolls Royces’ of the fishing fleet

There is a story of Viking spirit and West Coast ingenuity.

When Oystein “Ed” Wahl, a Norwegian immigrant in his twenties, came to North America with $25 in his pocket to join his brother, he was essentially trading one rugged coastline for another.

After logging and fishing on the Olympic Peninsula, and later Alaska, Ed Wahl returned to Norway in 1920, married 16-year-old Hildur Olsen, and they settled at Q’wa kitsâlî Cove on Quadra Island.

Three years later he loaded up his 27-foot gillnetter, Viking, and moved his growing family to Port Essington on the Skeena River. There, according to Ryan Wahl, his great-grandfather “made history by becoming the first fisherman to use a gas-powered boat on the river.”

Wahl’s forebears were not only expert navigators, they were technically advanced shipbuilders as well, so as the north coast fleet moved from sails to motorized gillnetters on the river, Ed Wahl started building his own boats. Self-taught, he didn’t rely on plans or blueprints, but worked from models. Ed calculated the shape of each plank needed and cut the board without pulling out a measuring tape. Over the years he proceeded to build a fleet of boats constructed by eye.

Wahl would often fish the new craft through summer, consider improvements that could be made, then sell the vessel and start building another one. “His goal was not only to build a boat that would perform well but also give it lines that were just as flowing as the medium it floated on,” Ryan Wahl writes.

Ed Wahl moved the family to Dodge Cove near Prince Rupert in 1928, joining a small community of Norwegian fishermen who’d settled in the area. His brother followed. They were a self-sufficient bunch, building their homes, hunting and fishing, scrounging driftwood.

The only time the Wahls had to venture into Prince Rupert, “was to buy groceries and give birth!” Six sons worked in the shop, learning the trade from stem to stern: cutting planks, sanding, shaping planks in the steam box or hammering dry cotton into seams. When Ed’s wife Hildur died at age 34, his only option was to pull his sons Henry and Iver out of school.

Iver Wahl was Ryan Wahl’s chief informant about the rise and fall of the family business. “I was nine years old when I started school but had to quit when I was 15,” Iver Wahl says, “I helped with the house and took care of my younger brothers until Dad got a housekeeper. Ryan Wahl also interviewed carpenters, welders and tradesmen who stayed with the family business for decades. They paint a picture of an employer who despised unions, but did his best to keep good people. The story touches briefly on Japanese boat builders, like the Sakamoto family who supplied gillnetters to the canneries until the Second World War. Everything changed when they were interned, but some of their key design concepts were incorporated into Wahl vessels.

By 1943 the boat yard was producing a boat a week, and Ed was weaving in more changes. “His straight lines became curved, his sharp corners became rounded and the Wahl boats that finally emerged in the late 1950s had all the eye-pleasing characteristics that would make them so recognizable along the entire B.C. coast.” Light, strong, and to many observers, simply beautiful.

The company expanded in the 1950s, opening another boat shop in Prince Rupert. Ed retired in the 60s, and his sons carried on, building and rebuilding vessels that worked the entire coast. Eventually fiberglass nudged wooden craft aside, and Ryan helped build the last Wahl boat in 1989, his uncle’s vessel, Legacy. You can still see the Wahl handiwork on the coast, classic wooden vessels that are mostly tied up, hoping the salmon might return.

Mark Forsythe is the host of CBC’s BC Almanac.
EXPLORERS
Who was Captain Bodega y Quadra—another reason why his greatness has been obscured for more than two centuries.

If there is one new book that needed to be written for British Columbia more than any other, a strong argument can be made that Freeman M. Tovell has just spent many years writing it.

At the Far Reaches of Empire: The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra (UBC Press $39.95) is an impressively sober, extensively researched, non-fanciful biography that—at long last—provides a finely nuanced understanding of the life and times of Spain’s most influential sea captain in B.C. history.

Yes, Juan Pérez made the first recorded European “discovery” of future B.C. territory in 1774. Yes, Tuscany-born Alejandro Malaspina made a significant voyage intended to mirror the scientific accomplishments of Captain James Cook. And, yes, Don José María Narváez reached the Lower Mainland area in 1791, prior to Captain George Vancouver. And Captain Dionisio Galiano provided important mapping input to Vancouver in 1792.

But it was the sophisticated diplomat, Peruvian-born Bodega y Quadra [not just “Quadra,” as he is commonly known in B.C.], who led the second Spanish expedition (in 1775) to reach B.C. waters prior to Captain Cook; who first claimed Spanish sovereignty over Alaska (in 1775); who led a second voyage as far north as Cook Inlet (in 1779); and who famously settled the Nootka dispute with Captain Vancouver at Nootka Sound (in 1792) and thereby curtailed further international conflict.

After the Spanish flag was finally lowered at Nootka Sound (on March 28, 1795) and Cala de los Amigos (Friendly Cove) became neutral territory, Bodega y Quadra’s ambitions continued to be stifled by increasing debts and he suffered from Spanish prejudices against him simply because he was not born in Spain. He died at the San Blas naval port (just south of present-day California) in 1794, at age 49.

Since then, Bodega y Quadra has been under-celebrated for more than two centuries. Yes, Quadra Island was named in 1903, but few British Columbians realize that Vancouver Island was named “the Island of Quadra and Vancouver” on early maps of the 1800s until Hudson’s Bay Company traders abbreviated the name to reflect British chauvinism.

The virtues of Tovell’s thoroughness cannot be adequately expressed in this space. Suffice to say you won’t hear thunderous applause for his Herculean efforts to fill a gaping hole in B.C. history, but At the Far Reaches of Empire easily qualifies as one of the books that most validates the importance of the B.C. publishing industry in recent years.

With history degrees from University of Toronto and Harvard; Tovell is former Canadian ambassador to Peru and Bolivia who served in the Canadian navy during World War II.

BC BOOKWORLD STAFF PICK

Amazing stuff.... Cyrus Peck was a giant with the heart of a lion....

