

eastword

The Eastword Interview – Michael Isaac

“Long ago a young cougar by the name of Ajig wandered away from his family. He soon became lost in a strange and beautiful forest.”

So begins Michael James Isaac’s *How The Cougar Came To Be Called The Ghost Cat/Ta’n petalu telui’tut skite’kmujeway mia’uj*, released this month by Roseway Publishing. The story goes on to detail, in both English and Mi’kmaq, Ajig’s journey to find a place of belonging in a world filled with mystery and confusion, leading him to make a decision that will stay with readers long after they’ve turned the final page of this powerful and touching piece of writing.

Michael James Isaac is a Mi’kmaq from the Listuguj First Nation in Quebec. The eldest of six children, he is married to Susan Hayward, with whom he has five children. Fourteen years in law enforcement and several more with various federal departments in Ottawa preceded his return to university at age 40, where he obtained a B.A. in anthropology/sociology from Cape Breton University, and a B.Ed. and an M.Ed. in administration from St. F.X. Mike currently teaches within the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board.

You’ve packed a lot of diverse experience into your life – how did this lead to you consider writing a children’s book? Were there any formative experiences that drove you to write this particular story?

The diverse experiences were the result of life’s many opportunities for change and the personal need to accept the change. The many lived experiences allowed for both personal and professional growth. Open mindedness allowed me to feel comfortable to explore and learn about myself and the many worlds around me.

It was during my second year at St. Francis Xavier University, which was seven years ago now, that I was required to write a children’s story which had a message or moral for a course assignment. I was lost at the start



Michael Isaac and Dozay (Arlene) Christmas

but then I looked to my many lived experiences and found one which I could develop into a story. I must credit Brian MacDonald, an English professor, who with his encouragement gave me confidence in my writing ability. I was told by another professor that I should publish my story and that it was powerful. I thanked him for his comment and jokingly said a mark will do for now. But a few signs led me to truly consider publishing my story.

I was hired by the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board to teach grade five at Shipyard Elementary. I took the opportunity to read my story to my class and various other grades within the school. I was overwhelmed by the response I received from the children. I continue to use my story as a teaching tool. You might call this process my market research.

continued on page 2



WRITERS' FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA

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What led to its publication with Roseway? How did your relationship with illustrator Dozay (Arlene) Christmas come about, and do you have anything to say about the collaboration between writer and illustrator?

I was at a Mi'kmaq language conference and my story came up in a conversation. Again I was encouraged to publish it. So two publishing firms were suggested and Roseway was willing to pick up my story. It was an exciting day when I received the letter stating that they were interested in publishing my story. I approached a few illustrators and Dozay (Arlene) Christmas was the one who gave me the confidence that she would be able to interpret my story very well. In our discussions she expressed excitement about the project and the sample drawing she provided was vivid and expressive. She also was able to see herself in the story as the main character. All this clearly stated to me that she was the right person for the job.

There are powerful messages to be taken from this story by readers both young and old, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal. Have you learned anything from the feedback you've received from readers thus far?

Well, the children whom I've read to have clearly embraced the concept of respecting and embracing diversity. They also see the pain that it may cause if people are not treated with respect and kindness. I was told by one reader that it was a simple story with a powerful message for all ages.

I found that depending on who may be reading the story they were able to connect or relate to it personally or know a family member who they saw as the main character. I had two adults tear up a bit as they read the story; they were able to connect to the story on a personal level. Another comment received was that it was sensitively done and poignant. Overall I'm receiving positive feedback.

From where you stand, what sense do you have of Mi'kmaq writing in the region?

I would like to see more writings which express the experiences, both internal and external, in the lives of Mi'kmaq people. What we need is a hook which captures the attention of young readers. That hook is lived-experience stories which the youth can relate too. This will allow them to better understand their own reality. Having them written in Mi'kmaq and English will help develop and sustain their development in the reading of both the Mi'kmaq and English languages.

Do you have any observations or advice for aspiring children's writers? Do you plan to continue publishing stories? If so, what do you foresee in your writing future?

I encourage those who have a story to tell to do so. And find an illustrator that can bring your story to life. I enjoy writing and love reading stories to children. I've started my second book which will again appeal not only to First Nations People but people in general. Dozay has also agreed to once again illustrate my story. I would like to someday to take a stab at writing a novel. ■

Executive Director's Report

Nate Crawford

October is Mi'kmaq History Month in Nova Scotia, as it has been for 17 years, since Premier John Savage and Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy "set their hands in peace and friendship and caused their seals to be affixed on this first day of October, 1993." Related events went on in private and in public all month, including the launch of Roseway's new book *How The Cougar Came To Be Called The Ghost Cat/Ta'n petalu telui'tut skite'kmujeway mia'uj* – an interview with author Michael James Isaac can be found in this issue.

Another key event which took place in October was Prismatic 2010. Founded several years ago by Halifax's Onelight Theatre, Prismatic annually brings together culturally diverse artists for a week of performance, collaboration and dialogue. This year's festival focused largely on Aboriginal art and artists, and culminated in a three-day conference which brought together nearly 100 culturally diverse artists and arts workers from across Canada for some remarkable discussion about where we've been, where we are, and where we're going. From Prismatic's post-conference statement:

"We have finally grown to the extent that Aboriginal and culturally diverse professional artists can have significant discussions, planning and implementation in a more advanced and self-determined way. We are charting our future and the flow of the cultural river of Canada has been noticeably re-directed by the events taking place both inside and outside of the Prismatic conference," notes Debajehmujig Storytellers' Joahnnna Berti.

Policy-makers at the Canada Council for the Arts agree that this conference has been recognized as an historic event: Prismatic 2010 broke down barriers of geography, artistic practice and identity to bring Aboriginal and culturally diverse artists for the first time to share and learn from one another and to develop strategies to work together to bring our voices, experiences and artistic vision into the light.

In considering new directions and roads not yet taken at WFNS, Aboriginal programming has returned again and again to the forefront of my mind. Attending the Prismatic conference was one of many baby steps toward evolving WFNS programming that aspires to reflect the interests of everyone who lives here. I recently attended the Winnipeg International Writers' Festival, and among the readings I took in was one by the Manitoba Aboriginal Writers' Collective, a dynamic group of First Nations and Métis people both young and old who presented a diverse program of songs, poems and stories. Hopping from a Mainstage poetry reading, which

featured the astonishing poet Nora Gould reading about her experience as a rancher in Northern Alberta, to the Aboriginal Collective's reading at Aqua Books, I felt that in one evening I had learned how Place sits in the bodies and souls of the people in the region from a key cross-section of its current inhabitants.

I have a different sense of place when it comes to my relationship with Nova Scotia. I grew up surrounded by Mi'kmaq people, places and mythologies that seemed to me, in my childhood mind, to be as much as part of my life as anyone's. I had not yet learned to make the woeful distinction between "us" and "them" that tends to evolve as what we call maturity takes hold. I knew that people had swooped in and stolen the land from the people who lived here – I learned that much in school – but the school I learned that in was called Glooscap Elementary, and when we were told the etymology of the building's name, I assumed that the legends it had sprung from were active and strong. It was hard not to think about Glooscap and the mythology that surrounds him when I woke up with a view of the Blomidon cliffs every morning.

Yet as I grew older and experienced directly the strange and complicated relationships between "us" and "them," I began to think in more critical terms. These legends, stories, and traditions – they had seemed to me to course around us and exist in some kind of Ghost World, one that was lost long ago and only accessible if I attuned my mind just so and looked past the stores, the roads, the Glooscap Elementaries – the things that settlers built – to see and feel things from a more sublime angle. Yet once, as a teenager, I had arrived at that angle, it occurred to me that perhaps these stores and roads and schools – perhaps *these* made up the Ghost World, and had simply been placed temporarily upon something more eternal and important.

These thoughts and experiences inform the way I contend with my personal heritage as a Nova Scotian to this day. There's a reason why I have a map of our region above my desk that is labeled "Mi'kma'ki" as opposed to "New Scotland." Do these two Ghost Worlds yet co-exist to make a real one? Do we share stories like we share feelings, hopes, shames, laughter? I hope that new friends made in Manitoba and at Prismatic, and new friends to be made in the future, might help myself, and WFNS, to continue examining this question. ■

Who's doing what

■ **Devon Code's** short story, "Uncle Oscar," was a finalist for the 2010 Writers' Trust/McClelland & Stewart Journey Prize. Included in *Journey Prize Stories 21*, "Uncle Oscar" was published in the Fall 2009 issue (#168) of *The Malahat Review*. The \$10,000 Journey Prize, awarded annually to an emerging and developing writer of distinction for a short story published in a Canadian literary publication, is made possible by James A. Michener's donation of his Canadian royalties from his novel *Journey*, published by McClelland & Stewart in 1988. The winner of the Journey Prize is selected from among the stories that appear in the current volume of *The Journey Prize Stories*, published annually in the fall by McClelland & Stewart. Devon's story collection, *In a Mist* (Invisible Publishing, 2007), was chosen by *The Globe and Mail* as a notable fiction debut of 2008.

■ Writer/actor **Josh MacDonald** had two movies featured at the Atlantic Film Festival in September – *The Corridor* (a sci-fi thriller directed by Evan Kelly) and *Faith, Fraud & Minimum Wage* (directed by George Mihalka) a contemporary comedy based on MacDonald's hit play *Halo*.

■ **Steve Vernon** was featured in the Fall 2010 edition of *Our Children, Halifax's Family Magazine* in an interview with Christina Copp discussing his writing and his move into books for kids. Steve is the author of two volumes of ghost stories and a children's picture book *Maritime Monsters*. Nimbus will publish *Deeper*, his first novel for young adults, next year.



Inspired Script participants at the 30th Atlantic Film Festival. Left to right **Don Aker**, Roger Maunder, Joadie Jurgova and winner **Megan Wennberg**

■ Four Atlantic writers took part in a series of screenwriting workshops under the Atlantic Film Festival's 2010 Inspired Script Program, which culminated in an intensive pitching session on September 19.

Newfoundland writer Roger Maunder, Nova Scotia writer Joadie Jurgova and WFNS members **Don Aker** and **Megan Wennberg** were selected to work with Toronto screenwriter Noel Baker over a period of four months developing story ideas through treatments to feature-length screenplays.

Pitching expert Jan Miller then coached the group on techniques for "selling" a script, which the writers used as they competed for \$10,000 in development money provided by the Harold Greenberg Fund. Arranged in a "speed-dating" format, the pitching event held at the Delta Halifax enabled each writer to pitch

to four groups of three producers for 15 minutes each.

