

# Reflections on Publishing in Canada

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## **Abstract**

These brief entries provide a summary of different weeks of this class. I've written each using different genres and tones that hopefully shine through in my writing. It is meant to be a creative and interesting take on each topic.

## **Massey's (Com)Mission**

As a great evil looms over Canadian publishing, local good-guy Vincent Massey fights to keep ownership in Canada. With a swift legislative kick in foreign entities' you-know-whats, Massey enacts an emboldened commission for government funding for Canadian national culture. While Canadian writers continue to flee the country, Massey must duck and dive his way around government policies to ensure the integrity of Canada's culture is not belittled by anything less than his (and his country's) high-brow standards. Follow Massey as he struggles to uphold cultural value in Canada without ever defining Canadian culture. With the foreign entity defeated for the moment by national legislation, Massey focuses his pursuits elsewhere: the alarming and wicked popularization of Harlequin romance in Canadian literature. Worse yet, Massey fears that Harlequin romance may be the only way to keep Canadian book publishing in Canada, away from the promise of big money from foreign-owned companies. Jowls quivering and "moral standards" gripped tightly in his fist, Massey must hide the knowledge of Harlequin romance novels' rising popularity from the Canadian public. He must make sure that no one ever knows the shameful secret of Canadian book publishing's success... by any means necessary.

## The Invitation

Small, independent publishers are dying off all around the country. The Canadian editor sits, solitary, at his desk. The creaks and groans of the tiny publishing house sound in his ears, but his trembling hand remains firmly on the document before him. While the rising debt threatens to swallow him, the hands of authors and retailers claw at his throat. They ask the same question over and over, “Where is my money? Where is my money?” But he doesn’t have it. The editor stays later and later each day, desperately trying to get ahead. He continues to work as his stack of papers rises higher, threatening to drown him, and looking more like a tombstone than a reprieve from his financial troubles. The top paper’s headline is written in dark letters, reading: CANADA COUNCIL APPLICATION FOR FUNDING. Below it is two more of the same, reading CANADA BOOK FUND and HERITAGE CANADA. Without these governmental funding programs, he too will die... just like the rest of them. He swallows against the knot in his throat, exhaustion aching through him from his thirteen-hour day. After he finishes, he might do some freelance work to make ends meet. A sudden splattering noise sounds at the door behind him and the editor whips around, ink spilling and heart pounding. It is McClelland & Stewart, eyes covered in thick bandages and mouth sewn grotesquely shut; in one hand, a sizeable cheque, dripping Canadian blood. The other hand is held out, open-palmed – an invitation.

## Oh, Canada...

As a country known for multiculturalism and championing diversity, Canada is a great place to live and grow, and even greater for maintaining a publishing company... but only if you’re white! Discover the intricacies of Canadian publishing with Theytus Books, Pemmican Publications, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and Kegedonce – the only Aboriginal publishers in Canada, which can be counted on one hand with a finger to spare. Theytus Books is the oldest active Indigenous owned and run publishing house in Canada at just 37 years old, which is expected for an industry that strives to exclude its Indigenous members. Theytus promotes editorial training among Indigenous youth, because if they didn’t spend

their already small resources on training, no one else in Canada would, certainly not our government which prides itself on Canadian “culture.” God forbid that Canada would consider the culture of this land’s original peoples to be part of our own settler culture – Massey’s bones would be rattling in his grave. Despite the isolation from Canadian culture, Canada loves Indigenous peoples. In fact, Canada loves them so much that they ignore Indigenous publishers, exclude them from funding opportunities, and force assimilation on the off-chance Canada does recognize Indigenous writers or publishers. Find out more about Canada’s inclusivity and diversity through the barriers for Indigenous publishing in Canada by means of cultural policy, lack of editorial training for Indigenous peoples, and enforcement of colonial publishing techniques on Indigenous editors and writers.

### **Behind Closed Doors**

Meet McClelland & Stewart: Canada’s sweetheart and pioneer of Canadian publishing. McClelland & Stewart championed Canadian literature for decades, promoting Canadian authors to international success, including Margaret Atwood, Leonard Cohen, and Farley Mowat. McClelland & Stewart’s world is turned upside down by the entrance of Penguin Random House, an esteemed, successful, and affluent foreign publisher. Penguin Random House can offer McClelland & Stewart things that no other publisher or governmental organization in Canada ever could. The attraction is immediate, but taboo. McClelland & Stewart knows the literary community at large will be disgusted by such a partnership, so their affair begins in secret, unbeknownst to any but the parties involved. With money and desperation at the forefront of McClelland & Stewart’s mind, nationalism and Canadian culture are thrown out the window. What began as a small shift of power from McClelland & Stewart to Penguin Random House morphs into a domination of the market by foreign publishers. When McClelland & Stewart’s betrayal is made known to the community, there is public outrage and moral panic around the continuation of Canadian publishing. Legislation and policies are drafted, determined to outlaw any more affairs like McClelland & Stewart’s with Penguin Random House. What will happen when McClelland & Stewart declares themselves satisfied and, indeed,

prospering under the attention and protection of Penguin Random House? In this saga of shifting ownership, uncover the secret dealings and apparent loss of Canadian culture that blossomed out of McClelland & Stewart's hidden affair.

