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Former Hollywood star Meg Tilly decides, “It is never too late to be what you might have been.”

WOULDN’T ANYONE IN THEIR RIGHT MIND VOLUNTEER TO memorize a hefty two-hundred-and-fifty-seven pages of dialogue, then exacerbate the situation by not only agreeing to rattle off said two-hundred-and-fifty-seven pages of material while trying to climb into the skin of an incredibly complicated woman, but agreeing to do it under bright lights, on a nightly basis, in a theatre full of hundreds of strangers?

I don’t know the answer to that question. I do know that not only did I agree to play Martha in Edward Albee’s Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf, but I really, really, really wanted to do it.

And the question that hovers above me, circling like an unwieldy turkey vulture, day after day, as I try to cram all these lines into my fifty-one-year-old premenopausal brain, is, why?

I wish I had a simple answer for you, but I don’t. It was a mishmash of events that led me to this point. My youngest child left home last year and after spending hours on end raising, cooking, supporting and loving the last twenty-six years of my life, there was a hole.

I write novels, but even that was no longer enough. I found myself getting up from my desk after spending hours alone, hunched over my keyboard, staring at a glowing screen, and thinking to myself, as I stretched the kinks out of my back, that just writing wasn’t sufficient anymore. That if plugging out another manuscript and another, and another, was all that I did to the end of my days, I would have squandered too many of life’s precious hours.

I made an effort to contact old friends, to try to make new ones. I started going on long walks, trying to absorb the smells of the woods, the cold slap of salty ocean-scented air, the crunch and slide of pebbles under my feet, smoothed out from being tossed on countless shores, and it was good. It did help, but still it wasn’t enough.

And then, this Christmas, after the hustle and bustle of stockings and presents and turkey dinner, after my sisters had left and my visiting children had disappeared to their various corners of the house, I went over to switch off the Christmas tree lights and I found a small wrapped present that had been overlooked sitting forlornly under the tree. “A present!” I said, dropping to my belly, so I could reach under the branches and rescue it.

It was for me! For Meg, was on the gift tag and love, Jennifer was scrawled underneath. And there was something magical about finding that present in the darkened living room, the house quiet, the Christmas tree lights twinkling. There was something about holding that small little box in my hand that caused a tingle to go chasing through me.

I went to my writing room, shut the door, sat at my desk and carefully unwrapped it. Inside, nestled on a bed of cotton was a silver bracelet. “Hmm…” I said. There was something carved on the thin band. I held it closer so I could see more clearly. It is never too late to be what you might have been, a George Elliot quote.

Oh pooh, I thought, sitting back in my chair, the bracelet resting on my upturned palms. That’s silly. I am very happy with my life. And right on the heels of that, You’ve always wanted to do theatre, dropped into my head. Instantly, I was scared. Scared, but excited, because I knew there was no going back.

One thing lead to another and within a matter of weeks I found myself committed to performing in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf, this July, at the MacPherson Playhouse.

I vacillate between being thrilled and totally terrified. Would I go back and undo it? Absolutely not! And yes, I might make a total fool of myself, fall on my ass or worse, but whatever happens, good or bad, at least I won’t die with regrets on my lips, disappointed in myself, that I had made an effort to contact old friends, to try to make new ones. I started going on long walks, trying to absorb the smells of the woods, the cold slap of salty ocean-scented air, the crunch and slide of pebbles under my feet, smoothed out from being tossed on countless shores, and it was good. It did help, but still it wasn’t enough.

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"With great tenderness and poetry, Lee pulls aside the masks we wear to hide our raw emotions even while we yearn for the compassion of others."
- Billie Livingston, author of Greedy Little Eyes

Also by Jen Sookfong Lee
THE END OF EAST
Basran not an also-ran
Pupil eclipses Master for top fiction award

The liveliest applause at this year’s BC Book Prizes awards ceremony arose when debut novelist Gurjinder Basran was announced as the winner of the Ethel Wilson Fiction prize for *Everything Was Good-Bye* (Mother Tongue). Basran had earlier won the 2010 Search for the Great BC Novel Contest. The final judge for that competition, Jack Hodgins, had his own novel, *The Master of Happy Endings* (Thomas Allen), appear on the shortlist as a runner-up to Basran for the Wilson Prize.

Publisher Howard White credited his son, Silas, for alerting him to pay attention to Grant Lawrence’s manuscript *Adventures in Solitude: What Not to Wear to a Nude Potluck and Other Stories from Desolation Sound* (Harbour), winner of the Bill Durhie BC Booksellers’ Choice Award.

John Vaillant won the Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize for *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival* (Knopf), having previously won this year’s B.C. National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction.

Dan Savard won the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional Prize for *Images from the Likeness House* (Royal BC Museum).

Maggie de Vries won the Sheila A. Egoff Children’s Literature Prize for *Hunger Journeys* (HarperCollins Canada).

Julie Flett won the Christie Harris Illustrated Children’s Literature Prize for *Owls See Clearly at Night: A Michif Alphabet* (Simply Read Books).

The Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize went to Stephen Collis for *On the Material* (Talonbooks).

The shortest and most unusual speech of the evening was given by George Bowering who received this year’s Lieutenant-Governor’s Award for Literary Excellence. “I’d like to say 60 words. Ethel Wilson, Earle Birney, Sheila Watson, Roy Kiyooka, Jane Rule, Dorothy Livesay, Warren Tallman, Pat Lowther, David Davison, John Newlove, Gerry Gilbert, Chuck Davis, Bruce Serafin, Red Lane, Goh Poh Seng, Harry Robinson, Emily Carr, Robin Blaser, Bunny Wright, PK Page, George Woodcock, Betty Lambert, Brad Robinson, Red Lillard, Eric Nicol, Mourning Dove, Howard O’Hagan, Hubert Evans, Martin Allerdale Grainger, Irene Baird. Thank you.” These are all names of deceased B.C. authors.

This year five of the seven B.C. Book Prizes went to books published in the province. Non-B.C.-published titles had won at least three of the B.C. Book Prizes every year from 1998 to 2010. From 1985 to 1997, the average number of out-of-province-published winners was two.

For the first time in 27 years, the awards were presented from a stage, without an accompanying dinner.

Linda Cullen, one-half of the comedy duo Double Exposure, was inextricably absent from her emceeing duties. Double Exposure previously emceed the event in 1995.

Attendance for a Thursday evening, no-host-bar event at a theatre adjoining a high school was modest. More than half of the Kay Meek Theatre in West Vancouver was empty. For lists of judges and other nominees and further details, visit www.bcbookprizes.ca.
Working with Wool
A Coast Salish Legacy & the Cowichan Sweater
Sylvia Olsen

Cowichan sweaters, with their distinctive bands of design and untreated, handspun wool, have been a British Columbia icon since the early years of the twentieth century, but few people know the full story behind the garment. Sylvia Olsen tells the tale, drawing on her own experience, academic research, and her four-decade friendship with some of the Coast Salish women who have each knitted hundreds of sweaters.

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All That Glitters
A Climber’s Journey Through Addiction and Recovery
Margo Talbot

Margo Talbot’s unflinchingly honest account of a childhood characterized by abuse and neglect, her descent into depression, addiction, and criminal activity is both heartbreaking and, ultimately, inspiring. Finding redemption and healing through her passion for the outdoors and, in particular, ice climbing, this memoir is a stirring testament to the power of the human spirit and the healing force of nature.

“This inspiring real-life story shows us that our lives’ biggest challenges can also be our greatest opportunities for personal growth, transformation, and enlightenment. Margo is magnificent!”
—Bill Phillips, author of the #1 New York Times bestseller, Body-for-LIFE.

