

West Coast EDITOR

A MONTHLY FORUM FOR EAC

MEMBERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

TO EXCHANGE IDEAS,

DEVELOP SKILLS, AND

SHARE NEWS ABOUT EDITING

OCTOBER 1999

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Editors' Association
of Canada



Association canadienne
des rédacteurs-réviseurs

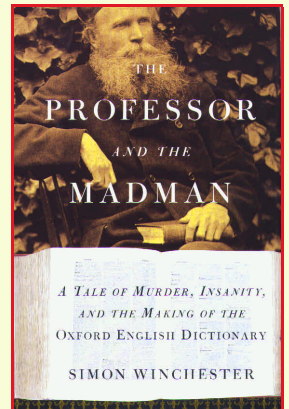
BC Branch

BOOK REVIEW

Murder, Insanity, and the *OED*

ANNE MACLEAN

The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary, by Simon Winchester. New York: HarperCollins, 1998. 242 p. Illus.



IF ANYONE tells you that dictionaries, or their compilers, are dull, remind him or her of William Chester Minor, one of the *Oxford English Dictionary's* most prolific and unusual contributors. Minor's life was an extraordinary one that no novel or Hollywood movie could match, and the *OED* would not have been the same without him.

In *The Professor and the Madman*, author Simon Winchester weaves Minor's story with that of the *OED* as a whole, drawing from government files and medical records to explore Minor's early years as the son of an affluent American family, his disastrous stint as an army doctor during the American Civil War, his descent into mental illness, and his murder of a man in England, which led to Minor's confinement in Broadmoor criminal lunatic asylum. Winchester outlines Minor's friendship with the *OED's* editor, Professor James Murray, contrasting their lives and personalities, from the time that Minor answered Murray's ad for contributors to the dictionary, through their correspondence, to their first meeting at Broadmoor in 1896 and subsequent visits there. One wonders whether, if things had gone differently for Minor, he could have become what Murray was, a distinguished, widely recognized scholar and not merely a "lexicographer manqué."

Working for the *OED* was a vital life-line for Minor, giving him "something valuable to do" and helping to restore his confidence and self-worth. He provided some 10 000 dictionary definitions until his condition deteriorated; he was eventually sent home to the United States, where he died in 1920. (Murray died in 1915.)

Winchester refers to the archival sources he consulted, but he is not

very specific about the exact types or location of these records; a more detailed bibliography would be helpful to other scholars. However, "Suggestions for Further Reading" offers useful descriptions of related books, including *Caught in the Web of Words* (1977), written by James Murray's granddaughter, Katharine Murray. The eight black-and-white illustrations by Philip Hood vividly complement the text, yet there is no list of illustrations. There is no index, either, another frustrating omission.

Readers might either like or hate the way that Winchester starts each chapter with a dictionary definition. This reviewer liked it; the definitions add an interesting dimension to the story. Chapter One, "The Dead of Night in Lambeth Marsh," begins with a definition of "murder," while Chapter Two, "The Man Who Taught Latin to Cattle," gives us "polymath" and "philology," both of which aptly describe James Murray and his life-long dedication to words and scholarship.

Winchester's obvious compassion for Minor leads him to some overwrought writing in places, but overall, his book is a lively and worthwhile read. He describes the strange, serendipitous events that produced the *OED*, and concludes, "... few would disagree that serendipity, in dictionaries, is a most splendid thing indeed."

Preliminary Notes on the Practical Subjunctive

CLAUDETTE REED-UPTON

A QUESTION from a subscriber to the EAC listserv alerted me to the fact that the subjunctive mood is no longer being taught, or at least taught well, in basic English grammar courses. When I started doing a little research, I discovered that the alleged demise of the subjunctive is nothing new: the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Usage* points out that since the late 19th century, grammarians have been remarking its disappearance. “The 18th-century grammarians had barely discovered the subjunctive, so apparently it was in decline as soon as it was recognized. The historical grammarians show that it has, in fact, been in decline since Old English, when the modal auxiliaries began to take over some of its functions.” It has, however, been “preserved like a fossil” in certain phrases, such as “be that as it may,” “as it were,” and “come what may,” as well as in what might be called parliamentary language: “I move that the meeting be adjourned.”

