

Threshold

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY



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Anthology of Contemporary
Writing
from Alberta



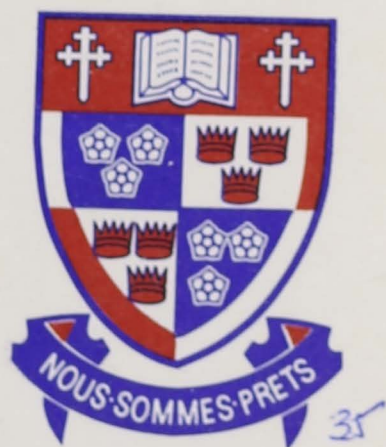
Edited by
Srdja Pavlovic

A threshold is a moment of crossing – a glance back at where we've been, a look ahead to where we're going. *Threshold: An Anthology of Contemporary Writing from Alberta* brings together the visions of thirty-six Alberta authors, both new and established, to give readers exactly such a glimpse. In this sampling of styles and genres – fiction, poetry, short stories, creative non-fiction – you'll discover why Alberta writers are read and respected around the world.

The high calibre of their writing has vaulted Alberta authors to the forefront of Canadian literature, as seen in the disproportionate number of national writing awards that have come home to Alberta. Not only are Alberta writers widely recognized on the national and international stage, but they are also part of a vibrant local literary scene. This climate of exchange and experiment has led to a uniquely Albertan idiom, in which strongly individual voices merge as a powerful collective force.

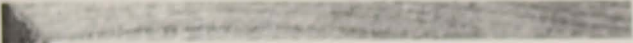
In his introduction to the collection, editor Srdja Pavlovic notes that Alberta writers have adapted world literary trends into "tools for experiencing and analyzing urban living, questions of time, space, and the meaning of life; for exploring one's identity and the sense of home and belonging."

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An Anthology of
Contemporary Writing
from Alberta

Edited by
Srdja Pavlovic

The University of Alberta Press



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FOR THE ARTS
SINCE 1957

LE CONSEIL DES ARTS
DU CANADA
DEPUIS 1957

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this fine collection of work from Alberta writers, the first of its kind in many years. In the pages that follow, thirty-six authors explore diverse themes through their fiction, essays, poetry, and short stories. This body of work suggests that Alberta's literary community is indeed healthy, giving the province a strong and distinct voice. Importantly, this collection includes work by new, emerging, and established writers, making it a text well suited for the study of Canadian literature in high school, college, and university classrooms.

On behalf of Syncrude Canada, I want to thank everyone who played a role in making this anthology possible. Our company is proud to support artistic expression in its many forms and is especially pleased to have formed this new link with Alberta writers.

Eric P. Newell
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Syncrude Canada

Contents

	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	XI
Srdja Pavlovic	<i>Introduction: The Intimacy of Ink</i>	XIII
Linda Goyette	Imaginary Alberta	I
Alice Major	Tales for an Urban Sky	7
	5. The moon of tricycles	8
	7. The moon of magpies quarrelling	9
	10. The moon of strippers	10
	12. The moon of fur coats	11
Roberta Rees	Hoar Frost	13
Richard Stevenson	Wait Till You See Her	17
	That Mournful Ballad Sound	18
Claire Harris	Correspondence	21
Anne Le Dressay	Another Story Altogether	25
	Just Darkness	27
Rosemary Nixon	Kiala	29
Anna Mioduchowska	Singing in the Garden	47
	Small Island	49
	In Bed with a Book	51
Norman Sacuta	Soft Shoe	53
	Death of a Scuba Diver at West Edmonton Mall	55