Telefilm Regional Director Gordon Whittaker and filmmaker Alan Bacchus chose **Megan Wennberg's** script "Crooks and Nannies" as the recipient of the Greenberg funding, but all four writers agreed that equally valuable was the opportunity to work intensively with Baker and Miller and to talk with a variety of film producers who provided feedback that will shape future drafts. The group also extended a special thanks to AFF Inspired Script Coordinator Alyson Sanders, who worked tirelessly to ensure a successful workshop experience for everyone involved.

■ CBC Radio's Stephanie Domet was the host and HRM poet laureate **Shauntay Grant**, Music Nova Scotia nominee Kev Corbett, and Heather

Kelday were on hand and on stage to celebrate **Chris Benjamin's** first novel, *Drive-by Saviours* (Roseway) in September at The Company House, Halifax. In October, Roseway, an imprint of Fernwood Books, also launched *How the Cougar Came to Be Called the Ghost Cat* by **Michael James Isaac** and illustrated by Dozay (Arlene) Christmas at the MicMac Native Friendship Centre, Halifax.

■ Seen in the October pages of *Halifax Magazine*: **Jon Tattrie's** cover story of Paul Talbot, who uses the lessons of his rough-and-tumble youth to help a new generation of North End kids. And **Marjorie Simmins** great profile of **Harry Bruce**.

■ The Canadian Children's Book Centre's *Best Books for Kids & Teens 2010* features the best new books for preschool, elementary school and high school students. Fed members and their books in the 2010 edition are: *Pumpkin People* (Nimbus) written by **Sandra Lightburn** and illustrated by **Ron Lightburn**; *Sleeping Dragons All Around: 20th Anniversary Edition* by Sheree Fitch (Nimbus); *Martin Bridge: Onwards and Upwards!* by **Jessica Scott Kerrin** (Kids Can Press); two books by **Lesley Choyce**, *Skate Freak* (Orca Currents) and *Hell's Hotel* (James Lorimer); *The Boy Kelsey* by **Alfred Silver** (Great Plains Publications); *Dragon Seer* by **Janet McNaughton**, (HarperCollins); two books by **Vicki Grant** *Not Suitable for Family Viewing* (HarperTrophyCanada) and *Res Judicata* (Orca); and *Getting Dads on Board: Fostering Literacy Partnerships for Successful Student Learning* by **Jane Baskwill** (Pembroke Publishing). For details on *Best Books* visit www.bookcentre.ca



■ Powerhouse writing group The Scribblers were out in full force at the Gala in September: Seated from left to right are **Joanna Butler**, winner of the 2009 Barkhouse Award; **Graham Bullock**, second place winner in the 2010 YA category; **Lisa Harrington**, author of the 2010 Nimbus YA title *Rattled*; and **Daphne Greer**, second place winner of the 2010 Barkhouse Award. Standing, left to right are **Jennifer Thorne** and **Jo Ann Yhard**, author of *The Fossil Hunter of Sydney Mines*, also a 2010 Nimbus release.

■ The Halifax Club Literary Luncheons are a monthly treat. Lunch is about \$20 and open to non-members. Check out www.halifaxclub.ns.ca. Mystery and mayhem were featured in October with **Pamela Callow**, whose first novel *Damaged* debuted to critical acclaim, **Allan Donaldson**, author of *The Case Against William Owen*, and **Anne Emery**, author of the popular bluesman/lawyer Monty Collins mysteries set in Halifax. A few days later Anne was off to Toronto for the International Festival of Authors, where she read from her latest mystery, *Children in the Morning*, and participated in Criminal Minds, a round table discussion with Louise Penny, Lisa Scottoline, John Lawton and Andrew Pyper.

■ **Silver Donald Cameron's** latest book is *A Million Futures: The Remarkable Legacy of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation* (Douglas & McIntyre). Don chronicles the political background of the foundation and brings alive the stories of many of the scholarship recipients.

■ The Writers Federation of New Brunswick celebrated its 25th anniversary October 16 at WordsFall, a day of workshops and readings held in Miramichi. On hand to launch their newest books were **Wayne Curtis** (*Long Ago and Far Away: A Miramichi Family Memoir*, Pottersfield Press) and **Sheree Fitch** (*Pluto's Ghost*, Doubleday Canada available in print and as an e-book)

continued on page 6

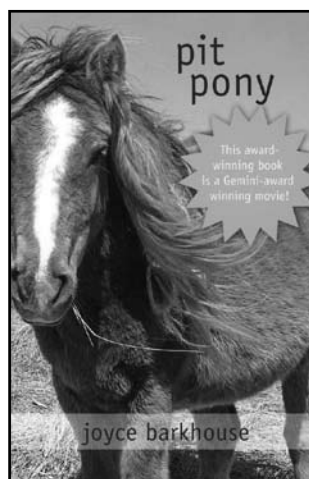
■ **Jan Coates** of Wolfville launched *A Hare in the Elephant's Trunk* (Red Deer Press) at St. Mary's University in October. Author royalties will be shared with Wadeng Wings of Hope, a registered charitable society raising funds to support education in Southern Sudan. She was inspired to write the book by Jacob Deng, one of the so-called "Lost Boys of Sudan," who graduated from SMU this fall. Jan was mentored by Gary Blackwood in the WFNS 2008-09 Mentorship Program while she was writing the book.

■ **Jon Tattrie** was the judge in the nonfiction category of the 2010 WFNB Literary Competition. And **Shandi Mitchell** was a judge in the Commonwealth Short Story Competition.

■ The Designer Café, on Main Street in Kentville, hosted October Country, a month-long exhibition of artist/illustrator **Ron Lighburn's** paintings for the harvest season. From the scenic to the decorative and the serene to the whimsical, Ron's paintings celebrate the iconic images of fall.

■ **Open Heart Forgery**, an online journal of poems and lyrics aiming to energize Halifax writers from the grass roots up, published **Heddy Johannesen's** poem "Under A Blood Moon" in its October issue. Check out <http://ohforgery.com>.

■ **Ryan Turner** (*What We're Made Of*, Oberon) and **Steven Mayoff** (*Fatted Calf Blues*, Turnstone) are on the 10th Annual ReLit Awards shortlist for their short story collections. The ReLit Awards acknowledge the best new work released by independent publishers. ReLit is short for Regarding Literature, Reinventing Literature, Relighting Literature ...



■ Formac has released a new mass market paperback and e-book edition of a Maritime classic – *Pit Pony* by **Joyce Barkhouse**. This new edition boasts an afterword by Zoe Lucas, world authority on the wild horses of Sable Island and one of the island's few permanent residents.

■ **Frederick Vaughan's** eighth book is *Viscount Haldane: The Wicked Stepfather of the Canadian Constitution*, published by the University of Toronto Press. Fred's previous books include *The Canadian Federalist Experiment From Defiant Monarchy to Reluctant Republic* and *Aggressive in Pursuit: The Life of Justice Emmett Hall*.

■ **Richard Provencher's** poetry is in *The Penwood Review*, *Caduceus*, *Message in a Bottle*, *phai'tude Literary Magazine*, and *Barrier Islands Review*.

■ The results for *Grain Magazine's* 2010 contest, Short Grain (with Variations) are in. And **Jennifer Stone** of Mineville was pleased to discover she took the top prize of \$1,250 in the fiction category. Her story "Thomas and the Woman" will be in *Grain's* Winter issue, 38.2.

■ More than 20 children's authors, illustrators, musicians, and storytellers – including **Philip**

Roy, author of the Submarine Outlaw series – visited Hamilton, Ontario's, Westfield Heritage Village in September to meet their fans and lend a hand to raise funds for literacy at Telling Tales, A Family Festival of Stories. Launched in 2009, this free one-day festival drew over 4,000 attendees in its first year, and raised \$20,000 for Hamilton-based literacy programs.

■ **Nicole Dixon**, a published fiction writer and final year Master of Library Sciences student at Dalhousie University, read from her work at the Killam Library. The September reading showcased creative current Dal students.

■ **George Elliott Clarke** is the subject of a course at the University of Duisberg-Essen in Germany. "The Poet of Africadia – George Elliott Clarke" will focus on George's novel *George & Rue*, his play and opera libretto *Beatrice Chancy*, and poetry.

■ **Munju Ravindra** has a piece in the recently released anthology *Hope Beneath Our Feet: Restoring Our Place in the Natural World* (North Atlantic Books). She writes, "Also, they've selected my piece as one of the 'favourites' and I'm quoted on the website sandwiched in between Barry Lopez and Alice Walker. So, that's good, right?"

New Members

S. Jane Affleck
Alexandra Barr
Bob Bent
Carmelita Boivin-Cole
Stephen Boudreau
Laura Bourassa
Isabelle Brousseau
Serena Cassidy
Fiona Day
Bryan Elson

Michael James Isaac
 Maggie LaPointe
 Howard MacDonald
 Heather Mackenzie-Carey
 Trevor MacLaren
 Nina Munteanu
 Tan-Nee Ng
 John O'Brien
 Randall Perry
 Megan Power
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Maureen Hull is Writer-in-Residence at PARL

The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library's (PARL) 2010-2011 Writer-in-Residence is Maureen Hull. Maureen is an award winning children's/young adult author, short-story writer, poet and a writing mentor with the Writers' Federation. This fall she'll be in residence at several of the public libraries in Pictou County, while in January 2011 she will be in-residence at the new Antigonish Town & County Public Library.

This fall, the PARL Writer-in-Residence will offer two 5-week workshops: Writing Poetry, October 14 to November 12 at the Pictou Library and Writing Memoirs, November 18 to December 16 (Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m.) at the Westville Library). For more information about the writing workshops and to register (as seating is limited) drop by your local library, or visit www.parl.ns.ca

In addition, local writers who would be interested in having their work reviewed, or an individual mentoring session with the Writer-in-Residence at the library are asked to contact Steve MacLean, at Regional Library Headquarters (755-6031/toll-free 1-866-779-7761).

The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library's Writer-in-Residence program is supported with funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Heritage & Culture's Cultural Activities Program, and the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board.

Maureen Hull was born and raised on Cape Breton Island. She studied at NSCAD, Dalhousie University and the Pictou Fisheries School. Before and during her formal education she worked in the costume department of Neptune Theatre. Since 1976 she has lived on Pictou Island in the Northumberland Strait. Between 1976 and 1998 she worked as a lobster fisher; for seven of those years she home-schooled her two daughters. She began writing in 1992.

Her fiction and poetry has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. Her short story collection, *Righteous Living*, Turnstone Press, 1999, was short-listed for the Danuta Gleed Award, and several of her stories have been read on CBC Radio. Her second picture book, *Rainy Days with Bear*, 2004, was short-listed for the Ann Connor Brimer and Blue Spruce awards. Her first novel, *The View from a Kite* was published by Nimbus/Vagrant in September 2006 and won the inaugural Moonbeam Award (for YA mature issues).

