

# OPEN LETTER

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THIRD SERIES, NUMBER 7  
SUMMER, 1977

...the psychological path of... rather  
...the psychological path of... rather  
...mental change in reading experience that  
...and questions the functional existence of  
...reaching political implications. A firm  
...intimate interrelation and interdependence  
...structure. Language is a huge support  
...question and distribution that reaches over  
...To change the structure of the language  
...the superstructure. I believe that we owe t

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and sources edited by Frank Davey

*Contributing Editors*

George Bowering

Steve McCaffery

John Bentley Mays

bpNichol

Fred Wah

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in themselves, but the world when they're together), offer us a chance to read and hear a fresh voice on an otherwise too cluttered horizon, and I have no criticism save a critical interest in how she rather locks her space in herself aware of distance, and I'd be tempted to, maybe at a party, make a pleasant request that she expand it? Canada needs this more desperately than Canadians know. Marlatt has taken the giant step toward the call of the wild — the vast indigenous (as well as her own) Canadian unconscious.

The puns and rhymes, phrasing, the whole interweaving construction including reversals form a solid surface that carries her meaning toward profound completion, and at that end, the ear, mind and whole feel works back through it all again, the final reversal was for me a forward move, to begin again toward the experience of arriving at the finest effect of it all *again* heard, seen and felt in *Our Lives*: the accomplishment of autonomy, which, from this writer, is the highest compliment.

FIELDING DAWSON

## To Locate

*Songs & Speeches* by Barry McKinnon. Prince George, B.C.: Caledonia Writing Series, 1976. Also distributed as supplement to NMFG (Vancouver).

I like the feeling of working with someone which I get from this book. These are poems which enact the work and life of the writer as he works and lives in his own particular circumstances. But they're not private poems illuminating only McKinnon. The bulk of the book gives a sense of sharing the work going on, invites and attracts by virtue of the writing's movement.

For openers there is a map. The aerial view invites recognition. We try to figure it out, where, relationships of size and space, and the curious cartographic symbols, what do they mean, and finally what does the map have to do with the book. I think its there as an arrow to the term 'place'. To locate.

And there's the body, 'our bodies', as well.

( & in our  
bodies. of the bodies

melody. give it place & shape &  
call the heart a lyre

Which becomes, in the first poem, the whale's 'body', which is ours too, his. McKinnon takes it on, moves that way himself, as the language moves through the poem, he hones in on the subject, the locus, the place. In 'bathtub races' he moves eyes and thoughts through a landscape of the town, he's *in* the place, the people are, all over, on the wharf, out in the boats, its a scene with the wind blowing, a day, I her he we

...carried away  
in language of another time  
& take my daughter home

Home is where the story is. There are talk-about poems, and the talk becomes a spinning out of chunks of language. Which is fine.

The third of what I take to be the 'speeches' (because they're larger, circumlocutive) sets out 'whales' and 'time' (as also in the first, he turns 30, into a whale), but this is Mobyless, more the movement through the place again, the people, what goes on. 'notes: the deer' is a nice example of verse which registers the mind moving, as the map, it covers a lot of space, and time:

time less, men speak

locate themselves in gardens  
of purchased earth.

I built a fence to keep the deer out, too late  
this garden is partially gone

the deer ate my partial  
time.

The rest of the book feels more like poems/songs, smaller and tighter, more lyrical maybe.

nor for the moon that moves it

the moon itself moving.

To get out 'beyond' the human activity, the things, '& sometimes sing/of nothing'. Not to undercut these later pieces. They too can move like the 'speeches'. The point is that sense of working with someone and the smooth and easy rhythms of the talk that can go on at those times, the dreaming

while the real/  
house is done

FRED WAH

## Some Bite

*Declining Gracefully* by John Sandman.

Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1976. 109 pp. \$4.50 paper.

In a review of Sandman's *Fords Eat Chevys*, I suggested that should the writer marry his interest in the hidden power of American speech below its flatness with his talent for fantasy as in *Eating Out*, he might create a disturbing and powerful novel. Although *Declining Gracefully* shows he has maintained both these qualities, the result is not as compelling as I had anticipated.

Trying to reconstruct the chain which had led to this conclusion, I remember suspecting Sandman was working the vein Pinter had struck, banal speech paradoxically hiding a complex and explosive situation. Violence dominates Pinter's work but there is no complete rupture in *Declining Gracefully*. We move to an anticlimactic conclusion. The title, ironic as it is, explores