Not being a grammarian, a linguist, or a parliamentarian, I tend to approach the subjunctive in a more practical way: as a verb form that expresses possibility rather than action. Here are a few examples:

I wish I (was, were) able to go to the party, but I have another engagement.

If I (was, were) 20 years younger, I would probably dye my hair fuchsia.

She describes the northern landscape as though she (was, were) looking at it through her living-room window, even though she's lived in Florida for three decades.

(Was, were) the US to pay its full share of the operating costs of the United Nations, the organization might have some teeth.

All those sentences properly take “were.” They show that the subjunctive is often found after the verb “wish”; after “if,” “as if,” and “as though”; and at the beginning of a clause expressing something *contrary to fact* or hypothetical. They also show that the verb “to be” is particularly sensitive to the difference between the indicative and the subjunctive mood.

To underline that difference, look at these sentences from Edward D. Johnson’s *Handbook of Good English*:

I wish I were rich. (Present subjunctive; desire for something contrary to fact.)

I wouldn't wear these clothes if I were rich. (Present subjunctive; condition contrary to fact.)

If he is rich he will be welcome. (Present indicative; the *if* clause presents a condition that may be true.)

If he was rich you couldn't tell it by his clothes. (Past indicative; the verb in the subordinate clause is in the past tense to agree with the past tense of the main verb, “couldn't.” To test it, change the sentence to the present tense: *If he is rich you can't tell it by his clothes.* You can see that the condition may be true, rather than contrary to fact.)

Space limitations preclude a complete discussion of the proper uses of the subjunctive mood. I hope that this brief and superficial summary will inspire readers to investigate further, as the subjunctive adds richness and texture to the written language.

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM



BC Publisher Reveals Inside Look at Local Book Publishing Scene

JUDY EXELL

ALAN TWIGG, publisher of *BC Bookworld*, managed to captivate a full house of editors with fascinating tales of BC literary folklore at the first BC branch EAC meeting of the season.

As a BC native who has witnessed the BC- and Canada-wide publishing evolution since the 1960s, Twigg offered a unique glimpse into the BC book publishing scene. Twigg now considers BC to be a “literary hotbed” of activity with approximately 2 000 to 3 000 authors and 15 to 20 successful publishing houses.

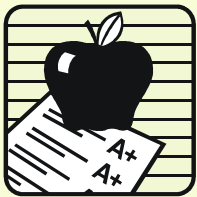
Bookworld was established about 11 years ago as a “conduit” to provide representation for BC books, which Twigg felt would otherwise never garner the attention of the media or the public. Disillusioned by the local print media whose reviews cater to the “literary aristocracy,” Twigg aims

to provide information to his readers about locally authored books—and allows readers to make up their own minds regarding the quality of the work.

Most BC publishers grew out of what Twigg calls “the democratization of the literary marketplace in the 1970s.” Before that time, there were only a handful of “gatekeepers” to the publishing world, all located in Toronto. The publishing explosion occurred as a result of the cultural pride Canadians derived from the success of Expo '67. Because they all grew up together, BC publishers are mutually supportive of one another.

Twigg sees self-publishing as a growing niche in the BC marketplace and he believes independent publishers provide a

Continued on page 3



Extra-Curricular Activities Spark Editorial Opportunities

JUDY EXELL

AH, AUTUMN! The chill in the air and the crunch of red leaves on the sidewalk remind me that it's learning time again. I eagerly thumb through the continuing education brochures and course calendars that arrive on my doorstep, looking for something to pique my interest.

Whether it's a just-for-fun cake decorating, tap dancing, or dog-training course, or something more formal that will enhance your professional development, the opportunity to learn something new will often reap more rewards than you might expect.

