

BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 3 No. 7

NOVEMBER, 1974

WE ARE WHAT WE MAP

The National Atlas of Canada, prepared by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Macmillan, 280 pages, \$56 cloth.

Maps and Mapping, a special issue of *artsCanada*, Spring, 1974.

Rivers of Canada, by Hugh MacLennan, Macmillan, 272 pages, \$30 cloth.

By **GEORGE WOODCOCK**

THERE IS MORE in common than meets the bird's eye between critics and geographers. Both are map-makers, even if the critic's maps are metaphoric while the geographer's are literate and both are trapped in the problems of how to combine the abstraction and schematization that their craft imposes with the need to recognize that they are saying or showing something about human beings and their settings and are perhaps dealing with exchangeable landscapes. Seventeenth-century map-makers attempted to solve the problem of the abstract and the actual by putting little vignettes of the people and animals of a country into the corners of their maps, and by drawing miniature houses or fields of grain to show the architecture and agriculture, a custom that survives in some modern maps where tiny stylized trees are dotted about to suggest forests or equally stylized clumps of rushes to signify marshes.

By now, in geography, we have passed over the point where such devices can be used with convenience; the information we have is too complex for a map to contain the complex of images that would present it all. So the geographer's functions have been divided in a way that the critic's have not; it is difficult to imagine today the same

geographer drawing a splendid map of a new land, as David Thompson once did, and also embodying a description of it in a journal written in robust and vividly metaphorical prose.

And yet, however far apart the specialization of techniques over the past century may appear to have thrust geographers and writers — and here I mean writers in general — their interests appear to have been drawing

closer in the recognition that in a country such as ours, where the terrain is so insistently present in one's experience, literature will never nor should ever try to get away from the actuality of the land. Somewhere in *Survival*, Margaret Atwood remarks that what we think of as "nature poetry" is "seldom about nature" but "usually about the poet's attitude towards the external

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BOOKS in CANADA

Vol. 3 No. 7

NOVEMBER, 1974

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Books in Canada & published twelve times per annum, with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario AN Council, by the Canadian Review of Books Limited, 501 Yonge St., Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1Y4. Phone: (416) 921-4466. Subscription rates: \$9.95 a year (\$15 overseas). Back issues available on microfilm from McLaren Micropublishing, P.O. Box 972, Station F, Toronto M4Y 2N9. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2593. Contents © 1914. Canadian Review of Books Ltd. Printed by Heritage Press Co., Ltd.

EDITORIAL

DOROTHY LIVESAY says in *The Documentaries* that art *should not be disassociated from people's lives*.
Everybody should be a poet!

To judge by the number of books of poetry currently being produced in Canada, everybody, or almost everybody, is becoming a poet. And why not? With the availability of comparatively inexpensive means of printing, anyone who wants to produce a handful of copies of his or her own small book can do so. And everybody knows at least a few people who would love such a book, even if critics and reviewers would be made apoplectic by it. Implicit in this development is the eventual fulfillment of de Tocqueville's prophecy that in an egalitarian society everyone will become an artist.

In the mid-1960s in English Canada, approximately 20 volumes of poetry from about 10 publishers were appearing each year. Since that time the number has rapidly increased. In his year-end review in *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1971) of the poetry published in English Canada in 1970, Michael Hornyansky touched on 37 collections from 15 publishers. In 1972, the box that brought me what the editors said was all the poetry that had been received by *Tamarack* in the previous eight months contained 93 books produced by 26 publishers. It's now two years later. I've been Assignments Editor at Books in Canada for only three months, but in that time more than 100 new books of English Canadian poetry from more than 40 publishers have crossed my desk and more arrive almost daily.

The populist in me applauds this development. For me, Louis Dudek's view that the proliferation of poetry means its "degeneration . . . to a teeny-bopper fad" seems excessively bleak. I find myself, instead, much more in sympathy with Fred Cogswell's suggestion in "A Defence of Amateurism":

*... every honest player shares
the joys the great stars have
occasions when my fielding zeal
pulled off a leaping catch
that lay beyond my skill
the high-arched spin my two hands knew
would cleave the hoop even as it left
my far-extended fingertips
the true faint vibration
that ran along the putter's shaft
to tell my body that the ball
was running truly to the cup
these things however rare
were in themselves enough
to justify my efforts and the games
it is that way too with poetry*

Would Dudek really prefer that baseball, basketball, golf — and poetry — be played only by the most proficient?

