

2016 Contemporary Adult Titles
with Appeal for Strong Teen Readers
By Gail Sidonie Sobat

With
Heather Ganshorn, Ingrid Johnston, Margaret Mackey, & Linda Telgarsky

I am delighted to share the selected 2016 Contemporary Adult Canadian Titles with Appeal for Strong Teen Readers. Following in the impressive footsteps of Dr. Margaret Mackey has been, to say the least, a little daunting. But this compilation offers 23 new and/or newer titles that we collectively feel will entice young adult readers. As in the past, some of our offerings have decidedly adult content--language, sexuality, violence--and we trust to the reader that she or he will put aside any novel with content that doesn't appeal. Most importantly, we feel that this is a list that will enrich the reading pleasure and exploration of those teens who are eager to read beyond the classroom and to delve into the rich literature that awaits.

One of my areas of focus--full disclosure, I am a Canadian author--is that of CanLit. Regrettably, research continues to support the dismal statistics of a dearth of Canadian content in curriculum at all levels of education. In a tiny attempt to address this deficit, many of the titles this year are written by well and lesser known Canadian authors.

And finally, this resource would not exist at all were it not for the excellent reviewers who've contributed to our list. They are the backbone that supports the whole enterprise. Many thanks for their careful reading and thoughtful commentary.

Thank you to the editors of Resource Links for their continued support and for welcoming this year's list and this year's green editor.

Readers: welcome and enjoy!

Gail Sobat

Contemporary Life

Woefield Poultry Collective by Susan Juby. Toronto: Harper, 2012. Pbk. 336p. 978-1554687459

Republic of Dirt by Susan Juby. Toronto: Harper, 2015. Pbk. 416p. 978-1443423953

Fresh from the city, naive and idealistic, Prudence Burns inherits a farm which aptly lives up to its name Woefield. Determined to make the farm self-sustaining, she sets to work with the assistance of a crew of misfit helpers: Earl, an elderly, reclusive bluegrass legend; Seth, a deliciously foul-mouthed, agoraphobic heavy-metal blogger recovering from alcoholism; and Sara, an able 11-year-old girl who is raising a flock of exotic show hens. Each of these characters narrates the ridiculous antics and misadventure - sometimes retelling the same story - and their voices lend the books considerable charm.

Prudence is armed with pluck and derring-do tinged with a little self-righteousness. She is hopelessly ill-equipped to care for a farm that faces foreclosure in the first book, and failure in the second. She dreams of organic farm produce to sell at the local farmers' market and of living the Emersonian good life in her new home on Vancouver Island. Through a series of small deceptions to herself and to the bank loans manager - Prudence pretends to open a rehab centre which the bank manager's niece attends - and with a little help from her motley crew of friends, she just manages. Hilarity ensues.

In ***The Republic of Dirt***, Prudence falls ill with a serious thyroid condition and her friends must come to the rescue and keep the farm running. A second complication arises when young Sara, who's been residing on the farm with her poultry collection while her separated parents spar, is wrenched from the circle of adoring friends because of a parent-teachers conference and a misunderstanding about her safety. Thereafter, the book focuses on Sara and assisting the child with the real safety issues: her parents. Perhaps not quite as successful as the first book, the sequel is still worth a read as the characters are nonetheless the main attraction. *GSS*

* explicit language

The Mountain Story by Lori Lansens. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2016. Pbk. 365p. 978-0-345-80903-2

Told in the form of a letter from a father to his college-aged son, ***The Mountain Story*** is a tale of four people who are lost for five days on a mountain top that towers over Palm Springs. Gripping from start to finish, this is the story of Wolf Truly as told to his son. On his eighteenth birthday, Wolf travels up the mountain to commit suicide. He is interrupted in the process by three women who ask him to guide them to Secret Lake. They are three generations of

the Devine Family: Nola, Bridget, and Vonn. We learn that Nola, the mother/grandmother, has come to the mountain to scatter the ashes of her husband who died in the previous year. As can happen in the wilderness, in searching for the lake the four of them become disoriented and they find themselves lost.

