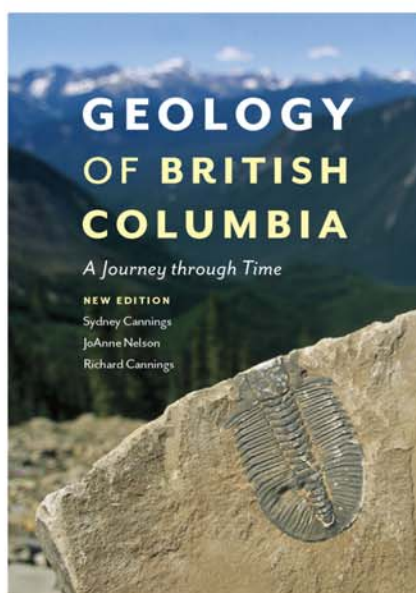
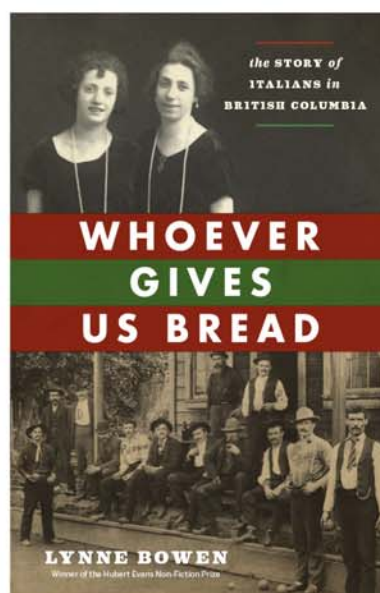




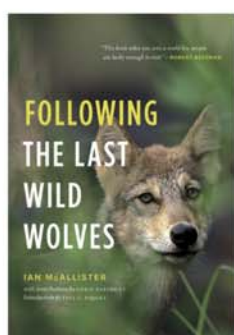
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Life is about taking risks...

**Meg Tilly** of Victoria has a growing reputation as a novelist, with four titles under her belt. Her young adult novel **Porcupine** (Tundra 2007) was nominated for a B.C. Book Prize.

But she is revisiting her acting career by taking the starring role as Martha in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, from July 5-17 at Victoria's MacPherson Playhouse.

Although Oscar-nominated Tilly appeared in films such as *The Big Chill* and *Agnes of God*, this will be her first appearance in live theatre.

We asked Meg Tilly to explain her risk-taking gambit.

## WHO'S **NOT** AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

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

**W**OULD 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* 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 the last twenty-six years of my life raising, cooking, supporting and loving my three kids, when the house emptied, 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 bent 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 Eliot** 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 this secret dream and I didn't even try.

Novelist Meg Tilly waits for the ferry after the first Galiano Island Writers Festival.

TWIGG PHOTO

# BC

BOOKWORLD

SUMMER  
2011  
Issue,  
Vol. 25, No. 2

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

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

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

Advertising & editorial: **BC BookWorld**, 3516 W. 13th Ave.,  
Vancouver, B.C., V6R 2S3. Tel/Fax: 604-736-4011  
Email: [bookworld@telus.net](mailto:bookworld@telus.net). Annual subscription: \$25

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**Proofreaders:** Wendy Atkinson, Jeremy Twigg  
**Design:** Get-to-the-Point Graphics. **Deliveries:** Ken Reid

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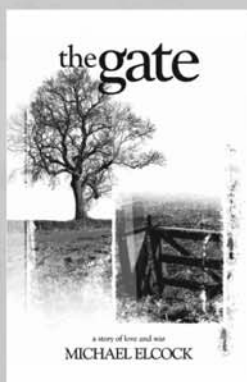
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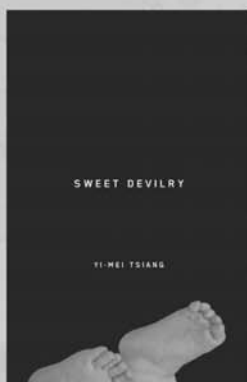


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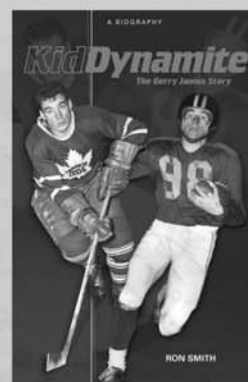


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## Basran not an also-ran

*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 Duthie BC Booksellers' Choice Award.

**John Vaillant** won the Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize for *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival*



Dan Savard

(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

**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).



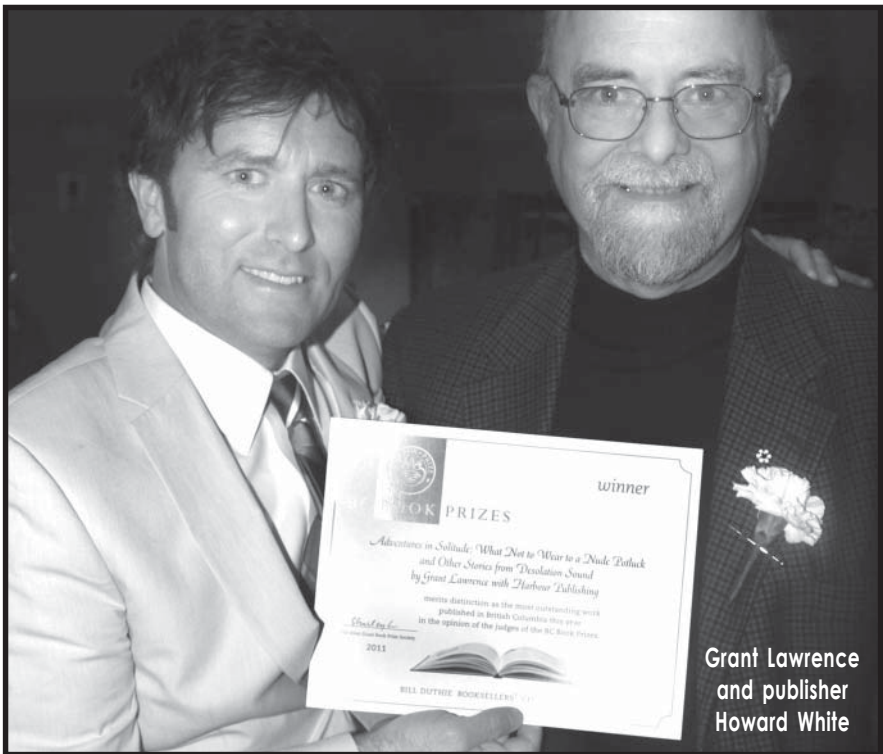
George Bowering

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 Dawson, 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



Wilson Fiction Prize winner Gurjinder Basran will be one of 26 writers at the 29th Festival of the Written Arts in Sechelt, August 4-7.



Grant Lawrence and publisher Howard White

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.

## B.C. Historical Federation's awards

THE British Columbia Historical Association was established on October 12, 1922, and on March 2, 1927, the association was registered under the *Societies Act*. It was renamed the British Columbia Historical Federation on July 29, 1983. The BCHF has 209 institutional members and through them access to 25,875 individuals.

Visit [www.bchistory.ca](http://www.bchistory.ca) for details.

This year the BCHF presented its Historical Writing awards at its annual general meeting in Powell River in May. First presented in 1983, the Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Historical Writing went to **Sylvia Olsen** for *Working with Wool: A Coast Salish Legacy and the Cowichan Sweater* (Sono Nis \$38.95)

Runners-up were **Dan Savard** for *Images From the Likeness House* (Royal BC Museum \$39.95) and **Dorothy Faulkner, Elaine Park and Cathy Jenks'** *Women of Pender Harbour: Their Voices, Their History* (Pender Harbour Living Heritage \$45).

Honorable mentions went to *The Essentials: 150 Great BC Books & Authors* (Ronsdale \$24.95); *Voices of British Columbia: Stories from Our Frontier* (D&M \$35) and *The Railroader's Wife: Letters from the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway* (Caitlin \$24.95)

And, yes, for all you proofreaders out there : The BCHF still retains the hyphen in Lieutenant-Governor, whereas the hyphen for Governor-General has been dropped by the Governor General's national literary awards from Ottawa.



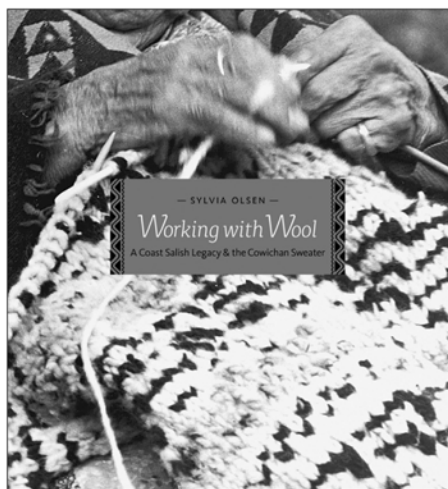
Medal awarded since 1983 for best historical writing

UBC PRESS HAD TWO TITLES SHORTLISTED FOR The Canada Prize which recognizes scholarly social science and humanities titles; in the Social Sciences category: **Alan Gordon's** *The Hero and the Historians: Historiography and the Uses of Jacques Cartier* and for **Joy Parr's** *Sensing Changes: Technologies, Environments, and the Everyday, 1953-2003*. Parr's book was the winner.

UBC's *Perverse Cities: Hidden Subsidies, Wonky Policy, and Urban Sprawl* by **Pamela Blais** was nominated for the Donner Prize, along with D&M's *Oka: A Political Crisis and Its Legacy* by **Harry Swain**.

**Shelagh D. Grant's** *Polar Imperative: A History of Arctic Sovereignty in North America* (D&M \$39.95) has been nominated for the 2011 J. W. Dafoe Book Prize. The Dafoe Book Prize was inaugurated in 1984 and is awarded annually for outstanding non-fiction writing about Canada, Canadians and the nation's role in international affairs. Valued at \$10,000, it is one of the county's richest book awards.





## Working with Wool

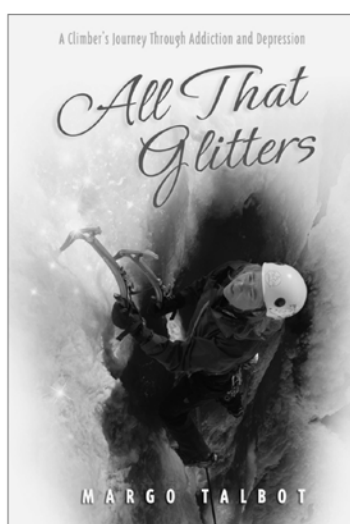
A Coast Salish Legacy & the Cowichan Sweater

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.

*Winner of the Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Historical Writing*

1-55039-177-1 • 8.5 x 9.25 • 328 pages • 165 photos • cloth • \$38.95



## 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*.

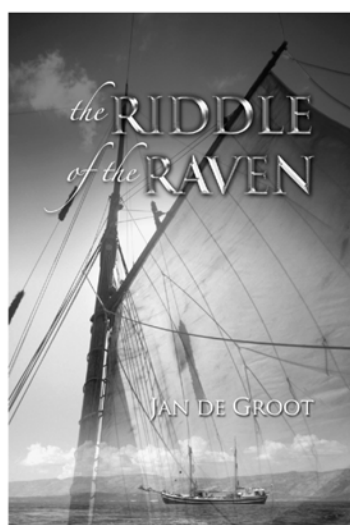
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—GREG CHILD, AUTHOR OF *Over the Edge*, *Thin Air: Encounters in the Himalayas*, AND OTHERS

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—WILL GADD, PROFESSIONAL MULTI-SPORT ATHLETE AND AUTHOR OF *Ice & Mixed Climbing*

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## The Riddle of the Raven

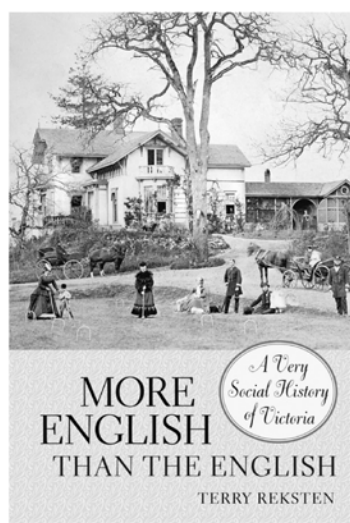
A Sailing Ship Possessed by a Ghost

Jan deGroot

When Jan de Groot 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 skullduggery.

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.

1-55039-183-6 • 6 x 9 • 200 pp • photos • paper • \$19.95



## 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 1930s. 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.

1-55039-186-0 • 6 x 9 • 232 pp • 100+ photos • paper • \$19.95





Angie Abdou had been writing operational manuals for light-armoured vehicles, tourism blurbs, academic articles, and online help—everything except what she wanted to do—until an accident triggered an avalanche of fiction.

# ANGIE'S CRASH COURSE

*Chaucer goes skiing in Angie Abdou's  
The Canterbury Trail*

KEVAN WILKE / 68 PHOTOGRAPHY

ONCE UPON A TIME, IT WAS common for people to take turns telling stories, in the same way as contestants take turns singing on *American Idol*.

That's how **Geoffrey Chaucer's** *The Canterbury Tales*—modeled on *The Decameron* by **Giovanni Boccaccio**—became one of the first staples of English literature.

*The Canterbury Tales* is a sometimes bawdy conglomeration of 14th century tales told by 29 disparate pilgrims on their way to Canterbury.

Set in the avalanche-ridden mountains of eastern British Columbia, **Angie Abdou's** *The Canterbury Trail* gradually introduces 14 characters on a Chaucerian quest: to take refuge in a back-country skiing hut called Camelot.

All the action occurs near Coalton, a fictional community that could easily be mistaken for Fernie, where Abdou lives.

All characters will follow a wilderness route forged by a disaffected hermit named Heinz who detests the powder puffs.

Although the reclusive Heinz abhors the noise and the messes that visitors and their dogs leave behind, he has nonetheless erected a van-sized sign mapping the area from the trailhead right over the summit and on to Camelot.