But that raises some interesting questions. What should the editors of a magazine such as this one, with too little space to begin with, do with all the poetry that arrives on their desks. What obligation do they have (a) to the poets who send them material, and (b) to their own readers? Our answer at this point is simply to put as much and as diverse a selection of the poetry we've received into the hands of as varied a group of reviewers as possible. In this issue, for example, we have a truck driver and poet (Len Gasparini) writing about six recent collections; a professor of English

(Keath Fraser) reviewing two others; the leader of the NDP (David Lewis) talking about the collected poems of an old friend; and a novelist and former publisher (Roy MacSkimming) taking the analogy between poetry and sports to a logical conclusion. In all, 13 volumes of poetry are discussed, more than have ever been reviewed in one issue of Books in Canada before. Next month a dozen or so more will be reviewed in these pages. But even if we could keep up this pace, Books in Canada would wind up reviewing only one of every three or four volumes produced. Given the various constraints on us, and the steady increase in poetry production, it's more likely that the odds will be about one in eight or nine. Every magazine and newspaper in the country that reviews poetry has a similar problem.

In the 1950s Phyllis Webb could write that the relationship between the poet and his or her public had broken down. That relationship, given residenceships, readings, inexpensive editions, and so on, has never been better than it is now. It's the relationship between the poet — particularly the young poet — and his or her critics and reviewers that now seems to be the problem. □

MORRIS WOLFE

CHACUN SA BLAIS

St. Lawrence Blues, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated by Ralph Manheim, Farrar Straus & Giroux (Double day), 229 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

The Wolf, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated by Sheila Fischman, McClelland & Stewart, 142 pages, \$6.95 cloth.

By MIRIAM WADDINGTON

CULTURAL ATTITUDES are not always translatable. This becomes clear in the reading of these two translated novels by Marie-Claire Blais. The publisher of the English version of *The Wolf* is the Canadian house of McClelland & Stewart and the translator is Sheila Fischman. There is an extravagant blurb that matches the worst excesses of the book but omits giving the original French title.

The publisher of St. *Lawrence Blues* is Farrar Straus & Giroux and the translator is Ralph Manheim. The French title is *Un joulonais, Sa joulonie*: a jowl-speaker and his jowl. The remarkable thing about these two novels is that no one would ever guess — from reading them in translation — that both were written by the same writer, Marie-Claire Blais. And I don't think this has to do only with the different attitudes and traditions out of which these two books are written. A lot, if not all, has to do with the two translators and their understanding of the symbolic and connotative nature of language. And not only their understanding of these important and delicate matters, but also for their respect for the integrity of each language, and ultimately, on their love for language itself.

I have to admit that until now I have never read anything by Marie-Claire Blais. And no wonder. The richly associative *La belle bête* became *Mad Shadows* in English. Surely even we English don't deserve to be served up such kitsch. Think of the connotations. Take madness. We have enough of it in everyday life, why go to novels for more? Take shadows. In life they are transitory, insubstantial, remote. In literature they add up to ennui, decadence, faded twilights and worst of all-phoniness.

FOR AND ABOUT

WOMEN



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—Joan Sutton, Toronto Sun.

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by Carlotta Hacker

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—Q's Reviews.

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But there's nothing phony or specious **about** *St. Lawrence Blues*. It's a **marvellous tour de force** that Blais sustains from the unbelievable beginning to the amazing end. And in her unflagging blaze of energy, in her inexhaustible fund of folklore, in her wild comic turns, her bitter local satires, she is nourished, supported and enhanced all the way by a **translator** who is folly **equal** to her in energy, ingenuity and the love of language.

