

east word

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA

Martha Attema & Allan Stratton workshops



ALLAN STRATTON

Canada's annual coast-to-coast-to-coast celebration of all that's best between the pages for children is on the road again. The TD Canada Children's Book Week is touring Nova Scotia in the persons of Martha Attema and Allan Stratton. In addition to readings, both will lead workshop sessions at your Federation. Allan, who enjoys a secret adult writer existence as a playwright, will work with writers who would like to write for the stage about how actors think . . . and he's convinced they do! Martha will talk about how research can drive or burden a story for young adults.

The Contentless Scene: A workshop for Playwrights with Allan Stratton is on Wednesday, November 2, 7 to 9 p.m. at WFNS (1113 Marginal Road, Halifax). The fee is \$30 for PARC, TNS and WFNS members and \$45 for non-members. This session will encourage playwrights to explore how an actor approaches text, the arc of a scene, progression on an act. The "contentless scene" is an acting/directing workshop based on Goals, Obstacles, Tactics and Expectations. By learning to think like actors, playwrights begin to understand their needs.

Allan Stratton began his career as an actor at the Stratford Festival. His work includes the hit plays *Nurse Jane Goes to Hawaii*, *Rexy!*, *Papers*, and *Bag Babies*, and the novels *The Phoenix Lottery*, *Leslie's Journal* and *Chanda's Secrets*. Allan is published and produced internationally, has won numerous awards, and is an active speaker, adjudicator and workshop leader. He has headed an arts school drama department and been a member of the playwright/director unit of The Actors' Studio, New York. Currently, he lives in Toronto with his partner, two cats and a pond full of fish.

Writing Historical Fiction for Young Adults with Martha Attema is on Thursday, November 3, 7 to 9 p.m. at WFNS. Cost: \$30 WFNS members; \$45 non-members. Research can be not only fun, but can also spark brand new ideas. This workshop will look at how you can use historical facts and anecdotes in your fictional stories. You'll discuss young adult fiction in general, historical fiction specifically. There's been an explosion of interest in this area, and it's one of the most challenging, and exciting, to write in.

Martha Attema was born in Friesland, the Netherlands, emigrating to Canada in the early '80s and settling in North Bay, Ontario, with her husband and three young children. Her first novel, *A Time to Choose*, was published by Orca in 1995. Set in her homeland, and dealing with the Dutch resistance to Nazi occupation during the Second World War, the book won the 1996 Blue Heron Award and was shortlisted for the Arthur Ellis and Geoffrey Bilson Awards. She has just celebrated the launch of her sixth book, *The Paper Wagon* (Orca). ■



MARTHA ATTEMA

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NOVA SCOTIA
Tourism, Culture and Heritage



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du Canada

Come to the table!

On Saturday, November 19, 7 p.m. at the Fed, join the NS Children's Literature Roundtable and Bryony House for "Comfort Food and Comfort Books." It's the dark time of the year. We need comfort to help us through the night. What better way for a bunch of booklovers to share comfort than to get together for a tummy-warming, heart-warming fundraiser/bookraiser for the Roundtable and for the children's library at Bryony House? (Bryony House provides shelter for abused women and their children.)

Come to the table for Comfort Foods at the Writers' Federation for only \$10 plus a favourite "comfort book." Which book brings back warm, fuzzy memories from your childhood? Which book has come along in the meantime that strikes a chord, that gives comfort? Purchase a copy of a favourite children's book and bring it as your donation to the Children's Library at Bryony House, along with \$10 admission. Or pay \$20 admission and the Roundtable will use half to purchase a book in your name. They will have custom-created bookplates for you to sign. There'll be special guests sharing short passages from favourite children's books, and a speaker from Bryony House to talk about what these books will mean to the families. And there's a whole menu of comfort food to tempt and treat. Amazing aromas, tantalizing tastes: two salads, three main courses (including a vegetarian option), breads, two desserts, tea and coffee. All for only \$10.

Did you read that right? You did. All this for only \$10 plus a beloved book for Bryony House. Come and join the Roundtable for an evening of Comfort Food and Comfort Books. ■

Eastern Front Explodes into 2005-6 Season

The world premiere of *BUMP* will open Eastern Front Theatre's 2005-06 season. Written by Nova Scotia-born playwright Richard Merrill, *BUMP* looks at the 1958 Springhill bump that trapped miners more than two miles underground. The play will run from October 26 to November 6 at Alderney Landing Theatre, Dartmouth.

In January the theatre will team up with the Nova Scotia Mass Choir to present their annual Share the Dream Concert, a combined tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a celebrated African Nova Scotian. Eastern Front has commissioned Michael Melski to write a new play about Canada's Corvette Navy during World War II, and during the winter *Corvette Crossing* will be workshopped and given a staged reading at Alderney Landing Theatre on March 11. From May 5 to 14, *On The Waterfront* and *Kids on the Waterfront* will return. These popular festivals present 10 plays in 10 days, featuring the best productions from across Canada, along with the best theatrical work from Nova Scotia.

Eastern Front's second main stage production will be an encore of *The Satchmo Suite*, about a modern-day classical cellist from Nova Scotia and Louis Armstrong. The play earned ovations and sell-out crowds last season, and returns by popular demand. The all-star cast includes Jeremiah Sparks as Louis, Andrew Moodie and musicians Paul Simons, Mike Cowie and Colin Matthews all onstage together in The Neptune Studio from June 20 to July 1. For subscriptions, tickets or more information, visit www.easternfront.ns.ca or call 902-463-7529. ■

President's prose: The case of the missing fish

Douglas Arthur Brown

Two years ago, while waiting for three classes to assemble for my reading, I looked around the new school library and my eye fell upon an aquarium sitting on the vacant librarian's desk. It was a 20-gallon model and the bottom was filled with bright yellow gravel. The water pump gurgled rather loudly in the empty room and I wondered if it might end up competing for my attention while I read. Beside the tank there was a can of fish food and a poster hung on the wall displaying several varieties of goldfish. I bent over the aquarium to admire the fish. A thin film of algae coated the inside front glass so I moved to the side, squinting for a better view. But try as I might, with my glasses both on and off, I couldn't find a single fish. There were no plants to obscure them from my gaze and nothing floated belly-up on the surface of the water. The tank was empty.

Puzzled, I retreated to the podium as the children began to file into the room. Each child had to pass the aquarium to reach the cushions on the floor and without exception each one of them cast an optimistic glance at the empty tank while passing.

It is difficult to face a room of children with quiet surrender in their eyes.