Peter Prest	Drawers	57
	Sunday Nights in the Early '50s	58
Caterina Edwards	Where the Heart Is	59
Hiromi Goto	Not Your Ethnic Body	67
Joseph Pivato	My Father's Escapes	73
Nigel Darbasie	Bridge Boys	79
	Western Carnival	81
	Noah's Offspring	82
Tololwa M. Mollel	The Olive Tree	83
David Albahari	By the Light of the Silvery Moon	91
Robert Hilles	A Gradual Ruin	97
Greg Hollingshead	Daughter of God	105
Suzette Mayr	Toot Sweet Matricia	113
Ken McGoogan	Chasing Safiya	121
Myrna Kostash	Unmasking the Polish Dissident	135
Peter Oliva	A Day in the Life of Yevgeyi Yevtushenko	143
Douglas Barbour	The Shoes of the Titanic	159
	in the dream Daphne	160
	utamaro's women	161
	Tom Thomson: 'The Jack Pine' 1916-1917	162
George Melnyk	An Exiled Trinity	163
Carol L. MacKay	Dusted on the Road to Madden	165
	Gibbous on Tape	166
	A Place of Clear Meaning	167

Kristjana Gunnars	Zoo	169
Monty Reid	Nisidoro	177
	Stones near Stanley Point	179
	Gossip Shoals	181
Fred Wah	Railing	183
	Artknot Forty Nine	184
	Music at the Heart of Thinking One Two Four	185
	Music at the Heart of Thinking One Two Seven	186
E.D. Blodgett	Summer	187
	O	188
	Kabbala	189
	Playing	190
Bert Almon	Feeding the Power Grid	191
	Hampstead Elegies	192
Rudy Wiebe	Watch for Two Coyotes, Crossing	195
Fred Stenson	Midnight	215
Vivian Hansen	Sounding the Medicine Map	225
Thomas Wharton	Salamander	229
Curtis Gillespie	Guadalajara	247
Tim Bowling	Rhododendron	259
	Family Bible	261
	<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	263
	<i>About the Editor</i>	270

Fred Wah

Railing

The words geese zone in above these deck railings I've just levelled, hover along
the parallel absolute of the opposite shore.

The pilings come out of the lake bed at my blurry eyes older yet sure of the
osprey, the nest.

Goodbye water says moving, even waves.

Honks.

Artknot Forty Nine

Stick to you as patience
Breaking foreign chases
Waiting for disaster
Attracting back the meaning
Facing all the numbers
Taking off your clothes
Sighing by the stove
Obeying all the stars
Rather let this murmuring
Return to disappearance

Stick to you like pasture
Broken foreign chances
Writing more disaster
A tract of surplus wordings
Opacity in marching
Faking naked truth
Breathing through your toes
Climbing up the stairs
Forever playing thoughtful
Repeating all the prayers

Music at the Heart of Thinking One Two Four

Say "Sheh!" to get up from the log to get lost and put into cadence the synchronous foreignicity of zone in order to track your own ladder of exhaust swim into the next story some starving elephant as the imperial slacking of alterity just such a gap in trans to collate the terra of potency except for being frightened by hunting this dispersal of planned punctuation will rob the arrow of its feather the dart of its you.

Some juncture of the moment that requires action, needs to be voiced, even though one might fear a shift from the quiet sitting position to the forces of navigation and their necessary paradigms of anticipation, estimation, and trial. The synchrony of estrangement, the unknown, and mapping could be as simple as willing to climb a ladder in order to learn how to swim. This is, of course, a privileged style of movement and the common can be seen as a gridlock that excludes the external, starves the senses. Wherever potential openings can be located intention is reminded of its uncertainty and at the same time gains new guidance systems.

Music at the Heart of Thinking One Two Seven

The shoulders of eating, the sack full of ginger, the Blakean beach, the other word at the end of the word, the curl from kulchur, the grade for the course, the genome in their home, the rap at the door, the spoon full of the rice, the chop for the lick, the tongue in a knot, the circuits of surplus, the milk in the way, the valley beyond the valley, the end of the world.

No mass is without something else, something added, other. The one and the many. Taste is a gradation of foreignicity: we come across some abandoned specific with the realization that it isn't represented in the sphere of culture surrounding us. These particles of recognition and desire, subalterns and alternatives, solids that could melt into air, are what we use to intervent and domesticate those homogeneous aggregates of institution and industry that surround us.