Jack Granatstein

Colonel Cyrus Wesley Peck was elected to Parliament in 1917 while commanding the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish) in the trenches of France & Belgium. He won the Victoria Cross & became the only man in British Commonwealth history to have won the V.C. while an elected member of Parliament. Edward Peck, second son of Cy Peck, was born in Victoria, B.C. He followed in his father’s footsteps by serving with the 1st Battalion Canadian Scottish in the Second World War. He is best known for a distinguished career in labour relations which spanned almost 40 years.

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WHEN VICTORIA WAS A FORT

Setting traps, speaking Cree and making dye for porcupine quills are not accomplishments becoming of a “young lady.”

In the summer of 1849, young Jenna Sinclair writes in her diary, “I begin with an Adventure” and then confesses to the indiscretion of “Exaggeration” and the peril of committing a “Misdemeanor of the Greatest Sort.” Jenna’s capitalized sins reflect the admonishments of her Aunt Grace, who cares for her orphaned Scottish-Cree niece at Fort Edmonton. This “uppy” aunt has finally settled on a husband, astonishingly a mere blacksmith rather than the expected high-ranking officer, and Jenna will leave Fort Edmonton with them after they are married.

That’s the set-up for Julie Lawson’s Where the River Takes Me: The Hudson’s Bay Company Diary of Jenna Sinclair, the latest installment of the Dear Canada Series. It chronicles the lives of girls and young women in early Canadian history.

Jenna’s diary chronicles her time at Fort Victoria, where the old stockade once stood, find the exact spot for the mud flats of James Bay. Along with her more than 20 other titles, Lawson has also written two other volumes in this impressive series, No Safe Harbour, The Halifax Explosion Diary of Charlotte Blackhorn and A Ribbon of Shining Steel, The Railway Diary of Kate Cameron.

BABY IN A BASKET CASE

Cassie-writing, uber-planter Julia has been best friends forever with “big-haired, big-asseed” Ruth, a drama queen with unsurpassed abilities at forging parents’ signatures. As soon as they can kiss high school goodbye, they’re off for New York or London or Los Angeles. Like Babar the Elephant, who, in Julia’s opinion, doesn’t get nearly the literary respect he deserves) their lives will be full of travel, cool clothes and a gorgeous red car.

But then Ruth ditches Julia, goes to a party without her, gets drunk and does “it” for the first time. A month later she’s crying over sappy morning television and her “boobs hurt.” But cerebral Julia has a plan. After all, her dad’s new wife is also pregnant and, fortunately, hiring a midwife. Under the guise of doing a school report, Julia will interview the midwife, observe her in action and pass along every bit of nutritional and pre-natal advice to Ruth.

As narrated by the sharp-minded Julia, Sarah N. Harvey, The Lit Report is not only about a missed period, two pregnancies and high-school graduation plans gone awry. Harvey has also deftly added a trilingual legal-secretary known for her Holy Trinity flower arrangements, a neo-natal nurse with a second pediatrician wife and a tattooed, ex-con, red-necked, bible-thumping pastor.

Along with the midwife who has “squid-ink-blue” painted toenails, the supporting cast includes the delectable Jonah, with his Christian school book-buzz cut and the “stamina of a triathlete,” and the dishy, sensitive yet foul-mouthed Mark. Julia’s high school confidential plan will be risky, of course—but it has to work out. They hope Ruth can talk her newborn in a basket and leave it on the steps of the church for some good Christians to adopt. Then the pair can simply pick up with their plans and head for New York or L.A. (9780515665110)

Louise Miki Donnelly writes from Vernon.

Sarah N. Harvey: from bookseller to editor and author.

GROUNDED

The Year I was Grounded by Bill New (Orca $12.95) ages 10+

Written for ages 11 & up, Bill New’s The Year I was Grounded is a playful facsimile of one-year journal kept by a restless kid who decides to enjoy his own introspectiveness. “I don’t tell everybody this,” he writes, “but I think I like thinking a whole lot, too. Last summer, kayaking on the lake, I spent a lot of time thinking about how things relate.”

Bill New
Columbia, we asked 50 new fiction titles from British Columbia to lead the way into our coverage of the proliferation of fiction from B.C. Here’s his response:

Here’s his response:

DO THE MATH: If BC fiction writers produce 1/4 of the fiction in English Canada, why is recognition so pathetic?

Schroeder—who has a new collection of novellas himself this fall—to comment on the ongoing proliferation of fiction from B.C. Here’s his response:

George Bowering since the Canada Council took over the GG’s in 1959. Both their winning titles were published from Ontario. Even the GG shortlists produce slim pickings—rarely more than one B.C. author is shortlisted per year, and many years none at all.

The glamorous, newer Giller Prize for Fiction is virtually a carbon copy. No B.C. fictioner has won the Giller in the 14 years of its existence. Yes, we’ve had an almost formulaic one title per shortlist every year (except ’95, ’97, ’99 and ’01, when there were none), but that’s as close as we’ve ever been to that particular brass ring. And it gets worse. If being a B.C. fiction writer is a handicap, being a B.C. fiction writer published by a B.C. publisher appears to double the problem, at the very least. Never mind that our two GG winners were published by CBC publishers. Of the 12 B.C. fiction writers who have made the GG shortlist since 1979 (the year the Canada Council’s archive for the GG awards begins listing finalists), only one was published by a B.C. publisher. That was Carol Windley for her debut collection of short stories, Visible Light, published by Oolichan Books in 1993. The other 11 were all published by Ontario publishers.

Andreas Schroeder of Roberts Creek has re-investigated his Mennonite roots for three novellas (Oolichan). See page 34.

Answer: It turns out that of the winners of the Ethel Wilson prize for BC fiction since 1985, a mere three have been published by BC publishers. Twice the winners were published by Douglas & McIntyre, once by Talonbooks. All the rest were published by Ontario publishers. And the shortlists reveal much the same story. They reveal an almost unbroken record of having only one shortlisted fiction writer published by a BC publisher every year. Most of the rest were published by Ontario publishers.

