

George Woodcock

1912-1995

George Woodcock died at his home, late on a Saturday evening, January 28, 1995. He was 82. The world lost an articulate social observer, a prodigious writer (the author of some 150 books), a historian and scriptwriter and biographer and poet. *Canadian Literature* lost its founding editor. I, and many others, lost a friend.

Several of us gathered the next week for a private wake. We grieved, and told ourselves we were not grieving for this man but celebrating having had the opportunity to know him. We told stories, and recollected the person that we knew. George had become a public figure (he had five honorary degrees, and as recently as 1994 he had been feted with a symposium and a large civic reception); but we recalled the man who loved cats and mountain walks, the man who mixed the best martini we'd ever tasted, the witty teller of anecdotes, the eloquent conversationalist who could talk with equal ease about ancient cultures and historical figures, modern politics and contemporary art. His friend Tony Phillips read "Seeing Free," from his last book of poems, *The Cherry Tree on Cherry Street*: "Friends, do not weep for me!/ Keep your eyes clear and bold/ and let the wake go on/ and wake the night/ to see my spirit free."

He had premonitions of death. But they did not slow him down; only his weakening heart did that. He still kept a journal, and sat long hours—he used to write all night, when the world was quiet—at a small portable Olympia typewriter, composing. As a project "for his old age," he recently declared, he had decided to retranslate Proust, and he did finish *Swann's*

Way, the first volume of *In Search of Time Lost*. He had also just completed the first draft of his first novel; and more besides. Letters to friends. And he had so many friends: George Orwell, Margaret Laurence, Julian Symons (all now gone); Al Purdy, Peggy Atwood, Pat Grosskurth, Doug Fetherling. Doris and Jack Shadbolt. David Watmough. Toni Onley. It's impossible to name them all. Us all. The world respected him; his friends loved him.

The public details of George Woodcock's life are, of course, well known. Born in Winnipeg on May 8, 1912, to parents of Welsh stock, he grew up in Shropshire when his family, who had not been successful in Canada, returned to England. He completed grammar school in 1928, and had no further formal academic training. He worked as a railway clerk in London during the 1930s, for 30 shillings a week. An aspiring poet, he also came to know a number of England's leading writers of the time, including Herbert Read and Aldous Huxley, about whom he later wrote. But he resisted the conventional political solutions of both the left and the right, and by the 1940s—by this time a friend of Orwell and Marie-Louise Berneri, and a committed pacifist and champion of philosophical anarchism—he was seeking a new place to live. Canada offered the prospect of freedom. So George and his wife Ingeborg emigrated to Sooke, on Vancouver Island. They were hoping to live a Tolstoyan ideal, somewhat on the model of the Doukhobours; but the stony ground resisted being turned into a market garden. And living as a professional writer in Canada in the 1950s offered no obvious alternative.

A chance to teach at the University of Washington was curtailed when in 1955 (as with so many other Canadians who openly espoused freedom of expression) George Woodcock was prevented by McCarthyite paranoia from re-entering the United States. It was then, despite his ongoing questioning of the powers of institutions, that he joined the faculty at U.B.C., taught a course in "European literature in translation," and (using his own name or sometimes his transparent pseudonym "Anthony Appenzell") wrote a small library of articles and books: *Anarchism* (1962), *Faces of India* (1964), *The Rejection of Politics* (1972), *Gabriel Dumont* (1975), *Caves in the Desert* (1988), *British Columbia* (1990), and literally scores of others—books on Thomas Merton and the British in the Far East, the Doukhobours and the myths of history, Kropotkin, the South Seas, and Canadian writers and writing. In 1959, when the University of B.C. began to publish *Canadian Literature*, he became its founding editor, a post he held till 1977, and he

helped to turn the study of Canadian culture from a marginal activity into an act of creative necessity, an engagement with the values of the future and the past.

