

# Writer Ritter scores better with Scrawl on society

*Urban Scrawl* by Erika Ritter  
MacMillan, 182 pp.

By CASSANDRA KRIVY

When Erika Ritter's name is mentioned one thinks only of the grating voice and glib approach to humor that marks her work on CBC's *Stereo Morning*. Tuning out Erika Ritter, however, would mean missing her quaint view of urban society. Her new book, *Urban Scrawl*, deals with precisely that tender topic.

The word 'Ritticism' is not used in her book; however, it colors each of her comical compositions, making the reader chuckle at her sarcastic, exaggerated, and very valid view of city life.

One could call her book an anthology of light social criticism, in which she explores some unlikely aspects of human existence that are otherwise ignored or taken for granted.

Ritter begins with the shocking truth about the exploitation of the bicycle (now merely a status symbol, when it was once content to be a useful toy). She satirizes the Club Med, calling it a hellish holiday spot that proves to be a dreadful experience for those who are frivolous enough to venture there.

Her parody of J.D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye (and-Water)*, tells the amusing tale of a literary professor-cum-detective living in the



fiction of this classic novel, in his own Humphrey Bogart (or is it W.C. Fields?) way.

This anti-urbanite author/playwright is well known in the realm of Canadian playhouse

literature and for a number of humorous books.

In *Urban Scrawl* Ritter parodies *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* with a more horrifying version that likely deals with her own fears: *The Invasion of the Airplane Stewardesses* (properly referred to as *Flight Attendants*). Her very subtle (can this be science fiction?) narrative more ingeniously entitled "A Lesson in Horticulture," is the ridiculous account of the consequences of talking to one's plant (an urban practice). Again, nothing more can be said of this one, lest the *fun* be spoiled.

Ritter also scores well with her unnervingly realistic inspiration, "A Cat's Guide to Woman Care." There is no doubt in the reader's mind that these helpful hints come from the mouth of Ritter's own feline. While one might initially harbor some hostility toward her smug manner and irritatingly knowledgeable tone, she demonstrates in her writing a consistency in sarcastic humor that might otherwise have been overshadowed by her unattractiveness on the radio.

Her words help bring to light the more obvious fables of a hung-up society. You needn't have nightmares, though, for the ugly truth is almost completely overwhelmed by Erika Ritter's gift for evoking constant chuckles.

□ Toronto Free Theatre presents the Toronto premiere of *DOC*, the Sharon Pollock play, directed by Guy Sprung. *DOC* is the story of a small town doctor who has sacrificed the happiness of his family in the service of his profession, and of the ghosts which arise with the return home of his daughter. Previews begin tonight. Opens Oct. 3 through to Nov. 4. Tickets: \$6-\$12. 26 Berkeley Street. 368-2858.

□ David French's *Salt-Water Moon* opens Tarragon Theatre's new season. A lyrical romance set in the enclosed world of the outport, the play is directed by Bill Glassco. Previews begin tonight. Opens Oct. 2 through to Nov. 4. Tickets: \$6-\$12. 30 Bridgman Ave. 531-1827.

□ *Toronto Painting '84*, featuring Joyce Wieland, Graham Coughtry and Gordon Rayner. Continues until Oct. 28 at the AGO. 977-0414.

## Oct. 4

□ *Repositioning the Familiar*, an exhibition of sculptures by Canadian artists Ian Carr-Harris, Jamelie Hassan, Spring Hurlbut, Liz Magor, and Judith Schwarz, will be presented at Glendon Gallery through Oct. 28. Free.

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