In 2009, her co-authored illustrated children's e-storybook, *Lobster Fishing on the Susan B*, a digital partnership with the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library, won the Canadian Library Association's national Innovation award. Nimbus Publishing released the printed version of the storybook, *Lobster Fishing on the Sea* in spring of 2010. ■

30th AFF unveils a new generation

Ron Foley Macdonald

The Atlantic Film Festival has come and gone for another year. In the midst of some thirtieth Anniversary hoopla, it delivered a fascinating picture of an industry and art form in transition.

While the regional material in the AFF encompasses shorts from emerging filmmakers along with work designed for the small screen – both television and computer monitors – the real measure of what's going on in the motion picture-making scene is the number of feature films unspooled on the big screens during the festival.

2010 saw nine feature-length films from the Atlantic region. Two were documentaries (*Drummer's Dream* and *Man of a Thousand Songs*), one drama was from New Brunswick (*Dog Pound*, a youth prison drama directed by a European). One television movie – *The Sea Wolf* shot in Nova Scotia – was primarily a “service” production made for German and Canadian television but was cut into a two-and-a-half-hour “festival” version for theatrical screening. The bulk of the features were Nova Scotian-made.

Several films were not completed in time for this year's festival, including Rohan Fernando's *Snow*, Mike Clattenburg's *Afghan Luke*, PicnicFace's *Roller Derby Movie*, Thom Fitzgerald's *Cloudburst*, and Jay Dahl's *There Are Monsters*, which means that the lineup for the 31st AFF already looks strong.

The two documentaries were made by established veterans of the Atlantic Canadian moviemaking scene. John Walker's *A Drummer's Dream* had already made an extraordinary impact at this year's Hot Docs festival in Toronto. William D. (Bill) MacGillivray's *Man of a Thousand Songs* was the only Atlantic feature at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Both films saw the directors at the top of their game. *A Drummer's Dream* aptly captured all the joy and extraordinary musicality of a world-class drummer's camp filmed in central Canada during the summer. *Man of a Thousand Songs* revealed songwriter Ron Hynes as a musical artist whose inspirations and demons were deeply intertwined. Directors MacGillivray and Walker were rewarded with full houses, excited audiences and jury honours. It's terrific to see that the vision and vitality of these filmmakers remains undiminished as they continue along their extraordinary careers.

What the 30th AFF also saw the emergence of a couple of players who've been near-constant presences on the Atlantic filmmaking scene. Writer/director/producer Paul Kimball – who has made a name for himself across North America as an expert in paranormal issues in film and television – delivered his first feature drama, *Eternal Kiss*, after a fascinating career in performance arts television and documentary. Writer/actor **Josh MacDonald** launched not one but two scripts in director Evan Kelly's Sci-Fi thriller *The Corridor* and legendary filmmaker George Mihalka's contemporary comedy *Faith, Fraud and Minimum Wage* (based on MacDonald's hit play *Halo*).

While Kimball and MacDonald spent years getting their scripts from the page to the screen, Laura Dawe managed to do so in far less time. Primarily known as a visual artist, Laura Dawe managed to make her feature film, *Light is the Day*, almost entirely outside the standard process of public funding and agency input, relying on Halifax's vibrant North End arts scene by selling paintings and hosting fundraising musical performances by members of Halifax's bustling indie milieu. Dawe's feature is a Bergmanesque chamber drama *menage-a-trois* about three alienated young people who escape to the country as an unnamed social crisis takes place around them.

Like Kimball's *Eternal Kiss* and MacDonald's *The Corridor*, *Light Is the Day* is a genre film that takes the standard conventions of commercial film and bends them to fit an imaginative, made-in-Atlantic-Canada setting. These are stories that show us not only how we look at ourselves but, within a wider frame, reveal how we look at the larger world. While these Nova Scotia-made films don't necessarily flaunt their setting as much as, say, your average Newfoundland movie there's no question that there is a new Bluenose film aesthetic emerging from this latest generation of cinematic storytellers. More universal in their outlook, and surely less insular, filmmakers such as Kimball, Dawe and MacDonald have no apologies for reaching out to the largest audiences possible.

With literally hundreds of film students graduated from Halifax's three film schools now hitting the ground, it will be interesting to see how the East Coast feature film scene looks when the AFF hits its fortieth and fiftyeth birthdays. ■

The Freelance Beat – Writing for trade magazines

Sandra Phinney

Freelance writers often overlook trade publications as potential markets, largely because they are not visible. Rarely sold at newsstands, the majority of trade magazines are sent directly to private audiences – usually to members of a particular trade, business or profession. More likely than not, every doctor, pilot, banker, baker, embalmer, and trucker belongs to at least one professional organization, if not a handful of them.

In some cases, trade magazines are mailed to corporate stockholders, government departments, agencies, or educational institutions. Others are created as marketing tools by retail giants and are offered at checkouts or mailed to card-holding customers. My guess is there are as many trade publications as there are regular mainstream publications in Canada, so the market potential is *vast*.

Similar to writing for consumer or on-the-shelf magazines, there's a wild range of pay rates from pittance to princely sums.

Remember the old adage, "Write what you know?" Add to that, "write what you are interested in." So, for example, if food strikes your fancy, visit cooking schools, food technology centres, processors and restaurants – and get copies of the trade publications they subscribe to.

Sure. Writing for some trade journals can be a bit technical and dry. Penning a story about basement waterproofing for a construction magazine or the latest feeding technology for pigs for a farm publication may not appear to be a scintillating topic yet weave in a little human interest and even dry

topics can be a lot of fun. I once had an editor ask if I would write about funeral co-ops. Turned out to be fascinating.

Once you've read a handful of trade publications, you'll notice that they frequently feature profiles. So, for example, if you know of a lawyer who has a penchant for flying kites, it could make for a great story in *The Lawyer's Weekly*. Does your pharmacist collect exotic birds? Do you know a scientist at a nearby university who's discovered a new gene? Has your family doctor just come back from doing a stint for Doctors Without Borders? Related professional publications might be interested.

Tip # 1: The fastest way to break into trade publications is through short, newsy items. Or pitch a story for a special section or profile. These tend to be freelance written.

Tip # 2: Get on the mailing list for trade associations and attend conferences or trade shows in your area of interest. Soon, story ideas and information will flow to you. You don't have to know a lot about a subject area, but you have to be able to find out *who does* – and who will talk to you when you need them.

Tip # 3: Ask your friends, relatives and colleagues who work in particular industries to give you a copy of the trade publications they (or their employers) subscribe to. I did that a few years ago and ended up with publications related to everything from nursing, teaching and music to race cars, firearms and finance.



Tip # 4: Snoop around. Keep your eyes open. Any time you're in a waiting room or check-out look for trade journals. They're everywhere! Also, every time you interview someone find out what magazines they subscribe to. Don't be shy about asking for a couple of back copies. I've not only picked up some great markets this way, but it's also given me ideas of ways to spin out a rewrite about the same person or company, for a different magazine.

Tip # 5: Call editors of trade publications. Unlike editors of consumer magazines, they will frequently send you copies of their publication and talk quite openly about their publication's freelancing needs. Also check out the magazine's website – you can often find its editorial calendar for the year by looking under the media/advertising tab.

continued on page 10

Tip # 6. Some corporations carry a series of magazines on related topics. For example, Rogers Health Care Group has five publications related to the pharmaceutical professions (three in English and two in French – www.pharmacygateway.ca/contactus/adsales.jsp). Such magazines can be a gold mine for freelancers as they often have weekly e-news supplements that are a bottomless pit for news items. They also tend to pay the same rates for website content and they often want updates on a regular basis, some almost daily..

Where to find trade publications:

The Canadian Writer's Market, 18th Edition, updated by Joanna Karaplis and published in 2010 by McClelland & Stewart has a good section titled "Trade, Business, Farm & Professional Publications." You can get an idea of just how useful this book is by checking it out through Google Books, where a free, limited preview is available.

Canadian trade publications:
www.allyoucanread.com/canadian-trade-magazines/

US trade publications: www.tradepub.com/

As I'm writing this I just remembered hearing about a local fish plant that is in start-up mode to flash freeze fish. Hmmm. Trade publications related to fisheries, business and food popped into mind for starters. Bet y'all could come up with three more possibilities! ■

Sandra Phinney writes from her perch on the Tusket River in Yarmouth County, NS. Her workshop on Travel Writing has been rescheduled to Saturday November 20 at the WFNS office. See ad in this issue or contact her at s.phinney@ns.sympatico.ca

Sylvan Greyson wins Woozles writing contest

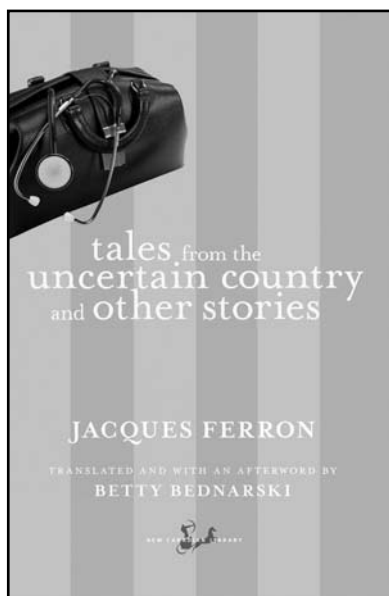
This fall, Woozles Bookstore in Halifax hosted their first annual writing contest for young people (ages 6-13) and hooked two Fed members, Philip Roy and Steve Vernon, and one Fed friend, Terilee Bulger, into judging the stories and offering valuable critiques to the young scribes. Woozles was pleased to announce Sylvan Greyson (age 13) of Halifax as the winner! Way to go Sylvan! Maybe we'll see your name amongst future Atlantic Writing Competition entries and WFNS member application forms. Until then, *Eastword* is pleased to reprint an excerpt of Sylvan's winning story:

I had been twelve when Akan was born. Everyone had thought that I would be an only child and Akan was a surprise. To me, it had seemed like a present when he was born and I became his third parent whenever Mama or Father weren't around. I taught him how to shoot a bow, hold a knife and dance. He had never been excited by the knives or the bow but when I taught him dancing, he was fascinated by the instruments. Akan could spend hours, banging on the drums or experimenting with the notes on flutes. Akan eventually started playing the music while I danced. But when I turned fifteen, Mama and Papa started to bring me to village meetings. They never told me why, but everyone knew it was to prepare me for when they weren't there and I was Chieftess. Suddenly, my time was taken up with lessons, lessons on other tribes, lessons from Mama and from Father. I treasured the time I spent with my friends or even alone.