He has also erected signposts and named the route The Canterbury Trail. Youthful ski-bums prefer to mawkishly call it The C— Trail.

**E**ver 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* (NeWest 2007) was recently shortlisted for the CBC Canada Reads Award. Now she has published her second novel, **The Canterbury Trail** (Brindle & Glass \$19.95), 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 at such crudity appearing in print.



IN *THE CANTERBURY TRAIL*, WE FIRST MEET Three Musketeers in toques; a trio of intense skiers nicknamed Loco, F Bomb, and SOR. SOR stands for Stud on Rockets. Loco refers to someone who is a local. And F Bomb is a First Nations man. And they swear a lot.

They take along a big city journalist, Alison, who is documenting her descent



**Cherie  
THIESSEN**

from gentrified Toronto into countrified Coalton, getting her squeezes in wherever she can. Her female competition is Shanny, a hot young hitchhiking snowboarder.

Add to the mix, heavy drinking snowmobilers Kevin and his friend, Frederik, who both drive trucks for the local mill, and Kevin's second wife, Claudette.

Back-country skiers include Michael, a real estate developer, his very pregnant wife, Janet, and Michael's friend, Lanny. Add two of Janet's lesbian friends, the earth mother, Cosmos, and her lover, Ella, who use snowshoes.

It's a small town—Ella was Kevin's first wife before he left her for Claudette,

prompting Ella to try the other sex—and it's late April. Everyone will be squeezed into Camelot. They will share their hovel with four dogs, one of which doesn't appear to be house trained.

Nearly everyone will drink and/or get stoned on magic mushroom tea, hash brownies, and other concoctions. They'll fight, they'll puke, they'll pout, they'll storm and they'll slumber, encountering anger, frustration, disappointment, jealousy, passion, elation and boredom.



ABDOU CLEARLY KNOWS OF WHAT SHE writes. Along with her whimsical character sketches, she includes local tidbits such as a recipe for Mary Jane's Cookies, a hangover cure and instructions on how to mix a Shotgun.

Echoes of Chaucer tend to recede as the narrative pace picks up along the Canterbury Trail. Only a few characters seem to match those in *The Canterbury Tales*. Lanny is a miller and there's a miller who tells a tale in Chaucer. The ribald Wife of Bath correlates only slightly to Abdou's lusty Alison. The storytelling of the characters tends to fizzle 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 uninhibited and most fun.

978-1-897142-50-9

*Cherie Thiessen is an avid skier who reviews fiction from Pender Island.*



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*Robert J.* **Wiersema**



**BC BOOKWORLD:** Why the fascination with Chaucer?

**ANGIE ABDOU:** Chaucer is possibly the very first English writer to have a true interest in character. Before his work, characters tended to be flat representations of certain sins (Sloth or Pride, say) or certain virtues. Chaucer uses characters to represent particular classes in his medieval society, but he quickly shows that these people cannot be contained within their designated roles.

**BCBW:** So you're doing the same, but with contemporary people.

**ABDOU:** Exactly. I have ski bums, rednecks, hippies, developers. I hope the reader discovers these characters cannot easily be contained within their labels. Chaucer used a pilgrimage to bring together diverse elements of medieval society. In that way, Chaucer had an opportunity to satirize a cross-section of his medieval society. So I asked myself—what type of journey would bring together diverse components of my community?

**BCBW:** What other parallels did you use?

**ABDOU:** *The Canterbury Trail* takes place in April. That's an "of course!" for anyone who knows Chaucer. But here it is spring snow rather than spring thaw that brings everyone together.

**BCBW:** So would you describe *The Canterbury Trail* as a social satire?

**ABDOU:** Satire implies a certain distance from the material—a looking in at and a poking fun of, a highlighting of the shortcomings of *others*. I have no such distance from this material. So instead of satire, I have been referring to *The Canterbury Trail* as a black comedy or a tragicomedy or a comic-tragedy. If anyone has a better label, I would be happy to hear it.

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

**ABDOU:** I am 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 *queynte* 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 recoiling 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 ANG-RY!" But once a book is published, a writer no longer has control over it. *The Canterbury Trail* is now out there in the wide world for each reader to make of it what he or she will.

“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. Remem-

ber, 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 access to information is not the issue—instead we need to teach young adults what to do with information and how to think about it critically. If young people want recipes for drugs, they can find far worse with a simple click on Google. 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 Trail* 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 were 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:** Now you're on the cover of *Quill & Quire*, Canada's national publishing trade magazine, having *not* opted for Toronto.

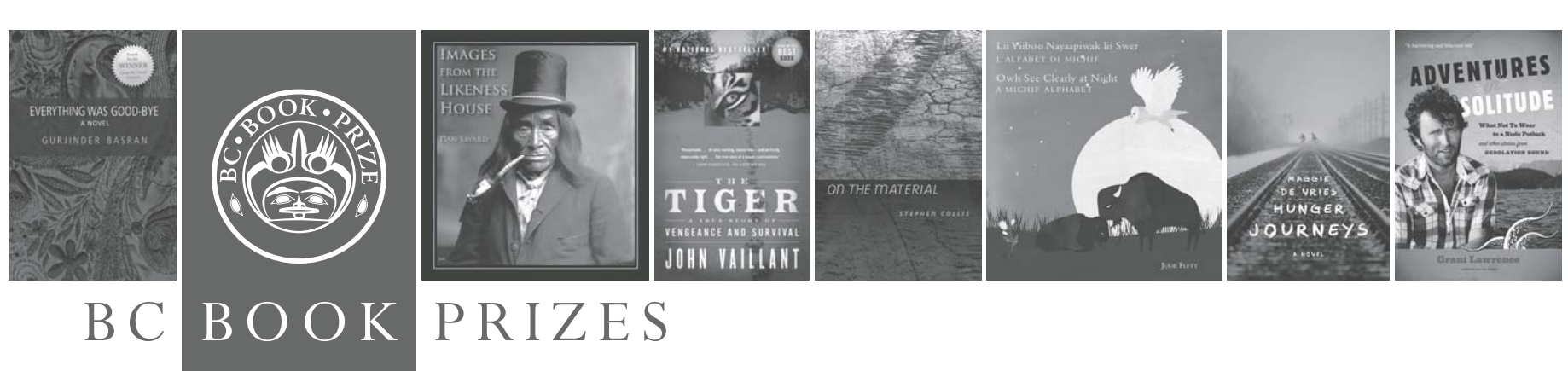
**ABDOU:** At times it feels pretty weird. One of the weirdest moments of the Canada Reads competition was picking up the *National Post* and reading **Mark Medley's** description of me as "virtually unknown." I knew what he meant, of course, but at the same time I thought, "Oh yeah! Well, Mark Medley is virtually unknown where I come from!"

Fernie is a long way from Toronto. Choosing a B.C. press was, in part, an awareness that it's important to be known first at home. I have to say, my proudest moment so far came when I saw the book featured in March's Hot List right here in the *Fernie Fix*. To know that Fernie's young hip crowd is reading this novel and enjoying it made me feel, for just a moment, pretty darn cool.


**Montreal Canadiens hockey player Georges Laraque argued on behalf of Angie Abdou's first novel as one of the five finalists for CBC's Canada Reads competition.**







Read the winners of the 27th annual BC Book Prizes

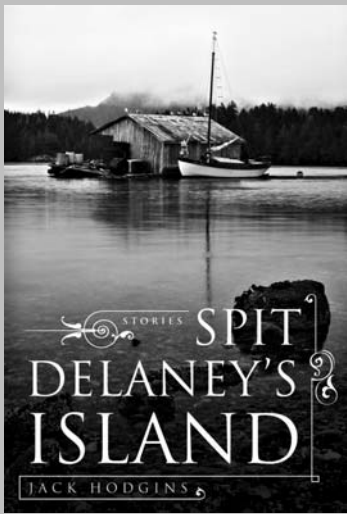
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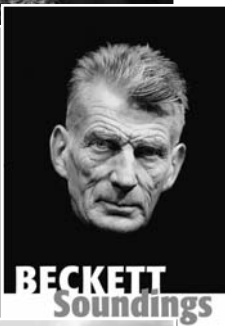
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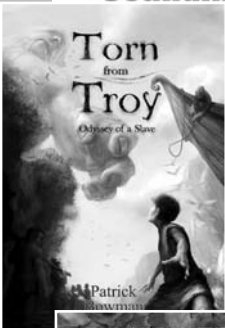
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**BANGLADESH:**

# Innocence comes before a fall

Cover art from  
*The Innocent Corner*

**BY CHERIE THIESSEN**

**M**IX A LITTLE MEDDLING with a whole lot of naiveté and you can have a dangerous concoction. If this is the lesson **Peggy Herring** wants us to learn in *This Innocent Corner* (Oolican \$19.95), it's well-illustrated in the character of a 20-year-old American exchange student, Robin Rowe, who is studying 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, becoming fast friends with their daughter, Luna, rapidly estranging herself from the fiery son, Hasan, and romantically involving herself with his friend, Shaheed.

Fresh from the United States, Robin holds firm to her immature ideals, devoid of cultural sensitivity. She encourages Luna to run away with her lover to avoid an arranged marriage, and motivates Shaheed to involve himself in a political turmoil he was inclined to avoid.

She refuses to listen to the Chowdhury's urgings to leave their increasingly violent country, postponing a trip to the airport until she puts not only Hasan in danger, but the runaway lovers, as well. Worse, she deliberately accuses an innocent servant of theft, reminiscent of **Khaled Hosseini's** *Kite Runner*.

*Peggy Herring lived in Bangladesh for two years, and spent several years in Nepal and India. Set in Bangladesh, **The Innocent Corner** is her first novel.*

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 seem to get it. She waits for letters from Luna and the Chowdhury household, seemingly surprised when no communication from them is forthcoming.

By the time Robin returns to Dhaka thirty years later, in order to give a presentation 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 audience, she abandons her talk and then casually goes off to find her host family with still no apparent idea of the reception she'll get.



ALTERNATING BETWEEN EAST PAKISTAN then and Bangladesh now, sometimes awkwardly, this story fills in gaps in Robin'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 subsequent 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 happened to those lovers.

Setting fiction in a politically volatile country at a significant moment in history 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.

978-088982-268-9

*Cherie Thiessen reviews from Pender Island.*

## PUNJAB: FIRST DAUGHTERS IN CANADA

**W**ith the release of **Zhindagee: Voices of Canadian 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 females to be born in Canada, from 1920 to 1950.

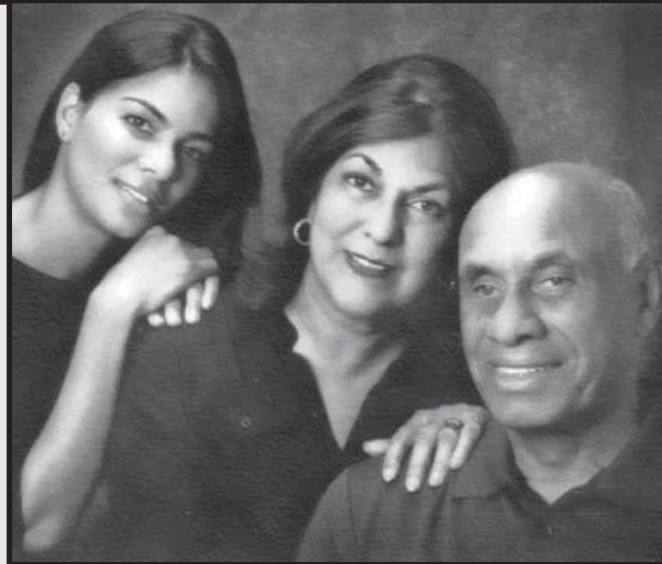
The parents of these women were pioneers from Punjab India. The mother of each was affected by the exclusion of South Asian females, even though they were British subjects, from entering Canada until after 1920.

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

Many of the stories emanate from Paldi, the Vancouver 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](http://www.zhindagee.ca) for more info. 978-0-9811913-0-0



Hockey pioneer Willie O'Ree, his daughter Chandra and his wife Deljeet



Subject to Change  
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-knee') **Rodin** warmly shaking my hand and introducing herself, as if she is simply helping with the event rather than being the feature of it.

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 children are shown with her on the cover of her new book, **Subject to Change**, an autobiographical sampling that is dedicated to her sister.

Her previous books are *Ready for Freddy* (2005), a memoir reflecting the period of her life when she moved back



Roxana  
NECULESCU

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 Slyomovics'** birthday, and there Vera is nodding and smiling back at her



Renee Rodin opened R2B2 in 1986.

from her seat. Renee then reads us a poem titled "The Real Deal," which is both dedicated to, and about, Vera and her husband Josef. Vera was awarded the Order of Canada in 2005 for travelling across the country conducting talks about her experiences during the

Holocaust. Renee recalls that Vera came into her life as one of the few people that she remembers her mother giving instant respect to.

Renee demonstrates her affinity for Kitsilano through the poems she chooses to read. It's refreshing to be able to mentally engage with the sights she is speaking of, even if it is the thrift store on Broadway and MacDonald.

She closes with "A Naif's Story," a poem that reflects upon the eight years (1986-1994) she spent running the R2B2 bookstore on West 4th avenue in Kits. That bookstore was dedicated to keeping the Vancouver literary scene both alive and personal. She admits to her audience that R2B2 was more about the books, and those who read the books, than the business itself.

As literary den mother, past and present, Renee Rodin has concluded *Subject to Change* with a list of more than one hundred writers and artists who participated in events at her bookstore. That list is preceded by an update on the lives of 31 infants who have, between 1968 and 2010, been raised in the same beautiful wicker basket that she bought for her daughter Joey, on Portobello Road, in London, in 1968.

Roxana Neculescu is a contributing editor to *BC BookWorld Express*.