Notes on Contributors

David Albahari was born in 1948 in the Serbian town of Pec. He was the founder and, for years, the editor-in-chief of *Pismo*, a magazine of world literature, and is an accomplished translator of Anglo-American literature. He is the author of *Words Are Something Else* (1996), a collection of short stories, and *Tsing* (1997), a novel. He resides in Calgary. "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" was published in *Alberta Views* (January 1999).

Bert Almon has taught at the University of Alberta since 1968. He is a native of Texas and a citizen of Canada. His writing students have included Monty Reid, Aritha van Herk, and Norman Sacuta. In 1995, he won the Stephan G. Stephansson Award for *Earth Prime* (1994). His poetry publications include *The Return and Other Poems* (1968), *Taking Possession* (1976), *Poems for the Nuclear Family* (1979), *Blue Sunrise* (1980), *Deep North* (1984), *Calling Texas* (1990), *Earth Prime* (1994), and *Mind the Gap* (1996). Bert lives in Edmonton.

Douglas Barbour is a poet and critic living in Edmonton. He teaches Canadian literature, modern poetry, science fiction and fantasy, and creative writing in the Department of English at the University of Alberta. He has published many books of poetry and critical studies, the most recent of which include *Visible Visions: Selected Poems* (1984), *Story for a Saskatchewan Night* (1989), and *Michael Ondaatje* (1993).

E.D. Blodgett was born on February 26, 1935. For over three decades, he has taught at the University of Alberta, where he lectures in comparative literature. Among his many publications are a monograph on Canadian short-story writer Alice Munro and translations of *Carmina Burana*. He has published several collections of poetry, including *take away the names* (1975), *sounding* (1977), *Beast Gate* (1980), *Arche/Elegies* (1983), *Musical Offering* (1986), *Da Capo: Selected Poems* (1990), *Apostrophes: woman at a piano* (1996), *Apostrophes II: through you I* (1998), *Transfiguration* (1998, with Jacques Brault), and *Apostrophes III: alone upon the earth* (1999). He received the 1996

Governor-General's Literary Award for Poetry for *Apostrophes: woman at a piano*. He lives in Edmonton.

Tim Bowling was born in Vancouver, British Columbia and was raised in the nearby town of Ladner, where he worked for many years in the commercial salmon-fishing industry. Now living and writing full-time in Edmonton, he is the author of two collections of poems: *Low Water Slack* (1995) and *Dying Scarlet* (1997).

Nigel Darbasie was born on the Caribbean island of Trinidad; he moved to Canada in 1969. Many of his poems have appeared in literary journals across the country. *Last Crossing*, a collection of his poetry, was published in 1988. Nigel lives and works in Edmonton.

Caterina Edwards has published two novellas, *Whiter Shade of Pale* and *Becoming Emma*, and a novel, *The Lion's Mouth*, which is being published in French. Her play *Homeground* was performed professionally and published by Guernica Editions. She has also published many short stories in literary magazines and anthologies. With Kay Stewart, she has edited two collections of autobiographical writing by women: *Eating Apples*, *Knowing Women's Lives* and *The Second Bite*. She lives in Edmonton.

Curtis Gillespie is the author of *The Progress of an Object in Motion*, which in 1998 won the Henry Kreisel Award and the Danuta Gleed Literary Award. He lives in Edmonton.

Hiromi Goto was born in Japan and immigrated to Canada with her family when she was three. She now lives in Calgary. Her novel *A Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994) was the 1995 winner of the Commonwealth Writer's Prize Best First Book Canadian Caribbean Region, and the 1995 co-winner of the Canada-Japan Book Award. Her short stories and critical writing have been published in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *Ms. Magazine*, *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature* (1996), and *Due West* (1996). She is an active member of the Calgary Women Colour Collective.

Linda Goyette grew up near Windsor, Ontario. In the late 1970s, she moved to Edmonton and began working with the *Edmonton Journal*. She presently works as a columnist and is considered to be the sharpest pen in Alberta journalism. "Imaginary

Alberta" first appeared in the *Edmonton Journal* and is published in Goyette's book *Second Opinion* (1998).