The sound of laughing and boots walking about woke me from the memories. About thirty men were headed to the village, their weapons dangling from their belts. I froze, remembering the day of Akan's first birthday. The village had been celebrating, dishes of food and music playing from every corner of the village. There were no sentries posted that day, we had made peace with our neighbours and it was a celebration. Around the end when everyone had eaten and people were giving Akan their gifts, from all around, black figures emerged from the shadows and grabbed the closest person. The people outnumbered us by at least twenty. Everything was chaos, people were screaming, trying to fight back. The roof of one of the huts caught fire and showered everyone with ash. At last everything was quieter, ten of the white men had been captured, eight dead. We had no dead but we had twenty missing. We burned the dead and prayed. The next day, the warriors assembled and left to find the slave traders. I was only thirteen, so I stayed with the children and waited. Finally, the party of warriors returned, with half of the people that were taken. The whole village mourned for two days as if those people had died.

Those men didn't see what was wrong with what they were doing or how much pain they would cause, they were only in it for the money. ■

ImPRESSed & E-pressed



Tales from the Uncertain Country and Other Stories

Jacques Ferron

Afterword by Betty Bednarski

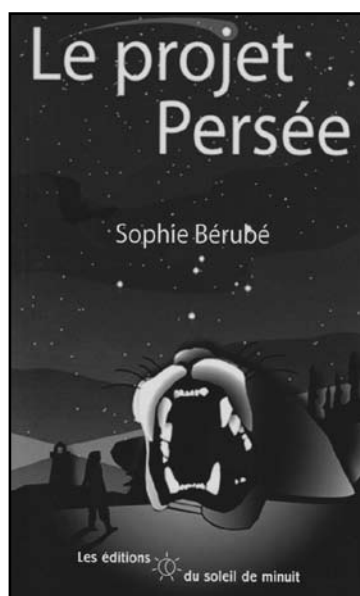
Translated by Betty Bednarski

New Canadian Library, Aug. 2010

\$21.95, ISBN: 978-0-7710-9404-0

In these fantastic tall tales a bull turns into a lawyer, a lonely Alberta cow's ghost longs for Quebec, and Ulysses comes back to Ithaca Corner, Ontario. Jacques Ferron writes metaphysical fables, political satire, portraits of men and women in all walks of life, and wry comedies, with great originality and a profound sympathy for the human condition. These 41 sparkling classics are among the most celebrated works in modern Quebec literature. They appear in this original New Canadian Library collection in a specially revised and expanded translation by Betty Bednarski.

Betty Bednarski is a professor of French at Dalhousie University.



Le projet Persée

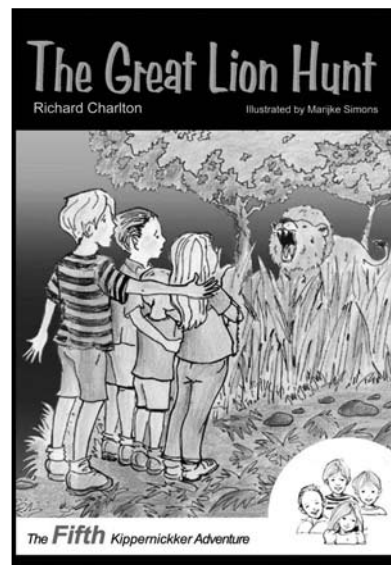
Sophie Bérubé

Les éditions du soleil de minuit, \$9.95

mai 2010, ISBN: 978-2-922691-79-5

Élise Chan-Dugas, alias Cassiopée, ne pense pas survivre à l'été. Ses parents ont en effet décidé de l'exiler en Nouvelle-Écosse chez sa tante Diane. Elle sera donc loin de sa meilleure amie Orion et de leur galaxie bien à elles pendant l'événement le plus important de leur vie, le projet Persée. Cass fait la connaissance de Prudent Robichaud, un sexagénaire un peu original qui est mordu d'histoire et qui lui fait découvrir ses ancêtres acadiens. L'été se met en grande vitesse et Cassiopée en oublie presque Orion et leur projet Persée... Heureusement, grâce à Prudent, Cassiopée réalise que l'amitié et la destinée se promènent souvent main dans la main dans l'univers, là où tous et toutes ont une place.

Sophie Bérubé vit en Nouvelle-Écosse. Elle s'intéresse aux gens, à leur culture et à leurs particularités. C'est au cœur de ces expériences que naît son écriture.



The Great Lion Hunt

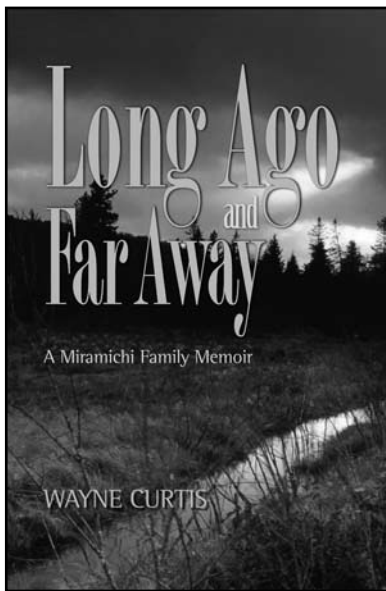
Richard Charlton

Little Fishes Publishing, Sept. 2010

\$7.99, ISBN: 978-0-9738-438-59

When Matthew returns from an adventure, he tells Nicolas, Jonathan and Sarah he has been to Fricka and they must come back with him and help capture the lion that is taking all the cattle in the village. The Kippernickkers use their adventure key and eventually meet Matthew's friend Kimau and they all set to work building a trap for the ferocious lion. The African adventure twists and turns until Sarah makes a great observation and her discovery leads to the problem being solved.

Richard Charlton emigrated from England to Canada in 1975 with his wife and their three children, settling in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. He created the Kippernickker stories for his grandchildren in California, who asked for the stories so often he finally had to write them all down.



Long Ago and Far Away
A Miramichi Family Memoir
Wayne Curtis
Pottersfield Press, Oct. 2010
\$19.95, ISBN: 978-1-897426-20-3

Long Ago and Far Away is a poetic yet honest look at growing up in very difficult times. Wayne Curtis depicts how a family lived and prospered during the late 1880s when his grandfather was a young man. The story then follows the lives of Wayne and his father, chronicling Wayne's youth and adult years in rural New Brunswick. He brings to life an extraordinary time and place and reflects upon the changes that have all but erased those days gone by. But the book is also a reminder of what it was like growing up in the backwoods of New Brunswick with all its joys and hardships.

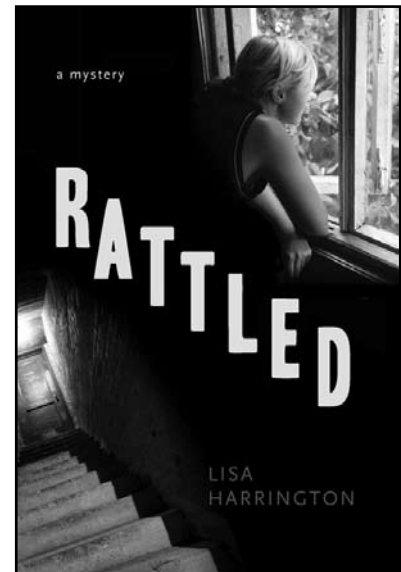
Wayne Curtis was born and raised in the rural Miramichi community of Keenan. He's the author of three novels and four collections of short stories. This is his thirteenth book.



Snow for Christmas
Doretta Groenendyk
Acorn Press, Nov. 2010, ages 3–8
\$12.95, ISBN: 978-1-894838-49-8

Doretta Groenendyk's fourth book combines the whimsy and cheer of her vivid oil paints with the magic of a snowy Christmas to create this beautiful ode to storytelling. Prompted simply by her Christmas wish for snow, a child sits with her family, conjuring up their favourite snow-filled memories. From giant snowballs that race you down the hill to skiing off the roof, from snowmen goaltenders in pond hockey to caroling in a blizzard, each person's memory prompts another, creating a heart-warming book that is perfect for sitting around the tree, telling stories, while the snow falls outside.

A graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Doretta Groenendyk's whimsical paintings can be found in galleries throughout the Maritimes. She paints, illustrates, writes, and teaches art in Canning. Doretta is the illustrator of the children's books *Bounce* and *Beans and Burn* and the author and illustrator of *I'm Writing a Story*.

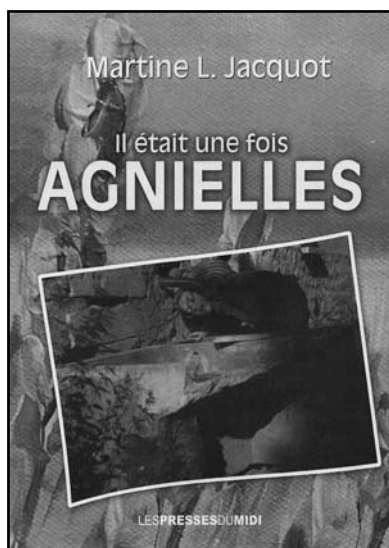


Rattled: A Mystery
Lisa Harrington
Nimbus, Sept. 2010
\$11.95, ISBN: 978-155109-783-1

Fifteen-year-old Lydia, resigned to a boring summer in Halifax, is thrilled when Megan and her gorgeous brother Sam move in across the road. But their rude and hostile mother, Mrs. Swicker, does everything she can to stop Lydia and her flirty older sister, Jilly, from getting close to the new neighbours.

Lydia stumbles across two baby rattles, engraved with the names Amy and Michael, and a gun hidden in a box in the Swickers' basement. Lydia's suspicions that Mrs. Swicker is not who she says she is are mounting, but she has no idea what a twisted, dangerous secret she has uncovered until it's almost too late.

Lisa Harrington graduated from Mount Saint Vincent University with a degree in education. After a number of years substitute teaching and working with children, she tried her hand at writing. Her short story, "A Nanna Mary Christmas," was published in *A Maritime Christmas*. Lisa lives in Halifax. This is her first novel.



Il était une fois Agnielles
Martine L. Jacquot
 Les Presses du Midi, Toulon
 \$21.50, ISBN: 978-2-8127-0165-8

Les années 70. Les communes. La liberté qu'on chante sur des guitares. Les chantiers de travail pour sauver les vieilles pierres. C'est ce que l'auteure a vécu vers la fin de son adolescence, comme de nombreux jeunes de l'époque. Ça se passait dans un village haut-alpin, Agnielles-en-Bochaîne. Cette expérience se poursuit dans plusieurs recherches : pourquoi ce village avait-il été abandonné, et comment cette région a-t-elle inspiré des écrivains tels que Giono? Un petit livre qui sent la lavande et l'air pur des cimes. Des pages qui parlent de ce que certains lieux ou événements gravent dans notre inconscient.