“This disarmingly frank self-portrait of a life almost off the rails is a roadmap to redemption.”
—Greg Child, author of Over the Edge, Then Air: Encounters in the Himalayas, and others

“This is as much or more a story of climbing from the darkness to the light as it is of climbing mountains. Climbing is hard, but this remarkable story proves that the most difficult place to find is not a distant summit, but peace within the savage terrain between our ears.”
—Will Gadd, professional multi-sport athlete and author of Ice & Mixed Climbing

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The Riddle of the Raven
A Sailing Ship Possessed by a Ghost
Jan deGroot

When Jan deGroot decided to purchase Raven, a 140-foot gaff-rigged ketch, in order to provide sailing adventures for underprivileged children in BC, he had no idea of the bizarre adventure that lay ahead. His voyage began with a crew of thirty-one who set sail in the Bahamas to bring the ship to her new home in Vancouver. Almost immediately, strange events began to rattle the crew and all were affected by the presence of the ghost who haunted the ship and cursed the voyage with its paranormal skulllduggery.

The Riddle of the Raven is a fascinating read for all those who love tales about ships and the sea, and for those who are intrigued by the paranormal.

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More English than the English
A Very Social History of Victoria
Terry Reksten, foreword and revisions by Rosemary Neering

Twenty-five years ago, Terry Reksten, who died in 2001, wrote More English than the English “for those who might not usually find pleasure in reading about the past,” and strove to create a social history that portrayed the spirit of the times from the mid-nineteenth century into the 1920s. Deliberately selective and anecdotal, this is a delightful collection of stories and sagas of the people who fashioned a fort, a town, and finally, a city on the rocks and meadows of southern Vancouver Island.

This completely redesigned, updated, and expanded edition brings this fascinating social history of Victoria’s early days back into print. Writer and historian Rosemary Neering has added new photos and updated the list of sixty-one historical sites. As in the original edition, More English than the English includes maps and a comprehensive list of sites for readers strolling the streets and pathways of the city, searching for evidence of the past—both at surviving physical locations and in the stories that unfolded there.

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ever since she discovered her first favourite book—One Fish, Two Fish by Dr. Seuss—Angie Abdou knew she wanted to write, but it took a near-fatal accident to get her started on fiction. The turning point was a head-on collision on the highway between Calgary and Crowsnest Pass, about a month before her thirtieth birthday, at about 100 kilometres per hour.

“After surviving that,” she says, “suddenly the logic of stalling on anything tends to disappear. The prospect of failure or embarrassment doesn’t seem nearly as dire as the prospect of not ever having tried at all.”

The driver immediately quit his job as an engineer at Nortel and moved into a little backwoods hut with no running water or electricity. And Abdou, who was a passenger in her own car, began writing her first fiction collection, Anything Boys Can Do (Thistledown 2006).

Abdou’s sports-related first novel, The Bone Cage (NewWest 2007) was recently shortlisted for the CBC Canada Reads Award. Now she has published her second novel, The Canterbury Trail (Brindle & Glass 3/16), reviewed here by Cherie Thiessen.

This is how some people talk—and live, love and laugh—particularly within the brash ski culture of risk takers who partake of marijuana and booze. Some locals in the Fernie area have taken offense due to fatigue, drugs and alcohol. Only a few characters seem to match those in Chaucer. The ribald Wife of Bath correlates only slightly to Abdou’s lusty Alison. The storytelling of the characters tends to fossilize due to fatigue, drugs and alcohol. Only Lanny completes his story of an encounter with an angry, mother moose.

This amounts to a gnarly, original fictional journey. Abdou’s second novel is not the first literary work to emulate Chaucer’s classic, but it could be the most un inhibited and most fun.

Cherie Thiessen is an avid skier who writes fictional stories from Pender Island.
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“Choosing a B.C. press was, in part, an awareness that it’s important to be known first at home.”

ANGIE ABDOU INTERVIEW

BCBW: I wonder if Chaucer encountered any similar feedback in his day?

ABDOU: We don’t know. But one thing that might surprise people today is the pure wildness of *The Canterbury Tales*. Because it is a classic text, people sometimes assume it must be stuffy and serious and boring. Though Chaucer’s text does have serious content, taken as a whole it is one of the bawdiest and most ribald texts of the English language. Remember, it’s a tale about sinners using a pilgrimage as an opportunity to indulge in their favourite sins.

BCBW: That works as a good explanation for the drugs and swearing in your book.

ABDOU: Well, let’s just say I take my tone from Chaucer. Just because a novel includes drug abuse does not mean that it endorses drug abuse. My husband asked me at one point if I was really going to include those marijuana cookie recipes. “You have a lot of young readers—is that the message you want to send out?”

My answer was that we live in a society where drug use is a normal part of the culture, and they are a part of this book. Drugs are a part of mountain culture, and they are a part of this book.

BCBW: Does it matter if some readers haven’t read *The Canterbury Tales*?

ABDOU: Not at all.

BCBW: Why did you choose a B.C. publisher?

ABDOU: Around the time I was deciding what to do with this novel, I read a piece in *B.C. BookWorld* about writers abandoning B.C. just as they were becoming successful. There is, the article said, a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy about B.C. writers being doomed to remain mid-listers… This piece struck a chord with me. It made me feel loyal to the Western Canadian writers, editors and publishers who had been so helpful in the various phases of producing my first two books. So I decided to try a B.C. publisher. After all, *The Canterbury Tales* is a very B.C. novel.

Also, Fernie is very isolated. It’s a good twelve-hour drive from Vancouver. I thought going with a press in Victoria would link me into the B.C. publishing world. I also chose Brindle & Glass because of the publisher, Ruth Linka. I trust her absolutely. We undergraduates together at the University of Regina. I remember sitting next to her, in about 1989, for a Feminist Theory course taught by Joan Givner. I wonder what we would’ve thought then if someone could’ve told us that one day she’d own a press and would publish my third book?

BCBW: How do you say to readers who might be offended by some of the language in your novel? Especially the C-word?

ABDOU: I completely surprised by how offended some readers are. I guess Germaine Greer was right when she claimed “it is one of the few remaining words in the English language with a genuine power to shock.” It’s in the original Chaucer. He refers to queyrant for a misplaced kiss that’s meant to land on an intended lover’s lips but lands instead, well, somewhere else. It is, therefore, one of the oldest words to describe a part of the human body—a part on every woman, and the place from which we all come. So if you find yourself reciting at it, you might ask why it should be any more offensive than, say, the word “kneecap.”

BCBW: Were you using it mindfully?

ABDOU: Of course. One reason for the C-word’s predominance in this book relates to the feminization of landscape. At an earlier stage, this novel was a dissertation project, and the best moment of that process was when an examiner declared: “Nature is a character in this novel…and she is ANGRY!” But once a book is published, a writer no longer has control over it. *The Canterbury Tales* is now out there in the wide world for each reader to make of it what he or she will.
This collection of short stories — winner of the Eaton’s Book Prize and a finalist for the Governor General’s Award — started Jack Hodgins off on his award-studded literary career.

"Jack Hodgins’ stories do one of the best things fiction can do — they reveal the extra dimension of the real place, they light up the crazy necessities of real life."

— ALICE MUNRO

978-1-55380-111-5  6 x 9  200 pp  $18.95

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Drawing on interviews with actors of the period, McNicoll explores such companies as Everyman in Vancouver, New Play Society in Toronto, and Théâtre du Nouveau Monde in Montreal.

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Inge Israel

In these poems, Inge Israel slips into the mind of Samuel Beckett to explore the sources of his novels, plays and poems, especially his belief that language (mis)informs all that we know.

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Innocence comes before a fall

BY CHERIE THIESSEN

MIX A LITTLE MEDDLING
with a whole lot of
naïveté and you can
have a dangerous concoction. If
this is the lesson Peggy Her-
ing wants us to learn in This Inno-
cent Corner (Oolican $19.95), it’s
well-illustrated in the character of
a 20-year-old American exchange
student, Robin Rowe, who is study-
ing in East Pakistan.

It’s 1970, and there’s social unrest in
Dhaka. East Pakistan is about to erupt
and eventually reform itself into the
world’s 139th country—Bangladesh. Its
genocidal struggle for independence has
been called one of the shortest and
bloodiest wars of modern times.

Robin has been boarding in Dhaka
with the wealthy Chowdhury family, be-
coming fast friends with their daughter,
Luna, rapidly estranging herself from the
fiery son, Hasan, and romantically in-
volving herself with his friend, Shaheed.