The story tells about the adventures of Ti-Pit as **he lives his life** in a parochial **culture** (Quebec) **in** all its boisterous **detail**. But behind the narrative voice of **Ti-Pit** is the voice of Blais, and it is anything but parochial; and behind Blais' voice is the translator **Manheim's** voice with all its **verbal** intuitiveness and emotional intelligence. For me, as a reader, there's nothing **left** except to **read** the novel in the original **French** to see how he accomplished the impossible. To translate **joual** so that you **are hardly** aware of reading a **translation** is to perform a miracle. Thus a priest is a sky pilot, **winter driving** is to set sail in the snow, a poet is a **scribbleroo**, and so on **from** one richness to another. Blais presents **us** with an immense windblown tapestry of poor people — **students**, prostitutes, homosexuals, prurient landladies, red-nosed **snow-shovellers**, oily lawyers, **soft-hearted** ambulance drivers; anyone who has ever known Montreal and loved it, will find more **reason** for it in these pages.

As for *The Wolf*. This too I must read in the original. I can only wonder—did Blais **really** write so badly, **so** cloudily, so ungrammatically, or was it Sheila **Fischman** rushing to meet a deadline? Or is it, as I suggested earlier, that **cultural** attitudes are not **really** translatable — especially when there are no English equivalents to certain deeply imbedded French feelings and customs. **For example** you can talk about **your soul and its detailed psychological nuances from morning until night in French, but in English** such talk becomes purple prose, the kind of false and maudlin rhetoric that Christopher Frye used to impress **gullible theatre-goers** and **raw** high-school students with.

Probably Blais has merely **written** a derivative novel in the metaphysical style of de **Montherlant, Mauriac** and even the nihilistic **Céline**. A more recent influence seems to be **Génet**, and the **writer** who **comes** closest to **succeeding** in this **vein** in **English** is Lawrence **Durrell** in his Four **Quartets**.

Maybe Blais' story **about** homosexuals is an attempt to unite that sort of sexuality with sublime and noble feelings. The narrator is a young man who goes **into** agonies of pity and doom as **he describes** his relationships with a series of older men. Or maybe the **novel** is really about the poignancy of aging as imagined by the young (but seldom **experienced** by the old). For the **English reader**, the narrator lacks all credibility; he's always making mountains out of mole-hills and as a result comes across as a **wolf** dressed up in very **sheepish clothing**.

Somewhere inside of this welter of "wounds" and "tormented appetites" the narrator is trying to tell **us** that he wishes to attain grace by uniting **himself** with all that is **pure**, good and primitively unspoiled in his **corrupt** old lovers. As **he puts it**:

At any rate, all the work of redeeming people for one another as I imagined it would be while I lived began with a kind of naked pity where bodies suddenly riveted to the earth no longer lied. Perhaps it was because I was cold myself that I had a dream (knowing that it was only a dream) about setting fire with the fire of my senses to those bodies overcome with cold that I used to encounter. That was how I began to love Eric.

Could you mad through 142 pages of this? At the end the narrator concludes: "And is **this all** that we brought **one** another **through our love**? Perhaps the **balance sheet** of my life is only that, the approach to **several** souls who were only wounded but whom I left dying, even if I continue to feel their weight." And there is **'much** more in this same **pre-Raphaelite claustrophobic** self-indulgent vein.

I can hardly believe it's the same **Marie-Claire** Blais as the one who **wrote St. Lawrence Blues**. *Those blues are the sort to make every reader sing* and dance and bless the world we live in, despite its pain, hardship, and chaos. □

A QUATRAIN OF CONTENDERS

Who will seize the crown that Layton, Cohen, Purdy and Atwood once wore?

For and Against the Moon: Blues, Yells and Chuckles, by **Tom Wayman**, Macmillan, 157 pages, \$6.95 paper.

Beware the Months of Fire, by **Patrick Lane**, Anansi, 100 pages, \$6.50 cloth and \$3.25 paper.

Stranger, by **Victor Coleman**, Coach House, unpaginated, \$4 paper.

Cities, by **George Jonas**, Anansi, 73 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.25 paper.

By **ROY MACSKIMMING**

IF POETS WERE boxers looking for a shot at the champ — and sometimes in Canada it **seems** as if we **do rank our** poets; with all those symbols of **recognition** in the form of junior and senior grants, writer-in-residence-ships and invitations to **represent** the country abroad — **the** lineage of those **who've** worn the crown might look this this:

In the heavyweight division, Irving Layton was the undisputed champ for many a year. Then **are** those who say he lost the crown for a while back there **in 1964** when a challenger named Leonard Cohen pot out **Flowers for Hitler** and the reading public took a fancy to him. But then Cohen lost a lot of weight down in Nashville **and** had to be **relegated** to the middleweights; Irving **was** back on top. That was in the days when we were discovering that sex is **good**.