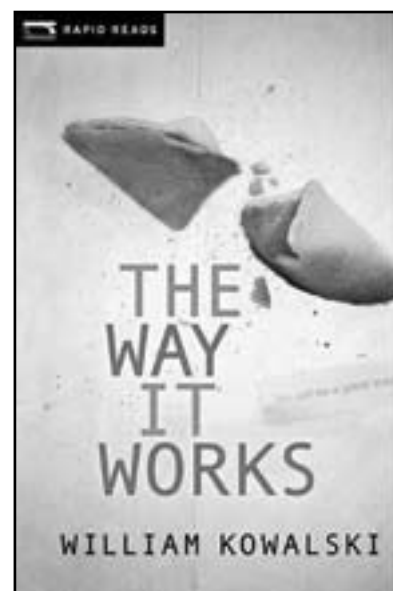
Martine Jacquot, who has studied and lived in France, England, Switzerland and Canada, writes poetry, novels, short stories, essays, and articles, in both English and French. Her work has also been translated into Russian, Portuguese, Italian and Arabic.



Raphael's Riddle
Karen Kelloway
 Bryler Publications, November 2010,
 \$12.95, ISBN: 978-0-9866425-3-1

'If you find this riddle ...' reads the first line of the Supreeze poem Raphael's grandmother, Oma, has puzzled over since she was Raphael's age. Oma discovered the riddle, along with a pendant, many years ago hidden in an ancient text. Raphael knows the pendant is special, but is it magic as well?

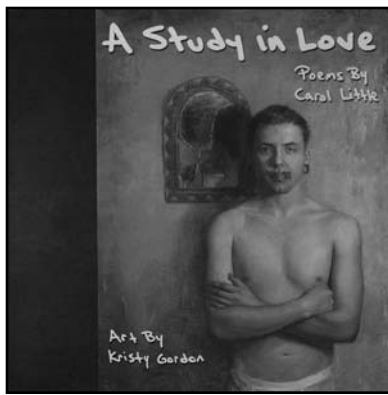
Karen Kelloway started her career as a freelance writer in Whistler, BC and is now a certified executive coach in Nova Scotia. She is also the author of *Nail It! Six Steps to Transform Your Career*.



The Way It Works
William Kowalski
 Orca Book Publishers, Oct. 2010
 \$9.95, ISBN: 9781554693672

Walter Davis is young, handsome, intelligent, dynamic and personable. The product of a biracial marriage but abandoned by his father as a young child, he prides himself on three things: his drive to succeed, his fine clothes and never having been late for anything in his life. Walter is also homeless and presently lives in his car. Walter navigates love and life with no fixed address and only resilience, ingenuity and his drive to succeed can bring him back from the brink of despair.

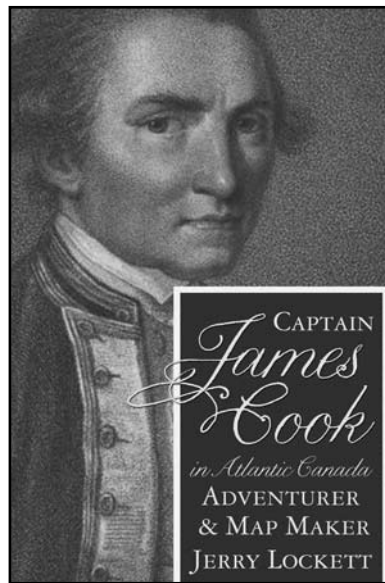
William Kowalski is the author of the novels *Eddie's Bastard*, *Somewhere South of Here*, *The Adventures of Flash Jackson*, and *The Good Neighbor*. Since 2002, William has lived with his wife and two children in Nova Scotia.



A Study In Love
Carol Little
Featuring Artwork by Kristy Gordon
Little Books, June 2010,
\$24.95, ISBN: 978-0-9866259-0-9

A Study In Love is a visceral analysis of love and loss, their mutability and interchangeability, and the pain derived from both. Written over a two-year period, these poems explore emotionally sensitive territory in order to garner a deeper understanding of human relationships, boundaries, and tendencies.

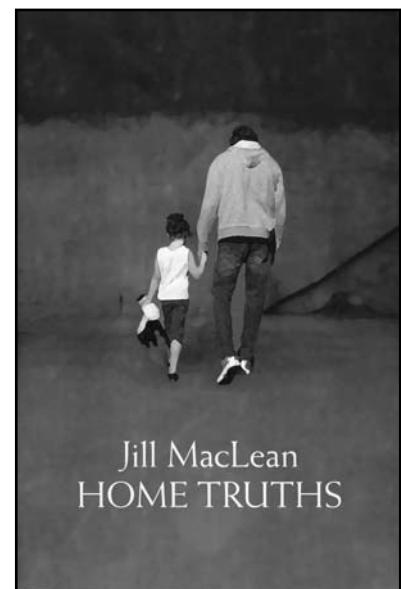
Carol Little lives in Prince Edward Island. *A Study in Love* is her second book, following her novel, *Hide Your Life Away*.



Captain James Cook in Atlantic Canada: Adventurer & Map Maker
Jerry Lockett
Formac, Sept. 2010
\$29.95, ISBN: 978-0-88780-920-0,
Ebook: \$19.95, ISBN: 978-0-88780-944-6

The foundation for the skills, knowledge and experience that took Captain James Cook to the South Seas and around the world was laid during the nine years he spent in Atlantic Canada, after his arrival in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1758. Jerry Lockett tells us of Cook's experiences as a young man and of the influential men who became his mentors and patrons and describes Cook's role in the key British military actions at Louisbourg and Quebec, which brought an effective end to the French regime in North America.

Jerry Lockett has been writing for more than 20 years. He has developed text for websites, including Fungus Among Us and Seaside Live for the Nova Scotia Museum and the Virtual Museum of Canada. In addition to writing, he edits books for a number of publishers in Canada and the United States and operates his own business, Seahorse Communications.



Home Truths
Jill MacLean
Dancing Cat Books, Oct. 2010,
\$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897151-96-9

Brick MacAvoy is saving his money and counting down the 17 months until he can leave home, believing there is no one there worth staying for. He sees his mother as a self-absorbed flake, his dad as a vindictive bully, but when Brick looks in the mirror what exactly does he see in himself?

Bedford resident Jill MacLean has won the Ann Connor Brimer Award for Children's Literature twice, in 2009 for *The Nine Lives of Travis Keating* and in 2010 for *The Present Tense of Prinney Murphy*. She makes her home in Bedford.

A conversation with Andrew Steeves of Gaspereau Press

It's been said this is the year of the small press as four of the five books on the shortlist for the prestigious ScotiaBank Giller Prize come from small presses.

One – *The Sentimentalists* by Johanna Skibsrud – is from Gaspereau Press owned by Andrew Steeves and Gary Durnford in Kentville. To discover more about Gaspereau Press check out www.gaspereau.com

Andy Brown, editor of *Matrix* magazine published in Montreal, spoke with Andrew Steeves of Gaspereau Press in *Matrix* 87 New Maritimes. It's reprinted here with their permission. *Matrix* is at www.matrixmagazine.org.

AB: So here we are with Andrew Steeves in the King's Arms Pub in Kentville, Nova Scotia. Wild Letterforms of Kentville, Nova Scotia was a presentation I saw you give at the Wayzgoose last Fall [2009] and found it very interesting.

AS: The world we live in is full of letters. It's so much a part of our lives that we forget about it. We pay more attention to clothes. ...

We forget that letters are this incredible system that's married to language and the letters we deal with in society are, for the most part, prefabricated letters.

Generally, people don't know how to form a letter with their hand these days, with a brush, pen, or chisel. Instead, we push a key and the letter magically appears. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but something is lost when you lose the connection with how things are made, with how the body shapes things. We have the same problem with hamburger and houses. We go to the grocery store and pull a cellophane-wrapped item off a shelf. We consume passively instead of create.

Anyway, at the time I put this Wild Letterforms talk together, I was biking from Wolfville to Kentville every-day, travelling the back routes where there was graffiti.

AB: Well, to call it graffiti would be misleading. It's not even tagging really.

AS: Well it's not up to Montreal standards, no. It's pretty bush league. There are other examples of hand-made letters around town. So I started documenting all kinds of stuff, from welded letters to letters chiseled on old tombstones. There are examples of well-made local stones from the 1770s and '80s, letters made by some guy with a hammer and chisel and a unique idea about what a letter should look like.

So I put a slide show together which talked about these spontaneously made letters, and about the ecology,

the diversity, of letterforms possible in a small town. From the stenciled "Don't Park Here" signs to the crayon "Rabbits for Sale" notice.

And what I discovered is that the wild letterforms were still holding their own against the commercial drone of pre-fab Tim Hortons and McDonalds signage. That stuff can really take over and kill out the native letterforms if you let it.

AB: What is the project you're working on based on the old Planter tombstones?

AS: That project was born of the methodology which got me into publishing and printing in the first place, the thinking being that if you want to learn about something, go back to its root form and figure out how it works. Don't wait for the machine to break, just take it apart.

AB: You've figured out a way to import the letterforms off the tombstones into the computer to make a font?

AS: When I got into printing and publishing I didn't know anything about it. I came in blind. My background is actually in Criminology. [Laughs.]

AB: There are a lot of young offenders in publishing. I publish a lot of them actually.

AS: I'm not going to comment on your list, Andy. But I've always been interested in making things, too. I had some experience at the University of Ottawa student newspaper as a production manager and cartoonist. I was fascinated by books and printing. When I started to publish books, I decided that I wanted to know more about typography and design. So I went to the root of the art: Letterpress printing and metal type.

AB: How do you dabble with letterpress printing? You have to have a letterpress machine. Where do you get it?

AS: We bought some equipment from some local printers. This stuff was usually sitting in the back of their shop under a pile of boxes. I also got involved early on in what is called the Dawson Collection, which is now at NSCAD but was then housed at Dalhousie University. There was a night class which I enrolled in, I lasted only three evenings. I learned just enough to go home and dabble on my own. ... The course was geared to hobbyists and I was not a hobbyist. I went home and studied on my own. This has always been our technique, Gary [Durnford] and I.

continued on page 16

AB: Had you started a publishing company at this time?

AS: We weren't doing any printing but we'd started to publish books. We acquired a perfectbinder first. Around 2000, we found it too frustrating to outsource our printing, so we just bought a 19-by-25-inch two colour press and taught ourselves to print. We were control freaks about it, I guess. We wanted to control both the cost and the quality and this was the best way to do it.

AB: Do you want to explain who Gary is?

AS: Gary and I met down here, though we are both from New Brunswick. He was a stay-at-home dad and computer programmer when I met him. He had degrees in forestry and theology. No courses in publishing for either of us. Anyway, where were we?

I became interested in the history of type and how it was made. These days, type is almost exclusively manufactured in digital form. So I bought some software and taught myself the ropes by modifying existing fonts that I owned, fixing kerning problems and building missing characters. Sharpening my tools, you could say.