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

LAUNCH

WHEN I ARRIVE A HALF-AN-HOUR IN advance for **Jessica Yee's** launch of **Feminism For Real**, Vancouver's Rhizome Café is already full of guests, lounging as if it is their communal living room, on a rainy, Thursday night. This place somehow retains the ambience 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.

Members of the audience take turns reading from the anthology. The president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, **Beverly Jacobs**, speaks of the need to change the vic-



Here Yee, Here Yee:  
The stage is set at the Rhizome Cafe for Jessica Yee's *Feminism for Real*.

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 Animikii Horton**, "Male Feminist" and "Invisible Activists." The older sister of **Shaunga Tagore** reads Shaunga's "A Slam on Feminism in Academia," an account of the hypocrisy of letting in ethnic students to graduate programs in order to fill a quota without adapting to the students' needs.

It is bracing content, punctuated by embraces. Jessica hugs each speaker before they return to their seats. The evening ends on a hopeful yet decidedly introspective note. Reproductive Justice Freedom Fighters of the World, Unite... the struggle continues.

Jessica Yee is also the founder and executive director of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (nativeyouthsexualhealth.com), the only indigenous sexual-health organization in North America, where she su-

pervises sexual education programs.

In 2009, Jessica Yee received the 2009 YWCA Young Woman of Distinction Award and most recently a 2010 Harmony Award.

—Roxana Neculescu

For more reports of literary events in B.C., visit the new BookWorld Express site at [www.bookworldexpress.com](http://www.bookworldexpress.com)

Organizers of literary events can submit info for free listings on the site's calendar.

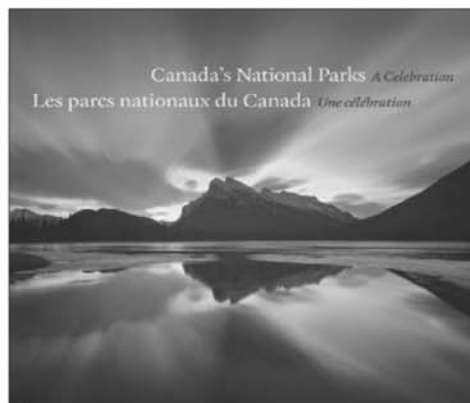


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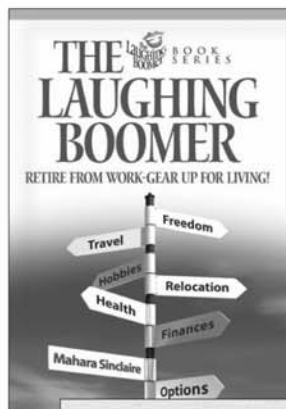
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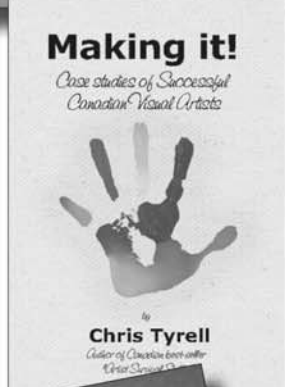


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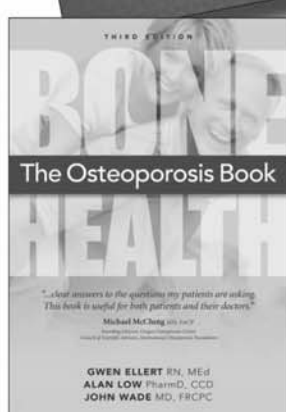


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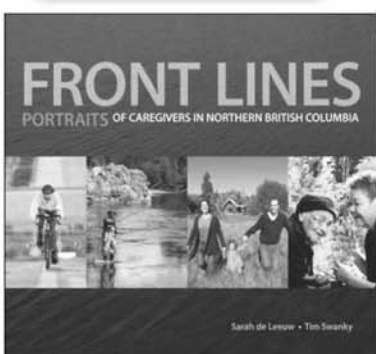


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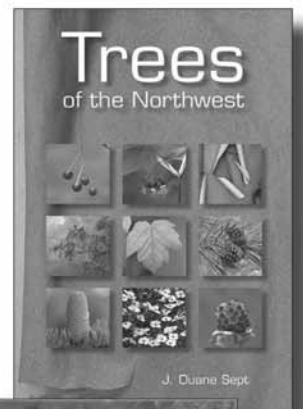
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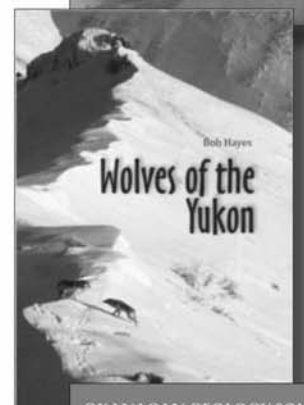


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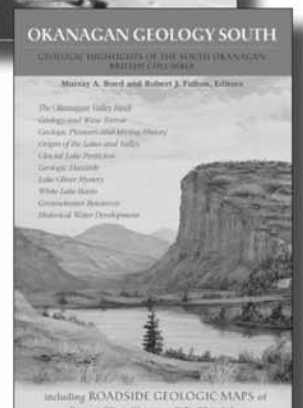


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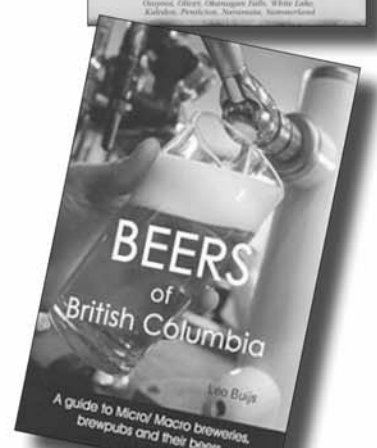


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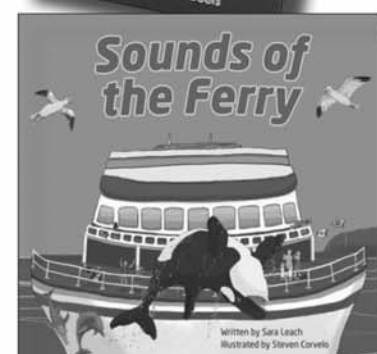


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Sara Leach

Following up on the best-seller *Mountain Machines*, this high quality, delightful book explores all the sounds and sights of a sea voyage. Full of detail, recurring characters and colorful marine life, this rhyming picture book takes kids aged two to six on an entertaining ferry ride full of things that churn, hum, hiss, roar, groan, zip, screech, splash and clang - lots of fun!

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BY SUSAN YATES

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 miscon-

# HALLELUJAH & PASS THE BIRD SEED

ceptions of the natural world is always a good remedy for the problems inherent in a rural dwelling.

*Up Close & Personal* has inspired me to observe and relate to the creatures in my own back yard as never before. Teen-age towhees squawking and splashing in the bird bath have me mesmerized and completely oblivious to whatever I was doing before I looked out my back window. How much time elapses before my attention goes back to my chores, I don’t know, but the image of those soggy, oversized fuzzballs splashing water everywhere, and looking like something only a mother towhee could love, brings a silly grin to my face.

The chapter *Birds: Better Than Prozac* begins with a line

from songwriter **Carly Simon**: “The sound of birds stops the noise in my mind.” 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.

978-0-9867453-0-0

*Former librarian Susan Yates writes and organizes literary events from Gabriola.*

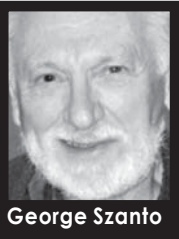


Sharon McInnes

## GABRIOLA MYSTERY

AS 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 Rachel and Noel Franklin of Islands Investigations International.

In the second novel, a grieving mother bends over to kiss her son’s corpse at a



George Szanto

funeral home viewing, only to shriek: “That’s not Sandro!”

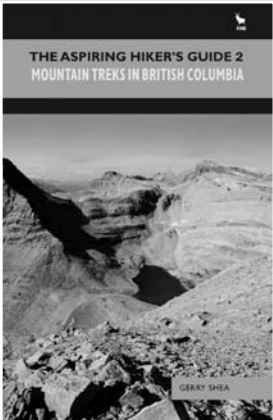
Having supposedly died of a heroin overdose, the body of Whidbey Island General Hospital nurse

Sandro Vasiliadis 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 a beautiful woman he knew long ago, are angrily opposed to his plan.

Whidbey 978-926741-05-5  
Tartarus 9781897142530

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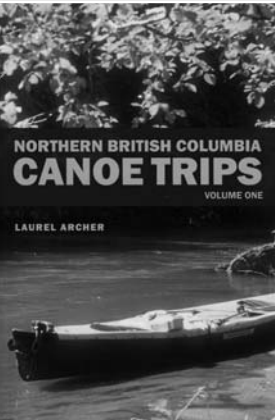
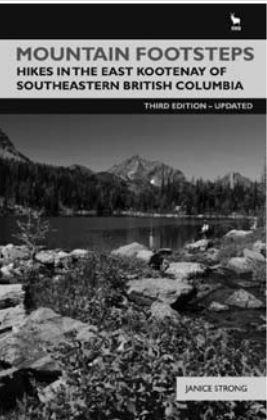
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Hikes in the East Kootenay of Southwestern British Columbia  
Janice Strong

This bestselling guide contains the latest updates to routes, trails and roads in the areas located between the Rocky Mountains in the east and the Purcell Mountains in the west. Readers will appreciate the author’s detailed descriptions and personal anecdotes, complete with colour maps and photos, related to one of the most stunning areas in BC.

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The first volume in the series describes eight northern BC paddling routes over eleven rivers, including those never documented in any other publication, such as the Taku, Jennings, Omineca, Gataga, as well as more familiar favourites such as the Fort Nelson and Dease rivers. Both volumes are designed to provide canoeists with all the information they need to plan an unforgettable river trip.

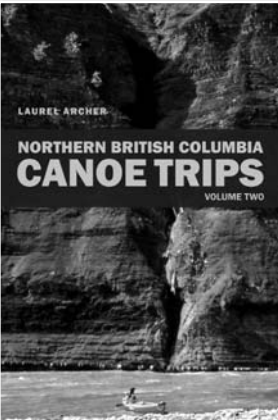
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**Northern British Columbia Canoe Trips**

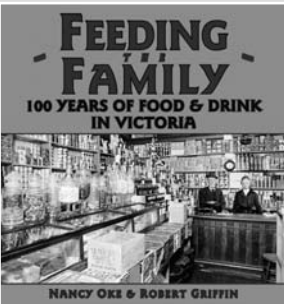
Volume Two  
Laurel Archer

The second volume in the series describes seven northern BC paddling routes over ten rivers, including those never documented in any other publication, such as the Turnagain/ Kechika, Toad/Liard and Tuchodi/Muskwa, as well as internationally acclaimed routes on the Spatsizi, Upper and Lower Stikine and Tatshenshini/Alsek.

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## NEW FROM ROYAL BC MUSEUM



**Feeding the Family**  
100 Years of Food and Drink in Victoria  
Nancy Oke and Robert Griffin

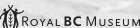


This engaging portrait of a large, vibrant, and multi-faceted city focuses on Victoria’s early food and drink suppliers, manufacturers and retailers, including the many colourful characters and the businesses that prospered or failed. It also includes a chapter on beer brewers by Greg Evans.

978-0-772663-43-6 | \$29.95

**Sister and I From Victoria to London**

Emily Carr



*Sister and I* presents Emily Carr’s whimsical account of her trip across Canada by rail, written and illustrated in her own hand. Along with vivid descriptions of the people she meets along the way, Emily recounts hikes 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 RBCM curator Kathryn Bridge, who places it in context with Carr’s life and works.

