



Christopher G. Moore: He firmly believes in the value of realism in fiction.

Finally, a home-town reading for Moore

He's a Canadian in Thailand, but his writing transcends the notion of East and West

BY KATHARINE HAMER

PROFILE | Christopher G. Moore is coming home. Christopher Who?, you might ask, since, despite having written 15 novels, Moore is little known in his native Vancouver.

"Not only is he not published in Canada," *Mix* columnist George Fetherling once noted in these pages, "he's not published by anyone who's distributed in Canada. This strikes me as a ludicrous oversight that some Canadian publisher should attend to."

Fetherling, through his publishing house, Subway Books, has now filled the void, taking on the role of Canadian publisher for Moore's latest, *Waiting for the Lady*. And next week, for the first time, Moore will read in his hometown at the Vancouver International Writers Festival.

A former University of B.C. law professor, Moore decamped to Thailand in 1988. He has a Thai wife and speaks the language fluently. In interviews he has said he misses little about Vancouver, except for things that can't be reproduced elsewhere: hockey, Stanley Park, his friends.

He must have been shaped, at least in some way, by his Canadian upbringing, but he rarely puts Canadian characters in his fiction, preferring Americans, Brits, Thais, Japanese — all of

whom have notably more aggressive personalities than Canadians.

For Moore, Bangkok is "a truly international city, living in the midst of a very old, unique culture." Southeast Asia has been the focus of most of his work, which includes a series of thrillers centred around private eye Vincent Calvino. The series has been optioned for American television — and another of Moore's titles, *God of Darkness*, has movie producers calling.

Germans are big fans of Moore's work, which has also been translated into Chinese, Japanese and Thai. In fact, his books are said to be so popular in Thailand, they can be bought in the nightclubs and massage parlours of Nana Plaza.

The plot of *Waiting for the Lady* (Subway Books, 342 pages, \$38.95) centres on a set of photographs found by chance at an airport. Several are of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

The subject matter is a measure of Moore's fascination with Asian politics and human rights. Suu Kyi, though democratically elected, has nonetheless been kept out of power in Burma and has often been under house arrest.

The novel possesses a gumshoe swagger and a charged atmosphere reminiscent of such Asian-set films as Peter Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously*. For instance, Sloan Walcott,

Moore's protagonist, revels in the fact he can order a cold Tiger beer from a customs officer at Rangoon airport — for a price. "I love airports where Customs officials work as freelance waiters," he says.

It's a blustery character voice for an author who, by all accounts, is quiet and somewhat self-effacing in person. But Moore firmly believes in the value of realism. He is said to have frequented some of in Bangkok's seedier bars and clubs while researching his Calvino series.

Walcott and his travelling companion are familiar with barter, both of consumer goods and of human flesh. But Walcott is also a man driven by a moral imperative.

Moore's work has drawn comparisons with Graham Greene (one of his favourite authors) and Ernest Hemingway. Clearly, his popularity stems from his ability to transcend East and West, to meld the mysteries of one with the sensibilities of the other. He gets to the heart of humanity and its foibles, a fact that shouldn't escape writers'-festival audiences.

Katharine Hamer last wrote for Mix on Kerri Sakamoto's One Hundred Million Hearts.

Christopher G. Moore will appear at the writers' festival Oct. 23 and 25.