So what should we conclude from this? It depends on whether you favour conspiracy theories, Alice’s Law of Coincidental Coincidences, or plain bad luck. Is there something inherent in B.C. fiction that just doesn’t work for Torontonians? Or is it that Ontario publishers cream off our most successful authors and leave only the beginners and the mid-list authors to our BC publishers? If that were true, why aren’t more of those B.C. authors published by Ontario publishers winning GG’s and Giller’s?

Alan Twigg, publisher of BC BookWorld, has made it his business to keep track of the “uneven playing field for fiction” for 20 years. Before writing this article, I asked him to comment on my research. His response was blunt: “The fiction game is played in Moscow,” he wrote. “We are in Vladivostok.”

Public Lending Rights founder/overseer Andreas Schroeder of Roberts Creek has re-investigated his Mennonite roots for three novellas that comprise Renovating Heaven (Oolichan). See page 34.
Actor Stephen Miller, known for playing Jack McAll in Da Vinci’s Inquest, has made the most of his character roles for 37 years. Now he’s hitting the big-time with his new Russian historical thriller

The Last Train to Kazan.

Published internationally by Penguin Books, it’s a double-agent’s view of how and why the czar and his family were murdered in 1918.

The North Carolina-born actor has recently re-added two novels about the Russian Revolution—but he has also carried a genuine Russian princess, the Grand Duchess Marie—prompts him to betray his better judgment.

“Rumours were the floor upon which they walked,” he writes.

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TV DETECTIVE

STEFEN MILLER

COMES IN FROM THE COLD

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Ill his life, Douglas has been going with the flow, not asserting himself, as if good looks can serve as a compass. Hotfooting it from his own wedding vows in western Crete, thereby horrifying his bourgeois betrothed and his crass, rich, American father-in-law-to-be, is an unforeseen act of self-preservation.

But where does he go? Where does he hide? Having worked on a summer archaeological dig, Douglas takes refuge with a Greek widow and her young son, a goat shepherd, and instead, after that trip I nearly died from a parasite I picked up in Asia, so I bought all these books and researched by reading.

“My Cretan friends think I may have been more accurate as a result of not being there, of not interacting with them. They are amazed that I know more than they do about traditions on the island and their grandparents verify my information.”

Ultimately, the confluence of village traditions, Greek law and the Orthodox church enable Douglas to learn necessary lessons of shame, terror, gratitude, forgiveness, and ultimately, accountability.

The Pale Surface of Things refers to Father Dimitrios, who, with help from Douglas, painstakingly restores religious frescoes that were covered up during the war. It’s a sophisticated, movie-like novel, slightly longer than it needs to be, packed with the history of the Cretan underground resistance during World War II. "Some are born Greek, some achieve Greekness, some have Greekness thrust upon them,” she says. “I was lucky. I stayed in Chania for a month, driving back and forth across Lefka Ori, tracking down villagers and World War II sites, looking for locations and geographical links.

I was planning to go back several times a year while I wrote Pale Surface and instead, after that trip I nearly died from a parasite I picked up in Asia, so I bought all these books and researched by reading.

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Published from Victoria, with an overly modest book jacket, The Pale Surface of Things has received seven book industry awards, including a gold medal for multicultural fiction from USA Book News Awards, as well as Indie Excellence Awards and Indie Next Generation Awards. In Canada, Pale Surface has gained citations for Best Use of Environmental Materials (from PuBWest), shared with Friesens Printers of Manitoba, who used 100% post-consumer recycled paper with vegetable inks.

Raided in San Diego, the daughter of an English professor, Bennett is a UCLA graduate and architectural journalist who lives on Hornby Island and in Bellingham.

In Christine Hart’s first novel Watching July, 16-year-old July MacKenzie moves to the Interior with her other same-sex parent—Marie—after her birth mother is killed in a traffic accident. As a teenage romance lifts July’s spirits, it comes to light that her mother’s death was not as straightforward as it first appeared, and she must unravel dangers arising from her past.

A graduate of UVic’s English department, Hart also writes for Shameless Magazine.
STANLEY EVANS BIBLIOGRAPHY
Seaweed on the Rocks (Touchwood, 2006)
Seaweed under Water (Touchwood, 2007)
Seaweed on Ice (Touchwood, 2006)
Seaweed on the Street (TouchWood, 2005)

STANLEY EVANS
in Victoria’s Chinatown

“Murder, like every other form of extreme behaviour, is addictive.”
—STANLEY EVANS

MURDER ON THE ROCKS

In Seaweed on the Rocks, the plotting can be a tad whimsical, but Silas Seaweed’s irreverent charm is infectious, Evans’ characters from the underbelly of society are superb and critical observations of Vancouver Island society are refreshingly candid and often revealing.

“Victoria’s ‘Viagra Triangle’ is based at Rock Bay,” he writes, “the area lying between Douglas Street and the George Waterway. Fifty years ago it was largely residential, but now the few remaining houses share Rock Bay with pawnshops, one-hour motels, used-car dealerships, warehouses, hole-in-the-wall consignment shops and British Columbia’s liquor-distribution headquarters.”

What the storyline lacks in urgency, it makes up for in complexity. When Silas investigates the overdose of a girl he knew from his reserve, he encounters a ten-foot-tall mythical bear, small-time crooks, a murdered hypnotist, bogus First Nations ceremonies for profit, a murdered blackmailer and a beautiful but aloof Lexus-driving First Nations love interest.

It rollicks. There’s wit. And it’s original.

978-1894898-73-7

Seaweed on the Rocks by Stanley Evans
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the heroine is a senior citizen, Pygmalion, Margaret Spencer, who evolves into a feisty Murder-She-Wrote type heroine, a la Angela Lansbury. Spencer is introduced as a well-mannered, post-Edwardian type, born in 1908, who inadvertently becomes a crime-solver in the late 1950s.

In Death in a Family Way, set in 1958, Spencer’s dissatisfaction with her corporate lawyer husband—who works for Snodgrass, Cramble & Spencer—prompts her to take part-time work for Nat Southby, a gumshoe-detective working out of a third floor office on West Broadway.