One of the things I have come to notice on my visits to schools in the province, especially those built to replace two or more smaller schools, is the lack of books – especially our region's books – on the shiny metal shelves of the new libraries. It's as if all the boxes of books from the old schools fell off the moving vans, creating a rather disturbing urban myth, as chilling as the story about alligators living in the sewers. "Did you hear the one about the missing books?" the prankster asks. "No, please," the terrified writer shouts, ears covered, "I won't sleep."

Missing books. Missing fish. Missing writers. I beaded this last thought to the string as the teacher introduced me. I'd been at this school before, always at her invitation, but she was going to retire in the spring. It'll probably be a few years before I'd be invited back, a syndrome many writers in the schools know well. When the devoted educator at your favourite school retires or is transferred, you often have to start over, nurturing a new contact within the school before you're asked, if ever, to return.

My visit to that particular school was two days before the Christmas break. In the lounge, some of the teachers swapped stories about the array of gifts they had received from students. "Really," one said, "I don't know where to put all the world's-

best-teacher plaques and trophies I've received the last three years." Or the gift certificates, coffee mugs, pen sets, potpourri, magazine subscriptions, and scratch-and-win lotto cards.

I don't begrudge teachers the gifts of appreciation they receive from students and parents at Christmas and graduation in the spring. It's an established tradition in our corner of the world. Many teachers I know dip deeply into their own pockets each year and spend hundreds of dollars on books and activity materials for their students.

Still, I couldn't shake the image of that empty aquarium in the library and the empty bookshelves. And that's when I made my fatal mistake. I foolishly suggested that parents might be encouraged to replace the teacher's gifts with books for the school library. "You wouldn't be hitting up the parents for more money," I ventured, "just suggesting that they shift their buying patterns."

The principal's eyes darkened and he wagged a finger in my face and told me that parents would be shocked and insulted at the suggestion. My faithful contact – the teacher who was already counting the days to retirement – brushed some invisible crumbs from the table. "You could

create a mix of titles," I continued. "Lists could be sent home to parents with the titles of local, regional, national and international books they could order from their local bookstores." The principal folded his arms and tapped his foot impatiently under the table. "You could even inscribe each book with the child's name," I added, "as a record of their contribution to the school. Talk about a lasting gift."

I looked around at an empty room. The principal stood in the doorway. "That's the bell," he said. "The grade four's are waiting."

"Oh."

I wasn't invited back the next year.

If the parents of one average-sized class in one school in this province got together and decided to substitute a book by a Nova Scotia writer for a teacher's gift, about 25 titles would be added to the shelves in the library. If one class in each P-6 school in the province did the same thing, 7,500 books would be added. And if the guardians of every elementary student in the province bought one book there would be 65,000 fewer Made-In-China knickknacks gathering dust in cupboards throughout this province. I'll buy the fish. ■



RON EVERLY

Markets, etc.

Appearance of a market or contest listing does not imply an endorsement by WFNS so check out magazines and contests before submitting material. Many publications include writers' guidelines on their websites. Remember that you have access to the Internet and websites through Public Access Computers at libraries throughout the province.

■ **Crab Orchard Review:** Dept. of English, Faner Hall 2380 – Mail Code 4503, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale IL 62901 (www.siu.edu/~crborchd) will read material for a special issue Summer/Fall 06 issue on Defining Family until Nov. 30 postmark. Publishes twice a year. Looking for original, unpublished poetry, fiction, literary nonfiction. Pays \$20 US per magazine page (\$50 minimum for poetry, \$100 min. for prose).

The Petra Kenney Poetry Competition

The North American deadline for the 2005 Petra Kenney Poetry Competition is December 31, 2005.

Fees: \$7 (Canadian) per poem.

Unpublished poetry entries
should be sent to:

Petra Kenney Poetry Competition
Molly Yeomans, Canadian Director,
38 Langmuir Crescent,
Toronto, ON M6S 2A7

E:-mail Molly.y@sympatico.ca

For complete submission guidelines, a
list of previous winners and the
downloadable entry form, visit:
www.petrapoetrycompetition.co.uk

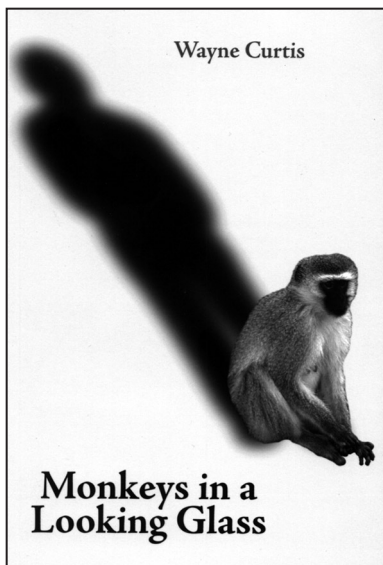
■ **YES Mag:** Canada's Science Magazine for Kids 501 – 3960 Quadra St, Victoria BC V8X 4A3 (www.yesmag.ca) Publishes 32 pages bimonthly. Aimed at kids 8 to 14. Pays 20¢/word on publication. Writers' guidelines available from editor by e-mail (jude@yesmag.ca). Query first. The same publisher will launch **KNOW: The Science Magazine for Curious Kids** in January, for kids 6 to 9 (for writers' guidelines e-mail adrienne@yesmag.ca). YES's editor says "We never seem to have science from the east coast." So they might be receptive to your query, and there is science going on in all four Atlantic provinces. Check out the local universities for leads.

■ **Horses All:** 49 White Oak Crescent S.W., Calgary AB T3C 3J9 (www.horsesall.com). Monthly newspaper read by more than 25,000 horse enthusiasts across Canada and the northern US. Affiliated with over 40 Canadian equine clubs and associations. Covers all breeds and disciplines, the editorial content includes human-and-horse features, news and association reports, and expert equine columnists. Apparently looking for writers to cover equine events in their local area. Articles are typically 600 to 700 words, and payment is typically \$100 for requested articles, depending on length and quality.

■ **Journey:** (Canadian Automobile Association member magazine) <http://journeymagazine.ca> Publishes 4 times for CAA clubs in the Maritimes and the Hamilton, Ottawa, Kitchener and Niagara regions in Ontario. Writers' guidelines on website. Publishes about 3 travel features and one major automotive feature every issue. Also features one-page columns on lifestyle (gardening, hobbies, etc.), health and finance topics, with a travel or automotive slant. Feature articles (1,200–1,500 words) \$800; mini-features (800–1,200 words) \$600; columns (400–500 words) \$400. Pays on publication.