In 1994 he accepted the freedom of the city of Vancouver, though he had earlier refused the “state honour” of the Order of Canada. The fine distinction he made here was true to his libertarian philosophy. For he believed that individual liberty always takes precedence over state authority. Because he identified cities (as distinct from nation-states) with civil rights and civil freedoms, he regarded the city’s award as the “gift of my neighbours”—not as a sign of eminence, that is, but as an affirmation of human equality. It was a philosophy he tried to live practically as well as in theory, and his own acts of generosity repeatedly affirmed human dignity. With his wife, he set up the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society, the Canada-India Village Aid Society, the Woodcock emergency fund for artists, and the Woodcock Trust. He worked tirelessly not just to recognize problems but also to resolve them.

Personally, I learned from him a lot about editing and a lot about Canadian writing. Every quarter, in the mid-1960s, Donald Stephens or I (Don was Associate Editor of *Canadian Literature* when I joined the magazine’s staff) would sit with George and prepare the paste-up for the next issue; the Woodcocks’ dining-room table would be littered with numbered articles and cookie crumbs, and scissored galleys marked with coffee stains. We’d talk about new books and rediscovered authors, about journal design and the directions of literary criticism, about what mattered in politics and literature and why we separately thought so. Technology has long since altered how the pages of *Canadian Literature* are designed, and many new books have appeared and rediscoveries been made since 1965. Happily, such changes never robbed us of opportunities for conversation. Nor did time ever rob George of his commitment to other people.

While writing these words, I have been reading the third volume of George’s autobiography, and I realize that through his books he is still talking to the world. He wrote not to produce final answers but to be in conversation, and these are *Walking Through the Valley’s* closing words:

I find myself aged and invalid, yet still dedicated to the writing that has sustained me and been my life; resigned, yet even to my own surprise careless about time and what can be done within it, and ready to depart as soon as my life loses meaning for me, which is not yet.

Still, I doubt if I shall be writing much more about my life.... I consider myself to have been on the whole a fortunate being in a fortunate time and place, though I

have tried never to let that blind me to the wretchedness of others. I have hoped for humanity and like many others have seen the realization of my hopes indefinitely postponed, so that I should feel sad beyond measure as I end this account. Inexplicably, I do not feel sad. That Possible on the far edge of Impossibility still stirs my imagination, and the growing consciousness of political and environmental realities among ordinary people offers at least a chance that humanity might save itself and other beings and the planet most of all.

It is a quiet bequest, and a generous one, and as always, an affirmation of what it means truly to be free. W.N.

ED. NOTE: George Woodcock's last reviews for *Canadian Literature* appear on pp. 165-66.



Looking Back to 1994

Start with the fiction. One of the striking moments of critical practice in 1994 came with the announcement of the lists of finalists for the two chief English-language fiction prizes: the Governor-General's Award, which subsequently went to Rudy Wiebe, and the newly-established Giller Award, which went to Moyez Vassanji. The two lists of "best books" were completely different. Not a single title overlapped. There were reasons, of course. Atwood's *Robber Bride*, a late 1993 publication, was a legitimate candidate for the two-G's award but not for the one. Alice Munro's *Open Secrets* likewise, not because of the date but because Munro was one of the Giller judges. But the differences also indicate how a judging committee's "political" priorities profoundly affect estimates of "best." The Giller committee was interested in technical consistency, and while predisposed, it seems, to the illusions of realism, was happy with any convention provided

it was carried through to book's end. The GG's committee seemed to be more concerned with politically fashionable subjects. I personally was more persuaded by the Giller list, though I like the Wiebe, the Atwood, the Munro. And there were interesting 1994 publications that didn't get to either list. History might deem us all wrong.

