experienced by audiences within that half world, a universe of light and dark" (173). Through his examination of many films dealing with constitutional, criminal, civil, and international law, Chase concludes that while they provide a legal narrative to the audience, it is "a different *kind* of narrative, a different impression of the legal system than conventional legal narrative, the language of lawyers and courts." The "visualization of legality" can be more or less true, but it is impossible to "argue that movies are simply a mirror held up to a system of blind justice, providing one more authorized account ..." (180).

Whether or not a realistic image of the American legal system is a reasonable goal for filmmakers, the fact remains that their productions provide some of the most powerful, if not *the* most powerful images that inform the audience's view of the system. This begs an important question that Chase chooses not to address in much detail: Should commercial filmmakers be expected to portray the American legal system in its pure form, or when it comes to the law is there still room for fiction? Aside from the minor criticisms above, however, Chase's extensive and well-written analysis offers much of interest to serious scholars and movie-buffs alike. In particular, *Movies on Trial* presents a well-argued case for the study of the legal genre of film as an essential means of gauging how people understand the rules, regulations and procedures of the American legal system.

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Marc Edge, *Pacific Press: The Unauthorized Story of Vancouver's Media Monopoly* (Vancouver, New Star, 2002).

The relationship between academia and the popular press has never been an easy one. Academics complain that journalists lack rigor. Editors complain that academics cannot write. Pity the poor PhD who tries to write a scholarly book in a journalistic style. The result is usually an unhappy marriage: not rigorous enough for scholars, not engaging enough for the general public.

Marc Edge's advisors likely warned him about this when he set himself the task of writing the history of Vancouver's two dominant newspapers, but unfortunately, *Pacific Press: The Unauthorized Story of Vancouver's Media Monopoly* succeeds in being both dull and sensationalist. Not only is it filled with clichés, it lacks the narrative structure to draw a reader along.

It is too bad, because Edge chose a great subject. Vancouver is infamous for its lack of media diversity. Today, both the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Vancouver Province* are owned by CanWest Global. This means that the Aspers, according to a recent Department of Canadian Heritage report, control more than ninety-five percent of the city's newspapers. They also own Vancouver's two biggest tel-

evision stations and most of the suburban weeklies.

Edge's book, in its way, does help explain how it got so bad. Vancouver's two dailies have been held by one company since the formation of Pacific Press in 1957. Under this odd arrangement, the Cromie family's *Sun* and Southam's *Province* consolidated production in one printing plant and shared profits equally. This effectively killed the competition that once enlivened Vancouver's dailies. And as the *Province* continued to bleed money, this arrangement soon proved unworkable for management. In the 1970s, in an attempt to rationalize operations – and in defiance of earlier federal rulings – Southam bought up the *Sun*, but still struggled to make both papers profitable.

Despite its virtual monopoly, between 1957 and 1991 Pacific Press went from being a profitable enterprise to a money-loser. Given its unbridled access to a major market, the company's travails can only be explained by spectacularly bad management. That might also explain the repeated strikes. Pacific Press employees walked off the job in 1967, 1970, 1972, 1976, 1978, and 1984. This summer, *Sun* and *Province* employees are on the picket line once again.

Edge makes a valiant attempt to explore all of these complex issues in *Pacific Press*, which is adapted from his PhD thesis in Mass Communications from the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism. He also tries to give readers a sense of the characters who made the newspapers, as well as the flavour of the editorial content. He even goes into detail about various failed attempts to start rival dailies. His account draws on archival material, including the memoirs and personal papers of former *Sun* publisher Stuart Keate, the records of Pacific Press's now-defunct typesetters local, various government reports, as well as interviews and email correspondence with some of the players.

Unfortunately, Edge's ability to gather information is far greater than his ability to synthesize it. He lingers over irrelevant details, and forces the reader to suffer through lengthy digressions and flashbacks that make it difficult to keep track of the many characters or even the chronology.

First of all, Edge begins at the end, with the *Sun*'s weird 1991 marketing campaign to promote its switch to morning publication. Admittedly, this is a time-honoured device–start at the climax of the story, and then start at the beginning and show readers how the events unfolded. But choosing a marketing campaign as the hook for a tale of monopolistic practices and subsequent labour strife seems rather strange.

Edge's approach becomes increasingly bizarre as the book proceeds. In the second chapter, Edge leads with *Vancouver Sun* publisher Don Cromie waiting for the elevator (exciting!) one fine day in 1956. Edge then expects the reader to accept that a lengthy flashback–which consumes the rest of the chapter save the final paragraph–is really Cromie reflecting on the events of that summer. That is one slow elevator.

