

distractions

that which amuses, especially in order to take attention away from pain or worry

Image

I have my doubts about image reflections, inflections the trickery and mockery the cost of that too-important industry of image the mirror business.

Tell me about your faded levis those faithful friends, some days your only friend kind to your body and how they feed your soul 'till you toss them into your closet on that pile that grows ever-larger...

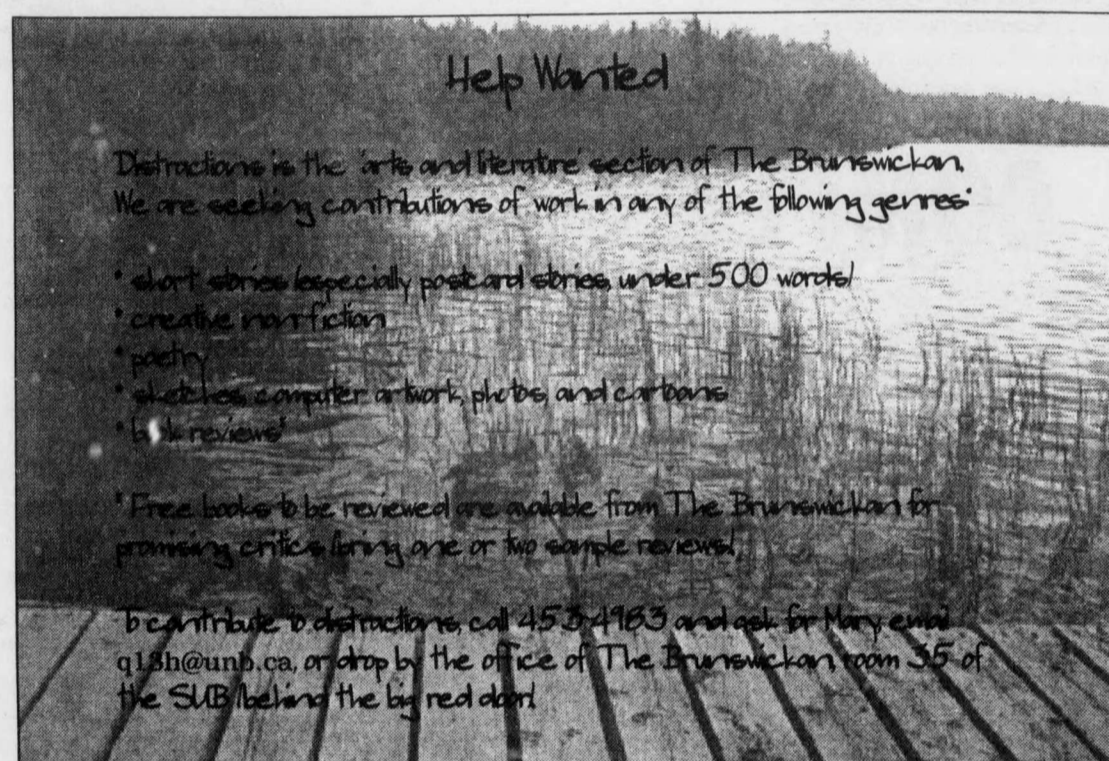
I don't know this face that you scrutinize and judge, and I am waiting for the day I am old enough to stop this constant struggle pulling myself in line with my image and testing both against every roving eye.

I want to reject image and rejoice — I will! until teasing silver backing eyes me again.

The Rooster in the Barn

dead, his neck stretched gracefully looking more human than he did alive because it doesn't wobble and jerk in that chicken-like way

this week's poems by hilarity



books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books...books

Resisting the Anomie

Kwame Dawes

by Mark Savoie

I have had the pleasure—I could write the 'privilege' or the 'honour,' since both are true, but the man exhibits an insufferable conceit in the comfort of his friends as it is—of knowing Kwame Dawes for a number of years. Thus, it was with a great deal of anticipation that I attended Dawes's concert in promotion of his latest collection of poems, *Resisting the Anomie*. I was not disappointed.

Dawes has not lost any of his considerable stage presence, and quickly won over his audience.

The book being promoted by the concert was *Resisting the Anomie*, a collection of poems by Dawes advertised as representing his search for a home. This desire for a place to call 'home' may well be a fundamental human need, yet it also strikes me as being somewhat unnecessary, since Dawes has exhibited throughout his travels an ability to make a home of any place that he visits.

