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Correspondence

**Canadian
Content**

As an English major at York University I feel compelled to express my anger and disappointment with the final poetry reading given Friday evening, October 26, as part of the symposium **Cultural Pluralism and the Canadian Unity**.

This reading was entitled: "Countries of the Poet's Mind: a multilingual poetic journey through time and place". Other than one poem by Stong's master Hedi Bouraoui and one poem by Margarita Feliciano none of the 21 poems read were original: the only other Canadian poem chosen was G. Johnson's obscure "Noctambule". I submit that, without denigrating the value of great foreign poets, their work was an unworthy subject for this reading. Given the topic of the symposium, I fail entirely to understand why its organizers overlooked the very obvious alternative of seeking out ethnic Canadian poets to read their own works. How many serious Canadian poets of varying cultural backgrounds are not crying out for exactly such recognition? Surely they can describe to us most accurately the "countries of the poet's mind".

The symposium seems also to have overlooked the existence of York's own Creative Writing department. Several young poets are attached to that department who might have been suitable for this reading. If it was necessary to avoid any flavour of incest involved with inviting York students or faculty to participate (something I doubt, considering the inclusion of Monsieur Bouraoui's poem, for example), the aid of the writing department might nevertheless have been enlisted in finding suitable writers. Surely Toronto is an ideal city in which to find them.

I also found the general quality of reading to be poor, and I suggest that, for the English translations of the poems, an actor might have been employed. York does have a substantial theatre department; again, barring York for any possible political reasons, this city is not presently to my knowledge suffering from a dearth of that profession.

In short, I found the reading—I should say rather, that greater part of it which I endured before feeling constrained to leave—quite amateurish and hopelessly removed from any attempt to present a realistic view of multicultural poetry in Canada. I suggest that had the organizers invited ethnic Canadian poets (including native people, a conspicuous lack in the program) to read their own work, the evening would have been, not only vastly more entertaining, but vastly more informative. Unfortunately, the reading provided has cast for me an air of suspicion on the value, if not indeed the credibility, of the entire symposium.

If any of my concerns arise from a misunderstanding of the theme or issues of the symposium, I would welcome enlightenment. Should anyone involved in **Cultural Pluralism and the Canadian Unity** wish to discuss any of these points further, please contact me.

Robyn Butt

**Chapter
and Verse**

The YUFA Library Chapter would like the York University community to know that we have unanimously approved of the following resolution:

The YUFA Library Chapter expresses its support of the YUFA

Negotiating Committee in its attempts to achieve a fair and equitable settlement of the present contractual issues. At the same time we strongly disapprove of the intransigence of the university administration in a time of budget surplus. The Chapter urges the YUFA Executive to take whatever special action necessary to bring about a fair and equitable settlement. YUFA should be under no pressure to reach an agreement before Christmas.

**Tiit Kodar
Chairman**



SEW 2

**Kicking
'Sand'**

The Holocaust is unarguably one of the most shameful incidents of our time. It deserves to be remembered as an example of the degrading depths man can slip to and, through remembrance, hopefully avoid in the future. It does not deserve to be exploited for cheap theatrics.

"The Sand" was severely disappointing as a "world premiere." A thinly disguised lecture, this play gives us no insight into reasons or emotions and offers nothing more than a loosely linked series of incidents and atrocities. The incidents themselves conjure up personal memories or stories which provide the only warmth and interest. When a famous photograph (which has become a symbol/image closely linked to the horror which was the Holocaust) is imitated for a quick shocking effect the validity of the entire enterprise is called into question.

On a more practical level the justice of using actors who have paid to learn their craft as the front for an illustrated recitation is debatable. Instead their tuition (not to mention mine) was splurged on a lavish set to house a play which did little to showcase or even test their talents. And surely the production crew would have been used just as effectively on a more adequate play.

If someone has a play about the Holocaust which has something to offer or even a unique documentation, the world is waiting. But please let us not mock/rip-off an event which has affected the lives of so many.

Andrew C. Rowsome

**No tax
on women**

There was much debate about female education in 18th-century England, and some writers encouraged women to improve themselves mentally and morally by studying botany.

But, although women were frequently attacked, there was never "a tax on women for being idle, lazy, silly or frivolous," as your article on my talk "Women and Plants—A Fruitful Topic" reports.

It is a wonderful conspiracy theory to picture a society preaching femininity and then raking in money as a penalty from

those who master traditional feminine qualities. What a fundraiser!

Ann B. Shteir

**Bookstore
Shuffle**

I read with a great deal of interest the letter from Fiona C. Sim in *Excalibur* concerning the rip-off at the York Bookstore. Although she is not the only student who has been ripped off by the bookstore this year, hopefully she will be one of the last.

The York Bookstore does not operate its own buy-back, but instead allows the Follette Used Bookstore of Chicago, Illinois to provide their services. The results are appropriately summarized in Ms. Sim's letter.

The final suggestion in her letter has been under study since May, and the Federation plans to open a co-operative used bookstore in January. Hopefully the Administration will acknowledge the academic importance of this endeavour by charging little or no rent. It is our contention to provide the services that students require at as low cost as possible.

**D. Keith Smockum
President
Council of the
York Student
Federation Inc.**

**Yankees buy
old texts**

Re: Ms. Fiona Sim's recent letter (*Excalibur*, November 8). Three times a year, used books are purchased from York students by Follett College Book Co. of Chicago, Illinois, at our premises. Their policy is to pay market value for used books purchased here for resale across the U.S. and Canada. They also buy back used textbooks on behalf of York University Bookstores.

Our policy on that portion of books Follett buys from us is to pay 50 per cent of list price, through Follett, to our customers. These "premium" used textbooks are in turn put on our shelves for sale at 75 per cent of list price, or less, depending on the condition of individual copies. Our gross margin on these textbooks, therefore, does not exceed 33 per cent—a long way from the 400 per cent-plus profit of which Ms. Sim chooses to accuse us. This very reasonable contribution to gross margin is, of course, then applied to salaries and other legitimate administrative costs incurred by the Bookstore in its daily operations.

We regret the fact that continental demand for many books purchased by Follett here is sometimes lower than students might find useful. In all fairness, neither Follett nor York University Bookstores are in a position to control the unpredictable fluctuations of demand in the Canadian and U.S. used book markets.

Follett's presence on our campus allows us to offer students top dollar for used books intended for resale at York, while giving students access to a market larger than that represented by the Bookstore's own limited requirements.

**R. Barreto-Rivera
Director**

All letters should be addressed to the editor, *Excalibur*, Room 111 Central Square. Letters must be typed, triple-spaced, on a 66 stroke line. Letters are limited to 300 words (seven column inches). Name, address, or phone number must be included or the letter will not be published. *Excalibur* reserves the right to edit for grammar and length. Deadline Monday 5 pm.