Over the course of the five days on the mountain, we learn about the violent circumstances of the death of Wolf's mother when he was four years old, his dysfunctional relationship with his alcoholic father, his failed love for a young woman, and the accident of his best friend, Byrd, that took place on the mountain the year before. Though he starts out intending to commit suicide, Wolf is quickly caught up in the dynamic and problematic relationship of the three Devine women and the overwhelming task to help them get off the mountain. They must all work together and make sacrifices if they are to survive this ordeal. Unlike most novels of this type, from the very outset of this book we know that someone will not survive. This disclosure just impels us to read on, haunted by the need to know who will not make it off the mountain. Lansens' writing is compelling and you will find it almost impossible to put this book down once you start it. *LT*

The Illegal by Lawrence Hill. Toronto: HarperCollins, 2016. Pbk. 400p. 978-1554683840

Lawrence Hill's latest novel has already received a range of accolades and awards. This story of a young marathoner, Keita Ali, from a fictional country in the Indian Ocean, addresses many of the issues we read about in the press every day: the movement of refugees fleeing from war and dictatorship, attitudes towards illegal immigrants, race, discrimination and the clash of wealth and poverty. Set in the near future, ***The Illegal*** follows Keita's escape from his impoverished island, Zantoroland, described as a nightmare dictatorship, to the larger and wealthier island of Freedom State where he is running a marathon and also fleeing the police.

The novel is fast-paced and the plot exciting. Refugees seeking to escape from Zantoroland attempt to travel across a dangerous sea to Freedom State, hoping to find refuge in Africtown, a shanty town, ruled over by the larger-than-life, Lulu. Keita faces an ongoing series of dangers in the marathon he is running and in his attempts to live as an illegal immigrant in Zantoroland. While the book is a very good read, written with Hill's characteristic insight and careful plotting, it doesn't quite achieve the resonance or stature of his earlier novel, *The Book of Negroes*. Nevertheless, it is an important book worth everyone's time and offers many reflections on the kind of world we are living in today. *IJ*

The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt. New York: Back Bay Books, 2013. Pbk. 771p. 978-0316055437

This coming-of-age novel was a literary sensation and will appeal to young readers who love a meaty tome with fascinating characters.

The story begins with a bang - literally. Thirteen-year-old Theo Decker and his mother are the victims of a terrorist bomb attack on the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Miraculously, the boy survives; his mother does not. In the immediate aftermath of the explosion are two important other happenstances that shape the boy's destiny: Theo meets the dying father of the girl he'd earlier admired in the gallery, and he absconds with a painting, the 1654 Carel Fabritius masterpiece, *The Goldfinch*, from which the novel draws its name.

In the ensuing 14 years, this painting factors as both a burden and a remaining connection to his lost mother. For nearly the entire time, he keeps the possession a secret as he moves from New York to Las Vegas where he lives with a dissolute and inattentive father who eventually abandons him. Here, he also meets the Russian teenager, Boris, with whom he has a complicated, substance-abuse-infused relationship.

Theo returns to New York and to Hobie, friend of the dying man in the MET, who becomes a surrogate father and through whom he reunites with Pippa, the girl from the gallery. Theo consorts with an array of eccentric characters, including assorted lowlifes, con men, Park Avenue recluses, and dissolute preppies, as he assumes the role of antique swindler (unbeknownst to antique restorer and partner, Hobie) and eventually penetrates high society through an impending marriage to wealthy Kitsey Barbour.

Understandably, the painting continues to haunt him, and eventually it is lost, necessitating his journey to Amsterdam and a final confrontation with the criminal underworld of art theft. Here Theo descends into a fever-induced state of near madness and reunites with Boris who has played an unscrupulous hand in the lost *Goldfinch*. This is a novel that examines the capriciousness of fate, the beauty of art, the complexity of love for persons and possessions. Ultimately, this is also a story of redemption, "that good come around sometimes through some strange back doors." *GSS*

The Memento by Christy Ann Conlin. Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2016. Pbk.. 400p. 978-0385662420

This gothic tale set in the 1950s in rural New Brunswick has elements of *Kate Morton* to it - a rural estate, a wealthy, eccentric family, dark secrets - but with a decidedly Canadian, Gothic twist. Fancy Mosher is a twelfth-born child, like her Grampie. Local legend has it that the family's twelfth-born children can speak to the dead. As with many supernatural gifts, this one manifests itself at the onset of puberty. Fancy lives with her foster mother, the housekeeper at the summer estate of a wealthy family. She's looking forward to a summer of roaming the countryside with her best friend Art, but things are derailed when her alcoholic mother shows up, demanding that Fancy try to use her gift to contact her brother John Lee, who drowned at the age of four because of his mother's negligence. After the wealthy Parker family arrives for the summer, more dark secrets are revealed. While there are supernatural elements to the story, it's really a book about how children are marked by their parents' deeds, even when those deeds are concealed. *HG*

Childhood

If I Fall, If I Die by Michael Christie. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2015. Hdbk. 336p. 978-0-771-02365-1

In this first novel by Michael Christie, we meet Will, an eleven-year-old boy who lives with his agoraphobic mother in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Precocious and naive, Will happily lives in the small world of his house until one day he hears a noise and ventures "Outside" to investigate. In his backyard, Will encounters an Aboriginal boy, Marcus, who intrigues him. Will returns to the "Outside" again and again in search of Marcus, where he discovers a world of people, places, and happenings that are both exciting and dangerous (just as his mother feared and predicted).

