
In *Authors and Audiences*, Clarence Karr has undertaken a mammoth project. Here he charts the careers of popular Canadian writers—Charles Gordon (aka Ralph Connor), Robert Stead, Nellie McClung, Lucy Maud Montgomery, and Arthur Stringer—who enjoyed great literary success throughout “the ‘golden age’ of writing and reading, from the 1890s through the 1920s, during which hardcover, mass-marketed fiction flourished” (3). Karr traces the emergence of modernism in North America, the transformation of Canada into a sophisticated modern society, and gives compelling reasons for the tremendous popularity of his five authors, “the first Canadian writers to acquire international recognition” (3). Moreover, he provides an overview of contemporary practice in the publishing and film industries and challenges the elitist dismissal of popular fiction as so much pap for the masses. The task he sets himself—to write a publishing and cultural history that focuses on five key writers—is a large one that calls for a clear focus, expert organization, and incisive analysis. Despite the vast sweep of his canvas and difficulty in organizing his material, Karr succeeds admirably in articulating an important period in Canada’s literary history.

Karr describes his book as cultural history within the framework of “international history of the book” studies (ix). In fact, *Authors and Audiences* draws on the material of book history, including publishers’ archives, author correspondence and journals, fan letters, and contemporary book reviews. The study is founded on an impressive selection of primary and secondary sources (cited in the book’s final section, Notes) from which Karr builds his interesting history. His exhaustive research informs the thoughtful analysis of this book.

Built around the careers of five writers, the work comprises twelve chapters. The first two chapters provide historical context, analyse
the ideology of modernism that transformed North American society of the time, and characterize the 1890s through to the 1920s as opportune years for fiction writers. Chapters three and four describe the literary apprenticeship and evolving careers of the authors under consideration, against a primarily North American backdrop of relationships among writers, publishers, and agents. Chapters five to nine, each devoted to one of the authors, carefully trace his or her respective success. The final three chapters draw heavily on fan letters to reconstruct audience reception; describe the fraught relationship among books, movies, and Hollywood; and chart the critical reception of the works of each author. Here, Karr shows how successful fiction was despised by reviewers and critics whose unexamined prejudice against popular works served to undervalue their literary and cultural significance, a practice that continued throughout the twentieth century.

The history Karr writes—of ambitious authors determined to make their livings by their pens; of authors courting readers through character, plot, and setting; of some publishers bilking authors whenever possible; of other publishers and agents working on behalf of authors; of the adaptation and corruption of texts to suit the movie screen; of loyal fans devoted to their favourite writers; of the rise and fall in authors' fortunes—is fascinating and emphasizes the emerging cosmopolitan nature of Canada. This study is as much recuperative, aimed to revise the generally held notion of an unsophisticated country lacking any modern culture of its own, as it is a significant contribution to the field of Canadian book history. Readers of these Papers/Cabiers will be interested especially in Karr's illuminating analysis of literary apprenticeship, the author as professional, and the contrasting reception of popular fiction among readers and critics.

Faulty organization, however, weakens the impact of the groundbreaking history Karr uncovers. Rather than study each of the authors in depth, the book focuses on the cultural history and circumstances that fostered their significant careers. The stories of Connor, Stead, McClung, Montgomery, and Stringer unfold gradually in a dense narrative that attempts to thread five long and complex tales into one. Since it is difficult to follow any single story, however, the authors themselves do not emerge as fully fleshed beings. In fact, the reader comes away with a composite portrait of the popular author who lived and wrote during the golden age of hardcover fiction but she cannot know that author intimately. In a
book of this scope, with its announced focus on individual authors, the reader ought to be able to distinguish between the careers of Robert Stead and Arthur Stringer, for example. The particularity of each author may have surfaced more clearly through examples from their respective works, but Karr does not cite sufficiently from the literary texts he historicizes in order to mark an author's individual style. A selection of fewer authors—with reference to other writers, as well—may have helped tighten the focus of this study and would have allowed for Karr’s historical examination.

Finally, I must note the appalling number of typographical errors that mar this otherwise attractive book. In fact, I confronted so many errors that I stumbled through my reading of Karr’s text, surely written as a seamless narrative. *Authors and Audiences* appears not to have been proofread—a particular oversight in this original examination of book history.

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Fidèle à sa démarche scientifique axée sur les dimensions doctrinales et économiques du libéralisme québécois, F. Roy étudie la librairie de langue française comme un commerce, à l'enseigne des rapports entre les affaires et la culture. C'est ce qui lui fait affirmer qu'en bon bourgeois libéral, le libraire Patriote Fabre « est convaincu que le