“He certainly didn’t look like Humphrey Bogart in the Maltese Falcon or any of the other detectives she had seen in the movies, for that matter...,” Southin writes, for that matter...,” Southin writes, “Instead, Nat was somewhat overweight, probably in his mid-twenties, dressed in baggy grey slacks and a blue-striped shirt... There was no drink and no gun.”

As she is drawn into the investigation of a string of abductions, Spencer, a mother of two grown daughters, discovers she has a knack for solving mysteries and her relationship with the former cop Southby starts to grow.

Set in the Cariboo in 1959, In the Shadow of Death features Margaret Spencer on a dude ranch vacation that soon detours her into unsolved murders. Eventually her boss arrives and they unravel the intrigue together.

Equally important, Margaret Spencer leaves her husband and his comfortable home in Kerrisdale in favour of a base- ment suite in Kitsilano and a love affair with Nat. The more her husband harasses her and urges her to return to her suffocating marriage, the more she knows she is right to seek employment and sex.

Set in various parts of the Lower Mainland in 1960, Southin’s newest release, Death on a Short Leash, has the duo investigating the death of a veterinarian’s assistant whose body is found in a cranberry bog.

Corruption abounds at the Silver Springs Nursing Home in Richmond, and they discover the dead body of Brother Francesco in Abbotsford. Puppies link the nursing home to a phony religious sect. It’s unabashedly Lower Mainland lit.

As a reward for her diligence, Ms. Spencer gains romance and a full partnership in the gumshoe business by the end of the third novel.

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The People Smugglers

Angel in the Full Moon by Don Easton

In his third, all-too-believable police procedural, Angel in the Full Moon, Don Easton opens his exposé of people smuggling and sexual abuse of children with the transport of an innocent young girl from Hanoi to Canada, for eventual sale to an American as a sex slave. To nab the villainous Russian ringleaders of an international syndicate, Mountie Jack Taggart must travel to the beaches of Cuba and call upon his contacts with the Satan’s Wrath motorcycle gang. Like Taggart, former RCMP undercover operative Don Easton of Victoria has had contracts on his life and has undertaken dangerous work using false identities. “I want the readers to experience what I did,” he says. “In so doing, what they read will challenge their own morality of what they may originally believe to be right or wrong. I want them to see, as Jack Taggart says, the ‘Big Picture.’ In the world of the undercover operative, life is not black and white, where good guys and bad guys are easily defined. Instead, it becomes murky and grey.”

DEATH & TAXES

Fatal Encryption by Debra Purdy Kong

Debra Purdy Kong has a second novel featuring a Revenue Canada Agency auditor, Alex Bellamy. Eighteen months after getting fired from the RCA, Bellamy reappears in Fatal Encryption dressed as Kermit the Frog on Hallowee’en night, wondering where his life went wrong.

In need of cash, Alex agrees to help catch a computer prankster at McKinley’s Department Store, but things turn serious when someone vows to permanently encrypt the store’s data and torch the building unless ten million dollars is handed over in two weeks. Along the way Alex gets implicated in a murder. He knows there’s a connection between the murder and the extortion threat, yet time’s running out. People are questioning his competency; a killer is threatening his life.
In Jim Christy’s Vancouver noir, the fun circles around buried treasure, stolen art, femme fatales, sad sack losers, sexual deviants and bohemians.

B. C. fiction aficionados might want to know that veteran Vancouver newspaperman and golf columnist Roland Wild also published a collection of semi-historical Vancouver stories called The Nine O’Clock Gun, in 1952. Wild weaves a tale from the boisterous boom-town days of Gassy Jack Deighton, to the repression of civic administration of Mayor Gerry McGee, tracing the fortunes of a fictional Scottish immigrant.

See www.abcbookworld.com for more info.

Grant Shilling is a regular contributor from Cumberland.

Vancouver gets renamed Olympia, Squamish is Squamish and Pentiction becomes Penticton. That’s how criminal defence lawyer Christopher Nowlin redraws the map for To See the Sky, an ecologically sensitive crime novel set against the backdrop of construction projects for the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver and Whistler. After the proposed expansion that Sea-to-Sky highway generates social unrest, two children disappear and their father becomes the main suspect.

Nowlin’s environmentally conscious protagonist, Demme Astraus, is independently wealthy. “I’ve lived in various cities across Canada,” Nowlin told the Calgary Herald, “and I’ve never witnessed the same sense of affluence, the same self-confidence that you get in Vancouver. I just wanted to question in a fairly satirical way the rationale that we need the rest of the world to put Vancouver in the spotlight (with the Olympics).” 978-0-307-68101-5

TOUCHING THE OLYMPICS

From the Past

MICHAEL S/4, UNITED

Crisscrossed by Michael Slade is a Vatican conspiracy novel that links Roman Catholicism to a high-ranking Third Reich member named Judas who betrayed Hitler, as the original Judas betrayed Christ.

The story unravels from the contemporary discovery in Germany of an Allied bomber plane called the Ace of Clubs. The granddaughter of the downed pilot, Liz Hannah, enlists the help of a bestselling author and historian, Wyatt Rock, to explain how the bomber was so severely off-course when it disappeared.

Their investigations soon attract attention from the Vatican, enabling Slade to make historical detours into the Crusades and Satanism, with flourishes of torture and murder en route.

978-0-14-242704-5

A RIVER RAN INTO IT

Set mostly in a fictional B.C. border town named Atwood, Donna Jonas Milner’s first novel, After River, is a reflective memoir about a woman coming to terms with the disintegration of her family some 35 years after a Vietnam War draft resister named River Jordan crossed into Canada and changed their lives. Prejudice against the gentle, long-haired River in a rural B.C. community, racism, the fear of homosexuality, leading to the rape of the teenage protagonist and narrator, daughter of the town’s milkman.