Kristjana Gunnars was born in Reykjavik, Iceland and came to Canada in 1969. She writes poetry, short stories, and novels; she is also an accomplished literary translator. Her published work includes *The Prowler*, *Zero Hour*, *Settlement Poems 1* (1980), *The Substance of Forgetting* (1992), *Guest House and Other Stories* (1992), and *A Night Train to Nykøbing* (1998). She lives in Edmonton and teaches creative writing and literature at the University of Alberta.

Vivian Hansen is a native Calgarian. She has published poetry, fiction, and non-fiction in such magazines as *Legacy*, *freefall*, *Synchronicity*, and *filling station*. Some of her reviews and essays appear in *Mattoid* and *Forum*. Her first chapbook of poetry, *Never Call It Bird: The Melodies of AIDS*, was published with Passwords Enterprises, and her work appears in *Worldly Treasures: Stories of Our Grandmother* (1999). "Sounding the Medicine Map" was broadcast by CBC Radio in 1998.

Claire Harris lives, teaches, and writes in Calgary. She was awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for her book *Fables from the Women's Quarters* (1985). Her other works include *The Conception of Winter* (1989), *Travelling to Find a Remedy* (1987; the Writers' Guild of Alberta Award and the First Alberta Culture Poetry Prize), and *Dipped in Shadow*. "Correspondence" is an excerpt from her forthcoming book-length poem *New York/Untitled*.

Robert Hilles was born in Kenora, Ontario in 1951; he later moved to Calgary. He has taught computer programming at the DeVry Institute of Technology since 1983. His books include *Look the Lovely Animal Speaks* (1983), *The Surprise Element* (1982), *An Angel in the Works* (1983), *Outlasting the Landscape* (1989), *Finding the Lights On* (1991), and *A Breath at a Time* (1992). His volume *Cantos from a Small Room* (1993) won the 1994 Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry. His latest book of poetry, *Breathing Distance* (1997), was shortlisted for the 1998 Milton Acorn People's Poetry Award. His next collection of poetry, *Somewhere Between Obstacles and Pleasure*, will appear in the fall of 1999.

Greg Hollingshead was born in Toronto. He has published two novels, *Spin Dry* (1992) and *The Healer* (1998); three collections of stories, *Famous Players* (1982), *White Buick* (1992), and *The Roaring Girl* (1995); and fifty stories in literary magazines and anthologies in Canada and the US. In 1993, *White Buick* was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize and won the Howard O'Hagan Award for Short Fiction. In 1995, *The Roaring Girl* won the Governor-General's Award for Fiction. *The Roaring Girl* has been published in Britain, the US, Germany, and China. *The Healer*, which is scheduled for publication in the US and Britain in 1999, was shortlisted for the 1998 Giller Prize, and won the 1998 Rogers Communications Writers Trust Fiction Award and the Georges Bugnet Award for Fiction. Greg lives in Edmonton, where he teaches literature and creative writing in the English Department of the University of Alberta. "Daughter of God" is an excerpt from *The Healer*.

Myrna Kostash was born in Edmonton and educated at the universities of Alberta, Washington, and Toronto. She is the author of four books: *All of Baba's Children*, *No Kidding*, *Bloodlines: A Journey Through Eastern Europe*, and *The Doomed Bridegroom: A Memoir*. She has also written for radio and stage, has done extensive teaching, and has been active on many fronts of cultural politics. She lives in Edmonton. "Unmasking the Polish Dissident" is an excerpt from *The Doomed Bridegroom*.

Anne Le Dressay was born in Manitoba and now lives in Edmonton. Her first book of poetry, *Sleep is a Country*, appeared in 1997. She has also published two chapbooks: *This Body That I Live In* (1979) and *Woman Dreams* (1998). She has taught English and creative writing at Alberta community colleges.