■ **Maisonneuve** Magazine is preparing for a major make-over of its web content (www.maisonneuve.org). Looking for dynamic writers who are able to do short and medium-length features and commentaries on the major issues of the week: politics, arts, books. To be put on the roster, send a brief cover letter focusing on story ideas and indicate, in priority order, your expertise in three areas detailing your qualifications in each. Include CV and two relevant writing samples. Send to Phillip Todd, managing web editor: e-mail philliptodd@maisonneuve.org, Subject: Web contributor roster. (From *Westword*, Writers' Guild of Alberta)

imPRESSed — the newest titles by WFNS members



Monkeys in a Looking Glass

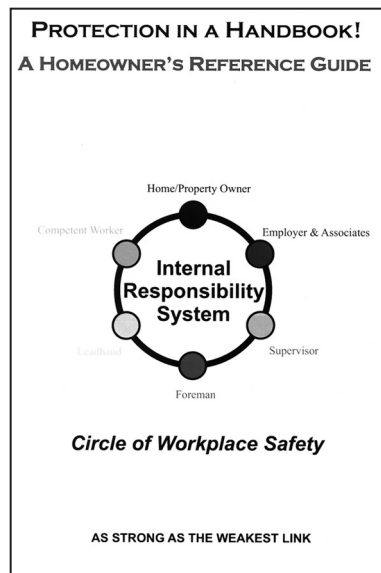
Wayne Curtis

Dreamcatcher, 2005, \$18.95

ISBN 1-894372-69-7

Monkeys in a Looking Glass contains themes familiar the world over – love, loss, life and death. Wayne Curtis draws upon his travels to give readers a portrait of the young Che Guevara in love for the first time and to describe the fear and exhilaration of Pamplona’s “running of the bulls.” He also applies his discerning eye to things much closer to home: a man searching for his family roots in the goldfields of the Yukon; an ex-convict looking for love at a singles’ dance; a young family chasing a dream in rural New Brunswick.

Wayne Curtis started writing prose in the late 1960s. He has been published in several newspapers, including *The National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*, and commercial magazines. Wayne’s stories have appeared in literary journals and in the Atlantic anthology, *Atlantica*, and been dramatized on CBC radio and for CBC television. He lives in Fredericton, New Brunswick.



Protection in a Handbook

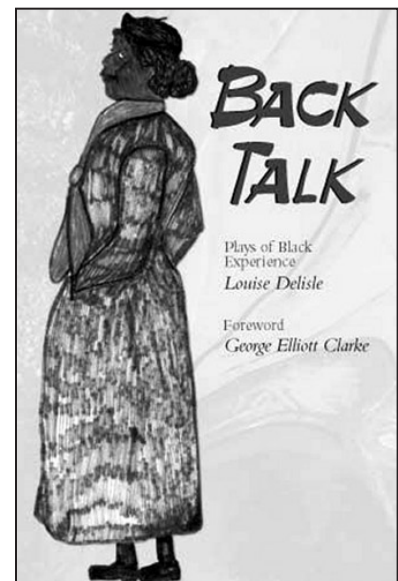
David B. Dahr

Self-published, 2005, \$12.95

ISBN 0-9738078-0-6

This handbook is for homeowners, to assist them in understanding who the major players are in the construction industry, as well as for employers and employees who work in the industry. It is meant to assist everyone working in commercial or residential construction to gain a better appreciation of their responsibilities in occupational health and safety. It explains how these factors have an impact on the construction process and on the process of hiring someone to work on a homeowner’s property.

The information in *Protection in a Handbook* was gleaned from David Dahr’s many years of experience in the construction industry – and he’s still learning. He’s been a carpenter for 30 years.



Back Talk:

Plays of Black Experience

Louise Delisle

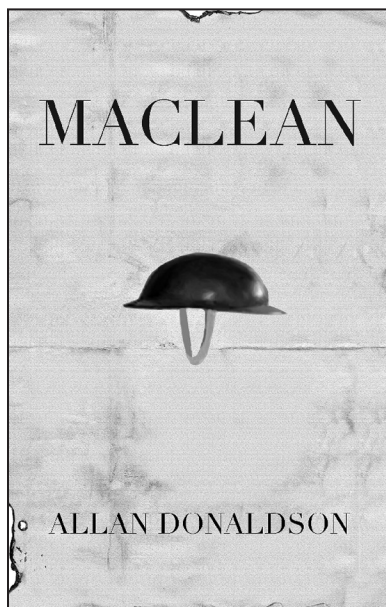
Roseway Publishing, 2005, \$16.98

ISBN 1-896496-48-2

Back Talk is a collection of plays by the Nova Scotia playwright, Louise Delisle. These plays reflect the history of slavery as well as contemporary Black experience.

“She speaks the kind of voice our community has always possessed. She’s a nat’chal writer, one who sets down in black ink the brilliant indigo of our speech and the blazing sepia of our history.” From the Foreword, by George Elliott Clarke.

Louise Delisle lives in Shelburne County, Nova Scotia.



Maclean

Allan Donaldson

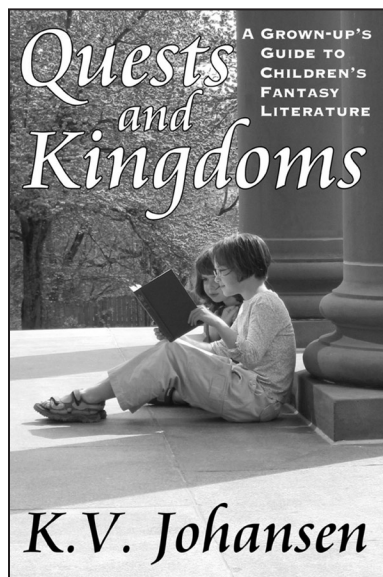
Vagrant Press, 2005, \$14.95

ISBN 1551095505

In *Maclean*, Allan Donaldson depicts the tragedy of a human life oppressed by the residual nightmare of war, as well as the limitations of small-town life in New Brunswick in the mid-1900s.

Maclean portrays the life of an alcoholic veteran of World War One, as outlined within a single day in the late summer of 1943. John Maclean's seemingly prosaic search to find his mother a birthday present illustrates his struggle with the obstacles created by war and poverty, themes which plague even his small town in mid-northern New Brunswick.

Born in Taber, Alberta, Allan Donaldson grew up in Woodstock, New Brunswick. In his teens, he worked summers wheeling cement, tamping ties and laying steel on the railway, working on a rock crusher and an asphalt plant, and operating a jackhammer. On scholarships, he studied English literature at the University of New Brunswick and the University of London, and he spent a teaching career in the English Department at UNB. He is the author of a book of short stories, *Paradise Siding* (Goose Lane).