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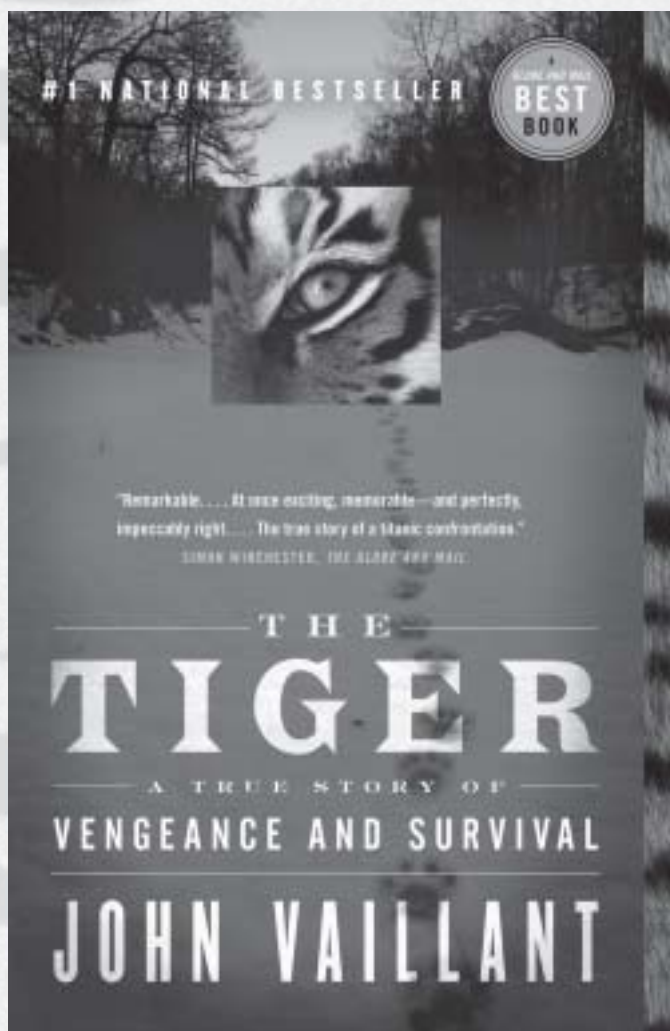
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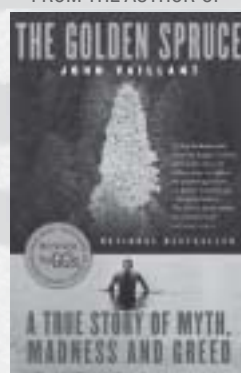
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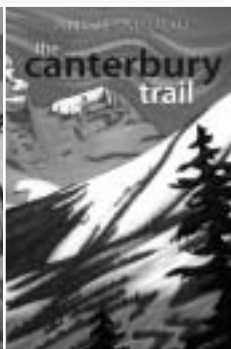
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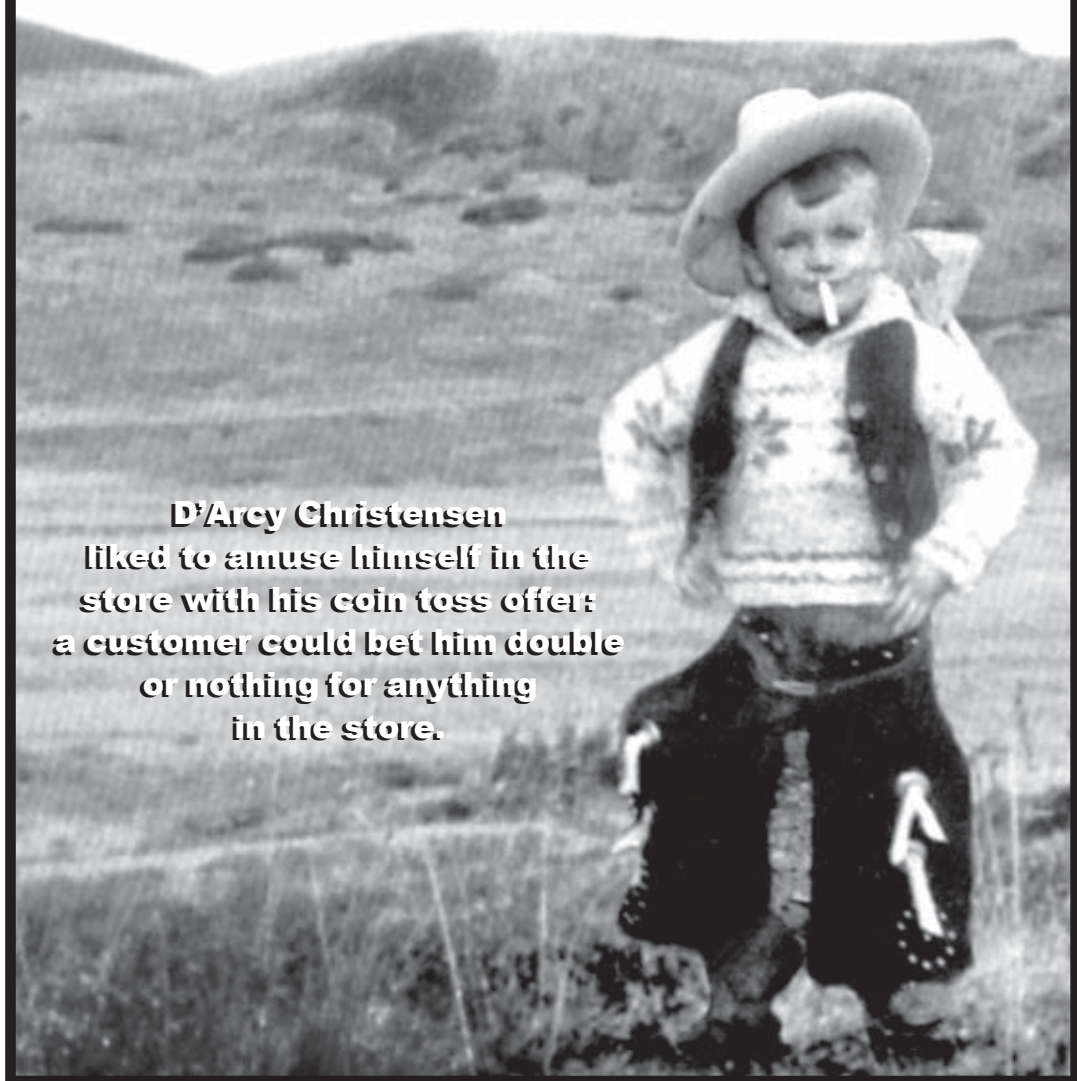
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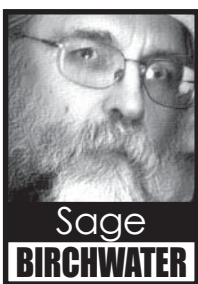
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# SEEING DOUBLE OR NOTHING



**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.



Sage  
BIRCHWATER

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 1898, 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 Cless 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 end of the road near Stuie, 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 with his family. During 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 isolated landscape with. **Lestor** and **Mickey Dorsey**, **Pan Phillips**, **Fred Engebretson**, **Maddy Jack**, **Jane Lehman**, **Tommy Holte**, **Alfred Bryant** and **Thomas Squinas** were all legends in their own right. They were also personal friends with whom D'Arcy milled lumber, ranched, trapped, gambled, and served in his store.

He says a strong motivation for writing his book was to preserve the unique stories, sayings and memories of the people he shared his life with in this rustic outpost region of B.C.

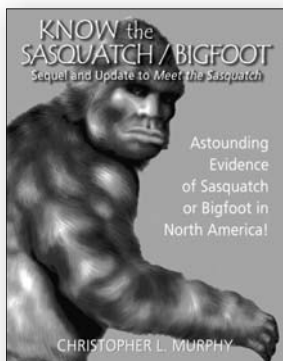
The cover photo of the book depicting six-year-old D'Arcy duded up with chaps, cowboy boots and hat, with a cigarette in his mouth, is bound to create some controversy. He says the cigarette was his mother's idea to make the picture interesting. An avowed anti-smoker, D'Arcy makes a statement to that effect on the back cover.

And, yes, he will flip double or nothing for the \$24.95 book. So far, he says, he's breaking about even.

9781894759472

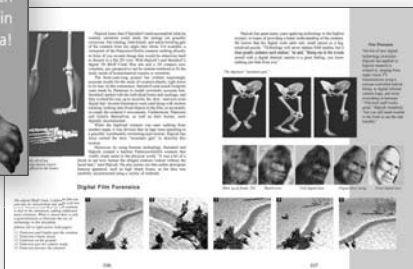
*Sage Birchwater is BCBW's Cariboo-Chilcotin correspondent.*

## Super SASQUATCH summer reads { history, research, evidence, encounters

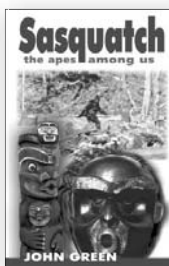


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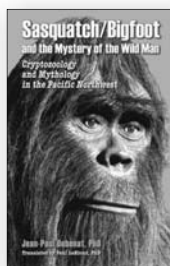
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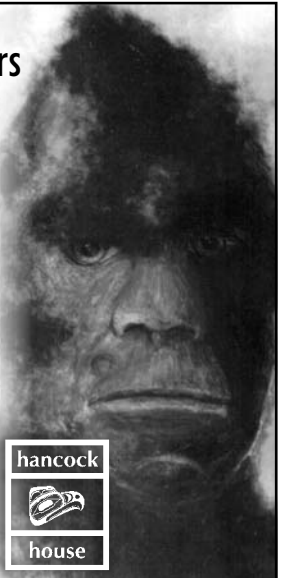


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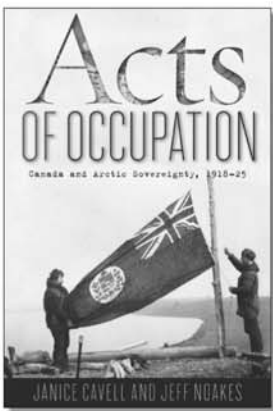




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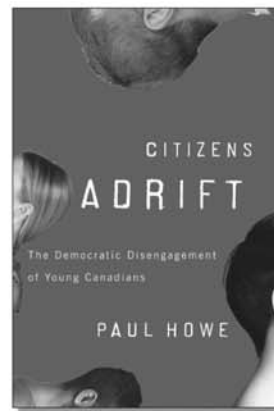


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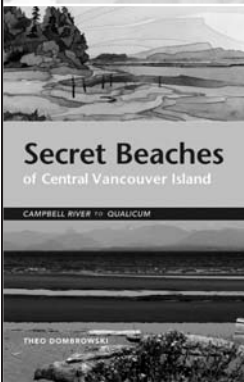
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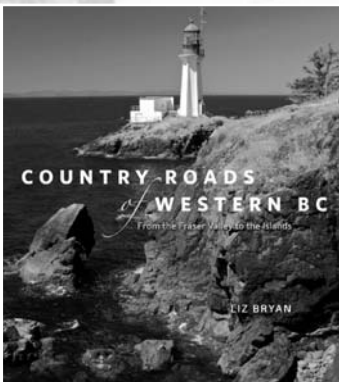
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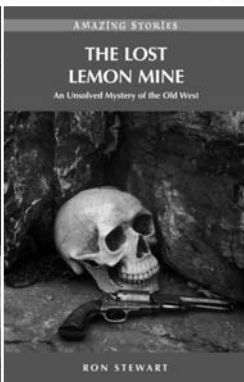
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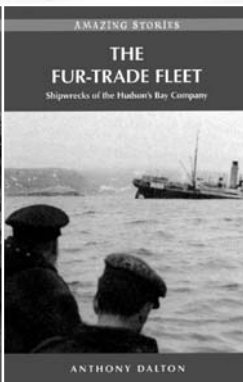
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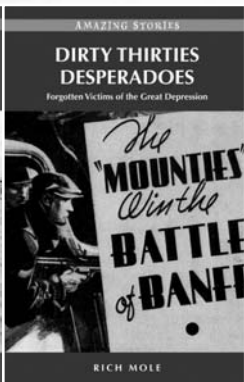
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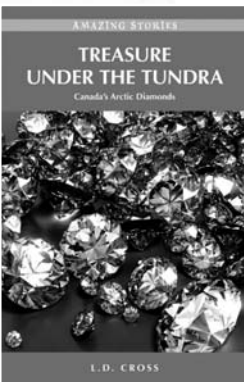
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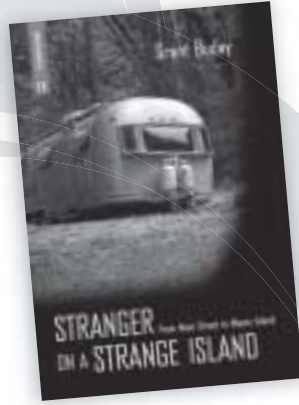
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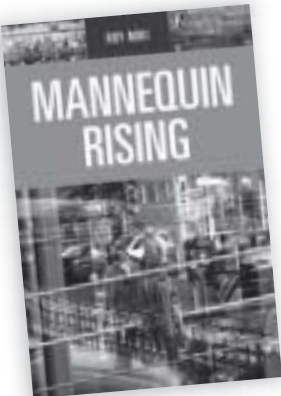
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*Celebrating forty years of publishing in 2011*





Ron Smith, Pat Smith  
and Bob Kroetsch at  
Vancouver International  
airport, 1972.

## 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 the f— 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 favourites.

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 Studhorse Man* 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 **Liona Boyd** 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 and pleases 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 *Boundary 2* out of Binghamton, 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 **Robin 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 Morriss Printing in Victoria. Very quickly **Dick Morriss** 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 Adolf Hitler.*

BY KRISTIN BOMBA

WEIGHING IN AT A METICULOUS 312 pages of original art, **David Lester's** *The Listener* (Arbeiter Ring \$19.95) is a graphic novel that manages to combine 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 level, revisits 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—takes a sabbatical tour of the museums of Europe, trying to overcome guilt and sadness after a young activist, inspired by one of Louise's sculptures, fell to his death while hanging a protest banner off the Woodward's W tower in Vancouver. She receives letters blaming her for the death of the activist.

As an antidote, Louise re-explores famous and favorite paintings and sculptures throughout Europe. The politics behind these works of art swim

in her mind. Along the way, she meets various people who affect her life.

In Austria, she meets Tomas, a man interested in the people behind the works of art, specifically destructive people who were artists or poets (Hitler was a painter; Stalin and Mao were poets). Tomas and Louise visit a concentration camp where Louise struggles to absorb the atmosphere, but she feels unable to comprehend the magnitude of what occurred there. As they journey through Europe, they discuss how they became artists, and what inspires them.

They discuss the nature of the art (Do people 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 artists to the world. Of particular note is a story about **Orson Welles** who was once asked to run for the senate and declined, whereupon **Joseph McCarthy** won that election.

THE RISE OF HITLER IS TOLD THROUGH THE memories of an older couple that Louise meets, Marie and Rudolph. In flashback scenes, Marie and Rudolph recall working for a newspaper in the conservative state of Lippe, in Germany, in the 1930s.

Louise listens as the couple recall joining the DNVP (German National People's Party), hoping for the return of the monarchy in Germany.

The world slowly begins to change around them, and the Nazi party grows, along with attacks on Jewish people.

A crisis in the federal government is approaching as Hindenburg dithers in selecting a new chancellor of Germany. The top picks are **Alfred Hugenberg** (who owns the paper where Marie and Rudolph work) and **Adolf Hitler**.

Along comes the state election in Lippe. Prior to this election call in Lippe, the Nazi Party was losing its appeal. Hitler's stubborn desire to hold all the power in his hands or none at all was hurting the party. But Hugenberg chose to strike a deal with Hitler, under the guise of national unity, hoping for a position of power in a Hitler-led government.

This compromise of principles by Hugenberg has disastrous consequences almost immediately. First, Marie and Rudolph's newspaper is ordered by Hugenberg to cease attacks on the Nazi Party. Hitler's party is in deep financial

Louise (left and above), an artist listening for answers.



trouble and the Lippe election fight may be his last. The Nazi party throws everything they have into the campaign. His stormtroopers arrive from across Germany, converging on Lippe. DNVP campaign posters are covered over with Nazi posters. Local rallies are manipulated and members of the opposition are brutally attacked at their own rallies.

