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Review: Canadian Dreams

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ing fact that part of him never grew up. The exterior chronology of their writing shows a progression from early childhood to old age, as well as increased subtlety in narration, as Lewis warmed to his theme and entered more deeply into his story. Read in this order, as Adey perceptively notes, the sequence gives evidence of Lewis's "underthought" and fosters a personal experience of the books, especially for young readers. The interior chronology of events in the story approximates the Christian mythos from the creation and Fall of *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), through sacrifice and resurrection in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), the "Narnian equivalent of Exodus" (175) in *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), the journey toward Heaven in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* (1952), a descent into Sheol in *The Silver Chair* (1953), and the apocalypse in *The Last Battle* (1956). This order of reading, whose recognition depends on the reader's age, education, and acquaintance with the Bible, puts greater weight on Lewis's theological "overthought."

As with Mark Twain's characterization of Wagner's music as better than it sounds, this book is better than it looks. While there are inconsistencies in his study, on the whole Adey takes a thoughtful and critical look at the pervasive themes of Lewis's literary career. The personified headings give Adey a handle on the sometime interaction, sometime conflict between Lewis's rationalist and romantic selves out of which the fiction, especially, arises. In sum, for people who do not like C.S. Lewis, or who find him only mildly interesting, the ground covered here may seem already well-trodden, and the Mentor and the Dreamer a predictable allegorizing of a man whose intellect often muffled his emotions. For people who like C.S. Lewis, on the other hand, this is the sort of book they will like.—**Verlyn Fliieger, University of Maryland**

Canadian Dreams. Edo van Belkom. *Northern Dreamers: Interviews with Famous Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Writers*. Out of This World Series #4. Ontario: Quarry, 1998. 254 pp. \$19.95 CDA; \$14.95 USA paper. Dist. in USA by InBook (800-243-0138).

This collection of 22 interviews with Canadian sf, fantasy, and horror writers is the first of its kind, and as such it is a valuable guide to the genre in Canada. Edo van Belkom is a professional editor, author of horror fiction, and a Canadian Regional Director of the Science Fiction Writers of America. His familiarity with his interview subjects and the field in Canada is immediately evident. He can be forgiven, then, for the effusive claims he makes for these authors in his introduction. While not all of these writers are "pioneers, leaders, and supreme masters of their realms" of speculative fiction (8), as he suggests, they do represent the leading voices in Canadian speculative fiction. Indeed, most of those included have received international awards, critical and reader acclaim, and some commercial success.

Van Belkom can also be commended for the breadth of his selection since the volume includes male and female writers in nearly equal numbers. Attention is focused on professional writers who have established active careers

in speculative fiction, including gaming fiction, rather than on newcomers to the field. The book thus makes an excellent companion to David Ketterer's *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Indiana UP, 1992), since more than half of these writers appear in his overview of the Canadian genre. American and Canadian readers and scholars will recognize, in particular, the names of William Gibson, Robert Sawyer, Spider and Jeanne Robinson, W.P. Kinsella, Guy Gavriel Kay, Terence Green, Charles de Lint, and Phyllis Gotlieb. The anthology does not include other Canadian writers like Margaret Atwood, author of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and a number of sf short fictions, who are not primarily identified with speculative writing. One particular shortcoming for researchers is the volume's emphasis on English Canada. The only Québécois author represented here is Elisabeth Vonarburg, whose work has been translated and distributed widely in English Canada and the US.

Despite what the subtitle may suggest, it is not fame that unites these writers; rather it is the fact that all the interview subjects live and work in Canada. Since the majority of these authors were born in the United States, questions about Canadian content and identity have an interesting spin. When van Belkom asks his interviewees about the importance of their identities as Canadians, two linked themes emerge: the importance of a Canadian identity for their writing, and the difficulty of success in the publishing marketplace. Despite their international awards and sales, as van Belkom points out, few of these 22 writers have had books published in Canada. These are writers who have largely made their professional careers and reputations in the US. According to those interviewed, the Canadian literary mainstream, including both critics and publishers, is mostly uninterested in speculative fiction; only smaller presses like Quarry, Tesseract, and Pottersfield have consistently published sf anthologies and genre books.

When questions of Canadian content and the significance of national identity arise, few authors, at least in this context, seem concerned with a symbolic landscape of the North or with the idea of geographical alienation. Instead, many embrace Canadian urban landscapes. Nancy Baker, Tanya Huff, Charles de Lint, and Spider Robinson use Canadian urban settings despite the publication or marketing of their novels in the US. As Terence Green suggests, "it's very much not having an inferiority complex as a Canadian and realizing our world is as interesting to outsiders as it can be to insiders" (107). Similarly, Michael Coney is not alone in suggesting that, though adamantly committed to Canada, the literary distinctions between American and Canadian sf elude him: "The truth is: I don't know what a Canadian story is.... Currently I have a story ... [that] has snow, Indians, possibly even caribou, and it was deliberately written to sound Canadian. We'll see what people think of that" (31).

As one might expect from interviews, these writers respond well when asked to discuss their literary influences, their reasons for choosing their genre, anecdotes from their careers, and their views on the direction of the genre as a whole. More unusual is the subject of the publishing marketplace. Strong insights into complexities of marketing forces in Canada and the US and their

influence on speculative writing are articulated in nearly every interview. Among the most penetrating on this subject are Terence Green, Robert Sawyer, Michele Sagara, Candas Jane Dorsey, and Dave Duncan, who offer candid opinions about genre categorization, sales figures and marketing, agent and author relationships, and self-promotion strategies. On the whole, this collection remains positive about the genre. Many of these same authors also discuss the writing process and its personal rewards. Phyllis Gotlieb, now in her seventies, remarks that while she began her career as the only visible Canadian writing sf, with little support and few models, she has few regrets. Now, after a career of 36 years, she asserts: “neighbors who came snickered at the dust on my furniture, but then afterwards they said, ‘Phyllis you had the right idea!’ (103)” —Nancy Johnston, Ryerson Polytechnic University