978-0-06-146299-3

Blast from the Past

Reading Jim Christy’s fourth and final installment of his Gene Castle Private Investigator Series, Nine O’Clock Gun, is like watching a good late night b-movie starring Edward G. Robinson or Humphrey Bogart.

Set in a perpetually foggy night, this is a compulsively readable journey into Vancouver’s past, in keeping with Christy’s previous Vancouver noir novels Shanghai Alley, Princess and Gore, and Terminal Avenue—all named for Vancouver streets or landmarks.

The new novel’s dramatic conclusion occurs at the Nine O’Clock Gun in Stanley Park, a cultural landmark that was first installed at Brockton Point in 1894. For many years the cannon was fired to mark the beginning and closing of fishing hours in Burrard Inlet. With so many unemployed men trying to make a living by fishing, the canneries needed to restrict fishing to pre-venture oversupply. Over the years, the citizens of Vancouver began to depend on the Nine O’Clock gun to set their watches. It was moved to its present location at Hallelujah Point in 1954. This time Detective Gene Castle returns to Vancouver from questionnable activities in what once was known as “Indo-China. As Castle steps off the deck of the Santa Lucia, at the foot of Shanghai Alley near the end of World War II, “There was fog and sunshine at the same time and all but the very tops of the tallest buildings appeared to glow from within like illuminated cotton candy.”

The big W atop the Woodward’s building stands for “Woe,” the hero informs us. “Hell, what the old terri- burg really looks like is a hophead’s Kubla Khan. So goddamned beautiful that, like any self-respecting hophead him or her, I don’t want to come down. They’re waiting on me, calling: Come down, Castle. Come down to these, your tawdry streets.”

What’s an old gunshow to do? Haunted by thoughts of his advancing age and the perfume scent of an old flame, Castle watches the body count climb and all the events strike close to his rain and gin-soaked world. Events circle around buried treasures, beautiful women, stolen art and a parade of femme fatales, sad sack losers, grifters, sexual deviants and bohemians. In other words, fun.

Nine O’Clock Gun by Jim Christy (HarperCollins, $29.95)
Fiction Round-Up

Betsy Trumpener’s debut fiction in The Butcher of Penetang is not for the squeamish.

BY CHERIE THIESSEN

The Butcher of Penetang by Betsy Trumpener (Globe-News, $17.95)

Are you up for meeting hunters with hearts of gold and the souls of children in a story called “A Slip of the Tongue”? Or a toddler who cracks eggs on the family dog’s snout in a story called “Even a Blind Hen”? Or the youth group leader who likes to show young girls his porn magazines at the Bible camp’s sleepover in “Instructions for a title story, and the 40 narrative snippets that comprise this fiction collection flash by as quickly as the clips from a news broadcast.

Some stories are further divided into sub-chapters, and details can be sparse, so the reader has work, occasionally having to provide endings, too. Sometimes they change gender. Frequently they appear to be the writer herself, as in “Elk Canyon Bugler Seeks Junior Reporter.” Or, to ensure you do your homework, the point of view even shifts in the middle of the story in “Emergencies.”

Just when you may be getting overcharged with the style, along comes a story like “The Coffin Maker,” veering off course with its zany, surreal black humour.

The Butcher of Penetang is a CBC reporter.

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HORATIO AT THE MONUMENT

"I didn't take the death threats very seriously, knowing how my former compatriots, especially those on the political right, loved to bravely puff up their pigeon chests." — ERNEST HEKKANEN

Hekkanen concentrates his narrative on events in Nelson when city fathers suddenly feared for the fate of their tourism industry. As Hekkanen’s role became fundamental in news stories from CNN, ABC, FOX, CBC, Los Angeles Times, Vancouver Sun, New York Times, and Globe & Mail, etc., he found his private life rapidly eroding. After the Doukhobor Museum outside of Castlegar failed to provide a home for the controversial monument as hoped, Hekkanen, in the novel, reluctantly provides refuge for it in his own living room—and his wife isn’t thrilled. “I didn’t take the death threats very seriously,” he writes, “knowing how my former compatriots, especially those on the political right, loved to bravely puff up their pigeon chests.”

In essence, Hekkanen has counter-attacked, providing a fiery and often funny local history of the wave of fear, patriotism and dollar-driven hysteria that effectively blew the lid off Nelson’s image as an idyllic community. He has likened his strange book to Ibsen’s An Enemy of the People and Nor- man Mailer’s The Armies of the Night, but it’s more journalistic and confessional. “Now I wear a beard similar to Abraham Lincoln’s,” he writes. “I don’t look anything like Lincoln. I look more like I could play the role of one of the apes in Planet of the Apes—without any facial hair.”

Of a Fire Beyond the Hills by Ernest Hekkanen (New Orphic $25)

Of a Fire Beyond the Hills was shortlisted for the George Ryga Award for Social Awareness in B.C.
**CHICKLIT, CROONERS, & MOTIVATIONS**

Unabashedly promoted as chicklit, Robyn Harding’s third novel *Chronicles of a Mid-Life Crisis* details the break-up of a 16-year marriage due to the husband’s unexpected disenchantment, the subsequent rebelliousness of their 15-year-old daughter, and the eventual reunion of their parents, Trent and Lucy, in order to deal with the parenting crisis. Now living in Vancouver, Harding is one of the few novelists on the planet born in Quesnel. 978-0-14-305375-0

In the social milieu of Magee High School back in 1948, teens are avidly debating the crooning abilities of Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra, but May Sutherland is ambivalent about comparing the two singers. In *That Tune Clutches my Heart*, a coming-of-age novel by Langara College teacher Paul Headrick, May spills her lonely heart into a diary given to her by her mother after suddenly losing two best friends. 9781554470648

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**THE LONER & THE NOVELIST**

Frankie Styne & the Silver Man by Kathy Page (Phoenix $23.95)

Kathy Page’s themes have been identified as loss, survival, transformation and “the magic by which a bad hand becomes a good chance.” Her newly reissued *Frankie Styne & the Silver Man* is about the very odd relationship between an obsessive loner who writes gruesome killer novels and his new next-door neighbours, a new mother and her highly unusual infant named Jim.