Will manages to convince his mother to let him enroll in the local school and he develops a friendship with Jonah, an Aboriginal student in his class. Jonah and Marcus work together to try to solve the mystery of the disappearance of Marcus. As the novel unfolds, we learn not only about the tragic backstory of Will's mother, uncle and grandfather but also of an old mystery that helps inform the current intrigue surrounding the disappearance of Marcus.

Christie covers many topics in this book including teen friendship, parent-child relationships, Aboriginal discrimination and mental illness. Perhaps the most resonant theme is that no one gets through life without getting hurt; being alive necessarily means that there will be some suffering and pain. As Will describes it, you need to build up some calluses. We may fall sometimes, but for the most part we get up, brush ourselves off and get on with living and it is the experiences, along with their risks, that give meaning to our life. *LT*

Teenagers

The Truth Commission by Susan Juby. Toronto: Razorbill, 2015. Hdbk. 320p. 978-0670067596

Perhaps best classified as New Adult fiction, ***The Truth Commission*** is an examination of the truth in a hyper-surveilled, socially networked world.

The novel is purportedly Normandy Pale's book-length work of creative non-fiction, submitted as a major project to Green Pastures, a high school for the arts, in a small Vancouver centre. Normandy relates the story of how she and her two best friends prompted other classmates to tell the truth about themselves.

Truth-telling has its consequences as Normandy learns. She considers revealing the truth about her own family: older sister Keira, Green Pastures' most notable alumna, has built a notable career from her graphic novels. The series portrays Keira as the heroine of a dysfunctional family - Normandy and her parents - as hopeless incompetents, rather a self-fulfilling prophecy for their real life. Confronting the realities of her sister's truth-and-lies telling, is for Normandy, a frightening but essential process to coming to terms with the damage it has inflicted. Along the way, readers also get a fun dose of the dos and don'ts of storytelling and writing creative fiction through Normandy's quirky and winsome voice. *GSS*

The Little Girl Who Was Too Fond of Matches by Gaétan Soucy (Trans. Sheila Fischman). Toronto: Anansi, 1998. Pbk. 138p. 978-0-88784-781-3

Although this is not a current novel, Gaétan Soucy's work is absent to date from our list, and his genius should not be missed.

From its first breathless pages, the first-person protagonist captivates and intrigues: “We had to take the universe in hand, my brother and I, for one morning just before dawn papa gave up the ghost without a by-your-leave.” is a tale of two siblings raised “by hand” on a rough rural farm under an authoritarian father, who dies of suicide as the story opens. Isolated from the world, the children - presumably in their teens - live in a dream-like otherworld of rural beauty and create a language of their own, largely culled from books and fairy tales. Forced to deal with their father’s burial arrangements, the protagonist steps beyond the world of the farm and makes first contact with neighbours and villagers. Thus begins her transformation - and it is some pages before we learn she is a she - from naive feral child to young woman. In the process of this bildungsroman, superstitions are examined and eventually rejected and disturbing family secrets are exposed to the light of understanding.

Recommended to the reviewer by a Grade 9 student, nevertheless, this is not an easy read because of the stream-of-consciousness/ invented language and the disturbing themes, but as an adult fairy tale, it is an exploration of the darkly human fascination with guilt, cruelty, and violence. *GSS*

*some sexually explicit material

Finton Moon by Gerard Collins. St. John’s: Killick Press, 2012. Pbk. 333p. 978-1-897174-90-6

An engaging adult fairytale, ***Finton Moon*** is a coming-of-age novel written with humour and poetic beauty. A blend of realism and magic, the narrative is set in the town of Darwin and features a cast of characters that in many ways represent the inhabitants of any small town in Newfoundland or beyond.