Quests and Kingdoms:

A Grown-Up's Guide to Children's Fantasy Literature

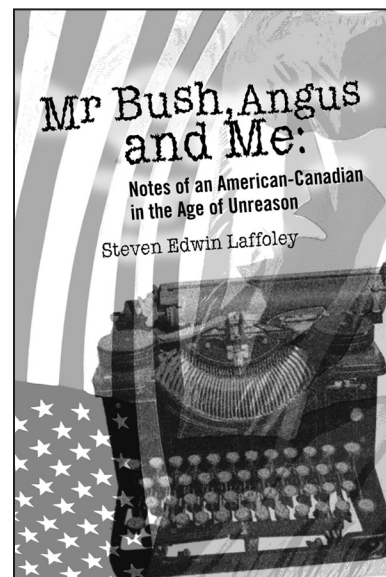
K.V. Johansen

Sybertooth Inc., 2005, U.S.\$30

ISBN 0-9688024-4-3

Quests and Kingdoms provides a basis from which an adult unfamiliar with the genre of children's fantasy literature may explore it. Taking a chronological approach, it begins with the fairy-tale collections of d'Aulnoy, Perrault, and the Grimms and works its way up to the novels of J.K. Rowling and Garth Nix, covering over three centuries of fantasy read by children. The lives of the authors are looked at and placed in historical context, while their works are introduced through both synopses and analysis.

Originally from Kingston, Ontario, K.V. Johansen studied English and history at Mount Allison University, received a Master's degree in Medieval Studies from the University of Toronto, and another Master's, in English, from McMaster. She held the 2001 Eileen Wallace Research Fellowship in Children's Literature from UNB to work on the history of children's fantasy literature, and received the 2004 Frances E. Russell Award for research in children's literature from IBBY Canada. She currently lives in Sackville, NB.



Mr. Bush, Angus and Me

Steven Laffoley

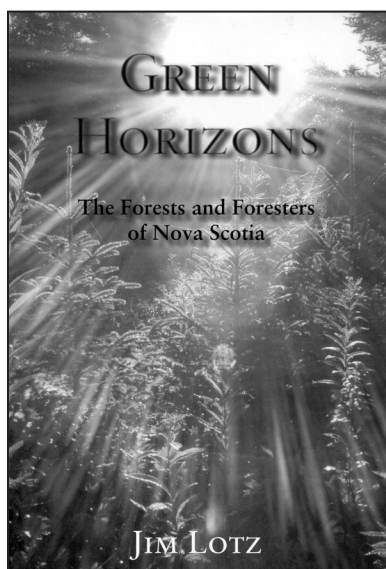
Pottersfield Press, 2005, \$16.95

ISBN 1895900751

Six months after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Steven Laffoley stood at the edge of Ground Zero in New York City. Having emigrated from the United States to Canada 20 years earlier, he had travelled to New York in an effort to find meaning in the terrible event. However, he found the absence of meaning. In the months that followed he watched as the American government created its own meaning for the event and used it to usher in a new age – The Age of Unreason.

As he wrote and published his thoughts on this new Dark Age, he began an unexpected journey: a journey to understand his own relationship to America and to Canada. He asked, "What is it to be an American-Canadian in this Age of Unreason?"

Born near Boston, Steven Laffoley moved to Nova Scotia in 1982 where he's worked as a curriculum writer, a university professor, and a school principal. As a freelance writer, columnist and broadcaster, Steven has written for more than 40 print and online magazines and newspapers. He lives with his family in Halifax.



Green Horizons: The Forests and Foresters of Nova Scotia

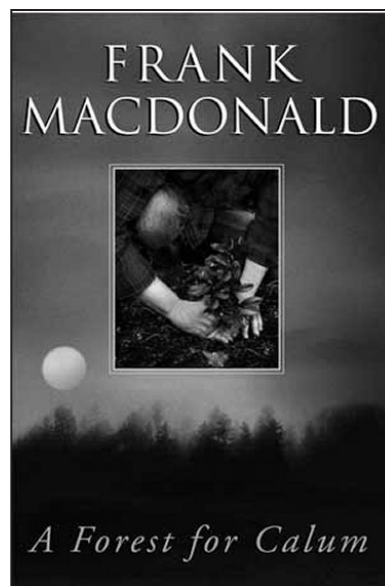
Jim Lotz

Pottersfield Press, 2005, \$22.95

ISBN 1-895900-71-9

Green Horizons traces the history of the forests in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the ethic of “cut and run” was rampant, destroying huge numbers of trees as did massive forest fires. The story moves on to the time of saw millers who “took the best and left the rest.” *Green Horizons* also recounts the history of the past 50 years in Nova Scotia’s forests through interviews with those directly involved in forestry.

Born in Liverpool, England, in 1929, Jim Lotz has held 25 different jobs, ranging from grouse beater in the Scottish Highlands to glacial meteorologist in the Arctic. Since 1960, he has been actively engaged in community-based development and has taught at the Coady International Institute. His travels in search of learning have taken him from Alaska to Slovakia and from the High Arctic to Lesotho. He has written 20 books.



A Forest for Calum

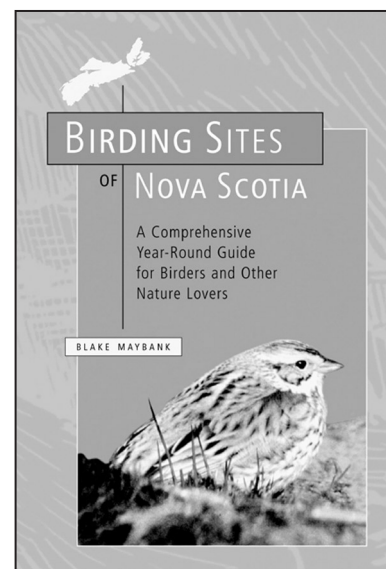
Frank MacDonald

Cape Breton University Press, 2005,

\$24.95 ISBN 1-897009-05-4

A Forest for Calum is a novel that explores the complex lives of rural communities in the post-war, post-heavy industry decades of the mid-twentieth century. It does so with dignity and humour. The setting is Cape Breton; the themes of cultural and rural change and decline are universal.

Frank Macdonald, award-winning columnist and publisher of *The Inverness Oran*, is an accomplished writer of short stories, drama, poetry and songs. His humorous, often satirical, columns have twice been anthologized: *How to Cook Your Cat* (2003), and *Assuming I’m Right* (1990), which also became a stage production that has toured Nova Scotia and Canada. He lives in Inverness, Cape Breton. This is his first novel.