Aside from the benefits of learning new skills or brushing up on existing ones, attending classes affords the opportunity to network with your peers and establish valuable contacts, thus generating more opportunities and ideas for work. Perhaps the Ceramic Pottery Association of BC requires an editor for their newsletter, or your Cantonese cooking class decides to publish a recipe book. Continuing education institutions are always on the lookout for new course ideas and instructors; this is a chance to blend your unique background and editorial experience to propose teaching a class on how to produce newsletters for non-profit organizations. Opportunities abound!

For freelance editors who work primarily on their own, the chance to develop friendships and socialize with classmates who share similar interests is an additional advantage and a great way to meet people. Networking and self-promotion in class can lead to future editorial job prospects.

Throughout BC there are numerous editing, publishing, and communications courses available that are taught by professionals who are experts in their fields. Many courses can be taken either independently or as part of a certificate or diploma program.

A sampling of courses that may be of interest to editors is listed here. Check out Web sites for the colleges and universities in your area to see what else is available. As well, most communities offer courses through local continuing education programs.

Simon Fraser University

Writing and Publishing Program

Phone: 604.291.5093

Web site: www.sfu.ca./cstudies/wp

Langara College

Publishing: Techniques and Technologies Program

Phone: 604.323.5686

Communications and Media Relations Program

Phone: 604.323.5971

Web site: www.langara.bc.ca

Douglas College

Print Futures: Professional Writing Program

Phone: 604.527.5400

Web site: www.douglas.bc.ca

Capilano College

On-Line Publishing Program

Phone: 604.990.7819

Web site: www.capcollege.bc.ca

University of Victoria

Continuing Studies

Phone: 250.472.4747

Web site: www.uvcs.uvic.ca

EAC-BC WORKSHOPS

Enhance Your Editing Skills

The Managing Editor

Claudette Reed-Upton

Saturday, October 23

10 am to 4 pm

EAC members: \$85

The Business of Editing

Maxine and Bill Glover

Saturday, October 30

10 am to 4 pm

EAC members: \$45

Indexing

Annette Lorek

Saturday, November 20

10 am to 4 pm

EAC members: \$105

Call 604.681.7184 to register.

legitimate service. "Every second book in BC is now self-published." While he doesn't address the marketing and distribution aspects of self-publishing, Twigg believes that the time, energy, and care that an independent publisher devotes to producing one book often creates a superior product to the books produced in the mainstream publishing establishment, which churns out a substantial frontlist each season and must still maintain a long backlist of titles.

Many local publishing houses have expanded their list to include children's literature. Fiction, however, is still doomed, while trade publishing remains the anchor of the

local publishing industry.

Book publishing in BC is still small enough that everybody knows everybody and you can "knock on doors" to find work, although Twigg admits there are not many in-house positions available. Freelance editors are just as likely to find editing opportunities through the growing self-publishing movement. Making connections and attending book launches and other literary events about town is the way to go.

Twigg's final word: "There's no money in it." (But, as editors know, the allure is not about getting rich. Editors are passionate about their work. Right?)



Foot notes

Joanne Findon has had her first novel, *When Night Eats the Moon* (Red Deer Press), published. Joanne is the author of two picture books for older children, *The Dream of Aengus* and *Auld Lang Syne* (both Stoddart Kids), and has had some short stories for young adults published in two of Thistle-down Press's young adult collections. In 1998, her short story, "The Scarlatina," appeared in an anthology of historical fiction by Beach Holme Press called *Winds Through Time*.

On the move...

Last year's professional development chair, **Judy Phillips**, has left her position of senior editor at Self-Counsel Press to pursue editorial opportunities in Toronto.



Come the end of the year, **Claudette Reed-Upton** will be settling down in the Cayman Islands where her husband has secured a contract with the Cayman Brac Department of Education. Claudette hopes to find time to indulge in gardening and reacquaint herself with her cats. She will be doing some freelance editing on the side and will continue helping out with the 2000 EAC Conference.

Sheila Hill, professional development co-chair, has left her position of editor and exhibit developer at the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre to join Aldrich Pears as a writer and exhibit developer. Aldrich Pears is a Canadian firm that provides professional exhibit design and planning services to museums, science centres, zoos, and other themed attractions in Canada, the United States, and Asia.