One of the problems I have (it's not mine alone) is that I can't read everything, and estimates of accomplishment, comparative by nature, depend always on the particularity of the selection group. Of fictions that I did read, among those that missed the two prize lists, I would single out the following as well worth reading. Makeda Silvera's *Her Head a Village* collects eleven stories about Caribbean-Toronto connections; Silvera's style works to create the experience she foregrounds in her title story: the need to resist Western categories ("feminism," here) as "national" Third World subjects, and the need to write Third World consciousness through traditional forms, such as story-telling. Oakland Ross's *Guerilla Beach*, a journalist's fictions about South American violence, provided some provocative moments; as did Douglas Fetherling's *The File on Arthur Moss*, in which a reporter in Vietnam finds that political and cultural clichés are inseparable from the technology that produced them. Six more: Robertson Davies' *The Cunning Man*, with its repeated negotiations between sin and sainthood, sexuality and power, companionability and rigid form ("Do you need books in order to think?" it disingenuously asks, while keeping wealth close at hand in the narrative, and women in service roles); Patricia Robertson's fantasies in *City of Orphans*; William Lynch's cinematic *Parksville*, a Greek Tragedy on Vancouver Island, dealing with the masks that modern people wear; Lola Lemire Tostevin's *Frog Moon*, with its chorus convention, trying to come to terms with mother and mother-tongue, the relation between inheritance (social, gendered) and mode of thought (the impact of form); K.D. Miller's *A Litany in Time of Plague*, which juxtaposes linked stories about life's extreme moments (a 7-year-old, wanting questions answered, is drawn to, and avoids, a child molester; a gay man, dying, reflects on the nature of love and religion; a young woman theatre student takes lovers for the sake of experiment); and George Bowering's 21 metatextually playful takes on "narrating life" in *The Rain Barrel*.

Another Bowering book, *Shoot!*, is a novel about the 19th-century McLean gang in the author's Okanagan home territory; a characteristic Bowering disquisition on history and literary convention, this book entertainingly

takes on the Establishment by both subject and method: “Canadian history is mainly written by schoolteachers who know a lot about the Government. If an individual with a gun shows up, he had better be an American or else.” Paul Yee’s *Breakaway*, a young-adult tale about a Chinese-Canadian soccer-playing youth in Depression Vancouver, also takes a historical moment as the basis for social narrative; Yee’s point is to expose the cultural construction of racism and to reaffirm the necessity of self-esteem. Frances Itani’s *Man Without Face* probes the inheritance of racism in another way; the filmic-interview format that closes this book recalls the expulsion/relocation of Japanese-Canadians during World War II—but it highlights feelings of impotence and shame by focussing on a mother’s last statement; she is not preoccupied with past injustices, but fearful of something worse: afraid of seeing her own face in a documentary reconstruction of the past, and of being shamed again and again.

Technical experiment took other writers in more abstract directions. David Gurr’s *Arcadia We\$t*, with a deliberately American context (Elvis and Thomas Jefferson), is a kind of dialogue between “Author” (“the death of”) and Machine (“reader-friendly”). Susan Swan’s *The Wives of Bath* discovers madness and violence in a “Ladies College” and puts history on trial. And Brian Fawcett’s *Gender Wars* couples a fiction (about a sexual liaison) with a non-fiction disquisition on heterosexuality and the social construction of sexual behaviour; the fiction occupies the top of the page, the non-fiction the lower portion, and the two together constitute a kind of interface between experience and social dialectic (“creativity does not happen in a vacuum”).

Still other fictions suffered from the awful ordinariness that sometimes inhibits style or conception. I was disappointed by Florence McNeil’s *Breathing Each Other’s Air*, Susan Haley’s *How to Start a Charter Airline*, Ann Copeland’s *Strange Bodies on a Stranger Shore*, Joe Rosenblatt’s *Beds & Consenting Dreamers*, Diane Schoemperlen’s *In the Language of Love*, Sky Lee’s *Bellydancer*, Anne Cameron’s *DeeJay & Betty*. These are good writers; and this is flaccid writing. Where does the problem come from? The pressure to publish? The failure of editing? The intricacies of small-press (or large-press) financing?