The first of Dawes's homes evokes the most powerful poetry to be found within the book. The second section of the book—"Acceptance"—is not so much about Ghana but about Dawes's relationship with Neville Augustus Dawes, his father for whom the book is partially dedicated. The poems "The Kiss" and "The Day You Played the Piano" evoke an immense feeling of loss and resignation which is only partially erased by Dawes's Frederickton adoption of a new father in the person of John Ruganda in the section closing poem "Chief."

Unfortunately, the pleas of "Please God don't let this airplane crash. / Please God don't let this airplane crash. / Please God don't let this airplane crash," seem maudlin and contrived in comparison to the subdued memory of "It should have been a simple handshake / between father and adult son — / that way the memory would be simpler, / less wrought with guilt, / free of the treachery of Gethsemane / and the rocks on which the betrayer dashed his brains," found in "The Kiss."

A recurring theme throughout the book is Dawes's pride in his heritage as a "Ghanaian-born Jamaican." He is particularly resentful of the traditional history as taught by European culture. His "History Lesson Eight A.M." complains that "At eight a.m. each blessed day / No wonder I can't find Discovery Bay / Was looking for the gold / And all I see is blood / All I see is blood / All I see is blood." This complaint echoes that found in "Dry Bones" where he accuses Europeans of creating a myth of Carib Indian cannibalism. "To flatter yourself you rob my dignity. / To flatter yourself you rob my dignity."

Dawes's real gift of language is his ability to describe people. He is somehow able to produce images drawn from psyches and experiences which he cannot have lived himself. This is best seen in his many



Kwame Dawes

parted poem "Watchmaker," which is the tale of a young girl's incestuous rape. Some of the images, such as referring to the penis as a snake, smack of cliché, but the lines "I feel to spit // but vomit / on my feet instead" and "8 my skirt // I wash it / I wash it again / I bleach it // I burn it" convince the reader of the depth of the girl's self-loathing.

Kwame Dawes is, of course, far more than simply a poet. He is also a singer/musician, and Chairman of the English Department at the University of South Carolina at Sumter. At present, Dawes finds all of these hats comfortable, although he admits that he finds his administrative duties to be burdensome. His teaching duties remain welcome, and he hopes to be able to concentrate more on teaching when he starts his associate professorship at USC-Columbia effective January 1996.

Dawes's success thus far as a poet and musician (he was lead singer and song writer for the reggae band Ujamaa) invites comparisons with Canadian poet and singer Leonard Cohen. Cohen has managed to marry his skills so as to achieve commercial success. When asked about this possibility, Dawes claimed to have never thought of himself in those terms. He describes himself as a storyteller, and there can be little doubt that this is a role in which he is comfortable. Storytelling is an art with its roots in the oral medium, and as such many of *Resisting the Anomie's* poems need to be read to be fully appreciated. In fact, the best person to read (or sing) these poems is Kwame Dawes himself, and it can only be hoped that it won't be long before he comes to this realisation himself.

A Lad from Brantford & other essays

David Adams Richards

by Maria Paisley

David Adams Richards' *A Lad from Brantford & other essays* is a collection of 18 essays on how we see ourselves, how others see us and our culture. The biting and comic essays are primarily about the Maritimes, Maritimers and the way of life here. Richards comments on how those in other parts of Canada and the U.S. view the Maritime cultures.

Richards, a writer-in-residence at UNB in the 1980's, writes about music, traveling, weather, movies, driving at night, bed and breakfasts and hunting. In a CBC interview, Richards was asked what he considered to be the "main unifying linchpin for Canadian culture." He responded that he believed hockey was the unifying aspect of our culture. In addition, he comments on how we, as a nation, and others, particularly Americans, have come to view this national sport.

Richards was born in Newcastle, N.B., and is currently living in Saint John. His first novel, *The Coming of Winter* won the Norma Epstein Prize in 1974 and was translated in the Soviet Union. He is the award-winning author of *Blood Ties*, *Lives of Short Duration*, *Road to the Stilt House*, *Nights Below Station Street* (winner of the 1988 Governor General's Award for Fiction), *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace* (winner of 4990 Canadian Authors Association Award), *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*, was shortlisted for the 1993 Governor General's Award for Fiction and won the 1994 Atlantic Provinces Booksellers Awards.