Fresh from the United States, Robin
holds firm to her immature ideals, de-
void of cultural sensitivity. She encour-
gages Luna to run away with her lover to
avoid an arranged marriage, and moti-
vates Shaheed to involve himself in a po-
litical turmoil he was inclined to avoid.

There’s a great deal more to this story,
but I can’t give it all away. Once she’s
safely back in America, Robin still doesn’t
appear to get it. She waits for letters from
Luna and the Chowdhury household,
seemingly surprised when no commu-
nication from them is forthcoming.

By the timeRobin returns to Dhaka
thirty years later, in order to give a pres-
entation at the invitation of the Bangla-
American Women’s Friendship Society,
she still has her head in the sand. Con-
fronted by a furious Hasan in the audi-
cence, she abandons her talk and then
casually goes off to find her host family
with still no apparent idea of the recep-
tion she’ll get.

ALTERNATING BETWEEN EAST PAKISTAN
then and Bangladesh now, sometimes
awkwardly, this story fills in gaps in Rob-
in’s personal history: Her return to the
States, her falling in love with a draft
 dodger while on vacation in Canada, her
subsequent life in Vancouver, the birth
of her daughter, widowhood at 39, a move
to Salt Spring Island, and a subse-
quent estrangement from her daughter.

But there are some storytelling holes
that left me frustrated with the plot. I
still don’t know, for example, what hap-
pened to those lovers.

Setting fiction in a politically volatile
country at a significant moment in his-
tory is a good idea, and Herring has a
good ear for dialogue, but making Robin
so unattractively naïve proves alienating.
It would take just a few tweaks here and
there to give us a narrator we want to
hang out with.

978-0-9811913-0-0

Cherie Thiessen reviews from
Pender Island.

PUNJAB: FIRST DAUGHTERS IN CANADA

With the release of Zhindagee: Voices of Ca-
nadian Indian First Daughters ($39.95),
editor/publisher Mahinder Kaur Doman
Manhas has gathered an anthology of self-written
stories by some of the first South Asian Indian fe-
males to be born in Canada, from 1920 to 1950.

The parents of these women were pioneers from
Punjab India. The mother of each was affected by
the exclusion of South Asian females, even though they
were British subjects, from entering Canada until after
1920.

“These women have never been acknowledged
in any type of history,” says Mahinder, “and nor were
their mothers.” The photographs have never been pub-
lished and is a Punjabi-English glossary.

Many of the stories emanate from Paldi, the Van-
couver Island mill town named after a town called Paldi in Punjab, the birthplace of Mayo Singh
who co-owned the Mayo Lumber Company. An exception is the memoir of Deljeet Kaur Manak
O’Ree, who was raised in nearby Duncan, B.C. She has been living in the USA since 1969, the
year she married New Brunswick-born Willie O’Ree of the Boston Bruins, the first black man to
play in the National Hockey League (in 1958), but she still considers Canada her home.

“My hope is that others will publish more stories of women from this time span,” says Mahinder.

Contact: www.zhindagee.ca for more info. 978-5-9811913-0-0

Deljeet Kaur Manak
Pender Island.

Cover art from
This Innocent Corner.
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by Renee Rodin
(Talonbooks $18.95)

LAUNCH

ENTER THE OLD BILLY BISHOP LEGION Hall in Vancouver being somewhat uncertain as to where the book launch will take place, making my way towards the bar to ask an employee. Instead, I am greeted by Renee (pronounced ‘Ree-nee’) Rodin warmly shaking my hand and introducing herself, as if she is simply helping, with that same eventual reality.

Born and raised in Montreal, where she gained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Sir George Williams University, Rodin moved to Vancouver during the 1960s, later operating R2B2 Bookstore in the ’80s and ’90s. As much of her writing concerns family, it’s pertinent to note she is a mother of three.

Her previous books are Ready for Freddy (2005), a memoir reflecting the period of her life when she moved back to Montreal to care for her sick father, and Bread and Salt (1996), a collection of prose poems about her childhood experiences in Montreal.

With its intriguingly subtle title, Subject to Change has a much broader wing span. These are sophisticated reflections, without being showy about it. As Stan Persky puts it, “The intensity, care and wit that Renee Rodin brought to years of cultural and other activism is now honed into a distinctive voice—funny, relaxed, passionately intelligent, deeply attentive to reality.”

The Billy Bishop Legion Hall is a past and present meeting ground for war veterans. Today it’s a meeting ground for literary veterans. At the legion, most of the attendees seem to know each other quite well. The atmosphere is cozy and familiar, like the bar itself.

I talk to poet Maxine Gadd, author of Subway Under Byzantium (2008), who tells me how Kitsilano is much different now than it once was, and how happy she is to see that the Billy Bishop Legion Hall is still up and running.

Before Renee starts reading excerpts from Subject to Change, she informs us that it is her dear friend Vera Blyomovics’ birthday, and there Vera is nodding and smiling back at her.

It is bracing content, punctuated by tim-centered vocabulary that feminism has tended to adopt, and replace it with a more positive lingo. Her partner Pat reads two poems from the collection on male feminism by Robert Animiiki Horton. “Male Feminist” and “Invisible Activist.” The older sister of Shaunga Tagore reads Shaunga’s “A Slam on Feminism in Academia,” an account of hypocrisy of letting in ethnic students to graduate programs in order to fill a quota without adapting to the students’ needs.

Subject to Change, an autobiographical sampling that is dedicated to her sister.

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Feminism For Real
by Jessica Yee
(Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives $15)

LAUNCH

WHEN I ARRIVE A HALF-HOUR IN advance for Jessica Yee’s launch of Feminism For Real, Vancouver’s Rhizome Cafe is already full of guests, lounging as if it is their communal living room, on a rainy, Thursday night. This place somehow retains the ambiance of a modern cottage turned into an art studio.

To open the event, Terry Azak presents a song to the beat of his drum, honouring the bear and the mother; Angela Marie MacDougall, executive director of Battered Women’s Support Services (bwss.org), tells the audience that one cannot speak about violence against women without taking into account the colonial legacy of the murder and abuse of Indigenous women.

The stage is now set for Jessica Yee, editor of Feminism For Real, to recognize the ever-widening scope of the term ‘feminism.’ Of Chinese and Mohawk descent, Yee self-identifies as a two-spirit indigenous hip-hop feminist reproductive justice freedom fighter.

Feminism For Real is an ensemble of short pieces written by a variety of passionate voices telling of their experiences with racism, sexism and colonialism.

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I have the usual assortment of bird identification guides that any West Coast nature lover uses to discern a finch from a sparrow, but I don’t consider myself a birder. Neither did Sharon McInnes until she moved from the city to Gabriola Island.

As a relatively short anthology of essays originally written for a local island newspaper, McInnes’ *Up Close & Personal, Confessions of a Backyard Birder* (Isle of the Arts Publishing $21.95) is probably the only book (not including my daily staple of children’s picture books) that I have ever read in one sitting. Each chapter describes that special connection between humans and nature that happens when humans become birdwatchers.

“I found birds,” McInnes writes, “in much the same way, it seems, that some people find religion.” McInnes provides bird tales that leave the reader bemused, delighted, and connected to the natural world. My favourite is *Bird Seed in my Boots* that involves mice (with which I’m all too familiar) and birds, and the trials of learning to live in harmony with nature. Being able to laugh at our own misconceptions is always a good remedy for the problems inherent in a rural dwelling.

McInnes, a former counselor, explains: “Birding is a much safer, much more life-affirming antidote to all kinds of stress-related conditions.” Safer than most drugs, and possibly more life-affirming than exercising in an indoor gym.

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Feeding the Family

This engaging portrait of a large, vibrant, and multi-faceted city focuses on Victoria’s early food and drink supplies, manufacturers and retailers, including the many colourful characters and the businesses that prospered or failed. It also includes a chapter on beer brewed by Griff Uran.