At the same time, I was working on a book about local gravestones, and I got very interested in the stones cut in the late 1700s by an anonymous stone carver known as the Horton Carver. So I took a lot of photographs, and from those I plotted the characters out on the computer to make a basic typeface. It's very rough, but we use the type for setting the display type for a local historical book project. But I didn't perfect the font for commercial release. Maybe some day. There's another font I want to [develop] first, based on early Dutch models.

AB: Since I've known you, you've talked about this international letterpress community, certain presses in the States, and you are actually involved in that you letterpress-printed the cover of a journal devoted to letterpress printing. I'm in publishing and I don't know about this community and I'm sure 99.99% of people don't know about it.

AS: That publication is called *Parenthesis*, and it is published twice annually by the Fine Press Book Association. The spring issue is produced in the U.K. under the editorial direction of Sebastian Carter. Sebastian is letterpress royalty, a major name. His father was a stone cutter with Eric Gill, who is the famous creator of the Gill Sans font. The North American edition comes out in the fall. It's edited on the west coast, but designed and produced here in sleepy old Kentville, far away from the centres of culture. But you are right that that letterpress community is its own little bubble.

AB: What are some of the presses in the States involved in this community?

AS: There are many. Peter Koch of Koch Editions in Berkeley is amazing. Janus Press, Larkspur. Bird & Bull. There are big gatherings on the west coast (CODEX) and on the east coast (Oak Knoll Book Fair) each year where people show their work. Most of these people produce expensive limited edition books that they sell at high prices to collectors. The quality ranges widely.

At Gaspereau, we occupy a middle ground between everyday trade publishing and printing and the fine-art world of letterpress printing. We try to have it both ways. I find the letterpress community a little crazy sometimes.

AB: What's crazy about it?

AS: Well for one thing, it can be very elitist. People who buy these books can get very uptight, white gloves and storage vaults, etc. The books this community produces are often very beautiful things, but they are not often practical or functional as text transmission devices.

On the other side, you have the crass world of commercial publishing which is all about cheap product and profit for shareholders. That world also results in books that don't quite perform their function. The problem is not that the technology is bad, the problem is inattention and wrongheadedness. A lack of imagination and vision.

So it's not an issue of letterpress being automatically better than modern printing. I have as many examples of terrible letterpress printing as I do of photocopied flyers. It's possible to mess both of these up, or to do both of them well.

And that whole world of collecting is totally bizarre. Personally, I want to make beautiful things, but real beauty resides in the function of an object, not in ornamentation. And it's important to me that the waitress in Wawa, Ontario, can afford the books I produce if it means enough to her.

We recently did an edition of an essay by Thoreau called *Walking*, which sells for \$200. That is expensive on one hand, but in terms of what books sell for in the letterpress printing community, that's very inexpensive.

As far as trade books go, why is it that we are willing to spend a lot of money on disposable things but feel that a \$25 book is expensive? It's the price of an extra large pizza, for crying out loud!

AB: A \$15 paperback is the price of a movie now. Yet people still go to movies. You do need to be practical and have a market. Someone has to buy the \$60 well made book.

AS: But here's the question: Why is there no market in this country for Literary books? I wonder what effect the funding environment we function in here in Canada has on things, when it comes right down to it. The government has its fingers in culture, and though it's well intended it makes a mess of things.

There seems, for example, to be this conception in government that if little presses had better marketing skills that they could sell all kinds of books, as if an ads ever sold a poetry book. It's nonsense. Culture doesn't work that way. This funding infrastructure has everything to do with supporting an industry and little to do with culture at the grassroots.

AB: I would argue that the Canada Council's mandate is not to support industry but rather culture.

AS: The Council is constantly directing money into activities that they believe will help grow companies bigger and make them more like the big players. What we really need in this country is help fostering a readership.

Think about hockey. Why do we view it as being a part of our culture? Because so many Canadians are involved in it when they are growing up in their communities. It dominates television culture for a certain portion of the year. It is hard to avoid. Almost every community has a hockey rink, most likely funded in part by public money. Even though few kids make it to the NHL, hockey is a part of their lives. Soccer is like this in other communities, or figure skating.

But my point is that government invests in community sports infrastructure, and the result is a community of people who are interested in sport, both as participants and as consumers.

AB: How do you cultivate a culture of interest for esoteric beautiful books of poetry? How do you sell it to the average individual?

AS: I guess to oversimplify the matter, I would suggest you invest heavily in the educational system, and in cultural infrastructure that everyone gets to use – not just in industrial infrastructure like publishing houses.

AB: But why would they be reading your \$25 letterpress book? As opposed to *The Twilight Series*? There seems to be two things going on here. There's reading and there's the quality of the book. And those are two totally separate

things. I think reading is being promoted but it's middle of the road sold in vast quantities. There needs to be an appreciation of the book as opposed to ebooks or pulp, essentially just text, which is all going to go online anyway. For books to survive, any printed book, not just Gaspereau-style books, they will need to become an objet d'art since pretty much every piece of text will just be online.

AS: That's conjecture in the largest sense.

AB: That's what I do. I'm a conjecturer.

AS: I think books are only a small piece of the equation. What I'm really all about is getting people to pay attention. You take the small corner of the culture that's devoted to books and writing and ask why no one is reading the types of books published by literary presses,

the reflex response is that it's because publishers are not professional enough about marketing and promotion.

What I'm trying to suggest is that we dig deeper. If we build stronger communities culture will follow.

Right now there are programs that fund the writing of books, the publishing of the books, the marketing of the

books. Hell, governments fund everything except buying the books too.

And yet despite all this investment in "culture," very little benefit trickles down to the citizen in the street. Only the people directly involved in the industry (the writer, the publisher) really benefit. The average citizen has very little contact with this official literary culture. I don't like it.

But let's say you take the same amount of money and instead of funding the arts from the top, you fund it from the bottom. Let's say instead, you gave every Canadian a voucher to buy one Canadian-published book this year. There are many problems with this suggestion, but the big advantage is that you have engaged the general populace with literary culture. Right now that's kind of what's missing.

Right now we are propping up an industry that is dysfunctional. We all have a bunch of really great books in our warehouses that nobody's reading, even though



continued on page 18

they helped fund their production through their tax dollars.

I would rather get those books out there. After all, a good book is a ticking time bomb, it can sit there a long time. If it's well made, that is.

AB: Look at John Donne. Hundreds of years.

AS: Or even more locally a book like *Rockbound*, a long-forgotten novel which became an overnight success with CBC's Canada Reads. Books are patient. If you make them well enough they can be very patient.

AB: This could lead to the whole idea of regionalism. You are talking about building communities. Coming from Montreal we are in a huge city but considered regional because we are Anglophone, and here you are in the outer rim and perhaps you are given a break with the funding bodies. But it seems it could be positive or negative. You very much represent Kentville, Nova Scotia, but also have a national presence. Your authors are from all over, not just Nova Scotia, but you could be pegged as a regional press based on your focus. You may not do as well in downtown Toronto because of what else is around.

AS: Hard to know. Your assumption is that there are some real benefits to being located away from the centre, and perhaps there are. For me, I think I benefit most from escaping the distractions of a large, culturally hyperactive city. I'm able to focus here ...

AB: And probably have a more independent vision.

AS: Yes. It helps me to escape the herd mentality. I'm not looking over my shoulder all the time or thinking, What happens if I don't go to so and so's book launch?

AB: Because there are no launches!

AS: Well, there certainly are fewer. The challenge, however, is to find a way to continue to engage with the broader culture and not get too sheltered. You need to escape provincialism. You have to think internationally. For me, regionalism is a formless, empty idea because everywhere is regional. It's only an issue when you allow some places to pretend they are not regional. Like Toronto. It's a region, too. But we don't often talk of it that way. We tend instead to use regional to mean "not the mainstream."

AB: There are regions in Toronto. They are called neighbourhoods.

AS: Exactly. So I think you have to take a local economy view of these things, and that you also have to move forward and backward through time. What I mean

by that is that while I'm here, in little old Kentville, I'm also an international publisher whose peers include the living and the dead.

AB: Like Leonard Woolf.

AS: Yes! And Guttenberg, Christopher Planten, John Baskerville and Francis Meynell.

AB: Maybe Guttenberg will be on a Canada Council jury.

AS: He was terrible with money, so he'd fit right in with Canadian publishers. I think that if you want to occupy a place outside of the mainstream you need to adjust your thinking. You need to get yourself off the ladder of advancement, plant your feet somewhere and focus on perfecting your art. You have to slow down and pay attention to your craft. Mind your own business, you might say.

AB: And you're going off the grid.

AS: Yes, quite literally. My wife and I sold our house and bought 35 acres of woodland, about 20 minutes outside town near a place called Black River. We are building a house, and doing most of the work ourselves. It's a good piece off the road, so we're going to use solar electric, wood heat and some propane backup. In the meantime, we're pretty much living in a tent for the summer. It's awesome.

AB: And your children will have to bike to town to use the Internet. Is this what you mean when you talk about going off the ladder?

AS: What I mean is that we get sold this bland idea about what is normal, what is possible, and what is important. And we tend to go along with it because it's too much work to imagine things being any other way. Sometimes as we mature we can see that it's not really that simple, and we rebel to whatever degree we are comfortable with. Or, we step off the ladder. I get a lot of joy out of designing and making things, out of solving problems. I also get a lot of joy out of the natural world. So building a house in the woods is a way of combining these things, instead of just buying the suburban home and large screen TV.

AB: You once said that if anyone put a canoe in her submission to you that you would publish it. [laughs]. That's your editorial process.

AS: Well, yeah, canoes are an interest of mine. But what I'm really looking for is people who are paying attention. People who pay attention to the world around

them and are able to condense what they discover down into something worth saying.

AB: How does that translate to your publishing list? What is your editorial mandate for Gaspereau? There's poetry, non-fiction, biographies, novels. What's the link?

AS: The link is engagement. The link is paying attention and finding some useful or entertaining way to talk about what's discovered.

AB: Do you want to talk about the situation at Gaspereau? The future? You've been very public about it.

AS: Well I'm frank about things, if nothing else. We had a rough year last year. When you start a business from scratch there is no handbook to show you the way. You make your mistakes, and if you are lucky you survive them and you learn.

In the middle of the decade we saw some pretty substantial returns from Chapters/Indigo as they were trying to shuffle their own financial troubles onto the backs of their suppliers. We'd always been careful what we sold to them, but we still took a huge financial hit.

We had purchased the current printshop building at about that time. It was the right thing to do, but the financial stress of buying the building stretched us near to breaking.

This all left us in a precarious position as far as credit and cash flow. By the time we realized that we were carrying too much staff, carrying too much debt and carrying too much overhead, the hole was pretty deep.

So we had to act. We cut staff, which is an incredibly difficult thing to do in such a small shop. But now we've sized ourselves at a more sustainable level. Ideally, I think the right size staff for our operation is five people, and we're about that now.