The titular protagonist is a young misfit in the tradition of Pip from *Great Expectations*. Finton is an unusual child who bears little resemblance to his rough brothers, his strict Catholic mother or his lawless father. He is a reader, a dreamer, a thinker and, above all, has a penchant for healing - the element that gives the book nuances of magic-realism. With Dickensian echoes, the book gradually reveals dark family secrets, even featuring a Miss Havisham - type of character, an unattainable love, bullies with whom he comes to fisticuffs, and expectations beyond his family station. Though he wishes to belong, ultimately, Finton realizes he never will, and escapes the place and the family that do not understand or accept him.

Rich in description, character, intrigue and language, Gerard Collins has created a gothic Canadian masterpiece. *GSS*

Speculative/Science Fiction and Fantasy

Quantum Night by Robert J. Sawyer. Toronto: Viking, 2016. Hdbk. 351p. 978-0-670-06578-3

Robert Sawyer is an expert at genre-bending. His newest book merges science fiction, thriller (with some horror overtones), political fantasy - and a novel of ideas: quantum physics and moral philosophy play significant roles in this story. Sawyer is also very skilled at communicating extremely complicated ideas in ways that are clear and straightforward and that also advance the plot in apparently effortless ways.

This novel is set in 2020, and mostly takes place in Winnipeg, with a few side visits to Saskatchewan and a few other places. Jim Marchuk has developed a scientifically infallible method for detecting psychopaths - and it turns out the world is full of them. In the process of testifying about his methods in a notorious court case, he discovers that he has no memory of a six-month period of his life about twenty years ago. In pursuit of what happened during these lost months, he makes many significant discoveries about himself and his friends.

At the beginning of the book, 2020 Canada looks pretty familiar: Justin Trudeau is prime minister (though with a coalition government) and an identifiably Trump-esque president inhabits the White House. Through the course of events that transpire over a few months, the political landscape changes very radically, and the mix of familiar and frightening adds an intriguing texture to the book.

This book is a compulsive page-turner. Readers will have to accept a threshold for psychopaths that may seem unconvincing at first, but Sawyer makes a strong case. Exciting and thoughtful (in that order!), it is well worth a reader’s time and attention. *MM*

The Heart Goes Last by Margaret Atwood. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2015. Hdbk. 308p. 978-0-7710-0911-2

In a world where the economy has collapsed, Stan and Charmaine have lost their jobs and home. They live in their car and survive on the tips Charmaine earns working part-time in a run-down bar. They are harassed and threatened by others who are even more desperate than them. One day they learn about an experimental corporate community called Consilience where they are promised a home and jobs. The catch is that once they sign up and enter the community, they can never leave. The promise of security and comfort is so strong that they accept the offer and it is

only once they are in Consilience that they discover the cost of living this suburban dream life: they will be living in a prison every other month. This allows double the number of people to live in Consilience as they share homes and jobs - one month in prison and one month living a “normal” life.

After some time, unbeknownst to each other, Stan and Charmaine become obsessed with the people who live in their house while they are in prison. As the story unfolds, the pressure to conform, distrust, sexual obsession and greed affect and start to destroy Stan and Charmaine’s relationship and lives.

The first part of the story focuses on the dark dystopian world. It is a dog-eat-dog, scary and often times violent place. Once the action moves to Consilience, the book still has its dark moments, but there are unexpected farcical threads (such as Elvis and Marilyn Monroe “possibilibots” (sexual robot companions)) that move the story from sinister to slapstick at times. Throughout the story, however, you are compelled to consider just how frail the constructs of society and family are and what you might do in the same circumstances. *LT*

*some sexually explicit material

Poetry

Settler Education by Laurie D. Graham. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2016. Pbk. 117p. 978-0-7710-3687-3

Canadian history offers many examples of massive contradiction, cases where opposing accounts of a single event must be juxtaposed in all their contrariness. In ***Settler Education***, Laurie Graham confronts this challenge head-on. The book is described on its cover as “Poems,” but it also includes images, maps, snatches of old colonial songs, legal accounts, and a relatively large set of end-notes, setting some of this material in context.