Some translations were of more interest, though many were violent: Roch Carrier’s *The End*, a moody account of suicide; Jean Lemieux’s *Red Moon*, about Catholic school and violent murder; Anne Hébert’s *Burden of*

Dreams, about passion and irresponsibility in Paris; Ronald Lavallée's *Tchipayuk or The Way of the Wolf*, a Franco-Manitoban fiction about the Métis Rebellion, and about a "mutual rebuff, two ancient cultures turning their backs to one another, refusing to see each other" (Lavallée is a novelist who deserves to be much more widely known); and Michel Tremblay's *The First Quarter of the Moon*, another in the life-fictions of the author's protagonist, who, just prior to adolescence, finds he has to come to terms with creativity (the illusions of fiction) as well as intelligence (the illusions of fact). And reprints, which frequently indicate an overlap between market demand and social cause, included some of Hugh Hood's stories, Matt Cohen's selected stories, and four books by early women writers: Georgina Sime's *Our Little Life*, Joanna Wood's *The Untempered Wind*, Sara Jeannette Duncan's *Cousin Cinderella*, and Rosanna Leprohon's *Armand Durand*; the introductions to the Sime and Wood volumes, by Jane Watt and Klay Dyer respectively, mark the arrival on the Canadian critical scene of two striking new voices: their careful scholarship sets a high standard for their generation's re-encounter with cultural history. Another reprint, George Godwin's 1929 novel *The Eternal Forest* (the new edition comes with an elaborate apparatus), reveals some of the problems that face an editor who wishes to reassess the past. The narrative here is of interest—a *cheechako* Englishman emigrates to the Fraser Valley, only to discover he is ill-suited to pioneering, but meanwhile jots down pen-portraits of his multicultural neighbours, and reflects on the appeal of the "eternal" forest and the offensiveness of real estate dealers. It is, indeed, possibly the "first" Fraser Valley novel, and it provides a fascinating glimpse of early settler B.C. Its sociological interest may even extend to its historically authentic use of the language of racial stereotypes (though the editor has, he says, removed some epithets). But many 1994 readers will find it rough going.

Back, then, to some of 1994's short-listed prize finalists: Eliza Clark's *What You Need*, Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, Steve Weiner's *The Museum of Love*, Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*, M.G. Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets*, Alice Munro's *Open Secrets*. All deal with the role of the unknowable in people's lives. Vassanji's book traces the appeal of imperial culture in East Africa, drawing out the finally indeterminate "secrets" of a 1913 diary in order to examine the barrenness of faith in false authorities. Selvadurai's linked stories (not to my mind as technically accomplished as they might be) tell of a gay boy growing up in Sri Lanka; the technique of "overhear-

ing” the family secrets gets to be a bit laboured, though the details of wealth and race relations are effective, and lead to the narrative point: that empty Old School values do not serve people well during a time of change. The lively satiric prose of Clark’s book takes a man, separated from his wife, into the U.S. South, and through a series of exotic and illusory adventures, till he discovers his capacity to accept his aloneness. Weiner’s hallucinogenic tale of a gay francophone boy growing up into the world of dream takes its central character on a quest for meaning in a world he must unravel to recognize: the contrary character of his parents (prison guard and visionary), the contrary pulls of sibling, friend, environment, and concept (towards love, towards death)—these become mobile figures in a visionary quest. Quest also informs Wiebe’s narrative, which is based on the Franklin Expedition accounts of 1819-1922 (specifically the journal of Robert Hood); this novel reconstructs, in the rivalry between two Englishmen over a young Native woman, the tension between Native expectations and Imperial presumptions. What informs power? the novel asks, and does not always find comprehensible answers. And Munro’s *Open Secrets* (which, if I had been asked, would have been my selection for the year’s fiction prize-winner: it is just plain extraordinary in its insight into human behaviour, and its craft) takes the reader on other kinds of quest, through six stories—into Albanian history, into ghostly fantasy, into science-fiction, into literary and social convention in short—in order to examine how people, in the name of being open, always tell partial stories. The paradox of the title is that it promises answers and hides them at the same time; uncertainty is all. Yet the stories invite the reader repeatedly into narrative, to discover again and again the limits to what we can ever know, satisfying not through plot and closure but through the intricacies of revelation.