Carol L. MacKay was born in 1964 and raised in the rural community of Ryley, Alberta. She now writes from Bawlf, Alberta, population 300. Her stories and poems have appeared in numerous journals in Canada and the US, including *The Fiddlehead*, *Maelstrom*, *CV2*, *Antigonish Review*, *Whetstone*, and *The Alberta Poetry Yearbook*.

Alice Major has lived in Edmonton since 1981. Her first collection of poetry, *Time Travels Light*, appeared in 1992. Her chapbook *Scenes from the Sugar Bowl Café* won the 1998 Shaunt Basmajian competition. Her second collection of poems is *Lattice of the Years*. Alice is vice president of the League of Canadian Poets. The selections from *Tales for an Urban Sky* were published in *CV2*.

Suzette Mayr lives and works in Calgary. She is the author of *Moon Honey* (1995) and *The Widows* (1998). Suzette teaches at the Alberta College of Art.

Ken McGoogan has published three novels: *Visions of Kerouac*, *Calypso Warrior*, and *Kerouac's Ghost*. His critical volume, *Canada's Undeclared War: Fighting Words from the Literary Trenches*, won the best non-fiction book award from the Writers' Guild of Alberta in 1991. "Chasing Safiya" is an excerpt from his forthcoming novel *The Shaman's Fire*. Ken lives in Calgary and works as the books editor at the *Calgary Herald*.

George Melnyk is an essayist, poet, and historian who teaches Canadian studies at the University of Calgary. He is the author of *Riel to Reform: A History of Protest in Western Canada*, *The Urban Prairie*, *Beyond Alienation: Political Essays on the West*, *The Literary History of Alberta, Volumes One and Two*, and *Ribstones*, a book of poetry. He lives in Calgary.

Anna Mioduchowska was born in Poland and has lived in Edmonton since she was in grade eight. Her poetry, stories, and book reviews have appeared in literary periodicals, newspapers, and anthologies, and have been broadcast on CBC Radio's Alberta Anthology. One of the founding editors of *Other Voices*, Anna is the current president of Edmonton's Stroll of Poets Society. *In-Between Seasons* is the title of her poetry collection published in 1998.

Tololwa M. Mollel is a Tanzanian-born storyteller and author of over fifteen published and forthcoming books for children, including *The Orphan Boy* and *Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper!* His children's books have been published in the US, Australia, Great Britain, and South Africa, as well as in Canada, the latest titles being *Kitoto the Mighty* and *Shadow Dance* (both published in 1998). His short stories for adults have been published internationally and broadcast on the BBC World Service. He lives in Edmonton.

Peter Oliva was born in Eugene, Oregon and grew up in Italy and western Canada. He has published articles and stories in such magazines as *Brick*, *Descant*, *Eyetalian*, and *Quarry*. His first novel, *Drowning in Darkness* (1993), won the Henry Kreisel Award for Best First Book and was shortlisted for the Bressani Prize. The book was broadcast on CBC Radio and was also published in Spain. His new novel is *The City of Yes* (1999). Peter lives in Calgary.

Joseph Pivato was born in Tezze sul Brenta, Veneto, Italy. His major writing interest is exploring the experience of Italians in Canada. In addition to many articles and conference papers on ethnic minority writing, he has written *Echo: Essays on Other Literatures* (1994) and edited *Contrast: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing* (1985 and 1991) and the *Anthology of Italian-Canadian Writing* (1998). Joseph lives in Edmonton, where he teaches comparative literature at Athabasca University.

Peter Prest lives and teaches in Calgary. His poems have appeared in numerous literary magazines across Canada. He has published *At This Time of Day* (1995).

Roberta Rees lives in Calgary, where she teaches creative writing for women. Her work has appeared in various literary journals. *Eyes like Pigeons* (1992) was her first book of poetry. Her prose-poem "Hoar Frost" was published in *Saturday Night*.

Monty Reid was born in Saskatchewan and now lives in Camrose, Alberta. His published work includes *Fridays*, *Karst Means Stone*, *The Life of Ryley*, *The Dreams of Snowy Owls* (1983), and *Bunker Sonnets* (1998). His volume *Flat Side* won the Stephan G. Stephansson Award for Poetry in 1999. Poems published here are from his forthcoming book *Disappointment Islands*.

