tradition anglaise de la littérature pour l’enfance, nourrie de ‘nursery rhymes,’
de ‘nonsense’ et de jeux de mots.

La dernière conférencière venue de France, Catherine Velay-Vallantin, ferme la série avec un exposé sur le livre de colportage français et son influence possible sur le conte québécois. Prenant comme double point de départ l’épisode du colporteur assassiné et les allusions au Petit Albert dans L’Influence d’un livre, l’auteur propose des parallèles entre les récits de la Bibliothèque bleue de Troyes et certains contes folkloriques québécois conservés aux Archives de folklore de l’Université Laval.

Présenté sous une couverture attrayante dessinée par Norman Dupuis, laquelle rappelle les jolies reliures cartonnées de l’époque romantique, ce recueil d’études solides et variées marque un progrès notable dans nos connaissances de l’histoire de l’imprime au Québec. Le lecteur comblé regrettera seulement le nombre de coquilles – parfois deux ou trois sur une même page [p. 135, 196, 225] – et les noms propres dont l’orthographe n’a pas été uniformisée [Lamennais, La Mennais, LaMennais; Arlincourt, Arlingcourt, Arlington; Deckerr, Deckherr; Dufresnoy, Dufrénoy; etc.]. Un ouvrage scientifique de cette importance a droit à une toilette plus soignée.

DAVID M. HAYNE

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In the autumn of 1985 I published a book called Index to Canadian Poetry in English [Toronto: Reference Press, 1985], and was one its three editors. This work indexed Canadian poetry in fifty-one anthologies by title, first line, author, and subject(s).

A few months later I discovered that Dalhousie University had simultaneously published a similar index, edited by Margery Fee of the University of Victoria. This was most thoroughly alarming news for a non-funded small-press publisher whose livelihood hangs in the balance each time a new title is printed.

For several reasons, which I will describe below, my anxiety was misplaced, and a mid-air collision between two Piper Cubs of Canadian publishing was averted. The Reference Press Index has done modestly well, and a new edition will be published in 1990. I expect that the Dalhousie work, useful and reasonably priced as it is, has also had some success.

Like Index to Canadian Poetry in English, the Dalhousie Index is an index to Canadian poetry in approximately fifty selected anthologies. Surprisingly, only
twenty-four works are indexed in common. The Reference Press editors tried to use 
anthologies that might be found 'on the shelves of public libraries in Canada and the 
United States,' as did Margery Fee. She writes that a 'stodgy focus on the main-
stream appeared necessary to make the index useful to a wide range of readers ...'
Perhaps the mainstream is wider than it appears.

Like Reference Press, Dalhousie provides indexes for titles, first lines, authors 
and translators. Unlike the Reference Press Index, there is no subject indexing in 
Canadian Poetry in Selected English-Language Anthologies: An Index and Guide.

Margery Fee notes in her Introduction that '[w]hile there is no subject index as 
such, the titles and first lines provide a fairly good indication of the content of the 
poems.' Perhaps Fee is being a bit glib here, since the most cursory analysis of the 
'subject' content of titles and first lines demonstrates the futility of attempting to 
find poems on, say, 'War,' or 'Dogs,' or 'The Arctic' or 'Crime' by scanning titles. 
The librarian who attempts to do so while a customer lingers is going to look very 
inept indeed.

Having spent two years reading some six thousand not-very-straightforward 
poems and attempting to assign subject headings to them, I think I know why 
Dalhousie has no subject index. But for public libraries at least, it is an important 
shortcoming, and may help to explain how Reference Press and Dalhousie can co-
exist in a limited marketplace.

It may be fair to say that without subject analysis, the scope of Fee's project was 
greatly simplified, a matter of identifying and selecting anthologies, and keyboard-
ing details about poems for later manipulation by a computer. To paraphrase Tru-
man Capote, this was not indexing, this was typing. If I have a major criticism of the 
Dalhousie work, it is that within the 'simplified' framework there should have been 
room for many, many more anthologies, and perhaps for poetry from the major jour-
nals and magazines.

In terms of appearance and layout, the two Indexes differ considerably. The 
Index to Canadian Poetry was printed on seventy-pound stock at the Coach House 
Press in Toronto, then sewn and cased in cloth covers. The Dalhousie Index is 
perfect-bound in paper covers. Pages are reproduced from laser-printer masters and 
printed on light-weight bond paper, size 8½ x 11 inches. As a fairly early example of 
low-cost typesetting, the Dalhousie Index works fairly well. Neither layout nor 
typesetting detracts from its usefulness.

Plainly, the Reference Press Index is a more attractive and a more robust book. 
But I ask myself how much this matters, and the answer seems to be 'Not very 
much.' All other factors being equal, some libraries may prefer hardcover, some may 
prefer to spend $10.00 less for their index.

Is the Dalhousie Index worth having? Yes. It is well edited, relatively inexpen-
sive and easy to use. It deals with a substantial body of work, and includes many 
anthologies likely to be used in schools. Should it have included more collections 
and cast a wider net? Probably. Would the Reference Press Index be a better choice? 
If subject access is a priority, perhaps.

What is needed, of course, is a more comprehensive index. One that indexes
many more anthologies, and periodicals as well. Until such a beast appears, the advice of another reviewer makes sense: for an optimum search, use the Reference Press Index and the Dalhousie Index in combination.

GORDON RIPLEY

(Gordon Ripley is the Director of the Reference Press. He has edited or co-edited Who’s Who in Canadian Literature, Index to Canadian Poetry, Canadian Serials Directory, and the Canadian Short Story Index.)


A recent article in the American trade magazine Publishers Weekly [30 September 1988] describes the extraordinary growth of small, independent presses over the past twenty years. Holly Melanson has charted this thriving activity in Canada for the years 1975-85 in her present work for those presses she defines as English Canadian literary presses, those ‘created solely to encourage and provide a forum for new Canadian poets, novelists, dramatists and other creative artists.’ Her bibliography is intended to serve as a sequel to Grace Tratt’s Check List of Canadian Small Presses, English Language (Dalhousie University Libraries and School of Library Science, 1974).

The compiler has identified 240 literary presses [each of which must have published at least two original literary works within the decade, while existing independently of large publishing firms], listing 4,300 titles which fall into the category of English or English / French adult literature. Space restrictions meant the exclusion of ‘non-literature’ titles from these same presses.

For each press, information is included on press history, ISBN numbers used, current address or city of operation if the press is currently inactive, comments, when available, gathered from various sources [usually the proprietor], bibliographic references and a list of titles issued with author, title and date of publication. Only a small number of the titles listed were examined by the compiler, bibliographic data for the remainder was gathered from secondary sources, including in some cases information provided by press representatives. Cross-references from variant forms of press name are included within the alphabetical listing of presses. Two indexes provide access to the entries by press founder and province, and an extensive bibliography lists references to the presses and to small press publishing in Canada.

The truly astonishing variety and number of presses operating in Canada are clearly delineated in this checklist. Venerable Canadian institutions, some of them already well-documented, such as Coach House Press and Talonbooks, appear in juxtaposition with little-known originals such as Coma Goats Press and Surrealist Poets’ Gardening Association. I am full of admiration for the compiler’s success in identifying so many of these obviously ephemeral imprints and her perseverance in gathering details of their publishing history in the face of the ‘normal elusive nature