Graham does not shrink away from the horrors of Canadian history and Canadian current events. In a poem about a train ride across the prairies, she talks about the rationale for the building of the transcontinental railway in the following contemporary terms:

*No Oh My Nation, no God Save Our Queen,
no colonial imperative except in our being here, in what it means
to shower on a moving train, track rolling under the drainhole,
the luxurious pillows, my last-minute discount.
This is what they starved a people for. (p. 2)*

The poems pay particular attention to the Plains Cree uprising at Frog Lake, but the book more capaciously addresses the necessity of finding ways to process intolerable contradictions, even while acknowledging that it may not be possible to find a way to do so. It is thought-provoking and challenging - not a quick and easy read but well worth the effort it demands. *MM*

The Pemmican Eaters by Marilyn Dumont. Toronto: ECW Press, 2015. Pbk. 66p. 978-1-77041-241-5

Marilyn Dumont begins her book with an account of how her family traced connections with the Metis leader, Gabriel Dumont. From this prose introduction, the book moves to poems about the Metis resistance to western settlement. She moves between forms and languages and perspectives. In a letter addressed to Sir John A. Macdonald, she introduces contemporary events such as the Meech Lake discord, and concludes,

*..... you know as well as I
that we were railroaded
by some steel tracks that didn't last
and some settlers who wouldn't settle
and it's funny we're still here and callin ourselves halfbreed. (p. 9)*

Many of the poems address the historical injustices of the white settlement of the prairies, but there are also more light-hearted tributes to fiddle-playing and dancing, and to the elegant eloquence of beadwork. The book itself resembles beadwork in its careful selection of detail and colour, its juxtaposition of different elements so they show each other to best advantage, and its elegant eloquence in the composition of words and lines. *MM*

Mystery

Speaking in Bones by Kathy Reichs. Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2016. Pbk. 320p. 978-1501135347

In her 18th novel about forensic anthropologist Tempe Brennan, author Kathy Reichs has been able to maintain her winning combination of a good thriller, fast-paced plot and grizzly forensic details mixed with domestic

mayhem. In this novel, Tempe is investigating a missing person case, but quickly finds herself dealing with more bones and further intrigue. Together with Zeb Ramsay, a local sheriff, Tempe becomes embroiled in a horrifying and sinister situation that threatens her personal safety.

As usual, Reichs also includes aspects of Tempe's personal life in the novel. In this case, she is negotiating her on-again/off-again relationship with Ryan and dealing with her mother's illness. The novel successfully blends humour into its plot and has the usual hallmarks of a story with many unexpected twists and turns. *IJ*

Other Times and Historical Perspectives: Canada

Hark! A Vagrant. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2011. Pbk. 160p. 978-0-77046-060-7

Step Aside, Pops: A Hark! A Vagrant Collection. Montreal, Drawn & Quarterly, 2015. Pbk. 160p. 978-1-77046-208-3

Nova Scotia comic artist Kate Beaton gained a popular following publishing comics on her blog (available at www.harkavagrant.com). Her off-kilter take on history, literature and pop culture has gained her a devoted following. Her interest in history is wide-ranging, from the Fathers of Confederation to the uproar over "indecent" young women riding bicycles in the 1890s. Comics and literature are also a frequent topics (Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters and Wonder Woman each are the subject of several strips). Even if you aren't familiar with the historical people, stories and events behind a particular strip, they're still hilarious enough to send readers in search of a book (or at least a Wikipedia entry) that will provide background information. *HG*

The Piano Maker by Kurt Palka. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2015. Pbk. 288p. 978-0771071287

This well-crafted novel, rich in historical details, is set in the 1930s in the small Canadian town of St Homais. Helene Giroux, a refined and talented French woman arrives in the town and intrigues everyone with stories of her family's piano factory in France prior to World War One. She soon settles in as the church's pianist and choir conductor, gaining the admiration of the town's inhabitants for her musical talents and beginning a new friendship with David Chandler, a shoemaker in town.

Gradually, Helene's previous life is revealed to the reader and we learn about her former husband, what happened in the war, and the poverty she and her daughter endured. Details of her relationship with Nathan, a speculative businessman, emerge gradually and the novel follows Helene's efforts to face up to her troubled past and to explore new options for her life.

Palka's novel is easy to read, suspenseful and intriguing. The narrative shifts in the book between Helene's present and past are well handled and allow readers to gradually come to new insights about the life of this mysterious protagonist. *IJ*

Dancing in a Jar by Adele Poynter. St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 2016. Pbk. 179p. 978-1-55081-630-6

In 1929, newlyweds Don and Urla Poynter move to St. Lawrence, Newfoundland, where Don has been hired to oversee a fluorspar mine. The shift from New York was a radical culture shock, and this novel tells of their adjustment to a new life in letters from and to both of them. Their families in the big city are far from convinced that they have taken the right step, but Urla and Don find much to admire and love in their new home. Only Urla's deteriorating health is a real problem; everything else can be solved with ingenuity and hard work and a positive attitude.