Newspapers backed by the Nazis spread their propaganda while the DNVP silences its own papers and reporters, shuts down its rallies, and allows the Nazis to dominate the campaign without protest.

The Orson Welles anecdote, as previously mentioned, now takes on greater significance to the reader.

The Nazis won the Lippe election in January of 1933 with only 39% of the vote. They had increased their vote count by only 4,000 votes from a preceding federal vote that was held in Lippe only three months earlier, in November.

After Hitler was subsequently appointed to serve as chancellor, other political parties were banned. The DNVP was dissolved, opposition leaders were found dead, citizens suspected of being Jewish or communist were beaten, and persecution of the Jews was escalated. That narrow victory in Lippe became an annual celebration in which Hitler skillfully presented himself as Germany's hero.

MARIE AND RUDY EXPRESS THEIR REGRETS FOR NOT having done more, and Louise returns home with their memories and a special gift.

Back home, Louise is even more lost than before, and slips back into her previous lifestyle, returning to the man she had broken up with.

After several months, a man named Walter appears. He's an acquaintance of the Cambodian-born activist named Vann, who plunged to his death near the outset of the story.

This time Louise listens as Walter tells her the life story of Vann, a Cambodian doctor who survived genocide under the **Pol Pot** regime. Vann lost his parents and was never able to overcome his survivor's guilt. Because the Pol Pot regime particularly targeted artists for execution, Vann took a great interest in art, wondering what made

artists so dangerous that so many had had to die.

Rather than blaming Louise for Vann's death, Walter has come to tell her that Vann was inspired by her work. Walter reassures Louise that Vann was solely responsible for his own death. Louise is moved by the story and takes solace from Walter's absolution of her culpability.

As far-right-wing activities are again coming to the fore in Germany, at the outset of the 21st century, including anti-Semitic activity and violent confrontations, Louise is inspired to create a

new sculpture that is the culmination of all she has learned on her journey through Europe, and all her "listensings."

Louise is more comfortable expressing and explaining herself through drawing than talk, and I'm much the same with the written word. She is more of a listener, an observer, absorbing everything around her, and I found I could easily relate to her. I could sympathize with the way she runs from her guilt, even as it chases her every step of the way, until she is finally able to absorb Vann's actions and create her masterpiece.

THE STEREOTYPICAL ARTIST IS A "beautiful soul" putting passionate feelings to canvas, print, stone, or song. It's not often that artists are presented as mass murderers or power hungry dictators. But one of Hitler's greatest regrets is that he was never able to build a museum to house his personal collection of art.

It's depressing to think that someone who enjoys expression and creation could so love destruction. I prefer to write Hitler off as nothing more than a delusional, paranoid psychopath, someone who saw himself as Germany's new Siegfried, the Motherland's hero come to destroy the Nibelungs—the Jews.

But it's impossible to deny his artistic "flair," or the way in which he and his party so skillfully maneuvered a victory. Lester inserts several images and quotations of the propaganda used by the Nazis. The xenophobia is rampant. The vitriol is truly

An awkward Adolf Hitler prepares for a speech.



### Silence of the Milkman

The first of a planned two-volume set of **David Boswell's** *Reid Fleming: World's Toughest Milkman* (IDW \$29.99) collects all the Reid Fleming comics together. The release includes an introduction by Academy Award-winning film director **Jonathan Demme** (*Silence of the Lambs*).

This year, Boswell was inducted into The Giants of the North, the Canadian cartooning Hall of Fame in Toronto.

David Boswell began his cartooning career in 1977 at the *Georgia Straight* newspaper in Vancouver.

### Love it and Leavitt

**Sarah Leavitt's** graphic memoir *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me* (Freehand \$23.96) 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 non-fiction has appeared in *Nobody's Mother* (Heritage 2006) and *Beyond Forgetting: Poetry and Prose About Alzheimer's Disease* (Kent State University Press 2009). *Tangles* is the first graphic narrative to be a finalist for the Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize. *Tangles* was also nominated for the Hubert Evans Non-Fiction Prize.

### Dog-eared tale wins big

"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* (Lovett Pictures \$18.95), has won a Gold Medal at the Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPY) in New York. The IPPYs recognize independently published books in 69 categories for North America.







# RAPID READS

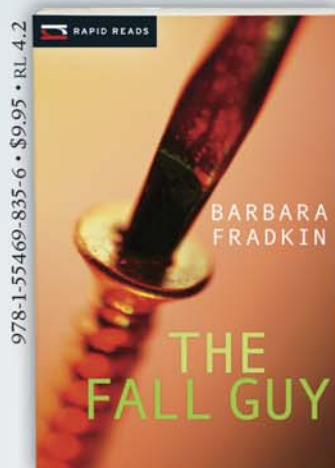
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"Fradkin does a nice job in combining the elements of a good murder mystery with the telling of the story through Rick's character...Deals with how different people with different intellectual capacities use language to construct meaning, which would also prove useful for discussion."

—*CM Magazine*

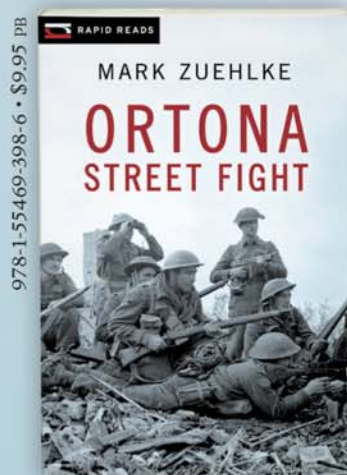


Gwen Lake is a forty-five-year-old recently divorced police officer with a desk job. When she agrees to a meeting with her ex's new wife, she has no idea that the encounter will lead to murder. And that her ex-husband will be arrested for the crime.

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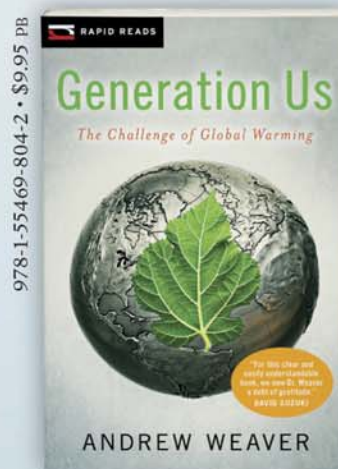


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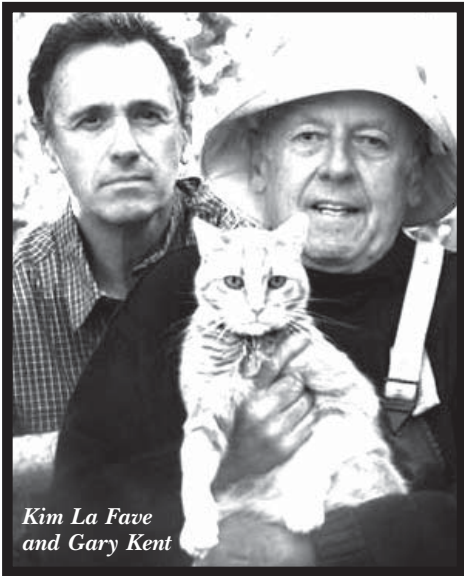


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Fishing with Gubby



Kim La Fave and Gary Kent

# SMOKE ALARMS

Generation Us: The Challenge of Global Warming by Andrew Weaver (Orca, \$9.95)

IF YOU SPENT A GOOD PART OF LAST WINTER SCRAPING FROST OFF your car’s windshield and bundling up in mittens, toques and woolen scarves you might be inclined, for a few frigid minutes anyway, to give some credence to the notion that global warming is a hoax.

But not so. **Andrew Weaver** states emphatically in *Generation Us: The Challenge of Global Warming* that increased greenhouse gases are responsible for making 2010 the hottest year in the past 130 years.

Scientists know this “as surely as medical professionals understand that smoking causes cancer. We stop smoking if we want to lower our risk of developing lung cancer. We must stop emitting greenhouse gases to the atmosphere if we want to stop global warming.”

*Generation Us*, a selection of the Rapid Reads series featuring truncated versions of popular fiction and timely nonfiction titles, offers a condensed overview of the detailed and science-backed argument for action now, not later, as presented in Weaver’s *Keeping Our Cool: Canada in a Warming World* (Viking Canada).

Weaver begins by defining the difference between climate and weather. Climate guides us in choosing May for a family reunion. It should be pleasant then, just the right temperature for an outdoor celebration. But what if there’s a sudden snow flurry on that late spring day, an event not unheard of in Canada? That’s weather.

Or, as Weaver puts it: “Climate is what you expect; weather is what you get.” Walking readers through an explanation of the scientific method and defining the various stages of how knowledge is acquired, he moves on to outline the coming fallout from rising sea levels, changing precipitation patterns and struggling ecosystems.

Weaver acknowledges “projected climate change for the next twenty to thirty years is very similar whether we continue with growing emissions or we start to stabilize and slowly reduce emissions.”

How then can we be motivated to take action in our busy daily lives when the benefits from these actions won’t be apparent in our lifetime? “Do we have any responsibility for the well-being of future generations?” Weaver asks. It’s a question only society, not science, can address.

If the answer is yes, *Generation Us* offers possibilities for personal and political change. The solutions are not simple or easy, nor are they without economic and ethical implications. Recycling, buying organic, switching from incandescent to fluorescent light bulbs are mere “baby steps.” A fundamental shift is required. There must be a re-examination of how our choices today will affect the lives of our grandchildren’s grandchildren. Only then can we evolve from the “Me Generation” to the “Us Generation.”

Andrew Weaver is professor and research chair in climate modeling and analysis at the University of Victoria, a lead author in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and 2007 co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2008 he was appointed to the Order of British Columbia.

978-1-55469-804

Louise Donnelly contributes her column on a regular basis from Vernon.

# GUBBY SNAGS THREE NOMINATIONS

Fishing with Gubby by Kim La Fave & Gary Kent (Harbour Publishing \$19.95)

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.

Gary Kent was a commercial fisherman and salmon troller 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**.

9781553655725

# DON’T UNDERESTIMATE THE INVISIBLE DOG

No Pets Allowed by Irene Watts & Kathryn E. Shoemaker (Tradewind \$8.95)

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 *Irene Watts’ No Pets Allowed*, with 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.

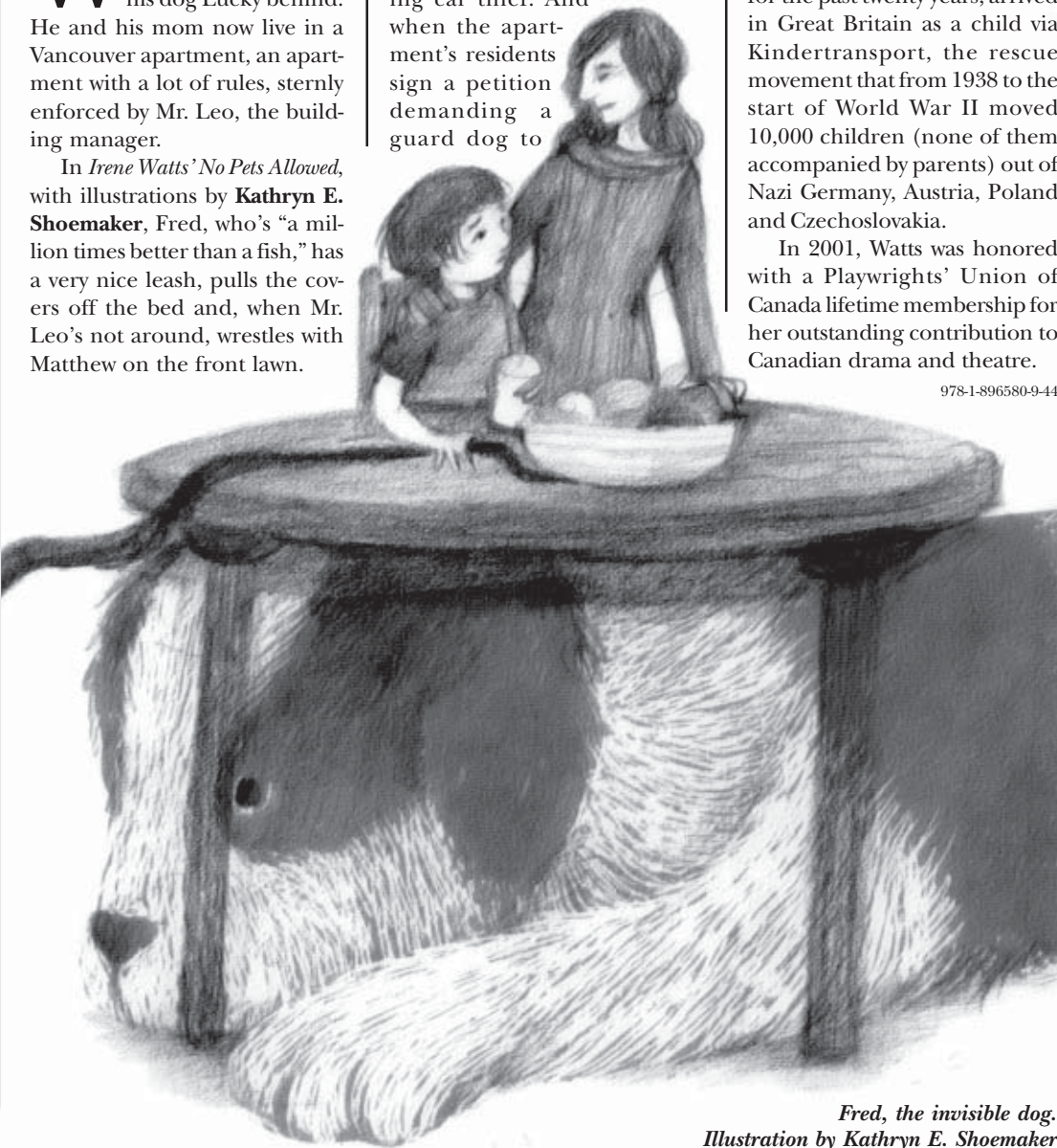
The only glitch is that Fred’s an invisible dog. That small detail doesn’t stop Matthew and Fred from putting the run on a brick-wielding, window-smashing car thief. And when the apartment’s residents sign a petition demanding a guard dog to

prevent further vandalism, Matthew ends up with not one, but two dogs—Lucky *and* Fred.