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Sister and I presents Emily Carr’s whimsical account of her trip across Canada by rail, written and illustrated by herself. Along with vivid descriptions of the people she meets along the way, Emily recounts visits in “Gloriously cool and beautiful” Glacier House, and encounters with porcupines and wasps in Lake Louise. This one-of-a-kind book is introduced by TECM curator Kathleen Bridge, who places it in context with Carr’s life and works.

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Laurel Archer

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**GABRIOLA MYSTERY**

A follow-up to their debut mystery, *Never Sleep with a Suspect on Gabriola Island*, George Szanto and Sandy Frances Duncan have co-written *Always Kiss the Corpse on Whidbey Island* (Touchwood $24.95). Both feature West Coast sleuths Kyra Tarnow and Noel Franklin of Islands Investigations International.

In the second novel, a grieving mother bends over to kiss her son’s corpse at a funeral home viewing, only to shriek: “That’s not Sandro!” Having supposedly died of a heroin overdose, the body of Whidbey Island General Hospital nurse Sandro Vassiladis is suddenly missing, and his mother is convinced he is still alive. The detectives’ inquiries lead them deep into Sandro’s life and to a medical clinic that specializes in transgendering.

Szanto speaks four languages and lives on Gabriola Island. In Szanto’s latest island-based novel, *The Tartarus House on Crab* (Brindle & Glass $19.95), photographer Jack Tartarus returns to his family’s old home to tear it down. But the people of Crab Island, including his sister, and Turtle—the island’s self-proclaimed guardian—and beautiful woman he knew long ago, are angrily opposed to his plan.

Whidbey 978-926741-05-5
Gabriola 9781897142530
George Szanto

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**HALLELUJAH & PASS THE BIRD SEED**

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**DOUBLE OR NOTHING**

D'Arcy Christensen liked to amuse himself in the store with his coin toss offer: a customer could bet him double or nothing for anything in the store.

D'Arcy told me later that wasn’t quite true. He said he was always careful not to gamble for any amount he could not afford to lose, and to scrutinize the character of those he entered into these games of chance with.

When D'Arcy Christensen sold his store, the business had been in the family for more than 100 years.

His grandfather, Adolph Christensen, founded A.C. Christensen Ltd. in Bella Coola in 1888. Shortly after he and his bride, Maret, arrived with the Norwegian colonists in 1894 via a circuitous route from Norway to Minnesota, then finally to B.C.

D'Arcy’s dad, Andy Christensen, bought the store from Adolph in the 1920s. A few years later, Andy and his wife, Dorothy Christensen, purchased the Clesle Pocket Ranch near Anahim Lake, and opened a branch of the store there, as well.

In those days there was no road connecting Bella Coola Valley to the Chilcotin Plateau. In fact, there was no road linking Anahim Lake to the provincial highway grid either.

Andy transported all the goods for his store by steamship to Bella Coola, then by truck up the valley to the road near Stue, and used packhorses to ship the goods the rest of the way up the Precipice Trail to Anahim Lake.

D'Arcy grew up in the saddle making these overland journeys back and forth between Bella Coola and the Chilcotin Plateau. He entered as a journalist the winters he attended school in Bella Coola, and spent the summers on the family ranch near Anahim Lake.

On his mother’s side, D'Arcy's grandfather, John Clayton, was also an entrepreneur. He was the last Hudson's Bay Factor in Bella Coola. When the historic fur-trading company pulled up stakes on the Central Coast in the 1880s, John Clayton bought up the HBC assets and was the major landholder in the valley when the Norwegians arrived in 1894.

So D'Arcy’s roots go back to the earliest of colonial times in Bella Coola, and to the earliest European settlement of the West Chilcotin around Anahim Lake. Penning his stories, D'Arcy scratched into the far reaches of his memory to dig up tales of notable characters he shared that island land with.

Philosophizing as a young lad, D'Arcy and Mickey Dorsey, Pan Phillips, Alfred Bryant and Thomas Squinas were all legends in their own right. They were also personal friends with whom D'Arcy rubbed shoulders in this rugged, remote outpost region of B.C.

The cover photo of the book depicts six-year-old D'Arcy decked out with chaps, cowboy boots and hat, with a cigarette in his mouth, is bound to create some controversy. He says the cigarette was his mother's idea to make the picture interesting.

An avowed anti-smoker, D’Arcy makes a statement to that effect on the back cover.

And, yes, he will flip double or nothing for the $12.95 book. So far, he says, he’s breaking even.

Sage Birchwater is BCBW's Cariboo Chilcotin correspondent.

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**Sageworks**
**Reviews**
**Non-Fiction**

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Celebrating forty years of publishing in 2011
OOLICHAN ORIGINS

In April at the Arbutus Club in Vancouver, Ron Smith, the founder of Oolichan Books, accepted the Gray Campbell Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to the publishing industry and recalled how his press was founded in the early 1970s.

I t all began when UBC quite rightly asked me to leave the university as a student. I had spent my first two years on campus as a Phys. Ed. student and for the most part had only learned the rules of bridge and how to perform a somersault in mid-air. Oh, and I also played on the rugby team.

As an academic I was a total failure. After a summer of working up north, I returned to Vancouver and managed to land a full-time job at the UBC Bookstore. This was 1962 or ’63. Three rather disreputable characters were assigned to help me: Claude Breeze (painter), Jamie Reid (poet) and John Newlove (poet). Through one or all of them, or else through Bill Duthie (bookseller) or Dick Morris (printer), I eventually met the remarkable artist and book designer Tak Tanabe.

John Newlove talked about poetry and history, recommended books I should read; and Jamie Reid talked politics and constantly reminded me of the many ways in which I was being exploited.

In the basement of the bookstore, I built a little hideaway out of duotang cartons. I piled them up to the ceiling, leaving a small space inside where I hid a chair and ashtray. I could slip a carton out and crawl into my space. There in my den I would sit, smoke and read. Often I would hear John shuffling past, calling, “Ron, Ron, there’s a truck to unload. Where are you?” Surprisingly he never saw the smoke winding up and along the floor joists above me.

John Newlove did more than recommend books. He wanted to talk about them. Mostly I listened. And what an education. A few weeks before John died, Pat and I were in Ottawa and spent a day with John—we had remained friends for all those years—and I told him about my little hideout in the UBC Bookstore. He laughed and confessed he had never figured out where I had disappeared to.

I only published two of John’s books but The Green Plain remains one of my favoursites.

Over the next few years I hung out on the edges of things, going to readings, etc., and then going back to university to get my degree in English. I had the good fortune to hear some amazing writers, all of whom “turned me on” to the craft of writing in some way. Leonard Cohen came through with his guitar and gave a concert in the new education building. Eventually I would hear Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Basil Bunting, and Seamus Heaney.

There were many other writers brought in by Warren Tallman and George McWhirter, all of whom nurtured my growing interest in the word. As a doctoral student, I met Jon Furberg whose energy and enthusiasm for poetry was infectious, and who, along with a few friends, had started a small publishing venture, Pulp Press. As early as this, 1971 or 72, the idea of publishing intrigued me.

About this time I wrote a letter to Robert Kroetsch, whose novel The Studentene Mien I had just read. It did all sorts of things other Canadian works didn’t do and I rushed to tell him so. One year later I was teaching at Malaspina and he was one of my first guest readers.

Over the next four years I arranged fifty-two events at the college, most of them literary, although I did invite Lionel Boyce to play her guitar and Maurice Good, an Irish actor, to do his one-man, west-end-of-London show based on Samuel Beckett. I had done my thesis on Beckett, so this was an obvious engagement for me.

The list of poets and novelists who made their way to Vancouver Island still surprises me, but I want to mention two who became hugely influential in my publishing life.

Bob Kroetsch and I became good friends and remain so to this day. He is my daughter’s godfather but in a curious way also my godfather. At the time he was running an important avant-garde journal called Bound- ary 2 out of Blamont, New York. In 1974 he was visiting and, after a few drinks, convinced me I should start a publishing company.