### **Amazonian Invasion**

The year is 2017. The Canadian Publishing Industry stands on its last legs, holding onto a hope they know they do not have. For years now, the Industry has been succumbing to the horrifying un-reality of an opponent so potent, so ubiquitous that it's hard to determine the exact angle from which Canadian Publishing is being attacked. It seems to come from all sides and Canadian Publishing is without a single defence. Every time they think they've got one leg up, the enemy swoops in to destabilize Industry prices and structure, a 70% discount on the product Canadian Publishing hoped would save them. Every publisher in the country shudders at the name, as taboo as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named: *Amazon*. The discounts they offer are otherworldly, divine, ethereal – it makes Indigo, champion of Canadian Publishing, wonder what Amazon is *really* up to in Earth's peaceful, normal publishing atmosphere. It's up to Indigo, alongside their team of independent and multinational publishers, to determine the true reason for Amazon's dominant takeover of their beloved Industry. Will Indigo get to the bottom of it and come up victorious, or will they discover a reason more sinister than they thought possible...?

### **The Untimely Disappearance of Culture**

Under the cover of darkness, black cloak donned, the protagonist Bourdieu devises a method of cataloguing books and literature as cultural objects and commodities. He knows the consequences of this act: public hatred, for who could ever think of the beloved book in the same terms as a can of beans? But in a game such as this, sacrifices must be made, and Bourdieu is prepared to make them. The key players are as follows: Bourdieu, pen flying as he devises a confusing and unreadable chart; someone likely named Pierre, wearing a fuzzy Harris tweed suit (no hat), who may be seen at the ballet with a glass of "adequate little" red wine; John, with a very dry martini and a lemon peel, lighted only by a

converted sculpture lamp; Todd, enjoying quartered iceberg lettuce and store dressing with a bourbon and ginger ale; Lenny, who can afford nothing better than old army clothes, coleslaw, and the game Craps. The setting is this: Pierre, horrified, speaks publicly against the mass-publication of a horribly explicit novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and cannot believe the country may let his *wife* or *servant* read such a thing. John is disturbed as well, but chooses not to speak out. Todd wishes to be given the chance to read something so vulgar, and acts against Pierre and regards John with passive-aggressive tones. Lenny cannot read. The four, plus Bourdieu in the shadows, seek their own ends through under-the-table agreements, cloaks-and-daggers situations, and creation of moral panic. In the shocking climax, discover the lengths Pierre would go to to prevent his inferiors from gaining access to the same literature as him. Todd's retaliation is the only thing more horrifying than Pierre's deed... And the game plays on.

### 3 Steps to Survive as a Canadian Author

Are you a struggling Canadian writer? Was your publisher's advance a reason you stay up at night, crying? Have you published a book but your royalties are... lacking? If any of these descriptions hurt your heart because they're so painfully *you*, then this is the book for you! With just three simple steps, you can survive as a Canadian author... without needing to work that lousy teaching job to make ends meet. YOU can publish your book without financial disappointment! YOU can write full-time and afford that new food processor you want! YOU can be the author you've always wanted to be! In this informative guide, find out what other authors are doing that you need to be doing to be successful in Canadian publishing. As a sneak-peak preview teaser, we've included an excerpt from the book to show you just what you stand to learn from purchasing this book:

*There's nothing in this world more coveted than the infamous Scotiabank Giller Prize. Or than winning the Canada Reads competition. Or than the Governor General Literacy Awards. This is the point – you can't make it in Canadian publishing if you don't win one of these prizes. But here's the thing most people don't know: there's about a trillion prizes for Canadian literature, and you don't even have to live in Canada to qualify! If you're a Canadian writer – and I sure hope that by this point in the book you realize this is for Canadian writers – you gotta get one of these prizes. And it's easy!*

*There's a trillion of them. So just submit your book a half hundred times and watch as the money and awards and prizes start to flow in. Trust me on this. See that sticker on the front? It says "Amazon.ca First Novel Award." Why? Because I won it. Don't trust me yet? I've got more under my sleeve. Just be sure to read on...*

## Copy & Replace

In their first published collection of poetry, Access Copyright expresses true emotion in 284 pages of unequivocal angst. An anthology of unfiltered hate, Access Copyright's writing is poignant, strong, and hard-hitting. This work of brilliance begins with a piece about the cataclysmic event that began their long and harrowing road: *Photocopier*, with heart-wrenching lines powerful enough to pull a reader to tears ("Joyous be ye who profit from those / Whose hard work now goes unknown / O Photocopier / If only your body was as fragile as mine / Perhaps then I could run something through your intestine"). The betrayal of Access Copyright by universities is explored through a series of first wrathful, then despondent haikus, most notably *Unsprouted* ("How dare you rip off / The seed of your own this way / You are a disgrace") or *Cloud-nine* ("Remember the days / When we played together in / The garden of love"). *Copy & Replace* also features longer poetry detailing the ways they wish they could have satisfied universities. Access Copyright is particularly forthright in their final poem, *Partnership*:

I need you to please come back to me now,  
 The shadows are trailing in without you.  
 In the darkness, I fear I will be lost  
 Forever. I can offer you the world,  
 If only you would just ask and also  
 Pay the premium price of twelve dollars  
 Per student for a five-year license, love.

## Like Rain We Fall

Maggie A. is living the most successful years of her life and things just seem to keep getting better. With Canadian publishing being deemed the most diverse in

the world, Maggie A. is proud to be part of the elite group making publishing a more inclusive industry and prouder to be Canada's sweetheart-slash-international sensation.

Everything threatens to come crumbling down when her friend Stevie G. is fired from his prestigious position at a top university. As Stevie G's friend, Maggie A. knows she must do something to protect the integrity and high seat of Canadian writers. But everything is starting to look more and more alien to her as she pens her approval to an open letter to Stevie G's old university and watches the floodgates open, criticism and backlash hitting her in a way they never have before.

Even worse, Maggie A's picture-perfect life is beginning to have more than a few gaping holes in it as she witnesses the take-down of white writers by minority writers after the embarrassing glib that was the "Appropriation Prize." Maggie A. must take control of the industry with her strong white hands and tell her side of the story before she her reputation becomes irreparable.



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