Berlin-born Irene Watts, who’s made her home in B.C. for the past twenty years, arrived in Great Britain as a child via Kindertransport, the rescue movement that from 1938 to the start of World War II moved 10,000 children (none of them accompanied by parents) out of Nazi Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

In 2001, Watts was honored with a Playwrights’ Union of Canada lifetime membership for her outstanding contribution to Canadian drama and theatre.

978-1-896580-9-44



Fred, the invisible dog. Illustration by Kathryn E. Shoemaker



# NEW FROM ANVIL PRESS



**Exit** by Nelly Arcan  
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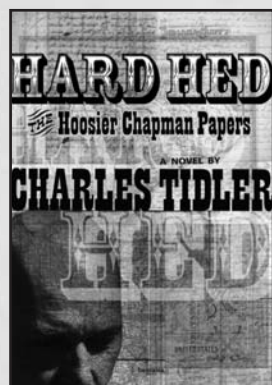
## FIRST BOOK COMPETITION

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.

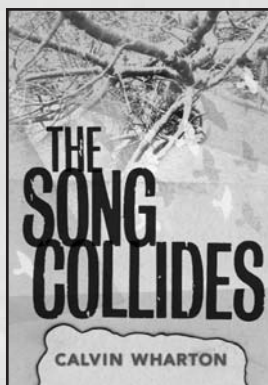
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*Hard Hed* is a contemporary retelling of the Johnny Appleseed story, an unabashedly original work of fiction that roams in and out of time and place and point of view.

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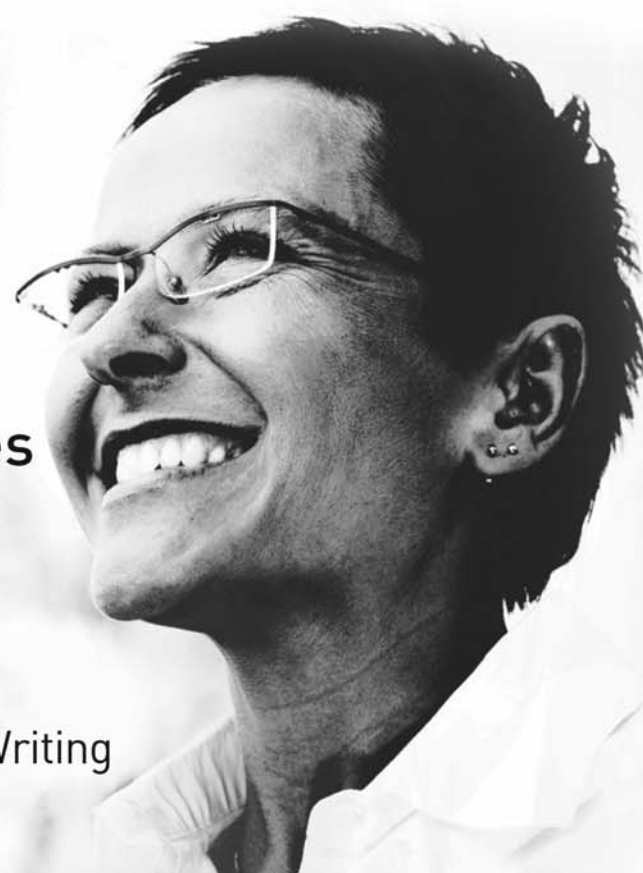
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# FIDELITY

## INFIDELITY & FIDEL

*A woman's love affair with Cuba and its people passionately deepens in Amanda Hale's In the Embrace of the Alligator*

In the Embrace of the Alligator by Amanda Hale (Thistledown \$18.95)

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 anyway, 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-Fic-

tion," 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 she 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..."

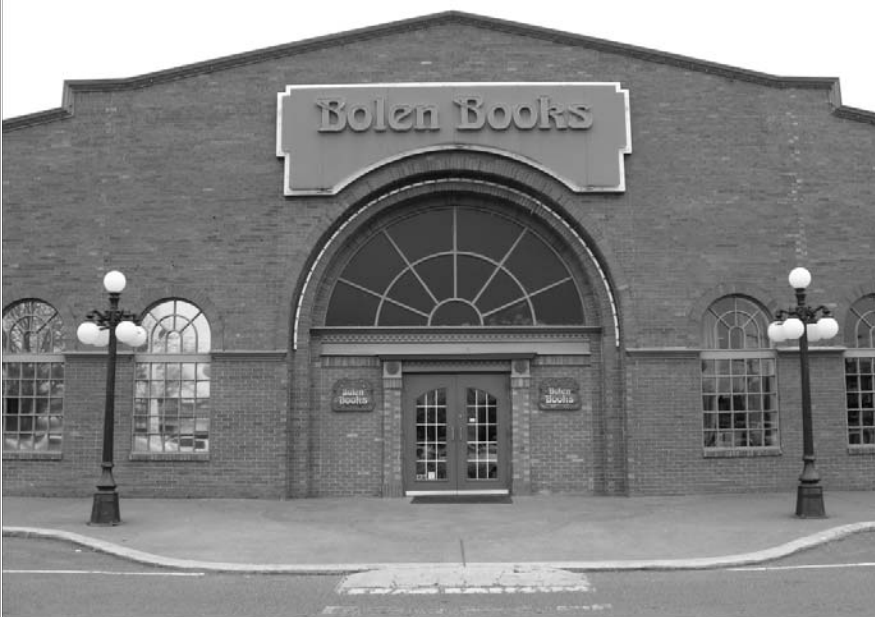
Disconnections between foreigners and Cubans abound, in language, politics, and attitudes. Part of it is simply the difference between a person on vacation and a person living their regular life. Much of it runs deeper. In "Senora Amable Ponce," a story named for the hostess of a place Karina and Onaldo stay during a romantic rendezvous, Karina feels in the air "a kind of

*continued on page 27*

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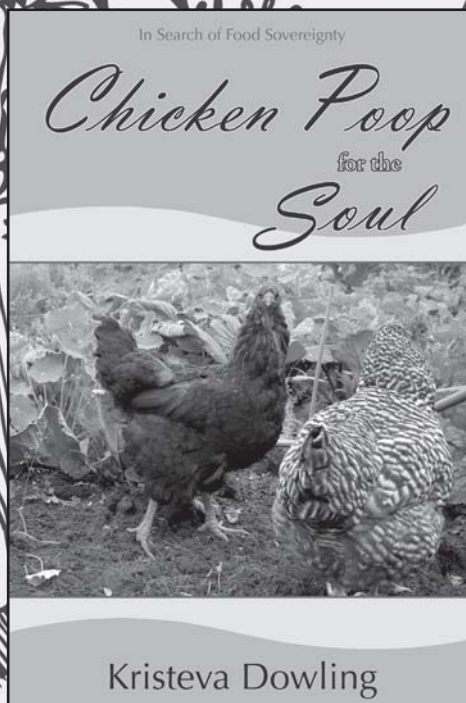
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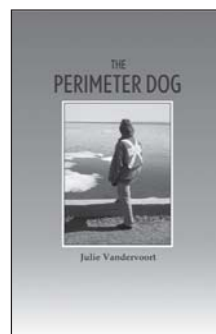
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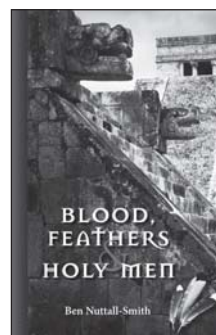
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# PITCH NOIR

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.

BY NOAH MOSCOVITCH  
*The Man Who Killed* by Fraser Nixon  
 (Douglas & McIntyre \$22.95)

FRASER NIXON’S VERSION OF 1926 Montreal is not a pretty place. Bootleggers, politicians, prostitutes, toughs, grave robbers and addicts of all kinds crowd the pages of *The Man Who Killed*. And the city is a perfect match for its denizens—filthy and corrupt.

We first meet our protagonist, Mick, at the docks, staring out across the garbage, fumes and vermin. “No clean thing around the harbour,” he thinks, including himself. Tossed out of med school, recovering from morphine addiction, torn up over a failed romance, and essentially penniless, Mick has seen better days. He waits, smoking his second-to-last cigarette, for Jack.

An ex-Pinkerton agent, Jack is his adopted brother, and has turned up in Montreal recently, working as a bootlegger and small-time criminal. And Mick is just desperate enough to take his offer of “some dirty work, with a chance of trouble,” in return for a square meal. This first time Mick doesn’t have to do much, just cut off an escape route and watch while Jack threatens and beats a bought-off customs agent who is trying to “spit out his hook.” Easy enough, and Mick remains unfazed: “Life had shown me much worse.”

However, the next job, a smuggling run to the States, goes

all to hell and Mick is caught up in more and more violence, as Jack struggles desperately to keep ahead of his debtors 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 nothing,” 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 from the Royal Victoria hospital in order to treat her in the style to which she was accustomed. Then, after she



abruptly broke things off with him, he began using morphine to numb the pain, thus beginning his downward spiral. He was eventually caught thieving, and forced to withdraw from McGill’s medical school.

Mick’s educated background, both as a minister’s son and university student, is never far from the reader’s mind. As

Mick tells the story, the crude slang of the times is often overlaid with medical terminology and references, creating a strange contrast with the brutal events of the text. We thus have a constant reminder that Mick was not always a criminal, and that his life once looked very different from what we see of it.

Though the shift in Mick’s

morals 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. 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 gruesome glory.

Montreal, as portrayed in the text, is toxic and addictive, and seems to leak into everything and everyone. Mick and Jack are endlessly drinking and sniffing cocaine in various taverns and hotels, or even just breathing the smog-filled air. The customs official 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 temporarily resurfaces: “You’ll go blind. It’s poison.” But Lilyan only laughs, “So’s everything.”

Noah Moscovitch is leaving Vancouver for Ottawa.

# FIDELITY, INFIDELITY & FIDEL

continued from page 25

energetic laziness soaked in eroticism.”

These feelings are in sharp contrast to their hosts’ urgencies, and their tiredness. Their hostess Senora Amable is “a wounded woman struggling to maintain her dignity.” Several times in this story staff try to urgently communicate something, but Karina never figures out what it is. Karina struggles to understand the senora’s Spanish; and the senora does not try to help her understand. A fellow guest who does not speak Spanish is described as being on his own island. The story ends with a literal disconnect: the senora’s phone line goes dead.

In a haunting, lovely story, Mirian Zelda lives next door to the funeral parlour in Baracoa, very much in tune with the comings and goings. At night, when she sleeps, she is visited by the recently deceased, and her role is to guide them home to their final resting place.

The gentle character of Mirian, the prevalence of spirituality and religion, the mystery of a vanished Czech visitor, and the fact that the gore of



the funeral parlour is not disguised, and death is not hidden and sterile as in our society, are all factors in making this story memorable.

Amanda Hale has clearly spent a lot of time in Cuba. One assumes or feels that she has experienced versions of many of these stories first-hand. She has come to know and understand aspects of Cuban society that tourists in resorts don’t always see, and has used her experiences to create a rewarding collection. Her writing is strong and sensual. We are given some intimacy with the heart of complex Cuban life.

Erinna Gilkison is a Vancouver editor.

Other notable books about Cuba by B.C. authors include **Maurice Halperin’s** *Return to Havana* (Vanderbilt University Press, 1994), **Adolf Hungry Wolf’s** *Trains of Cuba* (Good Medicine, 1997), **Rosa Jordan’s** *Cycling Cuba* (Lonely Planet, 2002), **Cornelia Hoogland’s** *Cuba Journal* (Black Moss 2003), **Linda Rogers’** *Friday Water* (Cormorant, 2003) and **Rosamund Norbury’s** *Notes at the End: Cuba on the Verge* (Arsenal Pulp, 2005).



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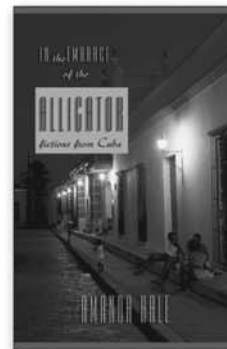
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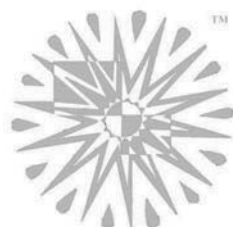
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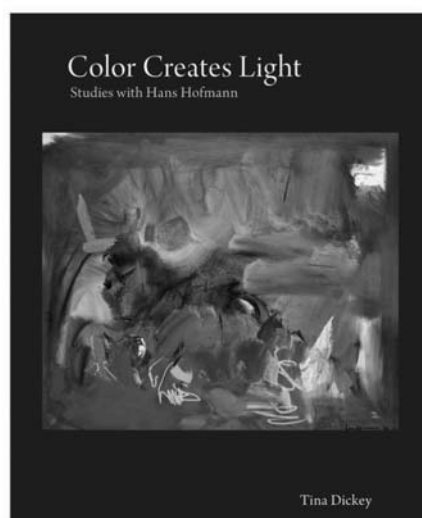
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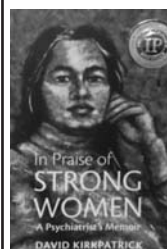
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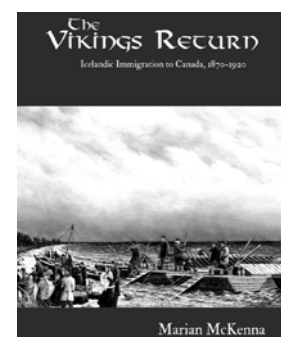
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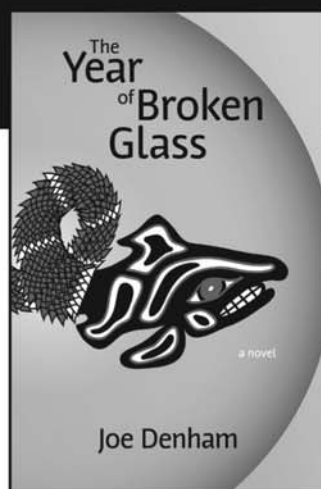
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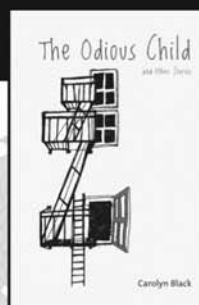
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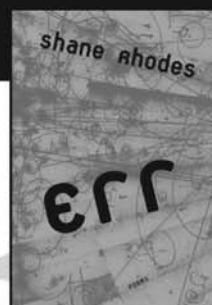
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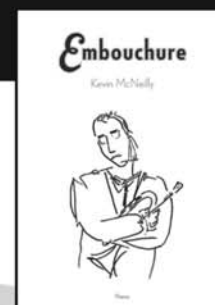
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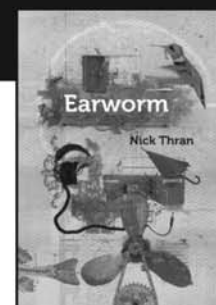
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BY NATALIE APPLETON

*The Empress and Mrs. Conger: The Uncommon Friendship of Two Women and Two Worlds* by Grant Hayter-Menzies (UBC Press/Hong Kong U. Press \$35)

Studying the gift of a tiny tree decorated with Chinese symbols, **Sarah Conger** sits in her Beijing Christmas room and writes to her sister: “Do you think it strange that I am becoming interested in these people?”