These types of conceits appear throughout. Again and again, chapters on one

topic quickly switch to another unrelated one. It's as though someone took the manuscript and shuffled it. One chapter, "The Reluctant Prince," begins with a portrait of young Harvey Southam being groomed to take over the family business. Several pages in, Edge returns to a discussion of shock-columnist Doug Collins–the subject of the previous chapter. A chapter about the 1967 Pacific Press strike is interrupted by Edge's comments on the Davey Commission, a 1968 senate inquiry into media concentration.

Edge's attention to non-revealing detail is remarkable. In a chapter on the 1970 strike, he spends about a page and a half on the early career of management's lead negotiator–including a couple of paragraphs on his penchant for mountain-climbing. This allows Edge to refer to Paddy Sherman as a "diminuitive mountaineer" later on, but what the man's choice of weekend activities is supposed to say about labour relations at Pacific Press is never made clear.

Edge is fascinated by the personalities at the newspapers, and spends a great deal of time on hackneyed profiles of the Cromies, Max Bell of FP Publications, *Sun* editor Bruce Hutchison, *Sun* columnist Allan Fotheringham, and many others. He even gives them lame little nicknames. Hutchison is "The Legend," Fotheringham is "The Perpetrator," Doug Collins is "The Bulldog." Edge's reliance on cheap clichés is astonishing. There are more "fiery Scots," "old bugaboos" and "writing on the wall" than I have ever encountered outside the "Stale Bread" section of my style guide. It makes you want to take up a collection and buy Edge (and his editors) a copy of Strunk & White.

Although he promises to focus on the economic aspects of Pacific Press, Edge seems most attracted to its reporters and editors, especially "renegades" like Fotheringham and hard-bitten types like Bruce Larsen, the seventies-era *Sun* managing editor who began his newspaper career at the age of seventeen.

Edge also marvels at Bruce Hutchison's ability to edit the *Sun* through the sixties and seventies from his retreat on Vancouver Island. An enviable post, sure, but could appointments like this have contributed to the lousy morale at Pacific Press? Edge does not even pose the question. Sure, Hutchison was a smart man, and the *Sun*'s circulation soared under his leadership, but there was also a ridiculous turf war between the managing editor and senior editors that (though Edge does not speculate) might have been avoided if an actual Editor were on site.

Oh yeah, and there were six strikes during this period too. The strike of 1967 got so heated that the craft unions and management started suing each other. One labour negotiator was even threatened with jail-time for his role in a work-slowdown campaign. The 1978-79 strike was even longer, dragging on for eight months and losing the company buckets of money.

Despite the woeful lack of analysis, reading through Edge's book, the profound disconnect between press operators, journalists and upper management is obvious. Edge reveals just how little *Sun* and *Province* writers identified with the people who made the actual paper. He cites one particularly grotesque comment

by Allan Fotheringham describing the labour situation as "people who write being jerked around by people who can't form sentences... People who can write subsidizing people in overalls."

The picture that emerges is one of a toxic work environment where management, newspaper staff, and press operators all hate each other. Six strikes in seventeen years. This despite the fact that Pacific Press employees have long been among the best paid in the business–with jobs for life no less. It suggests a level of distrust rarely seen outside Mike Harris's Ontario.

From Edge's account, it is difficult to determine why. The two longest strikes were protracted because both sides had outside income–Pacific Press from strike insurance, and the unions from their strike newspaper. But Edge fails to show which appointments, policies, and decisions created the acrimony in the first place. He cites a 1980 Royal Commission on newspapers that found upper management failed to plan for the inevitable technological upgrades, but he does not go into detail.

While many media outlets endured strikes over automation during the 1970s, few were so bitter, lengthy, and frequent as those at Pacific Press. The only Canadian examples that really compare were strikes at the *Montreal Star* and the *Ottawa Journal* (both owned by FP Publications, Pacific Press's parent company at the time). So maybe the corporate owners were doing something wrong. But what, precisely? Edge blames the trouble on absentee management, but plenty of companies are run by central command and nevertheless avoid repeated shutdowns.

As the book progresses into a series of chapters on media concentration, the quality of writing and analysis does improve somewhat. Edge's account of Black Wednesday (when both the *Winnipeg Tribune* and the *Ottawa Journal* shut down, leaving Thomson with a monopoly in Winnipeg and Southam with a monopoly in the nation's capital) is competent. So is his description of the ensuing criminal investigation and the 1980 Kent Commission on newspaper concentration. These events, however, are already well-documented in other works, and Edge's account adds little to the field.

For the bulk of the book, you are left to plod though, trying to figure out why you should care about all these grumpy old men and their crummy newspapers and what all these arcane details Edge has fished out of the archives are supposed to illustrate. It's disappointing, because Edge was in a position to make a valuable contribution to the history of Canada's media, and maybe even help Pacific Press's current owners learn something from the company's turbulent past. Sadly, the determined reader who makes it to the end of Edge's book will be left with more questions than answers.

Julie Crysler
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