As an incentive to get into publishing, Bob told me he would give me his first book of poetry, The Stone Hammer Poems. Little did I realize what I was getting into, nor did I appreciate how lucky I was to have this as a first title.

The other person who had been a part of the reading series and who immediately came to my aid and provided me with unwavering support was John Skelton. He also offered me a title for publication. I owe Robin a great debt. We spent many evenings over a bottle of Jameson’s Irish whiskey discussing the plight and pleasures of publishing.

I took a semester off from teaching and printed the first four Oolichan titles in the evenings on the Malaspina College press. But I had no idea how to bind the books so Robin suggested Morris Printing in Victoria. Very quickly Dick Morris became a dear friend and did much to help me learn the printing and publishing businesses.

During this period I met Margaret Reynolds, who was working for Sono Nis Press. Too quickly we forget those who have made major contributions to our culture and I would like us to remember Robin and Dick this evening for all they did for the literary arts in BC.

Writers are clearly the life blood of publishing and I am indebted to all the authors who have submitted manuscripts to Oolichan Books down through the years. Yes, some have been a pain in the ass, but I suspect a few feel that way about me. Oolichan owes its success to a long list of very talented people. At different times, Rhonda Bailey, Ursula Vaira and Hiro Boga were instrumental in keeping the operation going on a day-to-day basis. In recent times, David Manicom, Bill New, P.K. Page and John Pass have brought the press national attention.

Now Oolichan Books is under the leadership and guidance of Randal Macnair, of Fernie, who has brought new life and vision to the press. I feel blessed to have been the recipient of so much good fortune.
PORTRAIT OF THE ARIST AS A LISTENER

A graphic novel about art and politics and a long forgotten election that led to the rise of Hitler with a contemporary woman's search for meaning in the great art of Europe.

The Listener, on its historical and political levels, reveals how Adolf Hitler was one of the original spin doctors, turning his party's narrow electoral victory in the state of Lippe, in 1933, into an alleged "massive victory" that enabled him to be appointed chancellor of Germany, by President Hindenburg, just two weeks later.

On an intimate and personal level, Louise— the listener of the title—taps a biblical sense of the museums of Europe, reining in weasels and guilt and sadness after a young activist, inspired by one of Louise's sculptures, fell to his death while being Jewish or communist were beaten, and leaders were found dead, citizens suspected of being Jewish or communist were beaten, and leaders were found dead, citizens suspected of

Artistic feelings to canvas, print, stone, or song. It's not just I thought, hey, real people don't talk like that. But people who live deeply in art probably have written world. The vitriol is truly

"I don't believe in magic. But it's impossible to deny the existence of a genius who can make us see what they're meant to see, learn what they're meant to learn, or see what they already understand!" and the possible obligations of art to the world. Of particular note is a story about the rise of Hitler is told through the memories of an older couple that Louise meets, while being Jewish or communist were beaten, and leaders were found dead, citizens suspected of being Jewish or communist were beaten, and leaders were found dead, citizens suspected of

Critics have described the book as a "beautifully told" and "compelling," with a "mind-bending" plot that keeps readers on the edge of their seats.

Some years ago I noticed that there was a lack of quality adventure comics for kids aged 7 to 13, says Glen Lovett, who has worked for Hanna Barbera and Disney. Now his second graphic novel about a Siberian Husky, The Adventures of Jasper: Secrets of the Petroglyph (IDW $29.99) collects all the Reid Fleming comics together. The Dog-eared tale wins big

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Silence of the Milkman

The first of a planned two-volume set of David Bawden's "World Fleming: World's Toughest Milkman (IDW $29.99) collects all the Reid Fleming comics together. The release excites a sold-out audience.

This year, Bawden was invited into The Giants of the North, the Canadian cartooning hall of Fame in Toronto. David Bawden began his cartooning ca

Love it and Leavitt

Sarah Leavitt's graphic memoir, Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me (Freehand $23.95) tells the story of her mother developing Alzheimer's and her family's emotional reactions that ranged from shock, denial, anger, frustration to hope. The family manages to find moments of happiness that reveal the poignant bonds between mother and daughter.

Sarah Leavitt's graphic fiction has ap

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GUBBY SNAGS THREE NOMINATIONS

The Canadian Library Association has shortlisted Harbour Publishing’s Fishing with Gubby for the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator’s Award, which is awarded each year to the illustrator of a noteworthy Canadian book that appeals to children up to 12 years. Illustrator Kim La Fave and Gary Kent, both from Roberts Creek, have also had Fishing with Gubby nominated for the Joe Shuster Comic Book Creator Awards in the Comics for Kids section. As well, Fishing with Gubby was shortlisted for the Bill Duthie Booksellers’ Choice Award at the BC Book Prizes.

DON’T UNDERESTIMATE THE INVISIBLE DOG

When Matthew moves to the city he has to leave his dog Lucky behind. He and his mom now live in a Vancouver apartment, an apartment with a lot of rules, sternly enforced by Mr. Leo, the building manager. In June Watts’ No Pets Allowed, illustrations by Kathryn E. Shoemaker, Fred, who’s “a million times better than a fish,” has a very nice leash, pulls the covers off the bed and, when Mr. Leo’s not around, wrestles with Matthew on the front lawn. The only glitch is that Fred’s an invisible dog. That small detail doesn’t stop Matthew and Fred from putting the run on a brick-wielding, window-smashing car thief. And when the apartment’s residents sign a petition demanding a guard dog to prevent further vandalism, Matthew ends up with not one, but two dogs—Lucky and Fred.

Kim La Fave was a commercial fisherman and salmon trailer for nine years, prior to becoming a furniture maker. Kim La Fave has previously won the Howard-Gibbon Award for Amos’s Sweater, written by Janet Lunn.
Exit by Nelly Arcan
trans. by David Hamilton
Exit is the final novel from Quebec literary sensation Nelly Arcan. It is a hymn to life.
"A work of originality pushed to the limit."
– Le Devoir
"Her writing will grab you and pull you into a fabulous world."
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Afflictions & Departures by Madeline Sonik
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Hard Hed by Charles Tidler
Hard Hed is a contemporary retelling of the Johnny Appleseed story, an unabashedly original work of fiction that roams in and out of time and place and point of view.

The Song Collides by Calvin Wharton
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– Tom Wayman
"Here is a poetry of gentle surprise."
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First Book Competition
The First Book Competition was held to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Writer’s Studio at Simon Fraser University, Harbour Centre. The competition identified three fine new writers whose books were published this spring.
The winners are:
The House with the Broken Two, a memoir by Myrl Coulter of Edmonton; Nondescript Rambunctious, a novel by Jackie Bateman of Vancouver; and Galaxy, poetry by Rachel Thompson, also from Vancouver.
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A woman’s love affair with Cuba and its people passionately deepens in Amanda Hale’s *In the Embrace of the Alligator*  

**BY ERINNA GILKISON**

**Amanda Hale**’s *In the Embrace of the Alligator* primarily describes the love affair between a Canadian woman and a Cuban man, revealing the complications of a romance between people of different backgrounds. The title is derived from the fact that Cuba is often perceived geographically, on a map, as resembling the shape of an alligator.

*Embrace* also outlines the shape of a love affair between a foreigner and Cuba itself. Whether readers have been to Cuba or not, they will be fascinated to discover the personalities, beliefs, customs and everyday struggles of life in Cuba through this collection of short fiction.

★

Recovering from the death of her brother, Karina, an artist from Toronto, initially goes to Cuba to create and display art in Havana. In the first story, “First Steps, Last Steps,” Hale describes music, sickness, tourism, slavery, broken bodies, dance, filth, warmth, politics, romance and hunger.

After her exhibition opening, on a side trip to Baracoa—the second oldest European settlement in the Americas, located on the eastern end of Cuba—Karina meets Onaldo. They dance, drink, eat, and rapidly fall in love.

Karina soon discovers that differences in laws, cultures and finances can make relationships a challenge. Cuba’s economy depends on tourists, and there are laws that prohibit local people from becoming romantically involved with foreigners—to protect the tourists.