Norman Sacuta's poetry and fiction have appeared in a number of literary magazines, including *Grain*, *Matrix* and *Prairie Fire*, as well as in such anthologies as *Jugular Defences: An AIDS Anthology* and *Due West*. He lives in Edmonton and works as a writer and editor.

Fred Stenson is a freelance writer living in Calgary. He has published two novels, three books of short stories, and three books of non-fiction. His last fiction title was *Teeth* (1994). "Midnight" is an excerpt from his forthcoming novel *The Trade*.

Richard Stevenson is the author of ten full-length collections of poetry. His most recent books include *From the Mouths of Angels* (1993; winner of the 1994 Stephan G. Stephansson Award), *Flying Coffins* (1994), and *A Murder of Crows: New & Selected Poems* (1998). Richard listens to jazz and teaches Canadian literature, creative writing, and business communication courses for Lethbridge Community College.

Fred Wah has written sixteen volumes of poetry and prose-poetry. He was awarded the 1985 Governor-General's Literary Award for Poetry for his collection *Waiting for Saskatchewan*. His other work includes *So Far* (1991), *Alley Alley* (1992), and *Diamond Grill* (1996). He lives in Calgary and teaches English at the University of Calgary.

Thomas Wharton was born in Grande Prairie, Alberta in 1963. His first novel, *Icefields*, was published in 1995. "Dream Novels: Excerpt from a work in progress" was published in *Canadian Fiction Magazine* (1996) and reprinted in *Best Canadian Stories* (1996) and *Canadian Fiction Magazine, Silver Anniversary Anthology* (1997). Thomas lives in Edmonton and works at the Department of English at the University of Alberta. "Salamander" is an excerpt from his forthcoming second novel.

Rudy Wiebe is the author of several short-story and essay collections, including *River of Stone: Fiction and Memories* (1995), and eight novels, including *The Temptation of Big Bear* (1973) and *A Discovery of Strangers* (1994), both winners of the Governor-General's Award for Fiction. His other works include *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), *Double Vision: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Stories in English* (1976), *Getting Here: Stories* (1977), and *West of Fiction* (1983). His most recent book is *A Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* (1998, with Yvonne Johnson), which won the Viacom Canada Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize and the Wilfred Eggleston Award for Non-Fiction. "Watch for Two Coyotes, Crossing" appeared in *Saturday Night*. Rudy lives and works in Edmonton.

About the Editor

Srdja Pavlovic is a Montenegrin writer, literary translator, and journalist. He is one of the founders of the bilingual literary magazine *Stone Soup*, where he works as contributing editor. He is also a contributing editor for *Mak* literary magazine. His publications include an ethno-monograph, *Mongolian Pictograph* (1989), and a collection of essays on politics and literature, *Western Seesaw* (1997). He has translated and published the works of Brayten Braytenbach, Ken Smith, Jehuda Amichai, Umberto Eco, Jean Baudrillard, Hanif Kureishi, Michael Ondaatje, E.D. Blodgett, Fred Wah, George Melnyk, Monty Reid, and Douglas Barbour. He came to Edmonton in 1996, where he is working toward completing his doctoral thesis in the Department of History at the University of Alberta.

Pavlovic continues: "The effort of Alberta writers to reshape the influences they encounter appears to have the same purpose: to define various senses of identity and explore the traditional knowledge of history through the prism of a postmodern literary approach. This often entails writing about intimate, even sordid, everyday rituals. It means being able to walk through the outer regions of awareness, consciously off-centre, along the edges of experience. All of it has to do with the lyric intensity of a narrative consciousness that refuses to be limited to a single identity or a single form of expression."

From the palisades of Fort Edmonton to the streets of Dar es Salaam, from Calgary's Foothills Hospital to a medicine wheel in the Bow River valley, from the urban sky to the Polish underground, Alberta writers have crossed the threshold of places real and imagined to create this outstanding volume. *Threshold* will keep you spellbound for many days and nights.



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