When the novelist Frank hatches a real-life plot, the lives of the mother Liz and her very strange child are transformed. This new edition marks the onset of a new Writers’ Union of Canada initiative to assist members to revive out-of-print work.

9780969079651

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**MYSTERY BEA**

Gifts and Bones by Barbara Murray (Gowan Press / White Knight $22.95)

Bowen Islander Barbara Murray’s first novel in her planned Bea and Mildred series of mysteries, *Gifts and Bones*, is set in Newfoundland in 1902.

Working as a maid, the heroine Bea MacDonald enlists the company of her odd relative, Mildred, to solve a disappearance from the household in which she is employed. 978-09783373-0-8

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**THE LONER & THE NOVELIST**

**CHICKLIT, CROONERS, & MOTIVATIONS**

**MYSTERY BEA**

**THE LONER & THE NOVELIST**
**VERNE'S RETURN**

**Jules Verne** sets latest book in B.C.

The Golden Volcano by Jules Verne (University of Nebraska Press $19.95 U.S.)

*Everyone knows that Jules Verne, "the most translated author in the world," gave the world "journey to the centers of the Earth and Around the World in Eighty Days. Few know he also wrote a cautionary tale set in B.C. and the Yukon.*

The completed manuscript for *The Golden Volcano* was one of eight unpublished novels found after Verne died in 1905, but the author's son Michel Verne re-wrote much of it to erase his father's cynicism about gold (an attitude Verne developed while working at the Paris Stock Exchange). With the recovery of Verne's manuscripts by the Society Jules Verne, Edward Baxter has provided a newly translated version, undoing the tamperings of Verne, Jr.

**Shakespeare's Women**

Silent Girl by Tricia Dower (Amazon $22.95)

Tricia Dower has produced an unusual collection of stories inspired by female characters in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *Consolation*. Set in Canada, Kyrgyzstan, Thailand, and the United States, the stories in *Silent Girl* portray girls and women dealing with issues such as racism, social isolation, sexual slavery, kidnapping, violence, family dynamics and the fluid boundaries of gender.

The novel-length allegory that closes the book, *The Snow People*, 30-46 AGM, is set on Vancouver Island in a future in which environmental degradation has spawned fear and oppression.

**Poetry Stories**

Okanagan College in Vernon marks its 25th year of publishing with the release of *Undertow*, a collection of short stories by Virginia Dansereau.

The stories vary from the物业管理的 extraordinary range in locale from Canadian towns and waterfronts to a New Mexican mesa and a Costa Rican hideaway, and they mostly explore the notion of portraiture in fiction.

**What Species of Creatures**

Animal Relations from the New World by Sharon Kirsch

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**Burning Water**

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*Burnt out old-timer George Bowering’s classic GG-winning novel about Captain George Vancouver is back in print*
GENERATION Y

Monument by Patrick Blennerhassett

Patrick Blennerhassett

A self-described Thompson Rivers University English drop-out, Patrick Blennerhassett graduated in journalism from Langara and won a Jack Webster Fellowship Award in 2007.

As an arts and entertainment reporter for the Victoria News, Patrick Blennerhassett, at age 26, has released Monument, a first novel about “Generation Y confusion” in the form of a fictional memoir by a central character named Seth Wilhelm.

“A lot of the book is derived directly from personal experience,” says Blennerhassett, “playing hockey, drinking, drugs, dealing with being young and very, very stupid in a culture of Canadian bars, clubs, hockey rinks and house parties. This book is about my friends and I, and how we all sort of get lost after, or during, high school.”

In Natasha Davies’s ground-breaking first novel webcam girl, Brandon Chase, a privileged 30-something playboy, is infatuated with Vancouver’s hottest webcam girl, Shelby Munro—but the path of virtual love doesn’t run smooth.

Shelby wants out of the online adult sex industry. After she turns off the webcams in her apartment, Brandon sees the newly virtuous Shelby—the real Shelby—in a trendy bar and introduces himself, hinting she might get some work with his company.

When Shelby’s former online manager Craig discoveres Shelby has not only left him for a job at Brandon’s security software company, but is also having an affair with her boss, Craig descends deeper into a world of drugs and extortion, plotting to humiliate and ruin Shelby.

Blennerhassett’s novel will be a ground-breaking novel of a privileged playboy, a webcam girl, and the adults who surround them. Davies and Blennerhassett’s work should be essential reading for any generation Y.

Previously listed BC fiction

No Easy Answers by Deanna Luerder (Women’s Press $22.95)

Puzzled by Sam Wharton (Libros Librariad $19.95)

Good to a Fault by Mirta Endicott (Blackhand Books $25.95)

Template by Matthew Hughes (Py Pubs $37)

Pretenders by Lynda Williams (Edge $21.95)

The Silk Train Murders by Sharon Rosier (Carroll & Graf $21.95)

The Well & Other Stories by Nick Faragher (Thistledown $16.95)

The Gum Thief by Douglas Coupland (Random House $32)

Incidental Music by Carol Matthews (Oskichan $18.95)

Memories are Murder by Lou Allen (Napoleon $15.95)

Wild Talent by Eileen Kernaghan (Thistledown $13.95)

Stickboy: A Novel in Verse by Shane L. Kozum (House of Parallels $22.90)

Kill All the Lawyers by William Decerevel (McGill $34.99)

Far from Botany Bay by Ross Jordan (Oskichan $22.95)

Red Dust, Red Sky by Paul Sanga (Kistau $21)

The Well & Other Stories by Nick Faragher (Thistledown $16.95)

The Gum Thief by Douglas Coupland (Random House $32)

Incidental Music by Carol Matthews (Oskichan $18.95)

Falling from Heights by Chris F. Needham (Now or Never $24.95)

GENERATION EX

Potshots by Hal Sisson

As a prequel to his comedic Figgwiggin and Fowler trilogy, former lawyer Hal Sisson offers his seventh novel, Potshots, another humorous romp about the misadventures of Phil Figgwiggin, QC, who defends a call girl and a marijuana grow-operator after his stay at an idyllic Gulf Islands guest farm.