It's a matter of dispute just when Al **Purdy** became the champ, taking the crown **from** his former sparring partner (Cohen's too). But everyone **agrees** it happened during the late 1960s, just about the **time** when it was becoming **necessary** to have an **authentically** Canadian ring to your style: luckily for **Purdy**, the reek of **Weslemakoon Lake horseshit** rose richly off every page. Layton, meanwhile, was writing some embarrassingly unfashionable things about **Israel** and

LBJ and vulvas, and plummeted straight down to eighth spot. below people like Alden Nowlan. Ninth, even.

Purdy's reign didn't last quite as long as Layton's. Suddenly it was important — almost mandatory — to be not only Canadian but female too, and to write about all the nasty things that men do to women; and so we had Margaret Atwood's inexorable rise to the top: Some say she cheated by writing novels and criticism as well as poetry, but there's no space to go into that hem.

Any bets on who will depose Atwood? One thing we know is that, quality aside (and I'm not saying any of the above lack quality), personal image is a factor: who you are in your poems. Personality seems to be something that we like our poets to project, demanding that their work reveal the naked ego in all its glory. Hence, perhaps, the relative lack of popularity (compared to their gifts) of Avison, Reaney, or even Birney.

In any case, here are four up-and-coming contenders for the crown. They're all young and strong; their wind is good (a little too good in one case); their promoters think each one could go all the way; above all, each has plenty of personality, and I think you should look them over.

Tom Wayman first. A lot of people seem to be potting their money on him, to judge by the reviews of his first book, *Waiting for Wayman*. Getting into the poems in his new one, *For and Against the Moon: Blues, Yells and Chuckles*, you find that Wayman certainly has strong opinions. He is for the working man and welfare victim and against the boss and the bureaucrat, expressing his rage at social injustice in terms so simple, if not simplistic, that he deserves the title "People's Poet" appropriated by Milton Acorn (whose own writing tends to be quite incomprehensi-

ble to the intended audience). Wayman also writes about mountains and forests and includes a cycle of earnest love poems, in which the metaphor for the land of his love is the moon.

Wayman's main weakness in this collection is his shallow and unimaginative use of his material. He writes long poems, and cycles of poems, but they are long because he is verbose, not because, he has a great deal to tell us (for example in "The Alexander Poems") or to show us in the texture of his language. At his best he spins out good, stirring rhetoric or charming whimsy; when these fail he is prose or coy.

In the last poem in the book Wayman inadvertently identifies one source of the problem: "Say of Wayman's end, as he said himself/of so many unfortunate things that happened to him while he lived:/At least/he got a poem out of it." He may have been getting poems out of too many things, like the bore who won't stop telling stories.

Patrick Lane shares a few things with Wayman: the West Coast landscape, compassion for the poor, a personal knowledge of labouring jobs and welfare lines. But where Wayman seems an emotional convert to working-class causes, Lane is of the working class born and bred; where Wayman expresses moral outrage, Lane experiences bitter despair where Wayman is prolix, Lane is hard and concentrated, offering a honed richness.

In *Beware the Months of Fire* Lane reminds me of those anonymous medieval carvers who depicted the most gruesome scenes of human and animal suffering in the stone of Romanesque churches. Like them, he is a skilled craftsman; like theirs, his art; while horrifying, simply portrays life as he has seen it around him.