Cubans are granted fewer freedoms than visitors, and they face restrictions on travel and staying in tourist accommodations. Relationships happen any way, often to the detriment of one party or the other; but equally often mutually advantageous. Many blind eyes are turned in this country, readers are told.

When it comes to romance in Cuba, the lines between genuine feelings and adventures for personal gain can be blurred. Cubans know what a romance with a foreigner can mean for both themselves and their extended family. This collection consequently features many uncomfortable conversations about money. Such talk inevitably arises in the face of financial disparity.

Needs and desires can turn to greed in cross-cultural relationships. In “Creative Non-Fiction,” Onaldo concocts a tale to tell Karina about the money she has given to him for travel, and how it was ostensibly stolen. He knows that she will take pity on him and give him more.

Meanwhile, Onaldo’s ex-wife dismisses Onaldo’s relationship with Karina as “yet another affair.” Onaldo continues to use Karina’s money to improve the home of his ex-wife, with whom he is also living. To a point, Karina understands that he is being taken advantage of, but feels guilty after she confronts Onaldo. She cannot resist him even after she learns how he’s spending her money.

Rosamund, a German visitor, faces a similar situation. That’s not to say that everyone takes advantage of their foreign friends and their wealth, but sexual exploitation is a lurking threat in many such relationships portrayed in this collection.

The advantage-taking can go either way. In one memorable story, “Her New Red Dress,” Linancia, a Cuban woman, gets involved with an Italian man who has a wife and children at home. Luigi treats Linancia terribly, but in the end she is forced to come back to him. We later learn she has given up her job in order to be available to him whenever he’s in Cuba. Having gained the freedom to quit a job she hated, she entered into a new kind of servitude.

Karina learns that many things that are simple to do in Canada—such as booking a hotel room, buying lettuce, or leaving the country—are governed by strict rules and double standards in Cuba. A Cuban who has purchased an airline ticket can be bumped off the flight in favour of a foreigner right up until the moment the flight takes off.

In “El Caballo de Rosamund,” Rosamund loves the Revolution and everything else about Cuba until she learns that she is not allowed to buy the horse of her dreams.

Fear is a rampant force for both subservience and subterfuge in Cuba. In one story, an arrest sends the rest of the town of Baracoa into hiding. “Baracoa became a warren of creatures running scared, disappearing into their burrows…” Disconnections between foreigners and Cubans abound, in language, politics, and attitudes. Part of it is simply the difference between a person on vacation and a person living their regular life. Much of it runs deeper: in “Senora Amable Ponce,” a story named for the hostess of a place Karina and Onaldo stay during a romantic rendezvous, Karina feels in the air “a kind of continued on page 27
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all to hell and Mick is caught up in more and more violence, as Jack struggles desperately to keep ahead of his debts and figure out who sold them out. Covering only just over two weeks, The Man Who Killed chronicles Mick’s descent into crime, and the rapid decay of his conscience. On the whole, Mick finds the process surprisingly easy. Partly this is due to his destitute circumstances and lack of alternatives. He briefly considers leaving Montreal to return to his father, a minister working in the backwoods of British Columbia, but decides he is too far gone. “You’re nothin’,” he tells himself at one point, “not a mechanic of the human machine, not a son or lover but a criminal, a short-term ex-soldier unbloodied in war, an Irish Protestant, worst of both worlds.” And really it is this, his self-hatred and desire for destruction that makes it so easy to slide deeper into Jack’s world. Much of Mick’s despair, and his unpleasant situation, stems from his rejection by Laura, supposedly the love of his life. Though whether he was really in love with her, or only what she represented—status—is never fully clear. Laura is higher class, cold and aloof, and looked at Mick with the same degree of contempt that he has for himself. He began stealing and selling morphine to numb the pain, thus beginning his downward spiral. He briefly told the story, the crude tale of Cuba, of Montreal of the 1920s as he can. Occasionally this can make for a difficult read, and between the old-fashioned slang and the medical terms I found myself cracking open a dictionary more frequently than I expected. But more often than not, it allows the city to come to life, in all its gruesomeness. Montreal, as portrayed in the text, is toxic and addictive, and seems to leak into everything and everyone. Mick and Jack are end- lessly drinking and sniffling cocaine in various taverns and hotels, or even just breathing the smog-filled air. The customs officials from Mick’s very first job is later described as a degenerate gambler—the reason he is under Jack’s thumb in the first place. Within this city, Mick’s downward spiral seems natural and expected. When he discovers that actress and fellow morphine addict Lilyan Tashman puts drops of Belladonna in her eyes before performances to make them “look bigger and brighter,” Mick’s medical training temporally resurfaces: “You’ll go blind. It’s poison.” But for once, Jack only laughs. “No, no, said Mick, now the story moral is rapid, he doesn’t wholly give them up without thought, and we see enough vestiges of humanity in his character to keep us engaged in his struggles. After the first time he seriously injures a man, Mick at first declares that he “didn’t care.” However, later when the opportunity presents itself he makes a point of asking after the man’s condition, concerned that the wound could have been lethal. The reader is left guessing about just how far Mick will be willing to go. Though Mick plays the central role in the text, in many ways it is the city that is the most interesting character. Through language and various references, Nixon goes out of his way to offer as much immersion into Montreal of the 1920s as he can. Novice novelist Fraser Nixon approached publisher Scott McIntyre in a restaurant, hoping to interest him in a story about a petty criminal in “toxic and addictive” Montreal, circa 1926. It worked. The Man Who Killed has been set free.
The true story of the intimate relationship between Sarah Conger and Empress Dowager Cixi, a concubine who ruled China at the turn of the 20th century.
The unnamed narrator in Dennis E. Bolen’s short story collection Anticipated Results is the Everyman of the lost Baby Boomer generation. He has a decent job and works hard at maintaining a relationship with his daughter, whom we don’t meet until halfway through the book, and he gets on well with women. His culinary abilities and vocabulary (“perspicacious”) are above-average. But he’s unsatisfied. His friends come across as deadbeats, many of them struggling with addiction. He looks for meaning in ill-fated dinner parties with guests that are under-appreciative, emotionally unavailable or just plain rude.

Boomers are typically thought of as being an entitled generation, but the people we meet in Bolen’s stories are the ones that fell through the cracks, the ones that didn’t take over academic institutions or rise to the top of the corporate world. They’re smart, but not successful. They haven’t made it to the upper class, so they try to console themselves with the aforementioned parties and their impressive command of the English language.

The narrator’s description of military generals in charge of the Vietnam War is a case in point: “They create this awful Moloch—literally a young-man-eating machine—that became such an uber-monster, such a mental-physical-emotional-social object of utter hatred and polarization, that it caused a political schism in the collective world consciousness such that our hair and our music and our attitudes became picayune concerns in the overall miasma.”

Clearly, someone is trying too hard to impress the guests. I’ve always found Bolen’s past as a parole officer interesting—something that set him apart from other authors. This detail is missing from the publisher’s bio for Anticipated Results, his seventh work of fiction since 1992. Perhaps Bolen is tired of the association. Regardless, his writing has a toughness that comes across as having been gleaned from first-hand experience.

The opening story, entitled “Paul’s Car,” is a good example. One of the book’s secondary characters, Paul, has suffered a car accident (he’s a cab driver) that leaves him unable to move inside his vehicle, which is slowly sinking into a chilly Richmond ditch. “A shiver seized him from anus to scalp and nearly blackened his vision.” You can’t mess with a sentence like that.

Coming near the end of the collection, there’s a 1950s-era story about the narrator’s childhood in a small Vancouver Island town. He’s burdened with a boozing father who can’t hold down a steady job and a mother who becomes collateral damage. When the nine-year-old narrator proudly displays his new wiener stick—a device he’s made from a customized coat-hanger—at the dinner table, his Dad wraps it around the kid’s neck.

