

Writers on Writers

Quick, off the top of your head, name as many of your favorite Canadian authors as you can. Having trouble? Okay, fine, you can include the ones you aren't so fond of as well. Still struggling? How big was your list? If it was

over 20, I'd say you're doing good. Not as good as Danielle Schaub, though. Her new book, *Reading Writers Reading*, is a personal introduction to 164 Canadian authors—most of whom, I'm sad to say, I'd never heard of before. But that's okay; Schaub sits you down with each one and gives you a little one-on-one time.

Schaub has collected stories and essays from these writers on reading (what they read, why they read, how reading inspired them to write, etc) and compliments the words with intimate photographs of the author. And by intimate I mean photographs that go beyond the normal thumbnail portraits that accompany generic bios on the back sleeves of their books. These photos are candid shots of people in their lives, not in a studio. They offer a peek at who these writers really are.

As for the essays, they are inspired by questions on what the author reads. The responses vary from cute little poems on a disagreement with a copy editor (Leon Rooke), to connecting with a heckling audience member at a reading (Andrew Pyper), to losing the ability to read after a stroke (Howard Engel), to 161 more glimpses into the thoughts that inspire

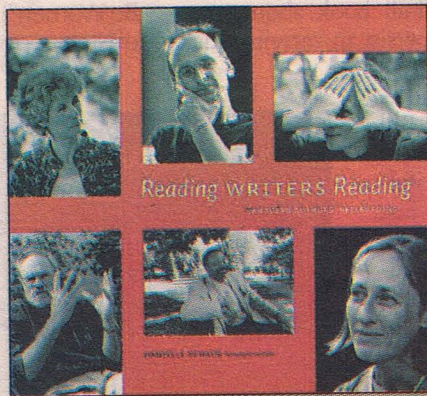
and drive these writers.

A non-Canadian herself, Schaub embraces our bilingual nature more than many of us do, presenting writings from writers in both French and English. There are a smattering of French pieces—just enough to make me appreciate another aspect of our countries uniqueness that I do not participate in, and wish I had paid more attention in high school French. What is Yolande Villemaire saying in her essay “La petite Madeleine”? I may not understand her words, but Schaub's photo says more to me about the author than a few hundred words ever could.

Taken all at once, *Reading Writers Reading* can be overwhelming. It's like going to a party with 164 totally

intriguing strangers and being introduced to them one by one. After awhile their faces all blur together and their witty comments and charming banter becomes meaningless. But if you keep the book within arms reach—by your bed, or on the coffee table—and flip through it occasionally, you will meet some truly fascinating Canadians. Just briefly, a quick hello and howdoyou do. Enough to get you interested, to look up what they've written, or what they've recommended, and add a whole pile of new books to your “must read” pile.

—Sarah Gignac



Reading Writers Reading
by Danielle Schaub
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