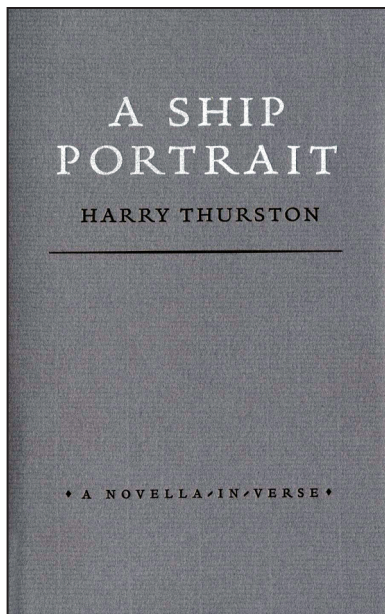
Birding Sites of Nova Scotia

Blake Maybank

Nimbus, 2005, \$35 ISBN 155109519X

Nova Scotia is a birders’ paradise – the trick is knowing where to go to catch sight of the dainty piping plover, stately blue heron, or cheeky blue jay. This problem is solved within the pages of this invaluable guidebook, which divides Nova Scotia by county, pinpointing the best birding sites, how to reach them, and on-site orientation. Complete with maps and chock-full of useful information such as special birds to see, species of note, and key details for each site (e.g. amenities, points of interest, and habitats), this guidebook is sure to delight the bird fancier in your life, or be a welcome addition to your own feathered pursuits.

Blake Maybank is a self-employed, well-travelled writer, editor, speaker, photographer, naturalist, and musician. He wrote *The National Parks and Other Wild Places of Canada*. He also wrote a nature column for *The Chronicle-Herald*, and is the editor of *Nova Scotia Birds*.



A Ship Portrait

Harry Thurston

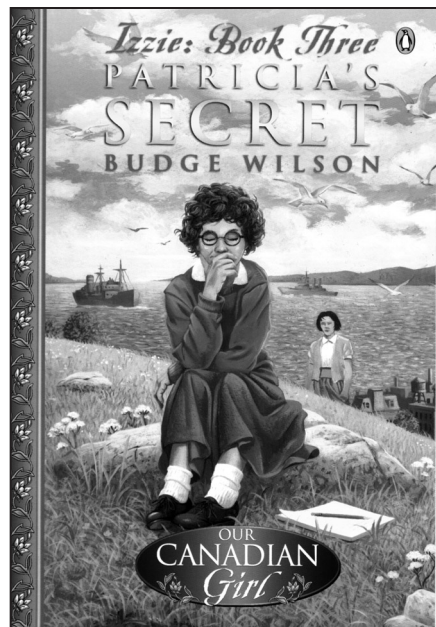
Gaspereau Press, 2005

ISBN 1554470064 (pbc), \$18.95

ISBN 1554470072 (hc), \$59.95

A Ship Portrait is a tribute to the life and art of John O'Brien, nineteenth-century painter of ships, written in what Harry Thurston calls "a novella in verse." Built upon two voices, O'Brien's and the poet's, the poem traces the painter's life in Halifax during the apex and decline of the Golden Age of Sail. Thurston characterizes this era in Nova Scotia's history as a time of shifting mythologies, of strife between Old World and New, and of a surprisingly cosmopolitan lifestyle sustained by the shipping industry.

Harry Thurston is the author of several collections of poetry, including *If Men Lived On Earth* (Gaspereau Press, 2000), and many non-fiction books. He has travelled widely as a freelance writer for many of North America's leading magazines, including *Audubon* and *National Geographic*. *A Place Between the Tides* was shortlisted for the 2004 Drainie-Taylor Biography Prize and the Dartmouth Book Award. He lives in Tidnish Bridge, Nova Scotia.



Izzie Book Three: Patricia's Secret

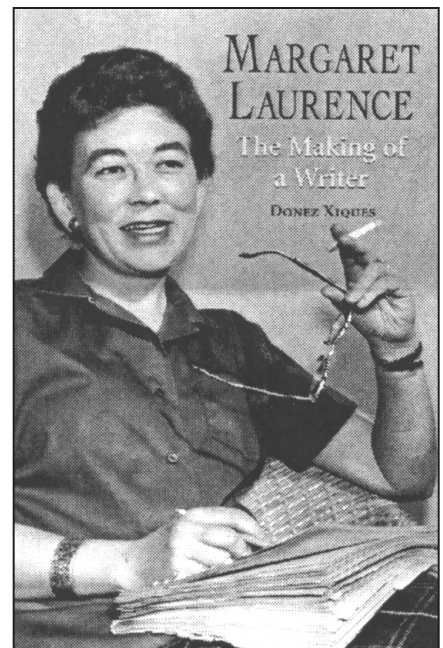
Budge Wilson

Penguin Canada, 2005, \$8.99

ISBN 0-14-305007-9

Nova Scotia, 1942: Izzie and her family have been living a new kind of life in the town of Woodside. Her mother has a job on the assembly line at the sugar refinery, and Izzie and her brother, Joey, have found new friends. Still, with Izzie's father in the navy, it's impossible for the family not to worry about him when they see explosions in the night just beyond Halifax Harbour or when they hear news of the sinking of another ship. But, as Izzie discovers, even when she and her family return for the summer to Granite Cove, there is no escaping the reality of war.

Since publishing her first book in 1984, Budge Wilson has published more than 29 books, with translations in 10 languages and in 13 countries. She has also won many awards and 19 Canadian Children's Book Centre "Our Choice" citations. She lives and writes in a fishing village on the South Shore of Nova Scotia.



Margaret Laurence:

The Making of a Writer

Denez Xiques

Dundurn Group, 2005, \$40.00

ISBN 1-55002-579-1

Author and scholar Denez Xiques writes in detail about the very important years Margaret Laurence spent with her husband and children in Somalia and Ghana. The adventures of the young Margaret Laurence are uncovered while her literary growth is traced through interviews with teachers, classmates, neighbours, and professional associates. Appended to this powerful new biography is a previously unpublished short story by Laurence and two other stories that have not been widely available.

Denez Xiques has a keen interest in Canadian literature and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for research in Canada. She also received Canadian Embassy Faculty Enrichment Awards. She is currently Associate Professor of English at Brooklyn College, City University of New York, specializing in nineteenth-century American fiction.

Who's doing what?

