

assigning Girton College to Oxford instead of Cambridge) have been allowed to slip through. Those who wish to follow in her researching footsteps will find McAlpine's notes infuriatingly incomplete (compare, for instance, the decidedly fuller documentation in Howard's article in *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 23). It would have been so easy to provide inconspicuous dates and other references for those who need them. Even general readers will encounter places where the going is less than smooth. Characters sometimes enter and disappear from the text with startling abruptness; the various members of the Wilson family, for instance, are difficult to disentangle when they are first introduced.

Of course, Ethel Wilson was, as McAlpine notes, an unusually private writer, and any biographer is therefore confronted with a problem. What makes Wilson interesting from a literary point of view is so often far removed from her "social" life (which she shows distinct signs of finding tiresome herself). McAlpine seems more comfortable with "Mrs. Wallace Wilson," doctor's wife, hostess, and prominent Vancouverite; the novelist Ethel Wilson is observed, recorded, but never fully explained. Nonetheless, *The Other Side of Silence* is a welcome first step in the biographical exploration of one of British Columbia's — and Canada's — most polished and elegant writers. However, despite certain eulogies I have encountered, it is a long way from being definitive.

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*Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*, by David Chuenyan Lai.  
Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. Pp. xvi, 347.  
Figures, tables, illus. \$29.95.

Most Canadians think of themselves as tolerant people, and Canada as a nation where multiculturalism is a keyword for tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding. Few Canadians, of course, would argue that they are perfect, but on any international scale they believe the country would receive an above average grade. While this book does not completely destroy this roseate view, it does cause the reader to reassess Canada's record. Canadians have in fact been both bigoted and prejudiced, so much so that for decades our laws encoded racial discrimination and ingrained in many citizens unsavoury sentiments that could be aroused easily. Given rising concerns about off-shore investment — especially from Asia — in

British Columbia, this study of more than a century long relationship with Chinese immigrants is timely.

*Chinatowns* is more than a history of distinct neighbourhoods in select Canadian cities; it is a detailed, thoroughly documented, and comprehensive urban history of Canada's Chinatowns. The volume analyzes the transformation of the physical and cultural landscapes of Chinatowns from 1858 to 1988, tracing their origins, locations, viability, and socio-economic changes. The study begins with an important section that examines Chinese immigration to Canada and the changing demographic characteristics of Chinese Canadians. *Chinatowns* also contains brief but comprehensive histories of Chinatowns in New Westminster, Barkerville, Nanaimo, Cumberland, Vancouver, Moose Jaw, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal.

Professor Lai's book develops a thesis that explains various stages in the development of Canadian Chinatowns, running from a "budding" stage, to "blooming," to "withering," and culminating in either "extinction" or "rehabilitation." "Like a living organism," Lai writes, "an Old Chinatown is constantly evolving and being transformed. Although Old Chinatowns change in different ways and at varying rates, they tend to follow a common pattern in their course of development" (p. 4). Lai's stage-development model is then applied to an in-depth study of Victoria's Chinatown, a section that comprises more than one-third of the volume. While more can certainly be written about other Chinatowns across Canada, the author's analysis of Victoria is as close to a definitive history as possible. This should come as no surprise since Professor Lai's work is based on more than two decades of research and detailed surveys.

*Chinatowns* is an important book — it provides rich details regarding an element of our cities that until now was misunderstood and usually ignored. Lai has provided much new information and has placed the Chinatown experience into a broad context. In so doing his study is far more than an analysis of Chinatowns themselves. It is, in fact, an engaging piece of Canada's ethnic history; the sections on the history of Chinese immigration to Canada provide an overview of the demographic changes in Canada's population of ethnic Chinese, including regional origins, from the period of free entry (1858-84) to the period of selective entry (since 1948). Unfortunately, Lai's study reads more like a text book than the compelling monograph the subject matter deserves, and *Chinatowns* will probably be utilized more in university courses than by the general public. Nonetheless, the book's dry tone can and must be overcome since it is

certainly time to come to grips with a continuing and important element of our urban experience.

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ALAN F. J. ARTIBISE

*The Gumboot Navy: Memories of the Fishermen's Reserve*, by Carol Popp. Lantzville, B.C.: Oolichan Books, 1988. Pp. 160; illus. \$24.95.

While Carol Popp exaggerates by suggesting the Fishermen's Reserve was the "main sea going defence" (p. 11) of Canada's Pacific coast during World War II, she has performed a useful service in collecting the memories of the men who served in this unique branch of the Royal Canadian Navy. Most of the men who served in the Fishermen's Reserve were peace time fishermen, were familiar with the fishing craft that had been turned into patrol vessels, and knew the straits, narrows, and bays of coastal British Columbia. They were an independent lot and unaccustomed to naval discipline, but that was a problem mainly for the parade ground of the training camp. Retrospectively, the fishermen were amused by inexperienced officers of the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve who got seasick or who, unaware of local tidal conditions, told them to take up the slack in tie lines. The fishermen wisely ignored such orders. It was with resentment, however, that fishermen recalled a skipper who was so intent on obeying orders that he refused to go off course to try to rescue some downed fliers.

On naval duty the fishermen encountered the same dangers — heavy seas, thick fogs, difficult radio communications, and inadequate charts — they knew in peace time. As naval personnel they faced the additional hazard of a daily rum ration, but despite many tales of drunken escapades and embarrassments, liquor never seems to have interfered with duty! The Fishermen's Reserve was chiefly engaged in coast guard work such as search and rescue, the transport of military personnel and supplies into remote bases, patrols and mine sweeping, and the examination of passing ships. Members of the Fishermen's Reserve never positively sighted an enemy vessel; had they done so they would have had little chance. As one man reported:

All we had on board were three Enfield rifles and a stripped Lewis gun, and they had the goddamn nerve to send us out there to investigate submarine scares. They didn't even know if we could get away or would have been blown up. I guess they figured we were expendable. (p. 62)