Sarah, who arrived in the Chinese capital only six months earlier—in July 1898, with her husband **Edward**, the newly named United States Minister to China—is already reflecting more on this culture than many of the other diplomats’ wives ever did.

Her interest in Chinese people is unusual and unwavering, her letters about her Beijing encounters are lively and telling. Both fuel Vancouver Island biographer/historian **Grant Hayter-Menzies’** *The Empress and Mrs. Conger: The Uncommon Friendship of Two Women and Two Worlds*.

This is a book about the intimate relationship between Sarah and **Empress Dowager Cixi**, a concubine who came to rule China. Or is it?

It’s clear from the start that Hayter-Menzies has done a meticulous amount of research, which he uses first to explore Sarah’s life, from growing up in the American Midwest to becoming a politician’s wife, before abruptly delving into American trade, Chinese relations and Cixi’s past.

*The Empress and Mrs. Conger* begins like a textbook, devoid of emotion or narrative and filled instead with dates and summaries.

Sarah’s letters, which give the story life, are therefore all the more welcome in later chapters.

After Sarah and the other diplomats’ wives meet Cixi for the first time in December 1898, Sarah writes, “Only to think! China, after centuries and centuries of locked doors, has now set them ajar!” Sarah’s frank excitement, indicated often by exclamation marks, says it all: the meeting was special, and the start of something more.

And yet almost 150 pages pass before we find Sarah and Cixi in the same room again. The reader wonders when this friendship will emerge, and if it really is the focus of *The Empress and Mrs. Conger*.

Hayter-Menzies, the author of biographies about stage and screen stars **Charlotte Greenwood** and **Billie Burke**, as well as one about Manchu-American personality **Princess Der Ling**, expertly explains how foreigners and their religion collide with Chinese unrest to create a deadly rebellion, the Boxer Uprising.

His ability to build suspense and foreshadow the revolt is also noteworthy. The bolts of silk given to Conger by Cixi would “be put to a rougher use than intended in a little over a year’s

# UNDERSTANDING SARAH

*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.*

time” and, during a dust storm on a trip to the Great Wall, the Congers closed their eyes and clung to their ponies, who “were to serve another important purpose in two months’ time, which none of their riders could have imagined.”

Both the fabric and the animals are used to keep the Congers and the other diplomats alive during the uprising, a siege which spans 55 days in the summer of 1900 and many more pages in *The Empress and Mrs. Conger*.

In this section, Hayter-Menzies drops the reader right into the line of fire. With only the fuel of incense sticks, their shouts and “centuries of resent-

ment against foreigners and their God,” thousands of Boxers torch mission hospitals and churches. The diplomats, meanwhile, watch bullets strike a baby’s headboard, wrap bodies in flags because there is no

wood for coffins and eat pets. Indeed, Hayter-Menzies supplies some absorbing accounts of the uprising, and it’s clearly a traumatic time for both Conger and Cixi, experiencing it separately and differently, but does his in-depth exploration of the event furnish our understanding of their friendship?



Grant Hayter-Menzies

Certainly it explains Cixi’s role in the rebellion. The empress dowager, we learn, “hated” foreigners, the chunks they were taking out of China’s coastline and their Christian religion, luring away so many of her people. Some debate whether Cixi supported the Boxers entirely or only in part in the beginning.

Hayter-Menzies, however, doesn’t take a stand: “Both theories have truth in them, depending on where weight is placed in the body of evidence.”

The chapters about the uprising also offer insight into how foreigners like Sarah survive the

siege as well as describe why husbands were suspicious of Cixi, who gives her second audience to Sarah and the other diplomatic ladies in February 1902, four years after the first meeting and more than a year after the uprising ended.

Here Cixi takes Sarah’s fingers, gives her gifts and says they are all one family. During one of the handful of times they see each other, a picture is taken of the two holding hands.

Is this friendship? For the time and between women in these two stations, probably. Is it the heart and meat of *The Empress and Mrs. Conger*? No.

Hayter-Menzies might have succeeded in capturing an unlikely friendship between two people in different worlds had he focused on Sarah and her houseboy. **Wang** gently and intimately offers wardrobe advice, hides pet ponies from hungry eyes, plants flowers where the family’s Pekingese dog is buried and makes an altar of the Congers’ daughter, away in America at Christmas. Through Wang’s sweet, simple actions and Sarah’s interpretation of them in her writing, we truly learn what it is to be Chinese, and what it is to be Sarah.

Once more, Sarah’s letters give this book its pulse. Hayter-Menzies supplements her words with the accounts of others, such as **Polly Condit Smith** who, during the uprising, sees people “half-starved, covered with soot and ashes from the fires, women carrying on their breasts horribly sick and diseased babies, and in one case a woman who held a dead baby.”

This is the narrative, the human portrait of life amidst Beijing’s unrest, the reader craves.

Unfortunately, we read more dates than description, though there are some illustrious details in *The Empress and Mrs. Conger*, such as pigs wearing leather “socks” to protect their feet from stones, Sarah never mastering the chopstick, shops offering to brush dust off book spines and Legation Street becoming known as “Cut Up Foreigners Crowing” Street.

These fascinating facts, however, are often offset by weak comparisons: relationships as simmering pots and choppy seas; Cixi “unable to jump down from the tiger she had heedlessly chosen to ride;” and Wang, so busy he was “carrying out enough other daily jobs to make a Figaro’s head spin.”

Wang, Cixi, the other foreigners and even Sarah almost disappear from the last chapter, which drags as Hayter-Menzies summarizes Sarah’s suspected looting and her estate sales in America before her death.

In life, one of Sarah’s goals was to understand China and its people, and she succeeds. In *The Empress and Mrs. Conger*, Hayter-Menzies succeeds at understanding Sarah.

9789888083008

Natalie Appleton is a freelance reviewer in Vernon.



Empress Dowager Cixi and Sarah Conger



## LOST BOOMERS

*Drinking and sinking, Dennis E. Bolen's generation has left the Age of Aquarius for the Age of Estrangement*

**BY JEREMY TWIGG**

**Anticipated Results by Dennis E. Bolen**  
(Arsenal Pulp Press \$18.95)

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



Dennis Bolen

TWIGG PHOTO

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 Boomer 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. Paul symbolizes lost the members of the Boomer generation: Left for dead in a ditch, abandoned, hanging sideways in a sunken car.

978-1-55152-400-9

*A graduate of UBC in creative writing, Jeremy Twigg works in public relations in Vancouver.*

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# WHO'S WHO

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

### A is for Alrawi

**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 carnival-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 **Bee Willey**. It's a teaching tale of kindness, showing how even a small creature can be heroic as a mouse saves ancient Egypt in an unexpected way.

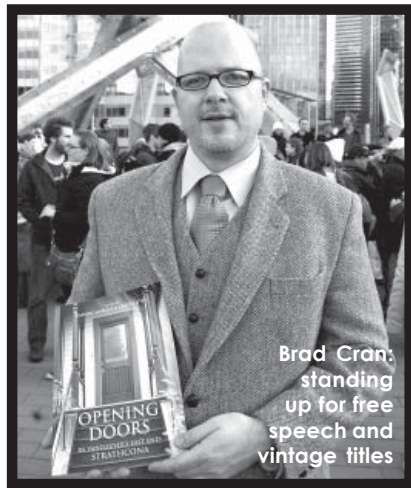
Born and raised in Alexandria, Alrawi lived in England where he was writer-in-residence at the Royal Court Theatre and the Theatre Royal Stratford East. He has written more than 30 professionally produced plays.

Alrawi currently supervises international aid and development programs in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. 978-1-896580-79-1

### B is for Bates

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**.

978-0-9736882-9-0



Brad Cran, standing up for free speech and vintage titles

### C is for 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 reviving 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. 978-1-55017-521-9

[The other non-fiction titles are: **Who Killed Janet Smith** by Ed Starkins; **Along the No. 20 Line** by Rolf Knight; **A Hard Man to Beat** by Howard White. 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, **Anhaga** by Jon Furberg.]

### D is for Dowling

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. 978-1-894759-60-1

### E is for Environment

**KIRKUS REVIEWS** PRAISES **E IS FOR ENVIRONMENT** (Simon & Schuster \$21.99), by Vancouver animator **Ian James Corlett**, by saying "the message that children can model for adults is clear and the approach is fresh." An interactive parenting book



Ian J. Corlett



Kristeva Dowling horsing around

inspired by Corlett's two children, **E is for Environment** aims to shape family discussions on what it means to be environmentally friendly. 978-1-4391-9455-3

### F is for Friedland

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. 9781926763002

### G is for Graydon

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*

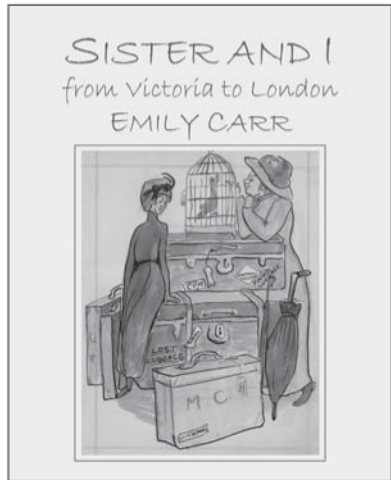


Karim Alrawi above Tahrir Square, Egypt

# EGYPT IN TURMOIL



This Spring, from the Royal BC Museum...



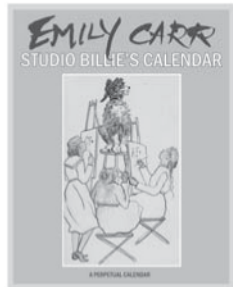
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# WHO'S WHO

BRITISH COLUMBIA



Jen Sookfong Lee

continued from page 31

2004). For her collection of stories from remarkable women who revel in the joys of ageing, *I Feel Great About My Hands* (D&M \$22.95), Shari Graydon invited women from across Canada—all over age 50—to provide an alternative perspective to the notion that ageing is a downhill slide. Graydon's anthology of stories, essays and poems embrace the changes, discoveries and wisdom that come with age.



Shari Graydon

B.C. contributors include Graydon, Frances Bula, Lyn Cockburn, Bonnie Sherr Klein, Ann Cowan, Liz Whynot, Harriett Lemer and Lillian Zimmerman.

978-1-55365-768-6

## H is for Hudson

WITH OVER 30 YEARS EXPERIENCE AS AN amateur botanist, **Phillipa Hudson** first identified the most popular coastal flowers for *A Field Guide to Coastal Flowers of the Pacific Northwest* (supplying English and Latin names) and has



Phillipa Hudson

now completed a follow-up volume, *A Field Guide to Alpine Flowers of the Pacific Northwest* (Harbour \$7.95).

978-1-55017-540-0

## I is for Italians

THEY FIRST ARRIVED VIA SAN FRANCISCO IN the early 1860s. They gave us Calona Wines (Capozzi), Vancouver Whitecaps (Lenarduzzi) and fancy restaurants (Menghi). They are the Italians. And their collective story in British Columbia has been told by **Lynne Bowen** in *Whoever Gives Us Bread* (D&M \$32.95), including the plight of 53 Italians who were shipped off to a Kananaskis internment camp for fear that they would form a fifth column in support of fascist dictator **Benito Mussolini**.

978-1-55365-607-4

## J is for Jen

THE BETTER MOTHER (KNOPF \$29.95) BY **Jen Sookfong Lee** is about an odd friendship between Miss Val, a longtime burlesque dancer, and Danny Lim, a Vancouver wedding photographer in the early 1980s, when HIV/AIDS was spreading rapidly.

The pair met in 1958 when eight-year-old Danny Lim was sent to buy cigarettes for his father, but lost the money. Frantic, he rushed through Chinatown and saw Miss Val behind a nightclub. The burlesque dancer gave him a pack of cigarettes and her silk belt.

Before Miss Val became the Siamese Kitten in showbiz, she grew up in an old house on the Fraser River.

978-0-307-39950-2

## K is for Kurtenbach

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.

978-0-9811376-9-8

## L is for Lyon

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.