■ **Racked** – members work appearing in the astonishing assemblage of journals, mags and ephemeral electronica crossing your editor's desk into the Fed Reference Library (open 9:30 to 4:30 Monday through Friday for your amusement and edification): **Joanne Merriam**'s poems appear this fall in *Ultraverse*, *Big Toe Review*, the *Magazine of Speculative Poetry* and *flashquake.org*, and a story, 'Dogwood Winter Coming' is in *DawnSky*; *goodtimes magazine* benefitted from **Elaine Ingalls Hogg**'s musings by including her poem 'September' in their issue of the same provenance. Elaine's work will appear in the January issue of *Link and Visitor*; the 35th anniversary issue of *The Antigonish Review* is testament to its continued vibrancy with lipslippery verse for adults from **Sheree Fitch**, short fiction from **Ian Colford**, and **Lorri Neilsen Glenn** in reviewing mode; **Gary Saunders** extends a sidebar reverie on windfalls in *Rural Delivery* into a larger exploration of all that maintaining old windows can teach about humility; winning Honorable Mention in the 2005 *Passager Poetry Contest* for Writers over 50 means **Pam Calabrese MacLean** is included in their special double contest issue; a recent *New Brunswick Reader* featured **Nellie Allen**'s insightful article, 'The Forgotten Base.'

■ Peter Carver has collected 15 spine-tingling stories for Red Deer Press, *The Horrors*, *Terrifying Tales*, *Book One*. **Don Aker** and **Alice Walsh** are among the contributors who've crafted a tale that illuminates a distinct path through fearful territory – for readers 14 to 40 and beyond who thrive on the stimulation of a frisson of the macabre. Alice has a fiction title slated with Red Deer: *Katie of the Labrador*. Red Deer Press, originally associated with Red Deer College, had moved down the road to the University of Calgary, and has recently been sold to Fitzhenry & Whiteside who are maintaining the famed press's editorial staff.

■ And speaking of futures: **Norene Smiley** has her first picture book on the fall 2006 horizon – *Mrs. Cosy and the No-Name Cat* is currently being illustrated and will be released by Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

■ Didn't you think the cover on *Berth*, **Carol Bruneau**'s recent release from Cormorant, was breathtaking? It's the work of our own **Margot Metcalfe**, an image titled 'Early Morning.'

■ Kudos to **Elizabeth Pacey** for her determined and masterful defense of Halifax's view plane to the harbour. Despite endless legal wrangling that is costing citizens determined to preserve the city's heritage more than \$30,000, the proposed high-rise on the Midtown Tavern site just below the Citadel has been defeated. Perhaps this will have some bearing on the looming proposal for an even higher structure closer to the water? Halifax is bruited a new cultural plan online that states: "Culture is the living bridge between our past and our future. It's a daily (and life-long) collaboration between ourselves and

our community, touching every aspect of how we live our lives. To ensure a bright cultural future for HRM, we need to nurture and protect our culture. We also need to understand it from as many different perspectives as we can recognize." Fine words but to date they've buttered no view planes. Perhaps the day will arrive when the perspective of Elizabeth Pacey and co. won't cost them so dearly.

■ **Harry Thurston** edited *The Sea's Voice: An Anthology of Atlantic Canadian Nature Writing* for Nimbus. His ordering principle is that the contributions be "grounded in the natural world . . . inspire wonder in the workings of nature and . . . expose human practices that degrade the natural legacy we share with other living things, both animal and vegetable." Among the 24 contributors are Evelyn Richardson, **Bruce Armstrong**, **Harold Horwood**, **Gary Saunders**, **Donna Smyth** and **Harry Thurston**. Harry is also celebrating the launch of *A Ship Portrait*, a narrative poem that has been stunningly designed by Gaspereau Press. The poem is a tribute to the life and art of John O'Brien, a 19th century painter of ships told in two voices – O'Brien's and the poet's. He was on the road reading, appearing in Parrsboro, Halifax, Amherst, Kentville, Hamilton, Toronto, and Montreal.

■ The Acorn-Plantos Award for People's Poetry honours the memory of Milton Acorn and Ted Plantos, and this year highlights the work of **Sue Goyette** who has been, among others, shortlisted for the prize. Sue is writer-in-residence for the month of November at UPEI in Charlottetown.

■ Both the Spring Garden Library, Halifax, and The Inside Story in Greenwood hosted launches for **Don Aker**'s newest book from HarperCollins, *One on One*, the story of 11-year old Jared who wants to make the basketball team but refuses to think about his math grades. In fact, September and October so resounded with launches for new books from members that you could call it an Armada! Westminster Books in Fredericton greeted the arrival of **Allan Donaldson**'s *Maclean* (which won the '98 Atlantic Writing Competition) from Nimbus; Inverness County Centre for the Arts toasted the release of *A Forest for Calum* (CBUP), a first-born novel for **Frank MacDonald**; the Lord Nelson Hotel in Halifax reverberated to applause as Frog Hollow Books helped deliver **Stephens Gerard Malone**'s debut novel, *Miss Elva*, in the good company of Joan Clark (*An Audience of Chairs*) and Beth Powning (*Edge Seasons*); the Acadian Historical Village in Pubnico was an evocative setting for the launch of **Martine Jacquot**'s latest novel, *Au Gré du vent* while over in Yarmouth, the County Museum launched **Harry Thurston**'s *A Ship Portrait* (Gaspereau); at the other end of the province in Glace Bay, the audience was celebrating the release of *Relative Happiness*, **Lesley Crewe**'s first novel from Nimbus' new imprint, Vagrant Press.

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■ **Donna Morrissey** played Cover Girl this fall enlivening the front page of *Atlantic Books Today* and *Boom* with feature articles respectively by Mark Callanan and Mary Jo Anderson. Donna did hard time on the road this fall, appearing at Toronto's Harbourfront International Festival of Authors and the Vancouver International Festival.

■ A story by **Jody Wood** is included in a new anthology from Second Story Press, *Outside of Ordinary: Women's Travel Stories*. The 32 real-life tales in the collection explore both physical and emotional journeys, ensuring that going home will never be the same again. And continuing in anthologizing mode, **Joanne Jefferson's** poetry is included in *Letting Go: An Anthology of Loss and Survival*, published by Black Moss Press, while **Elaine Ingalls Hogg** is contributing to *Chicken Soup for the Recovering Soul* and *Soul Matters for Moms*.

■ **Alistair** and **Anita MacLeod** popped into Halifax to be feted at this year's Atlantic Film Festival. Bill MacGillivray of Picture Plant Productions had first filmed Alistair 20 years ago, when there were still babies crawling on the floor of his Inverness home. Bill's new documentary, produced by Terry Greenlaw in co-production with the National Film Board, *Reading Alistair MacLeod*, premiered during the Festival. The stunning production also includes interviews with Margaret Atwood, Colm Toibin, Wayne Johnston, Russell Banks, Lisa Moore and David Adams Richards.