That scene leads to an epiphany: “As Dad was wrapping that wire around my neck, he was a jealous man. For years, we’d been competing for Mom’s attention.” The boy runs away into the woods and, although his status as outcast is temporary, his psyche is forever shaped by the wiener-stick incident. Adding insult to injury, the boy is prejudged by a cottage owner who catches him stealing peanut butter and jam sandwiches. “The injustice of it became the start of my darkness, the portal to a black will inside my soul.” Despite the narrator being declared emotionally scarred, Bolen’s Everyman consistently comes across as well-intentioned, as someone who cares about others.

We get to know Bolen’s narrator in bits and pieces, culminating in a degree of intimacy that is simultaneously disturbing and welcome. But it’s ultimately Paul, the most hopeless drunk, who bookends the collection: Left for dead in a ditch, abandoned, hanging sideways in a sunken car.

A graduate of UBC in creative writing, Jeremy Twigg works in public relations in Vancouver.
EGYPT IN TURMOIL

After doing a master’s degree in social anthropology in New Zealand, Vancouver-born Kristeva Dowling bought land in the Bella Coola Valley in 1993. Her humorous memoir Chicken Poop for the Soul: In Search of Food Sovereignty (Harbour $24.95) describes her not always successful, back-to-the-land efforts to attain 100% food self-sufficiency in 2008 by learning a wide variety of skills—such as growing wheat, canning, tracking wild game, and making maple syrup.

BEFORE DOING A MASTER’S DEGREE IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND, VANCOUVER-BORN KRISTEVA DOWLING bought land in the Bella Coola Valley in 1993. Her humorous memoir Chicken Poop for the Soul: In Search of Food Sovereignty (Harbour $24.95) describes her not always successful, back-to-the-land efforts to attain 100% food self-sufficiency in 2008 by learning a wide variety of skills—such as growing wheat, canning, tracking wild game, and making maple syrup.

KARIM ALRAWI OF VANCOUVER WAS IN Tahrir Square in January to support the pro-democracy uprising in his native Egypt. In a room overlooking the square in Cairo, with two million pro-democracy demonstrators below, Alrawi had a bird’s-eye-view as government thugs threw Molotov cocktails and rocks at protestors who sheltered behind barricades of iron sheeting.

Protestors erected a tent city within Tahrir Square until the dictator Hosni Mubarak finally resigned. During the three weeks, protestors maintained a carousel-like atmosphere to maintain morale. Teams of young people cleaned the square daily. As protestors were killed, posters were made of the martyrs and hung from buildings and lampposts.

Alrawi was in Cairo putting the finishing touches on his new children’s book, The Mouse Who Saved Egypt (Tradewind $16.95), illustrated by Brad Cran.

AS THE POET LAUREATE FOR VANCOUVER, BRAD CRAN distinguished himself by having the guts to criticize the Olympic arts bureaucrats who had the gall to require B.C. artists to contractually agree not to badmouth anything to do with the Games. Now he has spearheaded a successful publishing program for revising ten out-of-print ‘classic’ titles from a variety of B.C. publishers. The first to be re-released is Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter’s Opening Doors (Harbour $24.95). All titles should be available by September.

[The other non-fiction titles are: Who Killed Janet Smith by Ed Starkins; Along the No. 20 Line by Rolf Knight; A Hand Man to Bear by Howard Whitt; Fiction titles are: Crossings by Betty Lambert; Class Warfare by D.M. Fraser; A Credit to Your Race by Truman Green; The Inverted Pyramid by Bertrand W. Sinclair. Poetry titles are: Day and Night by Dorothy Livesay, Anhanga by Jon Fairberg.}

NEW WORLD PRESS IN BEIJING, CHINA, WILL translate and publish Robert N. Friedland’s collection of short stories Faded Love (Libros Libertad $22.95). Friedland practices human rights and administrative law in Richmond. There are Chinese connections in many of his stories.

BORN IN 1958, SHARI GRAYDON moved to Ottawa from B.C. in 2002. She has frequently returned to B.C. to promote her work that includes a non-fiction book, In Your Face: The Culture of Beauty and You (Annick Press, continued on next page)

KARIM ALRAWI above Tahrir Square, Egypt

WHO’S WHO
BRITISH COLUMBIA

A IS FOR ALRAWI

PRINTMAKER PAT MARTIN BATES OF Victoria recalls her upbringing in Moncton, New Brunswick, during and after World War II, with paintings and photographs in It is I, Patricia: An Artist’s Childhood (Hedgerow Press $29.95), with writing assistance from Hedgerow publisher Joan Coldwell.

D IS FOR DOWLING

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Raised in a large farm family in Saskatchewan, Connie Kurtenbach has gathered her recollections of rural life in the 1940s for short stories that comprise In My Mother’s Garden (Windshift Press $16.95), a work of adult fiction told through the eyes of an innocent but adventurous young girl.

It's hard to keep up with Annabel Lyon, winner of the Rogers Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize for her novel, The Golden Mean. It was also shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, the Governor General’s Literary Award, the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize and the Commonwealth Prize. Translated into six languages, The Golden Mean (Random House 2009) imagines the friendship between Aristotle and Alexander the Great, as narrated by Aristotle. Lyon's latest work is for young people. Encore Edie (Penguin $14), was released in February to rave reviews. And, yes, Hello! Canada magazine has made her one of their Women of the Year. Lyon will serve as one of the three judges for the Ontario swankfest known as the Scotiabank Giller Prize for fiction.
debted adult friend to artists, cold documentarian of a haunted sanitarium, and an engaged contemporary ticking off beauties.” Her poems are intended to evoke the “thread of spirit that links all our lost bits.”

**M is for Morse**

**GARRY THOMAS MORSE’S DISCOVERY**

**Morse Code: Garry Thomas Morse**

recently launched Discovery Passages of the ANZA Club in Vancouver along with new books by Proma Tagore and Cecily Nicholson.

**N is for New Star**

**Rolf Maurer** has received the Jim Douglas Publisher of the Year Award in British Columbia in 2011. His acceptance speech can be found in Rolf Maurer’s entry at bookshelfworld.com, along with introductory remarks about Maurer and New Star by Howard White.

New Star was mainly co-founded by **Lanny Beckman** and **Stan Persky**. Maurer started working for the press in 1981. He has been the owner and operator since 1990.

**R is for Rafique**

**Fauzia Rafique** is for Rafique’s new, tri-national novel about a Muslim woman named Skena (Libros Libertad $20).

**O is for Oyama**

**Sharon Thesen** was poetically inspired by Capilano College and was poetry editor for The Capilano Review. The various voices in her new collection Oyama Pink Shale (Anansi $22.95) include an “im-
**So Many Doors**
by Celia McBride

“Moving, funny, thoughtful, inspiring... and very real.”
—Yahn News, Whitehorse

**Gas Girls**
by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard

“Dark, ponderous, and stirring... holds on tight and simply doesn’t let go.”
—Steve Brecketo, TorontoStage.com

**The Adventures of Jasper 2**
by Cyn Lowett

The compelling journey of a mother struggling with bipolar illness. Jude Neal is putting a face to bipolar disorder.

“Finding the balance-points of humour and heartbreak, whimsy and depth, light-heartedness and dark twists.”
—Kim Barlow

**New from Playwrights Canada Press**

**No Way Out**
Melanie Jackson
ISBN 978-0-9871256-6-4
800 pg. PB $25.95

**The Lunch Bag Chronicles**
Don Sawyer
148 pages, PB $19.99
Pacific Northwest coast prior to 1800. Tovell's impressively sober, extensively researched, non-fanciful biography is At the Far Reaches of Empire: The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra (UBC Press 2008).

B.C. HAS LONG BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF UNDERWATER ROBOTICS. B.C. has long been at the forefront of underwater robotics! Who knew? Vickie Jensen and Harry Bohm's Underwater Robotics: Science, Design & Fabrication ($99.95) is a follow-up to their Build Your Own Underwater Robot and Other Wet Projects, which they self-published in 1997. Jensen says she has sold over 17,000 copies of that book and it's now heading into its 11th printing. The team added a third co-author, Dr. Steven W. Moore, for this latest project. Ten years in the making, the new book is 770 pages long and has over 500 illustrations and photographs (illustrations by Nola Johnston). The textbook is published by the Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) Center in Monterey, Westcoast Words handles distribution of both robotics titles.

