

courte dans les programmes du secondaire et elle n'est pas si souvent proposée dans les romans pour adolescents.

**Claire le Brun** est professeure à l'Université Concordia (*Études françaises*). Ses recherches portent actuellement sur la littérature québécoise pour la jeunesse des années 70 et 80.

#### LOCAL COLOUR IN VANCOUVER ISLAND

**Handliners' Island.** Arthur Mayse. Illus. Nola Johnston. Harbour Publishing, 1990. 160 pp., \$12.95 paper. ISBN 1-55017-025-2.

Arthur Mayse, long-time weekly columnist for the *Victoria Times-Colonist* on the coastal environment of northern Vancouver Island, sets his latest novel on two nearby islands during the summer of 1946. His hero, Paddy Logan, wants to keep up his summer vacations from Washington State by catching enough coho salmon to pay an \$800 mortgage on the B.C. ranch from which his Scottish grandfather faces eviction. For weeks he and George Mayus Simon, grandson of a Kwakiutl chief, catch nothing while the hostile Lynn Hutchins rows daily to the cannery with her harvest of coho. For helping her take her injured grandfather for treatment, they get the needed tuition in the difficult art of catching salmon from a rowboat, and the use of tackle left over from legendary pre-war coho runs. Following a barren week, Mayus, who has never hidden his misgivings about fishing from Diablo Island, a Kwakiutl burial site, is setting off home when a huge catch of coho, "wild and hungry pirates...from the north" (124) weighs down their boats.

This metaphor deflects our sympathy from the fish, whose return to spawn and die Ben Hutchins describes unsentimentally: Nature "gives the coho three years, then gathers 'em in." To succeed in handlining the boys must grow "fins behind yer shoulders and webs betwixt yer toes, and scales on yer necks" and so "think like salmon" (131).

When two spawning-creek robbers Paddy has foiled burst into the shack to steal his earnings, the quick-witted lad scares one long enough to send Lynn running for grandfather and his gun. She proves equally resourceful when the federal inspector threatens to confiscate Paddy's earnings for fishing in Canadian waters. Paddy, now fourteen and pubescent, sets off home intent on renewing the friendship next summer, for all her outrage at his uninvited kiss.

The novel's plain words and syntax make it readable, if once only, by pre-adolescents of either sex. An experienced fisherman, Mayse writes most compellingly in the fishing scenes. He slips in details of local history, Kwakiutl crafts and customs, but commits two anachronisms: blue jeans (16) and a plastic bailer (77) in 1946. He plays off Paddy's naive disregard of Mayus's folk-

wisdom and apprehensions against the improvidence of nibbling away their food-supply on the principle that Kwakiutl don't "hoard" like whites.

Solidly as the author draws Paddy, Lynn, and their grandparents, his stereotypical crooks seem brought in for excitement. Most convincing are the dialogue and motivation, least so the Kwakiutl boy's friendship with Paddy, his ignorance of how to catch salmon and unremarked disappearance at the end. But those are things grown-ups notice.

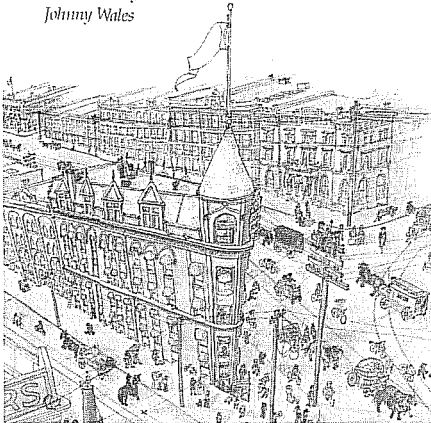
**Lionel Adey**, who is now retired, taught children's literature and literary approaches to childhood and adolescence at the University of Victoria. He has contributed many reviews to CCL.

## TORONTO IS STILL ITS PAST

**The Toronto story.** Claire Mackay. Illus. Johnny Wales. Annick Press. 1990. 112 pp., \$34.95 \$24.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-137-1, 1-55037-135-5.

### The Toronto Story

Claire Mackay  
Johnny Wales



As the two hundredth anniversary of the settlement of Toronto as a permanent community approaches (1993), booksellers will undoubtedly be coping with a flurry of histories of the city. One of the most colourful of these will surely be *The Toronto story*. While its large format seems to indicate that it is intended for a young teenage reader, it would be a shame if very much older readers as well did not have a chance to open it. They would be captivated. Everything about the book is delightful. From the wit of Mackay's prose and the cheery vigour of Wales's line-and-wash sketches to the attractive elements of the work's apparatus and design, the book will

quickly win a warm place in any reader's heart.

This is a survey of Toronto's past – from the ice-ages to the Sky Dome – with facts and figures and quotations from diaries; above all, though, it is not dry history. The author and illustrator, kindred spirits sharing a lively style, have indeed managed to narrate the story of their book's title, and one that is