■ Raising Literary Hell is the title of **Greg Cook's** reading from his selected poems, *Songs of the Wounded*, and his talk on *One Heart, One Way*, his biography of Alden Nowlan. The talk was front and centre at the Beveridge Arts Centre at Acadian in late September.

■ **Anne Simpson's** heading for a Rocky Mountain high as a faculty member at the Banff Writing Studio 2006. A five-week program offering poets and writers of fiction the time, space and support they need to pursue a project, the Banff program is aimed at literary

writers at an early stage in their career when they can benefit from an extended period of uninterrupted writing time, one-on-one editorial assistance from experienced writers and an opportunity to engage with a community of working writers. For more information and to apply: www.banffcentre.ca

■ **Tyne Brown's** *Pip Spins a Yarn* was a finalist in The Writers' Union of Canada 2005 Writing for Children Competition. Initiated to discover, encourage and promote new writers of children's literature, the competition drew over 520 entries with final judging by Deborah Ellis, Janet McNaughton and Allen Morgan. Winnowed down to 12 finalists, the prize went to Heather Beaumont of Toronto for *Delroy's Present*.

■ After the success of her first collection for the age 7 to 10 crew, Kids Can Press has brought **Jessica Kerrin's** Martin Bridge back. *Martin Bridge: On the Lookout!* features three more illustrated stories about Martin's well-laid plans unravelling. In this second lively trio of illustrated short stories, Martin has to entertain an unwanted guest, share lunch with a boy who eats erasers, and embark on a madcap search for his school's escaped pet parakeet.

■ **Madeleine Lefebvre** has gathered personal narratives from around the world from people who work in or use libraries. The result is *The Romance of Libraries*, due out in December from Scarecrow Press. And you can tell, in her heart of hearts, Madeleine is convinced that the physical library can play a role in our affections that the virtual can never fulfill. She's University Librarian at St. Mary's and currently serves as Chief Administrator of Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy.

■ Tundra has just released *A Pioneer ABC* by **Mary Alice Downie** with illustrations by Mary Jane Gerber. A homage to United Empire Loyalists who settled in the Kingston area 200

years ago, it's a glorious, homespun abcdarium, filled with bandlaore, goose greens, anvils and arcs.

■ **It's Tree Season in Canada!** The Red Cedar is British Columbia's Young Reader's Choice book award. Every year thousands of children between grades 4 and 7 from across BC are invited to read books from the nominated lists of non-fiction and fiction titles and vote for their favourite. This year **Dorothy Perkyns** has been included in the shortlist with *Last Days in Africville* (Beach Holme). Meanwhile over in Ontario, **Maureen Hull** and *Rainy Days With Bear* (immediately propelled into a second printing with Lobster Press) are in the running for the Blue Spruce Award, which means it will be read to over 80,000 kids in Ontario schools; **Vicki Grant** is shortlisted for a Silver Birch Award (Grades 4, 5 and 6) with *Quid Pro Quo* (Orca). Here in Atlantic Canada, the only bilingual running of children's choice awards, the Hackmatack shortlist includes *Pomiuk*, *Prince of the North* (Beach Holme) by **Alice Walsh**, **Vicki Grant's** *The Puppet Wrangler* (Orca), and *There You Are* (Tundra) by **Joanne Taylor**.

■ **Jodi DeLong**, our own goddess of the garden, shook the earth from her trowel this fall, assumed a life jacket, and headed out to sea. Telling the tale on the pages of *The Chronicle-Herald*, Jodi joined the complement of crew and scientists aboard the Canadian Coast Guard Ship *Hudson* as she set off to study fish habitat on several banks off Nova Scotia.

■ **Virginia Hayden** has a way with words and her words get around! Her 10-minute stage play, *People Like Us*, has been shortlisted from 1,000 entries in the Australian Short & Sweet contest. Winners will be professionally produced in rep at The Melbourne Arts Centre. Of the 100 shortlisted plays, Virginia's was the only Canadian finalist.

■ The Biscuit Eater in Mahone Bay is becoming the literary hotspot to see and be seen. Just off the main

drag, it's a sprawling Victorian house with rambling back deck surrounded by garden and rooms chock-a-block with tottering piles of books, the air scented with good, freshly ground coffee. Recent readers have included **William Kowalski**, **Tonja Gunvaldsen Klaassen**, and **Carole Langille**.

■ She learned about the competition on the pages of *Eastword*, but it was her talent that won out. **Teresa O'Brien** sent her story 'The Warp Knitter' off to *The New Writer* in Kent, England, and was chuffed when it placed third. **Brenda Tate**'s also been exhibiting her winning ways. She earned first place in the Rising Tide Press poetry contest, a Merit Award and her sonnet was cited as the Best Rhyming Poem in the *Utmost Christian* writers contest while her villanelle, 'Miriam's Exam' was shortlisted for *The Guardian's* poetry forum workshop in the UK.

■ September saw the launch of *Green Horizons: The Forests and Foresters of Nova Scotia* by **Jim Lotz** (Pottersfield Press). After a celebration at Coles in Truro that included a signing and distribution of free tree seedlings, the book was also available during a public field day in Miller's woodlot in Earltown, Colchester County. Tom and Lori Miller are Nova Scotia's 2005 Woodlot Owners of the Year.

■ **Steve Vernon** is not one to miss a spine-tingling opportunity. Cole Harbour Farm and Museum was his venue of choice for Hallowe'en stories that daunted even the most fearless listener.

■ Theatre Nova Scotia, in concert with Talonbooks, hosted an evening of thought-provoking theatre featuring dramatic readings by **Josh MacDonald** and Leanna Brodie. Josh is the author of *Halo* and *Whereverville* (Talonbooks), a powerful drama on resettlement and community identity which will be touring nationally in 2005-06. Elsewhere on stage, **Clyde Wray** presented *Excuse Me Lord But I Didn't*

Hear You, Conversations with God, a blend of dance, poetry, and song. Written, directed, and produced by Clyde, and performed by Rami Taha with dance choreographed and performed by Kelli Wray, the performance played at St. Matthews Theatre in Halifax. Meanwhile, over at Halifax North Library, **David Wood** performed *Gottingen X*, a combination of poetry, art and hip hop music reflecting the urban experience in Halifax. David appeared with hip hop artist DJ Delite.