I can't complain, however. If you're going to have a problem, have the type of problem where you can work harder and dig yourself out of it.

AB: What's your future? What's your five-year projection?

AS: Gary and I like doing things and making things, not managing people. So having nine employees, like we did at the peak, means more managing and less doing. I have to figure out how many books we should really be doing each year. We were doing 12 or more books a year, but I think somewhere between 10 and eight books a year is the right size.

AB: Talking to younger, or at least newer, publishers is that they have all this great stuff they want to publish. They

want to publish 20 books but have money for four. Then they say, Oops and fold. Too big too fast.

AS: It's back to that old underlying, unspoken suggestion that literary presses have to get bigger to get stronger and sustainable. I think that's ill-considered.

AB: The more niche the better as far as I'm concerned. Finding a niche and excelling at that niche.

AS: I think you're right. Part of what helped us get through this difficult winter was our ability to sell our excess production capacity. Doing commercial printing for our community helps keep our lights on and helps underwrite our cultural activities.

Besides, I love the mischievousness of applying my skills to the everyday visual landscape of a small town. So whether it's local pizza flyers or posters for community events, we're able to subvert the normal shabby design that is available in a small town by bringing our considerable experience and knowledge to the table. It opens up the possibility that the average citizen can live in a world where everyday objects are being made, and being made well, by their neighbours.

AB: We were talking about your list. I want to talk about Robert Bringhurst, because I think he is an incredibly interesting person. Gaspereau is publishing a number of his books, including his *Selected Poems*, and he is famous for his "textbook" *Elements of Typographic Style*. Did you study design?

AS: No. Not formally. I encountered Robert through that book, though. And I ended up writing at one point and asking him if he'd be interested in working on a project together.

AB: Like a fan letter.

AS: More an invitation from a publisher. I recognized in Bringhurst qualities that I valued. So if that's a fan letter, okay then. We ended up working together on a project called *Ursa Major*, which was an odd, polyphonic text printed in multiple ink colours. At that point it was the most complex piece of typesetting that I'd taken on. I was feeling around in the dark on that one because I didn't know what was going on half the time or how to pull it off. Yet I was working with "The Guy," and he seemed pleased with my contribution. As a typographer, I've always worked intuitively, so I suppose I'm constantly surprised that not everyone can set type well, given that it comes pretty easily to me.

continued on page 20

AB: Did you just call him up and ask how to solve a problem? How involved was he in the typography?

AS: On *Ursa Major* there was a lot of back and forth, but the typesetting was my task to complete. It was a real productive collaboration, and it cemented our friendship. We've done two volumes of Brighurst's talks, a few shorter books and the *Selected Poems* in the last few years. They are beautiful books, but mostly because they are books that merit reading and rereading through your life.

AB: Has there been a lot of interest in those books?

AS: We did okay with them in Canada. We also sold publication rights in other markets. For example, we sold rights to Counterpoint in the U.S. I'm a big fan of Jack Shoemaker, the publisher at Counterpoint. He publishes good books and good authors, guys like Gary Snyder and Wendel Berry. We sold the U.K. rights for the *Selected Poems* to Jonathan Cape. But in Canada, these books have been well received. We've also won some design awards for these books.

AB: Since you brought it up, you just won five Alcuin design awards. Why are you monopolizing these awards?

AS: No idea. I just make these books. I don't know who is going to love them or hate them. Brighurst's *Selected Poems* won first place in the poetry category this year. There are eight categories, and I submitted to three categories and took first place in all of them. Which doesn't always happen, mind you.

I have to add that I don't put much stock in awards. So I have to be circumspect when I win as well as circumspect when I don't. Regardless, it's always gratifying when your colleagues take the time to say, This is good work.

AB: Do you think your particular design aesthetic is exactly what the Alcuin Awards jury looks for? Just coincidentally?

AS: There is an element of that, perhaps. The Alcuin competition tends to have a nostalgic sensibility. My design aesthetic is informed by 1920s and '30s British book typography. Houses like the Nonesuch Press and early Penguin were great influences on my work. At that time, people like Francis Meynell and Jan Tschichold were trying to figure out how to marry centuries of typographic tradition with mass production technologies in order to produce inexpensive books that were not 'cheap' crap. They often succeeded.

And that's at the heart of what we do at Gaspereau Press, take the strange mix of letterpress and offset and digital stuff and to bring it all together in order to make good, strong functional books that are reasonably priced.

So maybe if a press is doing more urban, gritty, modern design it has less appeal for the Alcuin juries. It's possible to do that sort of design well, however; but it's rarely done well. Usually "designers" for literary presses just slop some type over an interesting photograph and stir it all around.

AB: You are not using colour photographs.

AS: Not often. It's often a lazy approach, I think, to rely on a photograph to carry a book cover. But I'm biased. I'm into type. And remember, the Alcuins are about the book as a whole, not just jacket design.

The people coming out of art school and doing book covers, they aren't usually typographers. They are graphic designers. Type is a mere visual element to these people, not a system with a history and a tradition to be learned and understood before it's mucked around with. There are very few good typographers in this country. I can list the living ones I've encountered on one hand: Stan Bevington, Tim Inkster, Glenn Goluska, Robert Brighurst, Will Rueter.

There's a younger generation starting to get the hang of it, though, including people like myself and Jason Dewinetz, and some encouraging work coming from the generation or two younger than me who seem hungry to learn. So I'm hopeful for the future of typography in this country.

AB: I'm going to wind this down. But you mentioned you are writing a book about publishing.

AS: The book is called *Smokeproofs*. In the early days of printing, when a punchcutter was designing a typeface, he had to make a steel punch with the shape of the letter engraved in the end of it. You make the letter shape on the end of steel using files, gravers and counterpunches. You would use this punch to make a mould for the type.

Before you finish a punch, you want to test it and see how it's going. So they would stick this steel punch into the flame of a candle to blacken it and then touch it to paper. It would make a very sharp "proof."

So this book is about testing the things I've been thinking about and working on. Essentially, it's going to be about eight or nine essays on the aesthetic of literary publishing and book design. There's one essay on the poetic line and how poetry is typeset. There are others on the role of book jackets and on the future of book publishing. What the book boils down to what we've been talking about today: ethics, ecology and economics. When I finish building my house, I'll get back to finishing that book. ■

Markets, etc.

■ **Tesseract 15: A Case of Quite Curious Tales:** EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing, based in Calgary, is seeking short fiction and poetry submissions of Young Adult speculative fiction (PG-14 content). Deadline: November 30. Open to both short fiction and poetry. The maximum length for stories is 5,500 words, with shorter works preferred. Pays \$20 for poetry, and between \$50 to \$150 for fiction depending on length. Accepts e-mail submissions. Details at www.edgewebsite.com/books/tess15/t15-catalog.html

■ **Tightrope Books:** (<http://tightropebooks.com>) This Canadian publisher is looking for submissions for an anthology about our relationships to hospitals, medicine, and healthcare to be published in spring 2012. This book will be composed of true stories and reflections from patients, healthcare providers, and loved ones where they meet at the nexus of the hospital, the clinic, or any other site of healthcare provision. Details on website. Deadline for 100-300 word abstracts is Dec. 1.

■ **Freaky Fountain Press** (www.freakyfountain.com) based in Toronto is accepting stories between 2,000 and 8,000 words for their Bad Romance anthology that explores the bittersweet allure of the dysfunctional relationship for an anthology. Deadline: Dec. 1. Details on website, click on submissions. Freaky Fountain says they are not for everyone and many people find their content disturbing.

■ **subterrain:** P.O. Box 3008, MPO, Vancouver, BC V6B 3X5 (www.subterrain.ca) Upcoming theme issue: *Chance* "A roll of the dice, a blink

of the eye. Is it Chance . . . or Fate?" Deadline: January 15. Feel free to interpret these themes in unique and unusual ways. Pays \$25 per poem, and \$25 per page for prose.

■ **Room Magazine:** PO Box 46160 Station D, Vancouver, BC V6J 5G5 (www.roommagazine.com) Canada's oldest literary journal by and about women. *Room* is a space where women can speak, connect, and showcase their creativity. The summer 2011 issue will focus on the theme of Nature. Send your fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry that explores women's animal nature and the natural beauty around us. Send to the attention of Amy McCall by January 15. See submission guidelines on website for details.

■ **Descant:** PO Box 314, Station P, Toronto, ON M5S 2S8 (www.descant.ca) Two theme issues. Pays \$100 on publication. *Renovations* – deadline: March 15. Rewriting *Pride and Prejudice* as a zombie novel. A DJ layering Led Zeppelin overtop Frank Sinatra's crooning. Or Peter Mayle struggling against faulty plumbing, stripping a Provencal farmhouse to its joists and studs to create something new — all are renovations. *Descant* wants to create a space where *Holmes on Homes* can meet Oulipo lipograms. Explore those spaces which exist both on the page and off. Wants stories and poems that renovate what literature can do. Reuse. Recycle. Renovate. *Bosnia, Between Loss and Recovery* – deadline: March 15. See website for details.

■ **Poetry Magazine:** 444 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1850, Chicago, IL 60611-4034 (www.poetryfoundation.org) Published by the Poetry Foundation. Pays on publication at the rate of \$10 per

line (with a minimum payment of \$300), and \$150 per page of prose, for first serial rights. Tries to respond in 6 to 8 weeks, but may take longer. Send up to 4 poems. Accepts online submissions.

■ **Vagrant Press:** Patrick Murphy, Senior Editor, Vagrant Press, 3731 MacKintosh St., Halifax, NS B3K 5A5 (www.nimbus.ns.ca) Nimbus Publishing's fiction imprint, is accepting proposals for full-length works of fiction. Vagrant aims to publish high quality, original novels. Looking for Atlantic Canadian stories with broad appeal, and writing that is fresh, as in modern, innovative – unconventional even – but also sassy and bold. Both contemporary and historical fiction are acceptable; conventional genre fiction (sci-fi, mystery, romance, etc.) is not. Can take them up to six months to review and respond to a submission.

■ **Basket Case Publishing:** (www.basketcasepublishing.com/submissions.html) a Canadian, independent press that focuses on science fiction, fantasy and horror, is seeking novel and graphic novel submissions. Not interested in young adult, erotica, religious fiction, or poetry. Manuscripts should be aimed at an older (aged 20 and up), mature audience. Prefer novels of between 80,000 and 100,000 words. E-mail submissions only.

■ **Dundurn Press:** The Dundurn Group, 3 Church Street, Suite 500, Toronto, ON M5E 1M2 (www.dundurn.com) Publishes Canadian history, military history, politics, current affairs, biography, and fiction. Check website for details.