The book fictionalizes a true story, told by Don's daughter by a second wife. There were some real letters and it is a tribute to Adele Poynter's skill that it is impossible to pin down what was actually written by the people involved and what she has imagined. It is a light-hearted and engaging story, despite the fact that readers know from the very beginning that the ending is sad. Life in St. Lawrence as the Depression takes hold is very challenging, but smuggling from the French island of St. Pierre alleviates some of the worst problems, and Urla's enthusiasm helps with the rest. *MM*

Memoirs and True Stories

Precious Cargo: My Year of Driving the Kids on School Bus 3077 by Craig Davidson.

Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016. Pbk. 297p. 978-0-345-81051-9

Craig Davidson, a fiction author who writes under the pseudonym Nick Cutter, spent a year when he was in his early thirties and at a low point in his life driving a school bus in Alberta. He accepted the job because it was the only one he could get. Initially, he took on the task of driving a bus of five teenage special needs students as a way to make some money but as he interacted with and really came to know these individuals, he witnessed firsthand how disabled and challenged people are seen and treated by others and learned some hard truths about himself.

Through his retelling of the events and conversations that happened with these teenagers, Davidson gives us a glimpse into what it is like to live in our society when you are a disabled or challenged person or a member of their family. Humor, happiness, embarrassment, anger, sadness and frustration run through the stories as he recounts them. Like the author, as we learn about the teenagers on the bus, we eventually come to see them as just the unique and interesting people that they are, being able to see beyond their disabilities or labels.

Davidson writes in an easy-to-read style and intersperses in the book excerpts from an unpublished novel he wrote, incorporating the teenagers as characters. Davidson generously shares his own feelings and failures as he describes how his bus riders changed him for the better. It is a wonderful read of the special relationship that can develop between people when you least expect it and how the person who benefits the most is not the one you expected. *LT*

Arts and Culture

Me Artsy by Drew Hayden Taylor. Madeira Park: Douglas and McIntyre, 2015. Pbk. 249p. 978-1-77162-070-3

Me Sexy by Drew Hayden Taylor. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2008. Pbk. 186p. 978-1-55365-276-2

Me Funny by Drew Hayden Taylor. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005. Pbk. 191p. 978-1-55365-137-6

A non-fiction series originated by Douglas and McIntyre publishers who felt there was much to explore in Native arts and culture. Drew Hayden Taylor, who is both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and calls himself “Blue-Eyed Ojibway,” compiled and edited all three collections and contributes his own essay to each replete with his usual humour. He’s chosen thoughtfully from amongst some of Canada’s First Nation stars, including: Thomas King, Tomson Highway, Richard Van Camp, Lee Maracle, Joseph Boyden, Gregory Scofield, Don Kelly, Ian Ferguson, Murray Porter and David Wolfman, to mention but a few.

The essays in all three collections are uneven, which is unfortunate, and many defy traditional essay forms, which is refreshing. These are often personal accounts of the realities for FNMI artists in Canada. They reflect the richness and variety of Aboriginal artistic endeavours, as well as the challenges facing the colonized artist.

Me Funny offers 11 essays that vary between academic analysis of comedy to stand-up to storytelling. Highlights include “High-ways” “Why Cree is the Funniest of All Languages” and King’s “Performing Native Humour: The Dead Dog Comedy Hour.” Irreverent and insightful, the writers of the collection examine humour in fiction, visual art, drama, education and oral traditions.

Similarly, thoughtful and playful examination of sexuality is the focus of the second in the series: *Me Sexy*. Of the 13 essays, Tomson Highway’s sequel to his first, “Why Cree is the Sexiest of All Languages,” Nancy Cooper’s cheeky “Learning to Skin the Beaver: In Search of Our Auntie’s Traplins,” Boyden’s naughty “Bush Country,” and Taylor’s own “Indian Love Call (Minus Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy)” are delightful standouts.

The most recent, *Me Artsy*, offers 14 new musings by artists in a variety of disciplines such as fashion design, “Drumming 101,” play writing, dance, visual art, blues singing and culinary arts. What is perhaps most courageous about this collection is that not all of the contributors are at ease with the written word. This lends the anthology and the individual essays an authenticity that is at times confounding to the non-Aboriginal reader, but ultimately and politically interesting and necessary. Two pieces, “Story of My Life,” by Inuk producer Zacharias Kunuk (best known for his film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*) and Haida Manga artist, Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas’ “The Wave” best illustrate the departure from traditional essay form at work in *Me Artsy*.

All three are excellent resources for both teacher and student, providing rich reading and alternate ways of seeing humour, sexuality and art from Aboriginal perspectives. *GSS*

*some sexually explicit material