New Members

The Directors, members and staff of WFNS are delighted to extend the warmest welcome, or welcome back, to the following member writers:

Frances Abbass, Dartmouth
Pedro Arce, Halifax
Michelle Baikie, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NL

Adam Benner, Wolfville
Ellen Burt, Bridgewater
Shirley Clarke, Dartmouth
Russell Colman, Englishtown
Jo Currie, Centreville
Dorothy Dearborn, Hampton, NB
Vanessa C. Donnelly, Halifax
Sandra Dunn, Sydney
Julie Ernst, Dartmouth
Rebecca Faria, Halifax
Camelia Frieberg, Mahone Bay
Dianne Hallman, Saskatoon, SK
Peter Hanson, Halifax
Andria Hill, Wolfville
Bill Jardine, Halifax
Nanci Lee, Halifax
Madeleine Lefebvre, Halifax
Diane Lucas, Dartmouth
Ian MacGillivray, Halifax
Darryl MacLeod, Port Hood
Sandra MacLeod, Hammonds Plains
Kathryn Wallace Mahoney, Dartmouth
Carol Matthews, Truro
Donna McDougall, D'Escousse
Ellen Millard, Tatamagouche
Julia Moore, Deep Brook
Peter Moreira, Glen Haven
Tara Muise, Dartmouth
Margaret Murray, Halifax

L. Margie Nicholson, Tatamagouche
Lorne R. Perry, Dartmouth
Richard Rockstro, Port Joli
Carol Burgess Romance, Grand Desert
Bonnie Russell, Eastern Passage
Edward Seyforth, Western Shore
Hilary Thompson, Kentville
Lynn Tilley, Tantallon
Natasha Tobin, Great Village
Janet Parker Vaughan, Middleton
Jack Ward, Lakeside
Kristin Welbourn, Halifax

ReMEMBERing Ours

It's with great sadness that the Federation remarks the passing of **Verna Thomas** at the end of August.

Born in Mount Denson in Hants County, Verna was a humanitarian whose work and community involvement focused on issues that supported and advanced the equality and dignity of all peoples. She took enormous satisfaction in knowing she was part of a continuum, picking up where a past generation had left off, and building in the hopes that the next generation could continue.

Verna was involved with everything from church to social and political organizations. She was a past officer of the National Anti-poverty Organization, Charter President of the East Preston Women's Missionary Society and of the Preston Area Learning Skills Program, and served on the Boards of the East Preston Recreation Centre and the East Preston PC Women's Association.

She was much in demand as a WITS writer to talk about her memoir *Invisible Shadows* (Nimbus). The book is Verna's account of coming to consciousness about race in the wake of changes in education, civil rights and black self-awareness that swept the continent in the second half of the twentieth century. For Verna Thomas, writing was much more than a process of describing the struggle: coupled with her unshakable faith, the ties of family and her indomitable determination, writing was a means of survival. ■

The entry fee or what it costs to write

by Sue Goyette

I've just googled the words *writing contests* and in 0.06 seconds 8,800,000 sites appeared. Most of them boast gigantic prizes, make offers of publication and promise a jury of "professional writers." This is about the time when we should breathe. Deeply.

I love the idea of all of us winning prizes, our poems and stories being published to wide acclaim, I love the idea of the paths through our writing experience being devoid of mishaps, rejection and despair. I wish it for us all: *ta da, abracadabra, shazam*. But let's get real. I think if we're going to pay to be read, we should get something for it: a subscription to the magazine that's running the contest, copies of the winning entries anthologized, or, like our competition here at the Federation (the Atlantic Writing Competition), three judges' written comments specifically about our work. Comments worth their weight in gold, I might add.

Perhaps we need to reassess our writing goals. Are we writing to get published? For the fame, the shrimp and the Perrier in the dressing room before the readings? Or are we writing because words are the best vessels we've found to pour our treasures and time into? Because when we write, we can feel our feet on the planet and know we are in the right place at the right time. This is important. Writing is a vocation, a system of navigation that delivers us soundly back to the truth of ourselves and, paradoxically, the truth of everyone else.

Publishing is another story. Getting paid to be published isn't just another story; it's a five-act tragedy complete with hauntings, murderous and suicidal thoughts, and unrequited love. We can live without this. Trust me.

Granted, getting published is a handy doorman to the entrance of Canada Council proposals, employment opportunities and even more publishing opportunities, and yes, people take you more seriously when you can say that you are in print. But I think that's more about the people who are deciding whether to take you seriously or not than it is about your worth on the planet, verbing your existence as testimony of a life well-lived.

Am I being ideal? Yes. Radical? Indeed. But I think the corporate world, the idea of selling and buying has entered a realm that should resist that kind of thinking. And maybe this is the time to reclaim our idea, the writers' idea of success. Having time is successful, a long

afternoon and a high stack of good books, a reliable pen, curiosity and verve, enthusiasm and the butane of a brilliant idea. The act of creating, of beginning with nothing and the slow process, the evolution of inspiration is a sacred place with no room in it for dollar signs. That's business and that's for later.

I worry when we buy international postage coupons and send our words, with our money out into the world of strangers to be judged. Goethe said: Do not hurry, do not rest. There's a Chinese proverb about heading in the same direction until you get there. There is an apprenticeship stage, a time when you're alone having a heart to heart talk with your blank page. Silence is necessary and the quick-scheme publishing promises are distracting, capable of endangering writers who are just getting used to the sound of their own voices. This is not the time to be waiting by your mailbox for the photocopied list of 20 strangers that made the cut and the list of the next five deadlines for the next five contests. Win big, big, big! We are innocent but we're not gullible, right? And we've got to get used to walking before we enter any running contests. ■

Stay-tuned for more musings about the muse: The Winners, the Losers and How We Play the Game.

Empathy and understanding on tap at Ma Fed – Dec. 8

Sure the days are still golden. The trees a blaze of colour. But wait . . . soon the dark will nibble away at dawn and dusk, and the time of shovelling, schussing and shape-shifting (from beach togs to Michelin-man-parka-gear) will be upon us. Before we all hunker in to finish a good manuscript, time to call a halt in plot's progress, don your sparkly best togs and talk, and sashay down to the Fed for our annual Meet, Eat and Greet. The Fed's the place to be at 3 pm. on Thursday, December 8. The perfect setting to rub more than elbows, drop sotto voce comments into idle chitchat about your recent advance, or whinge about the minky pittance from Fly-by-Night publications. Your writing kith and kin will all be there. Jane always makes the tables groan and your tummy say "howdy." The cider steams and the punch bowl introduces democracy to wit. Be there or be square. It's your Fed's annual Open House and all Fed family and friends are warmly welcome. ■