■ **Flanker Press:** PO Box 2522, Station C, St. John's, NL A1C 6K1

(www.flankerpress.com) Publishes general trade books with strong Newfoundland and Labrador content. Concentrates on regional non-fiction and historical fiction. Detailed submission guidelines on website.

■ **Novalis:** 10 Lower Spadina Ave., Suite 400, Toronto, ON M5V 2Z2 (www.novalis.ca) Novalis says it's the most important religious publisher in Canada. It publishes periodicals and books, primarily in the spiritual and religious fields, in English and in French. Novalis wishes to express the Christian faith in modern society in an accessible and comprehensible manner.

■ **Queen's Quarterly:** (www.queensu.ca/quarterly) A quarterly published by Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, seeks articles, reviews, short stories (2,500 to 3,000 words in length) and poetry. For poetry and fiction, will consider up to six poems or two stories.

■ **Bound Off:** (www.boundoff.com) A monthly literary audio magazine based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Seeks original literary fiction for podcasts. Send stories that are between 250 and 2,500 words long. Does not consider non-fiction or personal essays, poetry, stories for children. Pays \$20 per contracted story.

■ **One Story:** (www.one-story.com) A literary magazine that contains, simply, one story. Approximately every three weeks, subscribers are sent One Story in the mail. Also available digitally. Pays \$100. Detailed submission guidelines on website.

■ **The Dalhousie Review:** (<http://dalhousiereview.dal.ca>) invites contributions of short fiction,

creative non-fiction, poetry, and articles in such fields as history, literature, political science, philosophy, sociology, performing arts, and visual culture.

Contests

■ **Prairie Fire:** Writing Contests 2010 – 423 – 100 Arthur St., Winnipeg MB R3B 1H3 (www.prairiefire.ca) Banff Centre Bliss Carmen Poetry Award (1, 2 or 3 poems per entry, max 150 lines per entry); Short Fiction (1 story per entry, 10,000 words max); Creative Nonfiction (1 article per entry, 5,000 words max). Prizes in each category – 1st \$1,250, 2nd \$500; 3rd \$250. Deadline Nov. 30. Entry fee \$32 includes sub. Details on website.

■ **The Fiddlehead:** 20th annual literary contest: Campus House 11 Garland Court, UNB, PO Box 4400, Fredericton NB E3B 5A3 (www.thefiddlehead.ca) Deadline December 1 postmark. *The Fiddlehead* is 65 and is commemorating 2010 with the \$2,010 Ralph Gustafson Prize for Best Poem and \$500 each for two honourable mentions (up to 3 poems, no more than 100 lines each and \$2,010 for Best Story and \$500 each for two honourable mentions (6,000 words max). Entry fee \$30, includes sub. Complete details on website.

■ **34th Atlantic Writing Competition:** (www.writers.ns.ca/awc.html) Sponsored by the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia. Open to writers in the four Atlantic provinces. Deadline December 3. Seven categories: unproduced play; creative non-fiction; adult novel; short story; poetry; writing for children up to age 12; writing for juveniles and young adults, Details on website. Provides entrants with critiques and feedback.

■ **The Capilano Review:** 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, BC V7J 3H5 (www.thecapilanoreview.ca/contest.php) Invites contest submissions for their Winter 2011 issue Manifestos Now! Send a manifesto – either visual or textual. Deadline: December 15. Entry fee \$35. Maximum length 4 pages. Manifestos Now! seeks to explore, to revisit, and to revive the untapped and unexplored potentials of manifesto in a contemporary context. This issue explores and reassesses the place of the manifesto in our contemporary literary-cultural scene.

■ **PRISM international:** Creative Writing Program, UBC, Buch. E462 – 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver BC V6T 1Z1 (www.prismmagazine.ca) Short Fiction Contest: deadline January 29; 1st prize \$2,000, 3 runner-up prizes of \$200 each. Poetry Contest: deadline January 29; 1st prize \$1,000 and 2 runner-up prizes of \$300 and \$200. Entry fee \$25, includes subscription. Details on website.

■ **The Malahat Review:** University of Victoria, P.O. Box 1700 Stn CSC, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Y2 (www.malahatreview.ca) **Long Poem Prize:** Two awards of \$1,000 each. Deadline: February 1 postmark. A single poem or cycle of poems with a minimum of 10 published pages to a maximum of 20 published pages. A published page is up to 32 lines (or less), including breaks between stanzas. No restrictions as to subject matter or aesthetic approach. Entry fee \$35. **Far Horizons Award for Short Fiction:** open to emerging short-story writers who have yet to publish their stories in book form. One prize of \$1,000. Deadline is May 1, postmark. Length: up to 3,500 words. Entry fee \$25.

Robbie MacGregor & Invisible Publishing

Editor's Note: This interview originally appeared in the November 2010 issue of *Quill & Quire: Canada's Magazine of Book News and Reviews* and is reprinted with Q&Q's permission. Invisible Publishing's home on the Web is <http://invisiblepublishing.com/blog/>

In 2007, publisher Robbie MacGregor launched Halifax-based Invisible Publishing with Nic Boshart after becoming dissatisfied with what he calls "the realities of commercial publishing." MacGregor, who got his start in publishing with James Lorimer, works by day as a reader's adviser for the Halifax Public Library System, where he does PR and tech support.

What was the impetus behind Invisible Publishing?

You have to be a little naïve, possibly a little deluded, to want to work in publishing. Invisible is a literary firm that produces cool, contemporary Canadian books that are cheap and look awesome. The company and those who represent it are also meant to be actively involved in the local arts and culture scenes. Simple enough, right?

It's become almost axiomatic in publishing to treat small presses as "farm teams" that groom writers for the big leagues. What do you think of this assessment?

The world of independent publishing is unique, and there are lots of reasons to be a part of it. There are a lot of intelligent and skilled people who choose to work in independent publishing, where they have more control and greater responsibilities, and

pursue innovative, interesting, or contemporary projects.

At Invisible, we want to see our authors succeed and go as far as they can, and we support them going on to bigger and better things. I guess we're cool with the idea of being a "farm team," though we don't measure an author's success based on whether or not they get called up. When an author does move up to the "big leagues," it should be cause for celebration, but independent publishing is an end in itself.



What are the biggest challenges facing indie publishers in today's marketplace?

This might be the scariest time ever for print publishing, and we need to be crafty, flexible and willing to embrace change.

How do we do that? Independent publishers need to embrace the things that distinguish them from larger operations – they need to embrace the fact that they are smaller, more manoeuvrable, and have access to huge stores of cultural

intelligence, and the means to put that intel to good use.

What kinds of writing most excites you?

I'm most interested in character-driven, contemporary urban fiction. I'm also pretty sympathetic to weird/experimental stuff, as long as it's well crafted. I've recently enjoyed the work of Brian Joseph Davis and Martha Baillie.

What do you envision as the future of the company?

My hope is that Invisible Publishing will persist, that the core group – which now includes myself, Nic Boshart, Megan Fildes, Sacha Jackson, and Jenner-Brooke Berger – will continue to expand as the firm becomes self-sustaining. I don't think it's at all unreasonable to think that Invisible might become a recognized literary brand in Canada. That's what I really want: I want to do something people care about and connect with.

Above all, I want to stay relevant. We can't publish what is traditionally referred to as "CanLit." We have to publish stuff that's cool and has a market and is literary and current and *ours*. ■

Drug, health and dental coverage for writers

If you're a writer looking for more or less affordable health care, drug and dental coverage plans, you might want to check out the Writers' Coalition Program. If you are an affiliate of Access Copyright you are eligible to apply. Visit www.writerscoalition.com. ■

Bill C-32 robs writers of income

Douglas Arthur Brown

(Editor's note: According to evidence presented before the Federal Court of Appeal, 250-million pages of textbooks and other materials are copied for use in K-12 schools in Canada every year. What's being photocopied today by the primary, secondary and post-secondary education sector is the equivalent of 3 million books a year. In 2009, the Copyright Board of Canada certified a tariff to compensate creators and publishers for the photocopying of their works in K-12 schools. Ministers of Education of all the provinces and territories, with the exception of Quebec, along with close to a hundred individual school boards, asked the Federal Court to review the decision. In July 2010 the Federal Court found that the Copyright Board's decision was reasonable in light of the evidence before it. .

As writers, our business is words and stories. We welcome the digital age with its prospects for even wider electronic distribution of our work and the work of other Canadian writers. But we also believe in the basic principle that writers must be paid for their work.

Writers and other creators are part of the cultural fabric of this country; part of a community that tells Canada's stories, reflects our identity as a nation, and informs and entertains. Writers are also a primary producer: an entire industry begins with the product of imagination and skill. Writers earn on average a mere 10% of the cover price of a book – the other 90% supports a network of publishing, advertising, printing, design, distribution, and bookselling businesses.

Writers are key members of Canada's arts and culture industries, which in 2007 contributed an estimated \$85 billion or over 7% of Canada's real GDP. These industries directly employ over 600,000 Canadians. Culture delivers a solid return on investment as well: every \$1 invested directly or indirectly in cultural activities generates over three times that in economic activity. Fully one quarter of Canada's cultural sector workers is self-employed (compared with 16% across all industries). We are among these "entrepreneurs."

To ensure the knowledge economy survives and thrives in Canada, creators must be able to earn a living. However, many parts of Bill C-32 go against the spirit of fair usage threatening to make that living even more tenuous.

There are many new exemptions in Bill C-32 that will affect writers. That is, proposed new uses for which writers will not be paid when their work is used. The most troubling for writers is the extension of "fair dealing" to education. As the Bill is written, anyone who claims to have an educational purpose (from a university professor to a golf instructor) would be entitled to copy substantial parts of our work even though protected by copyright.

Under the current Copyright Act, Ministries of Education and educational institutions pay for "collective licenses" so that teachers and students can legally copy materials (rather than purchasing additional original books or magazines at much greater cost). This is a good balance: educators save considerable expense and creators like us are compensated because their works are used.

If C-32 becomes law we will lose most of our income from these collective licenses. Publishers will also lose this income and the job

losses that result will seriously threaten an industry that already operates on thin margins.

Those who support this exemption point justify it as a savings for education. But licenses represent less than 1% of the cost of education in this country. Educational institutions pay suppliers for the cost of desks and computers and they pay salaries to administrators, teachers, and maintenance staff. How can we support full value for those expenses but not support full value for the content that is being taught in the classrooms? Why would Canada's writers – the people who create the works being studied in our schools – be asked to work for free?

Protection of our intellectual property allows us to continue to write and publish in this country and be a part of what could be a burgeoning sector of our economy in a post-industrial era. Bill C-32 must be amended so we can continue to make a contribution to the cultural and economic fabric of this country.

As creators we are the drivers of the knowledge economy. We earn a living from the content we produce and that content needs to be valued and paid for.

Let your MP know how you feel on this issue. They all have their own websites. The Parliamentary website is another source. ■