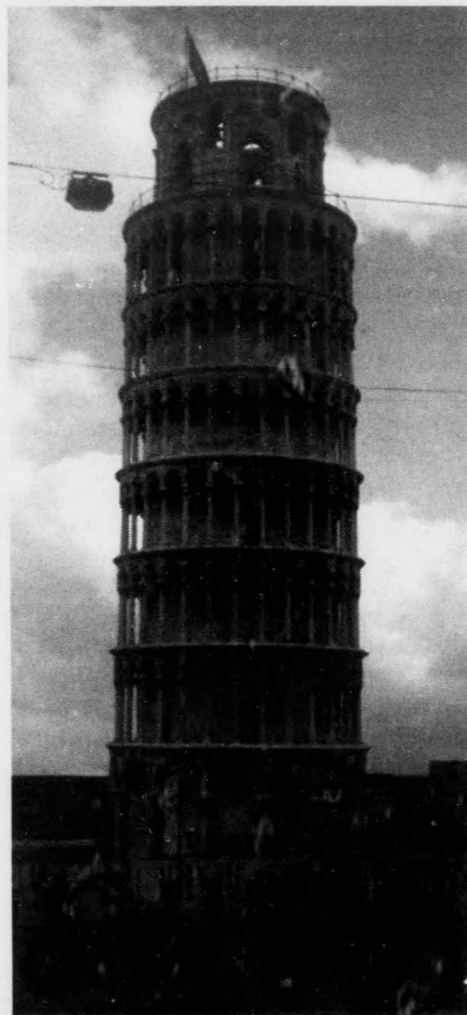


# d i s t r @ c t i o n s

## Tommy Travels

A Deaf, Dumb and Blind Travel Guide For The Debutante Traveler  
by Murray Thorpe

### "C'è l'abbamo fatta! La Tourre é dritta!"



"C'è l'abbamo fatta! La Tourre é dritta!" (We have done it! The tower is straight!) were the words of Alfa Romeo chief engineer Tiziano Vecellio as the leaning tower of Pisa settled into a near vertical position. The final fifteen minutes during which the tower was straightened was the culmination of hours of highly technical engineering work. Italian Prime Minister Raffaello Sanzio o Santi praised the day as, "the day when the world sees that Italy is on the leading edge of Technology and yet does not forget her past."

The leaning tower of Pisa is a marble bell tower of Romanesque architecture that was constructed between 1173 and 1372. It consists of seven stories, but it started to lean only after the third story was built. In 1989, the top was measured to be off the vertical by 14.5 feet. Since 1913, its lean has increased one twentieth of an inch a year. It is 177 feet tall and has an inner staircase of

300 steps leading to the bells.

Historian Giambattista Tiepolo stated that although Galileo was born in Pisa, there is no evidence showing that he actually did drop weights from the tower. However, he said "it is a nice story."

Geologist, Michelangelo Buonarroti of the Italian government research body, said that because of the lean, tourists were no longer allowed in the tower and that it was close to collapse. "We had to do something and Alfa Romeo had the computer resources necessary for the computations. They do a lot of computations for compressor blade design for their gas turbine engines, the J58-GE-3 and the J85-GE-13A, and we were fortunate we had their complete cooperation."

Tiziano Vecellio oversaw two teams of engineers that completed the project. "The solution is simple," Vecellio said. "All we did was to insert concrete under

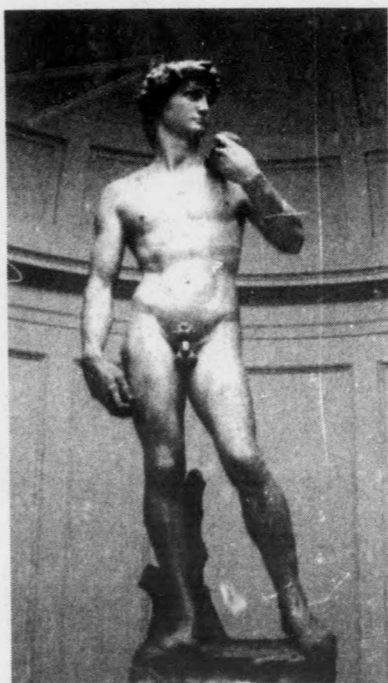
high pressure in the appropriate spots. Geological engineer, Giovanni Bellini and compressor engineer, Sandro Botticelli were instrumental in the success of this project." When asked about the impact of this project on the world, Vecellio said, "People will still flock to see the tower that used to lean. We have already been asked by the Dutch to fix a leaning house in Amsterdam. Maybe some day, we can find a way to clothe David."