One of the recurrent motifs of the year’s fiction involved the open declaration of a character’s gay or lesbian nature, an insistence on the priority of honesty and self-esteem over the biases of ignorant convention. Selvadurai, Miller, Cameron, Weiner, Tremblay: all consider sympathetically the inside world of the person shaped as a social outsider. As in fiction, so in poetry and drama. Bryden MacDonald’s play *Whale Riding Weather*, for example, examines with searing understanding the mixed emotions that accompany the breakup of a gay partnership. John Barton’s *Designs from the Interior*, a set of poems constructed around a landscape metaphor—childhood (suburban delivery), city (patriarchy), hinterland (ecology)—examines how the

growth of an adequate language for self-definition is also a struggle to make “difference” not a demeaning category. Such insights go far to changing public attitudes, despite the persistence of bias (presumably based on some sort of fear) in some sectors of society. The high-profile 1994 court case involving a gay/lesbian bookstore’s suit against Canada Customs discrimination, and the slow move of the federal government towards reform of equal-rights legislation, were further signs of social change.

Other 1994 dramas of note included Sally Clark’s *Life Without Instruction*, based on the life of the Renaissance artist Artemisia Gentileschi; Wendy Lill’s *All Fall Down*, about the evil of malevolence that corrupts innocents and turns innuendo into evidence, in a 20th-century daycare witchhunt; James Reaney’s adaptation of *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, in an edition that comes with lots of commentary on staging; and Michael Hollingsworth’s *The History of the Village of the Small Huts*, parts 1-8, which begins with the sound of drums and ends with Mackenzie King’s head and an A-bomb explosion superimposed—in between are melodramatic, farcical, and parodic versions of Canada’s historical “greats,” including Laval and Bond Head: this is a play mostly about male preoccupations with self and violence towards women, and about the value systems in the Canada that permits both. A related book, of enormous use to drama commentators, is John Ball and Richard Plant’s *Bibliography of Theatre History in Canada: The Beginnings through 1984*, a massive enumerative survey of actors, festivals, playwrights, theses, and performances.

To survey the year’s poetry in a short compass is next to impossible, and it is tempting to say that and nothing more. But at least a dozen or so books ask to be acknowledged directly. There were noteworthy books by Ludwig Zeller and A.F. Moritz, Bert Almon, Travis Lane, Philip Stratford, Erin Mouré, Roo Borson, Al Purdy, and a wonderful selection of poems by bp Nichol, *An H in the Heart: A Reader*, edited by George Bowering and Michael Ondaatje.

Ralph Gustafson asked what a thinker can think about, in *Tracks in the Snow*, and answered: the universe, music, surrounds, and “objectivity.” It’s in many ways a guide to other poetic accomplishments of the year. Gary Geddes’s *Girl by the Water* reflected on sexuality and the violence of action and language, on rural and family life and the desperate actions that have the flavour of inventiveness, and on human failure and (nevertheless) continuity. George Woodcock’s last volume of poetry, *The Cherry Tree on Cherry*

