



Speaking in the Past Tense: Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction

Herb Wylie

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“*Speaking in the Past Tense* participates in an expanding critical dialogue on the writing of historical fiction, providing a series of reflections on the process from the perspective of those souls intrepid enough to step onto what is, practically by definition, contested territory.”

— Herb Wylie, from the Introduction

The extermination of the Beothuk ... the exploration of the Arctic ... the experiences of soldiers in the trenches during World War I ... the foibles of Canada’s longest-serving prime minister ... the Ojibway sniper who is credited with 378 wartime kills—these are just some of the people and events discussed in these candid and wide-ranging interviews with eleven authors whose novels are based on events in Canadian history.

These sometimes startling conversations take the reader behind the scenes of the novels and into the minds of their authors. Through them we explore the writers’ motives for writing, the challenges they faced in gathering information and presenting it in fictional form, the sometimes hostile reaction they faced after publication, and, perhaps most interestingly, the stories that didn’t make it into their novels.

Speaking in the Past Tense provides fascinating insights into the construction of national historical narratives and myths, both those familiar to us and those that are still being written.

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