978-0-143177418



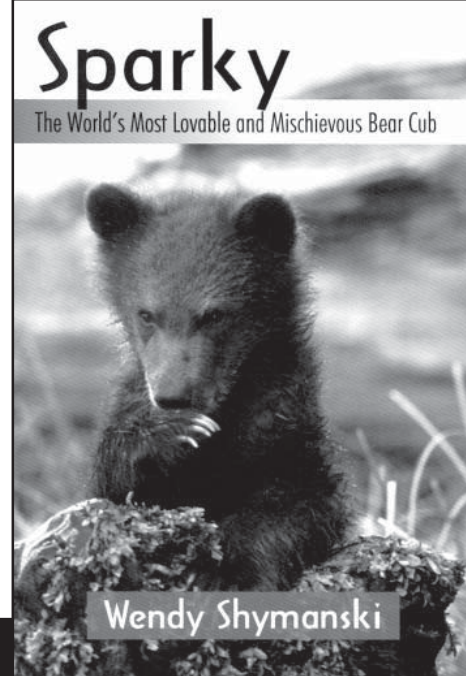
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debted adult friend to artists, cold documentarian of a haunted sanitarium, and an engaged contemporary ticking off beauties." Her poems are intended to evoke the "thread of spirit that links all our lost bits." 978-0-88784-272-6

## P is for Pojar

**ROSAMUND POJAR** OF SMITHERS FIRST self-published *Trees and Shrubs in Winter: A Guide to the Identification of Trees and Shrubs in Northwestern British Columbia* (Smithers: Cassiope Press, 2003). Plants featured are found throughout B.C. and the Rockies, with a focus on those north of Williams Lake. This work has been revised and republished as *Trees and Shrubs in Winter: An Identification Guide for Northern British Columbia* (Creekstone \$20), illustrated by **Evi Coulson**. 978-0-9783195-3-3

## Q is for Queer

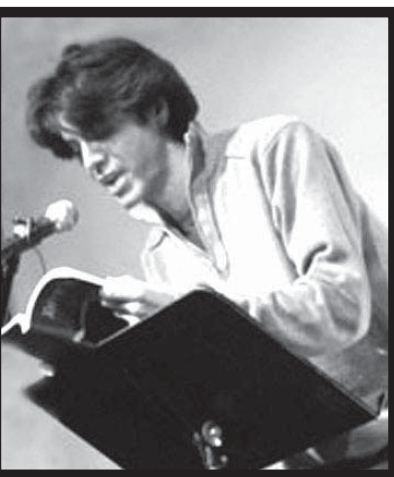
AFTER WRITING A WISH-LIST OF THEIR favourite queer authors, **Ivan E. Coyote** and co-editor **Zena Sharman** gathered submissions from them for a collection of stories called *Persistence: All Ways Butch and Femme* (Arsenal \$21.95) to explore the concepts of femme and butch. "I grew up without a roadmap to myself," writes Coyote. "Nobody taught me how to be butch; I didn't even hear the word until I was twenty years old. I first became something I had no name for in solitude and only later discovered the word for what I was, and there were others like me." 978-1-55152-397-2

## R is for Rafique

USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH A RIVER IN central B.C., the word Skeena, in Arabic, means "Spirit of Tranquility" (Sakina); in Hebrew, the "Indwelling Feminine Face of Divinity" (Shekhinah); and in the languages of Nisga'a peoples, the "River of Mists" (Skeena). **Fauzia Rafique's** new,

tri-national novel about a Muslim Canadian woman named Skeena (Libros Libertad \$20),

*continued on page 35*



**MORSE CODE:** Garry Thomas Morse recently launched *Discovery Passages* at the ANZA Club in Vancouver along with new books by Proma Tagore and Cecily Nicholson.

## M is for Morse

**GARRY THOMAS MORSE'S** *DISCOVERY Passages* (Talonbooks \$16.95) has been described as the first collection of poetry about the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) First Nations. Morse's book retraces Captain Vancouver's original sailing route along the B.C. coast. The poems contain tales of First Nations chiefs along with transformed passages from **Walt Whitman**, **Ezra Pound**, and **George Bowering**—linking Kwakwaka'wakw traditions with contemporary poetry. 978-0-88922-660-9

## N is for New Star



AS THE PUBLISHER of New Star Books, **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 [abcbookworld.com](http://abcbookworld.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.

## O is for Oyama

BORN IN TISDALE, SASKATCHEWAN in 1946, **Sharon Thesen** came to B.C. in 1952 and lived in several towns including Prince George and Kamloops before settling in Vancouver in 1966. She has chiefly taught at 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 "in-



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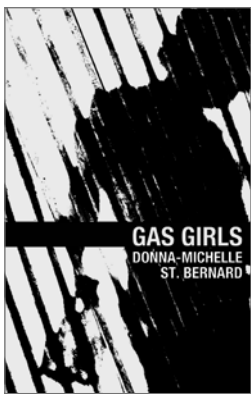
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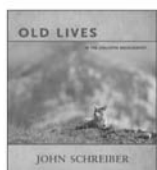
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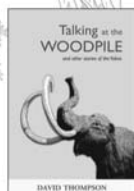
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continued from page 33

has three ten-year cycles, starting from a Pakistani Punjabi village in 1971, to Lahore, India in 1981, to Toronto in 1991; before Skeena reaches Surrey, B.C. in 2001. The story of Skeena coping with patriarchal values was first launched in a Punjabi (Shahmukhi) version from Pakistan in 2007. It has now appeared in a Gurumukhi edition, from Uddari Books in Surrey, and in English via Libros Libertad in White Rock. Having contributed to the anthology *Aurat Durbar: The Court of Women, Writings by Women of South Asian Origin* (Sumach Press, 1995), Rafique is also releasing a selection of her English and Punjabi poetry, *Passion-Fruit/Tahnget-Phal*. 9781926763125

## S is for Sosnowsky

IN 1992, SHORTLY AFTER HER ONLY BIRTH son Alex died at 17 in a freak accident at Whistler, **Cathy Sosnowsky** began writing poetry as grief therapy. She also faced the challenge of raising two late-adopted children who would turn to drugs and criminal behavior in their teens. In **Snapshots: A Story of Love, Loss, and Life** (Granville Island \$24.95) she recounts how she endured loss and learned how to turn her grief into art.

978-1-894694-80-3

## T is for Tovell

**FREEMAN MASSEY TOVELL** DIED ON March 7, 2011, at age 93, at home in Victoria, having written the first in-depth profile of Spanish sea captain **Bodega y Quadra** in English. It received the Keith Matthews Award from the Canadian Nautical Research Society for best book on a Canadian nautical subject. Peruvian-born Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra was the pre-eminent Spanish mariner who explored the



**Cathy Sosnowsky and daughter Tanya packing pickles**

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).

## U is for Underwater

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.

978-0-9841737-0-9

## V is for Vaira

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** (Caitlin \$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.

978-1-894759-58-8



**Ursula Vaira**

## W is for Weilbach

RAISED 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 \$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.

9780773538641

## X is for Closed

SOME VETERAN B.C. BOOKSELLERS LOOKED askance in September when Sitka Books opened its doors on Fourth Avenue in Vancouver in a location vacated by Book Warehouse. Then the owners realized there was already a nearby business named Sitka. A recent name change to Ardea Books & Art didn't help. The new bookstore went out of business in May.

## Y is for Yeats

**GEORGIE HYDE LEES**, 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**.

9780198184386



**Linde Zingaro**

## Z is for Zingaro

**LINDE** (NOT LINDA) **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.

978-1-598744217

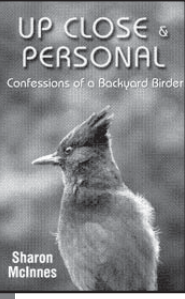


**W.B. Yeats with his wife "George" in 1923**



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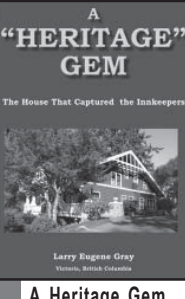
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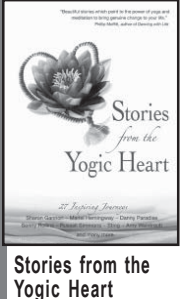
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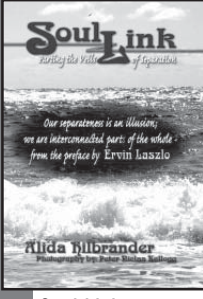
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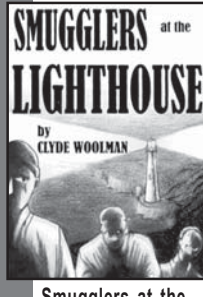
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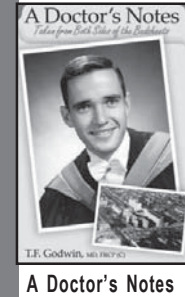
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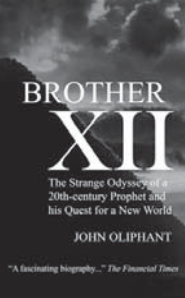
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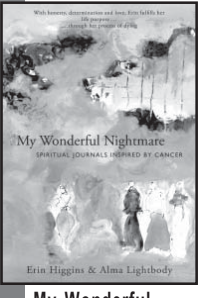
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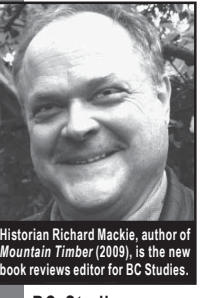
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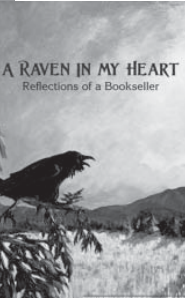


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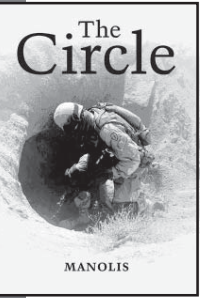
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## Gentlemanly wit

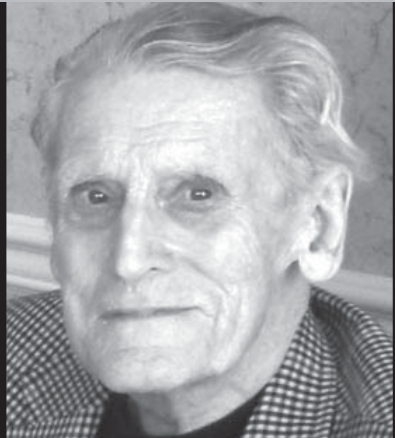
I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR INCLUDING a proper tribute to Eric Nicol in the Spring issue. Somewhat similar to your description of the “embarrassingly small” funeral for such a noted Canadian writer, the minimal mention of his death in the *Vancouver Sun / Province* and even *Georgia Straight* seemed 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 “gentlemanly 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 a rather stupid neighbourhood prank. We thought it was clever, he



Eric Nicol: always gentle on the mind

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  
NanOOSE 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* interview 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 devaluing, 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

## Thai hi

I’VE BEEN AN EXPAT FOR 25 YEARS. I’LL BE in Canada again soon to visit my family. My question: I wish to make a book for my family. Everything is ready to go in Microsoft Word. I want to transform that into a beautiful book as a gift for my Dad. I just need to make one book. Who does that sort of thing in Vancouver?

Daniel Sackin  
Phitsanulok, Thailand

[For design and prep work, try *Vancouver Desktop*. Talk to Printorium, on Fort Street in Victoria, for printing. – Ed.]

## Suzuki Critic

SURELY WHAT DAVID SUZUKI MEANT TO SAY [“Standing up for Science”], as a recipient of the George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award, was that religion, politics and business, informed by the hard facts of science, are the only chance we have to avoid a looming global catastrophe. After all, hasn’t it been the ill-considered application of scientific discoveries that has led to overpopulation, over-consumption and an overburdened planet? What is going to stop the juggernaut of humanity unless it is informed spirituality, enlightened politics and socially conscious business?

Craig Spence  
Langley

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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**.

LAURA SAWCHUK PHOTO



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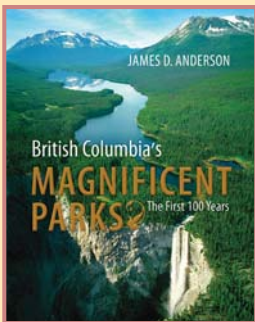
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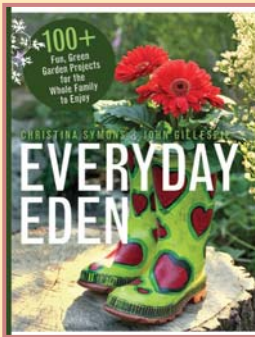
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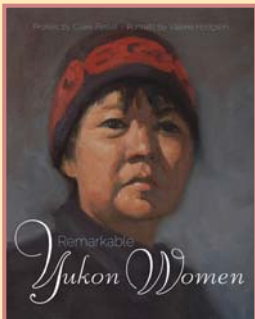


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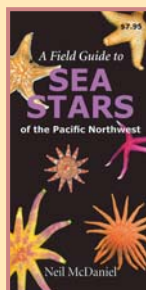
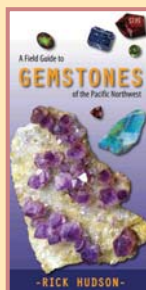
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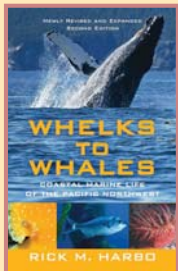
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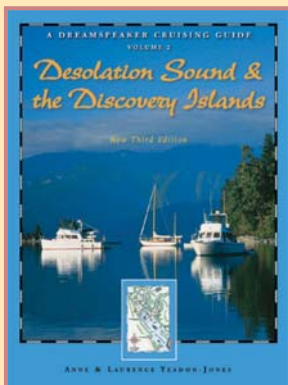
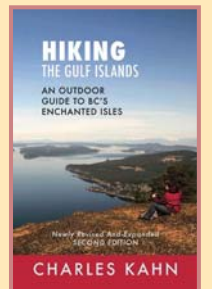
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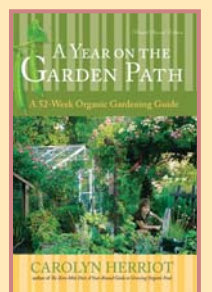
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