Previously listed BC fiction

No Easy Answers by Deanna Luerder (Women’s Press $22.95)

Dawson’s Paradox by Nina Montanaro (Dragon Moon $19.95)

Zorgamano by Robert Paul Weston (Penguin $17.50)

Heresy Trial by Ross Buchanan (Libros Librariad $22.95)

Wild Talent by Eileen Kernaghan (Thistledown $13.95)

Stickboy: A Novel in Verse by Shane L. Kozum (House of Parallels $22.90)

Incidental Music by Carol Matthews (Oskichan $18.95)

Memories are Murder by Lou Allen (Napoleon $15.95)

Lucullus’s Drum by Nina Montanaro (Oskichan $22.95)

No Easy Answers by Deanna Luerder (Women’s Press $22.95)

Far from Botany Bay by Ross Jordan (Oskichan $22.95)

Red Dust, Red Sky by Paul Sanga (Kistau $21)

The Gum Thief by Douglas Coupland (Random House $32)

Incidental Music by Carol Matthews (Oskichan $18.95)

Falling from Heights by Chris F. Needham (Now or Never $24.95)
A poet who can do woodstoves and chainsaws, Matt Rader, who grew up in Comox and now lives in Oregon, is not a nature faddist. Living Things is a slim volume that shows a highly familiar knowledge of trees, plants and birds which did not get picked up by browsing a field guide.

In a poem from a longer piece, Lives of North American Trees, the poet gets hectored by the "heart on sleeve, bad skin" arbutus.

"Windfirm. Hardscrabble./I unravel a standard in the rock and grime / of the subsoil where you too will return/ in the post burn of your life."

Rader’s nature is specific; there’s not an airy abstraction to be found. The poems about compost exude the sweetish scent of semi-decomposition.

"Chipped enamel of egg, cuttings, kitchen chaff, coffee grounds ground down to earth by a staff of earthworms, the compost moulted in its spot at the garden’s verge, a fetid incubator of rot….

End-rhymed, cadenced and often in formal patterns such as sonnet, there is nothing sloppy about these wry observations and they are very informed.

Sit with one of Rader’s tree poems, close the book, close your eyes, and there is his exact tree. You’ve been momentarily away from yourself, the tree took you away."

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RALPH MAUD VS BOSWELL

Dylan Thomas expert and a B.C. First Nations authority Ralph Maud first met the American poetry icon Charles Olson during a two-year stint at State University of New York at Buffalo—and there arose the third side of his split literary personality.

Since his Buffalo days, Maud has resolutely admired and championed Olson, editing Olson’s letters and contributing to efforts to restore Olson’s house at 28 Fort Square, Gloucester, Massachusetts as a research centre for Olson studies.

Now, to undo the harm done to Olson’s reputation by Tom Clark’s 1991 biography Charles Olson: The Allegory of a Poet’s Life, Ralph Maud has written Charles Olson at the Harbor to depict Olson as a great poetic genius as well as a highly successful Herman Melville scholar. It’s all heady, esoteric stuff. Olson is touted as the author of one of the two greatest American long poems of the twentieth century, ‘The Maximus Poems,’ rivaling Ezra Pound’s ‘The Cantos.’
As is for Argillite

Carol Sheehan began visiting argillite artists in Haida Gwaii in 2006 with the help of Sarah Hills Davidson of Sarah’s Arts and Jewellery in Old Masset. The 15 artists she has profiled in Breathing Stone: Contemporary Haida Argillite Sculpture (Frontenac $35) are Sean Brennan, Michael Brown, Donnie Edenshaw, Shaun Edgars, Chris Russ, Gary Minaker Russ, Marcel Russ, Lionel Samuels, Jay Simeon, Robert Vogstad, Darrell White, Gryn White, Martin Williams, Cooper Wilson and Freddie Wilson. There are 200 colour photos by Jack Litrell and John W. Heintz.

978-1-55380-063-7

B is for Braun

Born in the Fraser Valley, Connie Braun provides a creative non-fictional memoir of an extended Mennonite family during the 20th century, from eastern Europe to the valleys of the Fraser River, in The Steppes are the Colour of Sepia (Ronsdale $24.95). Historically faithful to documents, letters, old photos and personal testimonies, it complements Andreas Schroeder’s fictional views of his Mennonite background (see Fiction review).

978-1-5580-043-7

C is for Collis

As a descendant of Scottish coal miners who came to Vancouver Island in the late 1800s, poet Stephen Collis wrote Mines (New Star 2001), a reconstruction of the early history of the B.C. coal industry. Now Collis has explored further back in time for The Commons (Talonbooks $16.95), an anarchy-inspired exploration of how communally-held lands were essentially privatized in the English countryside. Amid the peasant revolts, Collis includes cameo appearances from the mad poet John Clare and back-to-the-land philosopher Henry David Thoreau.

978-0-88922-549-0

D is for Diamond

Having digested his 36 years as a theatrical activist for Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community-Based Dialogue (Trafford), David Diamond has received the Distinguished Book Award from the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE). It’s the first self-published book to receive the honour. Diamond suggests, “If we are to deal with the pressing issues of global warming, global violence, hunger, poverty, we must find a way, whether on the so-called left or the so-called right to stop perpetuating the concept of ‘the other.’ There is no ‘them.’ There is only ‘us.’”

978-1-55380-063-7

E is for Ellis

Donald Ellis has compiled the remarkable story of how Tsimshian ceremonial art objects were removed from Old Metlakatla by Scottish missionary Robert J. Dundas in 1863. These were eventually brought back to Prince Rupert for display in May of 2007, after setting a record $7 million price for First Nations art at auction at Sotheby’s. Originally acquired for an unspecified price from the missionary William Duncan, the so-called Dundas Collection remained in the Dundas family’s “cabinet of curiosities,” along with a 250,000-word diary, for more than a century.