Street, meditated quietly on place, literary influences, and impending death, as did the moving lines that close the third volume of his autobiography, *Walking Through the Valley*. Jay Ruzesky's *Painting the Yellow House Blue* achieved an effective tone that permitted pop culture to acquire resonance. Aaron Bushkowsky's *Ed and Mabel go the Moon* is another work I found arresting; it reveals fragments in the relationship of a married couple whose life is tied to a prairie farm, and it ends with the anti-poetic, phlegmatic crankiness that is the stuff of poetry in a lot of "ordinary" lives: "the way we built/ the god-damn thing up/ was some chore/ when i think about it." Bushkowsky's success is that he asks readers to think about it, and to find the thinking worthwhile. (David Carpenter's essays in *Writing Home* celebrate the same informal voice; they praise real life over jargon, humour over deadly earnestness, accessibility over ill-directed piety.) Steven Heighton's continuing development suggests that he is one of the most accomplished of younger Canadian writers, someone to keep reading, and seriously; his collection called *The Ecstasy of Skeptics* looked at places and events, Australia and Nagasaki, and at the body-as-text and "the bitter half-lit boroughs of the seeing." John Pass's poetry also continues to grow, and *Radical Innocence* examined the body/spirit duality by reflecting on the double pull of sex and religion. Eric Trethewey's *The Long Road Home*, though sometimes marked by a kind of throwaway sentimentalism, probed the character of caring as well; sequences on violence and departure, on recovering connectedness, and on irony (the most effective section of the book) led to a series of reflections on the way dispossession and the quest for validation alike create uncertainty. P.K. Page's *Hologram: A Book of Glosas* is a technical tour-de-force, poetry seen—through, and then beyond—the lines of others. Christopher Dewdney's *Demon Pond* continued this now-established poet's continuing enquiry into the relation between nature, dream, introspection, and the word. Keith Maillard's first venture into poetry, *Dementia Americana*, is another striking accomplishment: a revivification of iambic pentameter in a narrative about American relationships, it tells of doors with threats behind them, of people who rely on guns rather than recognition for security, and of the American sickness that leads to an ongoing war between reality and memory, happiness and fear.

I am less attracted to Page's children's texts than to her poetry (*The Goat that Flew* tells fairly conventionally of a prince, a princess, and a wizard). For transformation tales, I am much more drawn to Linda Rogers' *Frankie*

Zapper and the Disappearing Teacher, an institutionally irreverent comic romp with built-in child appeal.

And as far as anthologies are concerned, David and Maggie Helwig's *Best Canadian Stories 94* and *Coming Attractions 94* again provide a good guide to new accomplishments in short fiction; in particular I like the work of Donald F. McNeill, in the latter volume. Dave Speck's *North Coast Collected* is a different kind of book, a close regional sampling rather than a broad survey, and here the subjects recurrently are fish, timber, road-building, and the shore; an interesting story by Jean Rysstand and an Andrew Wreggitt poem stand out. Carol Morrell edited *Grammar of Dissent*, a powerful collection of poetry and prose by three Caribbean-Canadian writers: Claire Harris, M. Nourbese Philip, and Dionne Brand—all of whom probe the strictures that easy assumptions about “equality” only perpetuate. More conventional is R.G. Moyles' textbook, *'Improved by Civilization': English-Canadian Prose to 1914*. Conventional in a different way is Greg Gatenby's *The Wild Is Always There*, a gathering of commentaries on Canada by foreign writers, which range from the familiar contacts (Hemingway, James, London, Cather, Brooke, Butler) to the less known (Borges, Rossini, Cendrars, Burroughs, Eco, Helprin). It's interesting to see how often they don't get the detail right and rely on cliché instead: Algernon Blackwood writes of “reservations” and “Red Indians” and of a “fairyland of peace and loveliness” amid the Muskoka Lakes. A 7-sentence, 8-line squib by Dos Passos scarcely, I think, warranted inclusion; by contrast, Gatenby's commentary, notes, and index to motifs are excellent.