Information from the *World Book Encyclopedia* and *Aviation Week & Space Technology*.

*Disinformation due to the first day of the next month.*



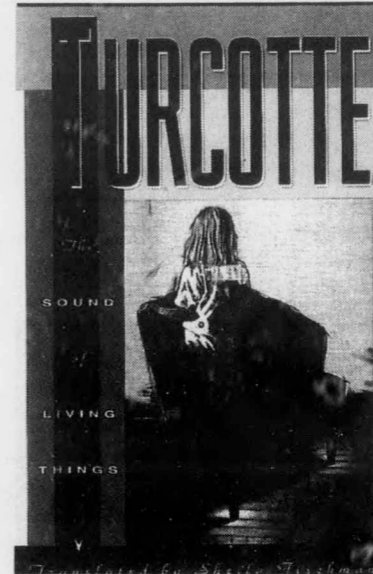
A Leaning Building in Amsterdam



Michelangelo's David at the Accademia in Florence



No Foolin', This is Car Henge near Alliance, Nebraska.



*The Sound of Living Things*  
by Elsie Turcotte  
translated by Sheila Fischman  
(Coach House Press)

*This is a story of the trials of single motherhood.*

Writers who can easily change genre and churn out poetry, fiction, and/or drama worth reading aren't all that common. When a writer rises to the challenge, critics tend to be savage. Elisa Turcotte, known for some time as one of Quebec's most successful young poets, dares to demonstrate her versatility with her first novel, *The Sound of Living Things*. The book seemed promising based on a relatively warm critical reception.

Turcotte's poetic skills help her take an inventive tack on the fiction genre. Poetry bleeds into the book's latticed structure, imagine being laid upon image, sections accumulating from many brief chapters rather than being tied to a plodding linear structure. There are five sections with titles giving the book a loose structure. The story is narrated by Albanie, a single mother who juggles her job as a librarian, her relationship with her daughter Maria, and her need for romance. The only

real plot of the novel is whether Albanie can manage to keep all of these balls in the air. Chapters are like poems, each one consisting of a particular incident or thought that Albanie ponders. These are dotingly elaborated upon with staccato detail:

I'm wearing jeans and a black sweater and as usual when I go out, I wait and put on lipstick at the very last minute. For kisses. As soon as the babysitter crosses the threshold, the lipstick can go on. Maria thinks I'm beautiful, too beautiful to be going out.

But Jeanne is already waiting outside. I go down the stairs and don't turn back. I check to see that my keys are in my purse. There's a trace of my love on Maria's cheek.

Turcotte doesn't bother with clear transitions between chapters or sections, so the novel is difficult to absorb until it has been completely read. Albanie also has the unsettling ability to stride through the trials of single motherhood with the calm meditiveness of superwoman. On the other hand, almost every phrase in this book delights in Albanie and Maria's bond. *The Sound of Living Things* penetrates the mental world of a three-year-old to rediscover the fears and joys attached to simple things at that age. Instead of being portrayed as a leech of the valuable energy that could be better spent on a lifestyle of carefree self-indulgence, Albanie's child proves to be her source of sanity. Maria is a beacon of absolute truth. In Maria's company, Albanie finds refuge from the chaotic and meaningless world outside their home. I only wish I could believe that all three-year-olds are such gracious company.

Although the poetic imagery is lush, it also makes a work of fiction like this very dense. Turcotte's style seems like a marvel in small doses, say a few chapters, but it weighs down too heavily in the long run. The mother-daughter relationship is portrayed by Turcotte with rare tenderness, but the reader is forced to wade through a murky story to discover this.

by Mimi Cormier



If the game does not look like Magic, it may be Bridge!

The answers to last week's bridge quiz are:  
Over 1♣, bid a. 1♦; b. 2♣; c. 1♦; d. 1♣; e. 1♣; f. 1♣; and g. 1♦.  
Over 1♣, bid a. 1NT; b. 2♣; c. 2♣; d. 2♣; e. 2♣; f. 3♣; and g. 3♣.

#### NOTICES

♦The Poetry Contest Winner from the 25 entries will be contacted Soon.

♦Where in The World is Due Monday. There are a few answers in Tommy Travels of past weeks. Entries with less than one third of the answers are encouraged.

photos by Warren Watson