RURAL IN THE RHINE VALLEY, S. Weilbach (a pseudonym) describes her escape as a child from Nazi Germany in Singing From the Darktime: A Childhood Memoir in Poetry and Prose (McGill-Queens Poetry and Prose, $18.95), with an afterword by Holocaust scholar Doris Bergen. Weilbach recalls her surreal experiences aboard the luxury refugee ship the St Louis, on which she and other passengers were refused the right to land, first by Cuba, then by the United States and Canada, and her forced return to Europe, where England and other countries eventually provided some sanctuary.

Before founding her publishing company Leaf Press in 2001, Ursula Vaira worked at Oolichan Books for ten years. Her first book, And See What Happens (Carlin $16.95) is a collection of three poetic stories about the west coast of Canada. The first story is based on her thirty-day paddle from Hazelton to Victoria to raise awareness about the government's treatment of First Nations in residential schools.

Zingaro has published Speaking Out: Storytelling for Social Change (UBC Press $35.95). Since entering the Vancouver School of Art in 1964, Zingaro has been a press operator, a cook, a darkroom technician, and the executive director of two non-profit agencies serving adolescents living on the street. In Speaking Out, Zingaro interviews fellow social workers and activists who speak out about their lives and work and the consequences of doing so. She uses these experiences to put forward ideas on how to encourage and help others in the field to speak freely in the interests of a just society. Zingaro is currently a board member for a disability arts organization. She has traveled extensively in Japan, working with women's groups and social service agencies for the expansion of services to vulnerable groups in that country.

In 1995, A.K.A. MRS. William Butler Yeats was more than an intellectual wet nurse to a genius, as outlined in former UBC professor Ann Saddlemeyer's in-depth biography Becoming George: The Life of Mrs. W.B. Yeats (2002). She married Yeats in 1917 when he was 52 and she was 25. Her 'automatic writing' and extrasensory perceptions fueled her husband's work and made their marriage into a literary experiment and partnership. Known to her friends as 'George,' she guarded Yeats' literary legacy for 30 years after his death. Saddlemeyer has now edited a follow-up, W.B. Yeats and George Yeats—The Letters (Oxford University Press $59.95), a 624-page volume, launched in Dublin, where attendees included the likes of Nobel Prize for Literature winner Seamus Heaney.

Vaira is for Vaira

Hosting a press release party for her book are Cathy Sosnowsky and daughter Tanya packing pickles.

For the B.C. Bookworld, Linde Zingaro
QUICKIES is an affordable advertising vehicle exclusively for writers, artists, publications and events. For info on how to be included for just $112, just email bookworld@telus.net
Gentlemamly fit
I would like to thank you for including a proper tribute to Eric Nicol in the Spring issue. Somewhat similar to your description of the “embarrassingly small” funeral for such a noted Canadian writer, the minimal mention of his death in the Vancouver Sun is Province and even Georgia Straight seemed puzzling and, finally, rather insulting. I have read much of his significant output, enjoyed his humour columns in the past, and as recently as a few months before his death, enjoyed his last book, Scriptease, (2010). His “gentlemamly wit,” as you called it, may have gone out of style, but I think we could use more of it these days. Thank goodness there are still libraries which keep copies of work like his (I hope).

Mercedes Smith
North Delta

Shocked & delighted
Just received my copy of BC BookWorld and was shocked to read that Eric Nicol had died but delighted with your lengthy tribute. I guess we never expect our icons to die, literally or figuratively. I grew up three houses away from Nicol’s place at 36th and Crown and managed to creep into his columns a few times. Once with a couple of friends for being sighted in his cherry tree, feasting away like flightless birds on his delicious fruit, and on another occasion for pulling an even more stupid neighbourhood prank. We thought it was clever, he somewhat less so, although he softened the victim’s ire with his take.

I always read his column, even as a teenager because he seemed to be talking about the community in which I lived in a way that I could understand. Most adults were simply too serious. Although his wife always came to neighbourhood socials, he never did, but he always had time to talk to those of us who roamed the streets.

I’m pleased that you remind us that we forget important influences too quickly. Thanks to BC BookWorld, he has his place outside the library.

Ron Smith
Nanaimo Bay

Woodlands 1
I have loved your publication since my “mature” student days at UVic. In the Spring issue, Gina McMurchy-Barber’s beautifully-rendered tale of survival in the cruel world of Woodlands brings easy tears. I had heard Sheryl McKay’s North-by-Northwest with her in November, and immediately ordered a copy from our Victoria library. I devoured it on a ferry ride over to New Westminster, bawled my eyes out, and now this. Thank you to Gina McMurchy-Barber. Her Free as a Bird is a read to cherish.

My own beloved daughter, a teen who has, until recently denied she has Down syndrome, enjoyed a visit from another young woman who has Trisomy 21. To hear these two, you would assume they are as similar as any other teens, yet, reminders of the recent past echo in my ears daily. The language of deviling, the continual judgment based upon appearance, the harsh reality of poverty because of a chromosomal rearrangement, is just plain wrong.

Ann Auld
Victoria

Woodlands 2
I was happily surprised to see the piece on Woodlands right there in the middle of BC BookWorld. What an honour to have been given that kind of attention. And I’m really touched by the responses I’ve had to it being there. It is very rewarding to know how meaningful the story has been to everyone I’ve heard from. I must say though, I had no idea that it would touch this kind of chord with people. Thanks so much for your support.

Gina McMurchy-Barber
Surrey

City of Love and Revolution
(New Star $24) by Lawrence Aronsen. 978-1-55420-048-1

Start & Run a Personal History Business:
Get Paid to Research Family Ancestry and Write Memoirs
(Self-Course $23.95) by Jennifer Campbell 978-1-77040-058-0

Unsettling the Settler Within:
Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada (UBC Press $34.94) by Paulette Regan, with a foreword by Taisaikie Alfred. 978-0-7748-1778-3

Brooken Circle:
The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools by Theodore Fontaine (Heritage House $19.95) 978-1-926613-66-6

The Canterbury Trail
(Brindle & Glass $19.95) by Angie Abdou. 978-1-897142-50-9

Snowdrift
(Soul’shan $18.95) by Lisa McGonigle 978-1-897142-50-9

* The current topselling titles from major BC publishing companies, in no particular order

BC TOPSELLERS

B C TOPSELLERS

Working with Wool: A Coast Salish Legacy & The Cowichan Sweater (Sono Nis $38.95) by Sylvia Olsen. 1-55039-177-1

Adventures in Solitude: What Not to Wear to a Nudist Potluck and Other Stories from Desolation Sound (Harbour $26.95) by Grant Lawrence. 978-1-55365-794-1

Subject to Change (Talonbooks $18.95) by Renee Rodin. 978-0-88922-644-9

The Devil You Know (Anvil $16) by Jenn Farrell. 978-1-897535-06-6

How It All Vegan! 10th Anniversary Edition (Arsenal $34.95) by Tanya Barnard & Sarah Kramer. 978-1-55152-253-1

Patriot Hearts (Douglas & McIntyre $32.95) by John Furlong with Gary Mason. 978-1-55385-794-1

River Odyssey (Ronsdale Press $10.95) by Philip Roy. 978-1-55380-105-0

Knife Point (Circ Books $9.95) by Alex Van Tol. 978-1-55469-305-4

Canada’s National Parks: A Celebration (Sandhill / Canopy $34.95) by Tanya Barnard & Sarah Kramer. 978-1-55152-253-1

City of Love and Revolution (New Star $24) by Lawrence Aronsen. 978-1-55420-048-1

Start & Run a Personal History Business:
Get Paid to Research Family Ancestry and Write Memoirs (Self-Course $23.95) by Jennifer Campbell 978-1-77040-058-0

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Sylvia Olsen (right) received the Lieutenant-Governor’s Medal for History, presented this year in Powell River by the BC Historical Federation, for Working with Wool.
Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.

~ Francis Bacon

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