As outlined in Tsimshian Treasures: The Remarkable Journey of the Dundas Collection (D&M $55), featuring 72 colour plates, Canadian institutions and collectors have recently purchased most of the major items.

9780969700821

F is for Fertig

Billed as the first wide-ranging anthology of contemporary B.C. poetry in 31 years, Rocksalt (Mother Tongue $24.95), edited by Mona Fertig and Harold Rhenisch, features 108 new, mid-career and established B.C. poets “from Dawson Creek to Massett and Prince Rupert to Vancouver.” Each poet has one previously unpublished poem and a statement of poetics. It’s the first book from Mona Fertig’s efforts to establish her Saltspring Island imprint as a literary and art trade publisher. Eight book launches are planned in the province.

978-0969700821

G is for Greco

Born in Milwaukee in 1947, Heidi Greco came to Canada in 1968. “The award I am proudest of is my Canadian citizenship,” she says. “I’m still convinced I ‘picked’ my parents because I thought they were Canadian. At the time, they were honeymooning at the Lake of the Woods.” Greco is one of 76 poets who have contributed to a new anthology by former Americans, Crossing Lines: Poets Who Came to Canada in the Vietnam War Era (Seraphim $19.95), edited by Allan Briesmaster and Steven Michael Berzensky.

Other B.C. contributors include Jim Christy, George Fetherling, Kim Goldberg, Ernest Hekkanen, Keith Maillard, Susan McCaslin, Bud Osborn, Sue Wheeler and J. Michael Yates.

978-0-969700821

H is for Horsfield

As a follow-up to her award-winning Cougar Annie’s Garden, Margaret Horsfield has produced Voices from the Sound: Chronicles of Clayoquot Sound and Tofino 1899-1929 (Salal $52.50), based on long-forgotten letters, diaries and memoirs. “I unearthed so many obscure documents in so many unlikely locations,” she says, “at times I felt nearly deafened by all the chatter of those voices. I met many characters who have become part of my life, and I learned an enormous amount about the underlying social and economic realities of the West Coast. Because the research was so intensive and detailed—and because I am so slow—this book has occupied seven years of my life.”

978-0-969700821

Continued on next page...
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Time of Plenty
Fiction by
Ed O'Brien

A place of wisdom, yet seldom free of strife, Jerusalem and the universal yearning for a holy land is the focus for poet Dvora Levin's, Sharav (Ekstasis $17.95). Her new chapbook To Bite the Blue Apple simultaneously examines her experiences with cancer.

Passe Partout
Fiction by
Sam Wharton

Kevin Kerr
Kevin Kerr's Studies in Motion (Talonbooks $18.95) examines the obsession of the Victorian photographer Eadweard Muybridge to stop time and freeze motion, partly to alleviate the pain of his own amputation. Kerr reveals how the pioneering cameraman used technology to try and absolve his guilt due to tragic actions from his past, including his acquittal for killing his wife's child. Kerr reveals how the pioneering cameraman used technology to try and absolve his guilt due to tragic actions from his past, including his acquittal for killing his wife's child.

K is for Jerusalem

Time of Plenty
Fiction by
Ed O'Brien

K is for Jerusalem

K is for Jerusalem

Kevin Kerr

A mainstream of the literary world in the Okanagan, John Lent has co-authored a collection of conversations about writing with Ms. Canadian Postmodern, Robert Kroetsch. Abundance (Kalamalka Press $10) is the fourth release from the Mackie Lake House Writer-in-Residence Project.

P is for Patterson

After he made his journey down the Nahanni River in 1927, R.M. Patterson's outdoor memoirs appeared in nearly every issue of The Beaver during the 1930s and 1940s. Those Earlier Hills Reminiscences 1928 to 1961 (Touchwood $24.95) is a compilation of articles by Patterson that appeared in the Hudson's Bay Company-published magazine during a 25-year epoch that included the long-serving editorships of Clifford P. Wilson and Malvina Bolus.

L is for Lent

A mainstream of the literary world in the Okanagan, John Lent has co-authored a collection of conversations about writing with Ms. Canadian Postmodern, Robert Kroetsch. Abundance (Kalamalka Press $10) is the fourth release from the Mackie Lake House Writer-in-Residence Project.

M is for McKay

Three years ago, Don McKay examined Vancouver Island wilderness "in the scheme of infinite time" for Disconnected West 100, six movements of prose and poetry. McKay has moved much farther north for The Muskwa Assembleage (Gaspereau $49.95), his poetic exploration of the Muskwa-Kechikan region in northern B.C., framed by Toad River in the north and the Tachodi River to the south. This work arises from an art-camp organized by Donna Kane and Wayne Sawchuk in August of 2006 to direct aesthetic attention to an ecosystem disturbed by industry or human settlement.

R is for Rimmer

Also known as Q'um Q'um Xilem, Jo-Ann Archibald worked with elders and storytellers to develop ways of bringing storytelling into educational contexts, resulting in Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit (UBC $85), written when she was Associate Dean for Indigenous Education in the UBC Faculty of Education. Revered typographer Jim Rimmer's private papers and his Pie Tree Press collection were recently donated to SFU Special Collections on the seventh floor of the Bennett Library. Now the letterpress artist has released his first trade publication, Memories from the Composing Room (Pie Tree Press / Gaspereau $59.95). The Vancouver-born designer and illustrator has created 198 digital and seven metal typefaces at his Jim Rimmer Type Foundry in New Westminster.
Suicide Psalms
poetry by Mari-Lou Rowley
A collection of poetry that is both hymn and visceral scream—of loss, despair, hope, and ultimately redemption.

“I knew my book was a long shot,” writes Will Morrison. “I knew that I would have to reach a more critical audience.” Morrison says, “going up against journalists writing about China, Iraq, and Islam,” Rowley’s Suicide Psalms are deft, double-edged, ‘kill sites bedded with violets,’ songs of violent beauty.” —DI BRANDT

Rowley’s Suicide Psalms are shortlisted for the $80,000 U.K/Ireland literary prize in conjunction with the Irish Writers Association.

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