

Editorial: Life and letters

Kevin Major, speaking at the Summer Institute of the Children's Literature Centre at Althouse College, London, presented the story of his life as a writer in the form of a set of letters. The old phrase "life and letters" can be taken in a more general sense: the words a writer uses and the constructs he creates are tied to the whole of his life, actual and vicarious.

The group of writers who agreed to speak at the summer conference convened by John Smallbridge on the topic "My own story" confronted the assignment in a variety of ways. This issue, presenting the "story", self-told, of Welwyn Katz, Claire Mackay, Barbara Reid, and other writers, reveals the complex relationship between the life and the work of a group of Canadian writers.

Most poignant perhaps is the story of Helen Forrester, author of the Liverpool trilogy, a woman many of us think of as an English writer, although she has lived in Edmonton for many years now. Leon Garfield, whose work has been enjoyed by thousands of Canadian students, emphasizes how deviously "real" place and time have affected his literary work. Finally, Anne Thwaite, biographer of the authors of those perennial favourites, *The secret garden* and *The house at Pooh Corner*, comments more generally on the relation of life story and story-telling, adding a perception of her own relation to the biographies she has produced.

"This is my letter to the world" Emily Dickinson said of her own poetry. This issue gives us a glimpse of the lives of artists who have written their "letters" to Canadian children.