Several books of reference and comment might have learned from Gatenby. I would single out, for example, the three volumes of *Place Names of Alberta*, edited by Aphrodite Karamitsanis (1 & 2) and Tracey Harrison (3); I deplore the format of these books (they are unwieldy in shape, and because they are not overall alphabetical, they assume previous knowledge of provincial geography), yet the information in them could have been fascinating; unfortunately one longs for anecdote and too often has to settle for sparse “factual” data. The same might be said about a lot of the biographical writing that appeared, though in some of these cases one longs for data and has to settle for anecdote. Clearly, some biographies were written simply as introductory guidebooks, and one ought not to fault them for incompleteness; indeed, ECW Press performs a useful task by commissioning brief, readable handbooks on familiar books and writers—among them,

Joseph Adamson's Frye, John Orange's Mowat, Ed Jewinski's Ondaatje, Carol Roberts' Findley, Gary Boire's Callaghan, Zailig Pollock's Klein (more on the works than on the writer). Ira Nadel's *Leonard Cohen: A Life in Art* attempts to do somewhat more: to give a sense of how the writings express a life, giving hints of the longer biography that Nadel has just recently completed. Longer biographies of 1994, however, tended to disappoint. Patricia Morley's attempt to reclaim Leo Kennedy is earnest but too much in awe, as is Judith Skelton Grant's *Robertson Davies*, which tells us a lot about sex and the British Empire—enemas, grovelling, and grammar—but is too unselective in its choice of detail to give shape to the man it so admires. Elspeth Cameron's *Earle Birney: A Life*, by contrast, ends up so interested in the tales of the poet's liaisons that it largely ignores his gentleness and wit as a teacher, with the result that it tells a story of prurience and naked ambition without finding writerly sensitivity. Somewhere between angel and beast is where human beings continue to dwell, much against their impulses sometimes, a judgment it might be useful to remember more often.

Critical books of note examined postmodernism and rhetorical strategems in fiction (Glenn Deer, Janet Paterson), the Maritimes (Gerald Thomas, John Lennox), gender and genre (Cynthia Zimmerman's *Playwriting Women*; S.R. Wilson's *Margaret Atwood's Fairy-Tale Politics*; Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton's *Separate Spheres*, on women's worlds in the 19th-century Maritimes, including commentaries on marriage and property, Methodism, careers, African-Nova Scotia women, Anna Leonowens and others; Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman's *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, with interesting essays by Margaret Jolly and Roxana Ng on empire and racism); Alice Munro (Ajay Heble on indeterminacy, James Carscallen on the mythological structures achieved by allusion, coding, and other recurrent techniques); power and exclusivity (Frank Davey's *Canadian Literary Power*, on canonicity; Arnold Davidson's *Coyote Country*, on trickster fictions of the Canadian West; Graham Huggan's *Territorial Disputes*, on the mapping strategies that inform both Canadian and Australian fictions; David Jordan's *New World Regionalism*, retrieving its subject from conventional definitions); and on ideology (Evelyn Cobley's *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*, examining the relation between historical "fact" and lexical construct, with an epilogue on Vietnam; Jane Errington's *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada*, on the twinned influence of American society and Simcoe's British connec-

tions on the cultural definition of colonial Ontario). I particularly admire Stan Dragland's *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Literature of Treaty 9*, which takes into account a number of the foregoing topics (region, rhetoric, social mythology, the exclusive power of mapmaking, gender, race, canonicity, and historical ideologies); it reads Scott's "Indian" works against his diaries and against treaty literature, examining the presumptions of authority that led Scott into the wilderness and then back out again, into an intellectual thicket far more dislocating than he ever knew.

Related to these topics are several of the 1994 publications that come under the category "non-fiction." Brock V. Silversides' *The Face-Pullers: Photographing Native Canadians 1871-1939*, for example, covers approximately the same time span as Scott's career; the book is both a curiosity and a documentation: i.e., of the conventions of representation—"dying race," "non-Christian savage"—that for so long governed European perceptions of Native cultures. The photographs are primarily of Blackfoot, Sarcee, Cree, Stoney, Piegan, Assiniboine, and Sioux, including one photo of Big Bear. E.S. Rogers and D.B. Smith edited *Aboriginal Ontario*, a collection of historical perspectives on First Nations. And Ulli Stelzer and Robert Davidson's *Eagle Transforming: The Art of Robert Davidson* includes both photos of the Haida carver at work and a commentary, with some sense of the history and technique of Haida design.