And finally, if you're attending the Surrey Writer's Conference in October, look out for **Barbara Pulling** who will be delivering a keynote address and facilitating a workshop on book proposals.

New BC Members

Temperatures aren't the only thing that rose over September. The BC-branch membership ranks have risen to 145. Welcome to the following new members: Eden Evans, Barbara Kuhne, Sandra MacKendrick, Janice Mann, and Richard. L. Rogers, all of Vancouver; Talitha Hostetter of Penticton; Clare Mathias of Pender Island; Marsha Mildon of Victoria; and Barbara Ann Schau of Brentwood Bay.

Workshop Registration Address Change

There has been a change of address for EAC-BC professional development workshop registrations. Please mail your registration forms and payment to:

EAC
2631 Melfa Lane
Vancouver, BC V6T 2C5

NEXT EAC-BC EVENT

Ann Cowan on Mentoring

How does one learn to edit? Many of us have had a mentor, someone who, perhaps informally, showed us the basics, helped us over the rough spots, and confirmed that we could indeed call ourselves editors.

Ann Cowan, Director of the SFU Writing and Publishing Program and Associate Director of the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing, believes we all have the responsibility to be teachers as well as learners. She has researched mentoring among writers and editors in England and will share with us her enthusiasm about the possibilities for mentoring in BC.

Wednesday, October 20
YWCA Hotel—Royal Bank Room
733 Beatty Street, Vancouver
(between Robson and Georgia)
7:30 pm to 9:30 pm

WEST COAST EDITOR

West Coast Editor is the newsletter of the British Columbia branch of the Editors' Association of Canada. Views expressed in these pages do not necessarily reflect those of EAC/ACR as a whole.

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Volunteer Now for Editing on the Edge

Here's how to volunteer for Editing on the Edge, the Editors' Association of Canada annual conference (SFU at Harbour Centre, May 26–28, 2000). It's your chance to be on the frontlines to make connections with editors from across the country and beyond.

Just answer the following questions and send your reply to the conference volunteer coordinator before November 5, 1999. By e-mail, send to <editbc@web.net>. (Make sure Editing on the Edge is in the subject line of your message.) Or by mail, send to Editing on the Edge — Volunteers, EAC-BC, P.O. Box 1688, Bentall Centre Post Office, Vancouver, BC V6C 2P7.

We'll get back to you early in the new year to confirm your interests and availability.

1. Your name, address, city, and postal code; day and evening telephone numbers; fax number; and e-mail address.
2. Why do you want to volunteer for Editing on the Edge?
3. Would you like to play a role in the conference organizing committee? (That means an ongoing commitment from early in the new year.) Or would you prefer to be part of the volunteer group that helps out as we get closer to the conference?
4. Have you volunteered in the past for an EAC committee or activity?
What and when?
Did you have a good time?
5. Do you speak and/or write French?
6. Do you have a car and a valid driver's licence?
7. Do you have a Serving It Right certificate?
8. Do you have any event management experience?
9. Select three areas of volunteer interest and list them in order of preference. Choose from the list below:
1.....
2.....
3.....

Administration: Answering general inquiries; helping with mailing and e-mailing; providing some clerical and administrative support. Good telephone, word-processing, writing and editing, and organizational skills required.

Hospitality: Assisting with the organization of social events, including meals and hospitality room(s); handling food and beverages; dealing with cash; setting up and closing event rooms. Serving It Right certificate useful.

Transportation: Helping speakers and out-of-town registrants get to and from the airport; delivering conference programs to selected venues; picking up supplies for conference events. Car essential.

Billeting: Assisting with billeting for out-of-town speakers and registrants. Database management and telephone, e-mail, and people skills required.

Media Liaison: Assisting with conference and speaker promotion. No print production or design skills required. Good telephone, writing and editing, organizational, and people skills required.

Site Volunteer: Helping out with a variety of jobs during the conference, filling in, running errands, coping gracefully with the unexpected. Flexibility essential.