Some commentaries on the Canadian past emphasized images of power (Donald MacKay and Lorne Perry's *Train Country*, on the men and machines that constructed the CNR; Robert R. Reid's *The Front Page Story of World War II*, headlines, year-by-year, from the *Vancouver Sun*, *Province*, and *News-Herald*, and from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*). Others emphasized the disparity between minority cultures and the effective systems of social control. Sarjeet Singh Jagpal's wonderful book *Becoming Canadians: Pioneer Sikhs In Their Own Words* tells, through photograph and memoir, of the commitment and hard work that helped Indian immigrants to "become Canadian" and overcome, without debilitating rancour, the institutionalized discrimination that was once unexamined social practice. Denise Chong's quietly-told, absorbing personal narrative *The Concubine's Children* tells her family's extraordinary, all-too-characteristic history in Canada: a grandfather is prevented by Canadian law from bringing his family from China; when he is permitted to bring a wife, he already has a Chinese wife and family, but cannot bring them, so declares a concubine as

wife; the secret is preserved from Canadian law, but is known and appreciated in China; the concubine's work helps support the family "at home" as well as the family in Gum Shan; and two generations later, when a granddaughter seeks her history, she opens up the secret that her mother has kept hidden, and together the two women reconnect with their Chinese cousins. Tina Loo's important *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871*, relatedly, demonstrates clearly how discrimination became institutionalized. Discourse analysis is brought to bear on fur trade practices, property laws, civil litigation cases, and mining actions, to demonstrate the self-interest of legislation, and the effects of its often unstated prescriptive character on the persons whom it had no interest in punishing but whom it nevertheless diminished or excluded.

Scott Watson's *Jack Shadbolt: Drawings* is indirectly connected with these several topics also, in that "nature," Watson avers, is for Shadbolt "a vortex, a maelstrom opening out onto the forces of darkness and chaos." But where is the boundary line? The "border between nature and colonial culture" keeps shifting, says the text, as the spectacular design of Shadbolt's work reveals. Harold Kalman's ambitious and well-illustrated 2-volume *History of Canadian Architecture* also touches on this question; surveying the changes that have taken Canadian building design from Native dwellings through church and settlement, commerce and industry, regional resistance and Gothic revival, to row housing, the "City Beautiful" movement, brutalism, and post-modernism, the project ends with Kalman's assertion that one feature of Canadian architecture (though its practitioners are still not particularly influential beyond national borders) is the "respect shown to nature." Kalman makes a clear case, though the difference between individual designs and the parking lots of a paved paradise insist that imagination and experience do not yet entirely overlap.

John Moss's book, the *North, Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape*, perhaps begins in this distinction. For (like Wiebe's novel, where imagination meets the Hood diaries) Moss's North is part landscape, part desire, part history and part metaphysical apprehension; this is an unusual and absorbing book—enigmatic and gnomic on one page, expansive and generalizing on the next. A travel book, a daybook, a dreambook, a history: Moss has written here what he calls an "exploration"—I see it more as a meditation on both experience and metaphor, for it manages at once to acknowledge and to resist conventional images of Arctic, and to spell out

the health-giving experience of walking through the real place and meeting the real people. This is a private enquiry; but it takes the reader along. John Gray's *Lost in North America* is also a personal book, and it examines Canadian culture from another angle still: that of the witty but passionate commentator. The essays collected here examine language, behaviour, and other features of the Canadian branch of North American culture and, while they observe banality and failure of nerve in contemporary life, they also discover a prospect that is far less bleak than some might expect. "Canada" is an idea, a belief, the book declares. And this declaration serves as a kind of optimistic mantra both for Gray and for the year—one that affirms the reality of the social space, and adds that all that's needed is the will to share it (as distinct from the mere hope that sharing might one day happen) and so to realize in practice the value of who we have been and who we now are. w.n.