NEW from Doubleday

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by Marie-Claire Blais

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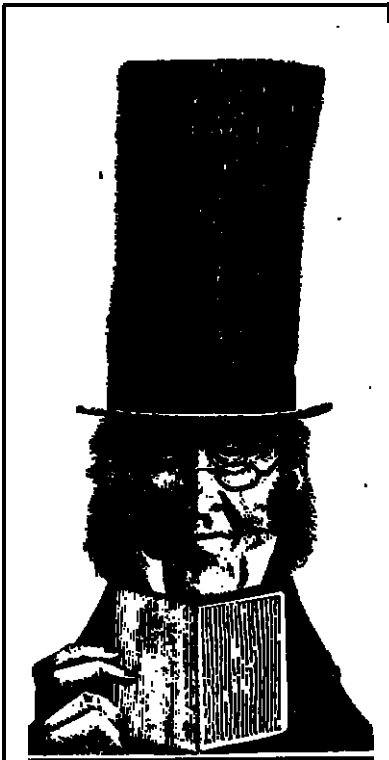
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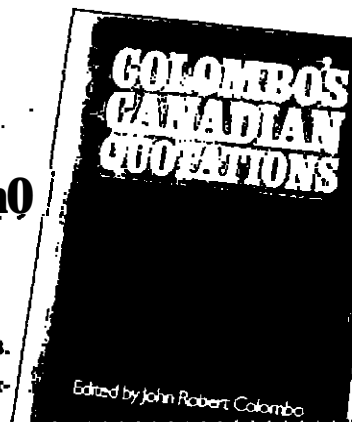


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The composite image of Lane's world would be **Interior** British Columbia as **Hell**: a cat is set **afire**, aborting kittens on the lawn; a boy bombs his parents' home, with the parents **still** inside; a ravenous dog impales his **guts on turkey** bones; a father smashes his baby's skull against the wall; knifings, **jailings**, futile escapes, lovers' bloody revenges. And yet these horrors, the stuff of **Midnight or Hush**, are presented as part of a consistent **response** to humanity that is tenderly elegiac. Paradoxically, the **poems'** very existence, so shapely and natural and genuine, **gives** more convincing hope **than** any **strident** propaganda could. Lane is an outstanding artist.

To travel **from** Patrick Lane's **reality** to Victor Coleman's in **Stranger** takes a lot of patience, even tolerance. Stranger holds little of the obsessive power **of Beware the Months of Fire**; chiefly there bums a **diffuse**, disorienting **brain** fever, a panicky reluctance to settle anywhere, to **bring** faith to **bear**. Behind the head games and the occasional bit of engaging wordplay ("where clever mandibles have handled handbills" or "sinking Mnemosyny snidely rebukes us") you sense a disillusioned and cynical intelligence. "The sick need to **fuck**" is one of the most **striking** phrases in a collection that is **ponderous** with sexual imagery.

Disgust with women and sexual relationships marks a major departure — you could almost say regression—from the urgings that informed two very fine, earlier collections by Coleman, **One/Eye/Love** and **Light Verse**. And **since** he's a good **Olsonite**, believing that form is but the extension of content, it's **natural** that there is **also** a visible **regression** in the matter of form: after **forging** a clear, strong voice of **his** own in the **earlier** work, **Coleman** has slipped back into **the** sterile pretensions of the Olson school. His poetry should **hardly** be judged on the basis **of Stranger**; his **excep-**

tional gifts are fully on view in the other books, and I can only hope he **revives** those **gifts** before long.

While Coleman has **been prolific** during the past few years as poet, **editor, printer** and publisher, George Jonas, who **first** appeared with Coleman, bp **Nichol** and others in the 1966 anthology **New Wave Canada**, has issued only **three** slim collections. **This** fact seems typical of the man as he appears in his work: discriminating, fastidious and unhurried. **But Cities**, the **third** book, has been **worth waiting** for.

The cities are Toronto, New York, London, Vienna and Budapest. The book itself is a beautifully orchestrated journey from one to the other, a journey that deepens in **intensity** as the poet moves from his adopted city (Toronto) to his birthplace (Budapest), **from** the brittle peace of the present into the **war-torn** past, via the capitals of crime, **treachery** and suicide. The **small ironies** of a penthouse **affair** merge into moving **reflections** on history, idealism and death.

Jonas is **an** independent and original spirit whose cosmopolitan versatility extends to technique; although **English** is **his** adopted language, he is the only poet among the four under review with the nerve **N** dip into **metre** and rhyme **occasionally** — as he does, superlatively, in the **minor satiric masterpiece** "The Girls of Whitney Hall." Elsewhere his **mixture** of wit, subtle **imagination** and a **tragic** sense produces a degree of wisdom that is dearly welcome. Jonas is of the highest breed of poets: those who can make us laugh and **cry**.

There you have them, then, **this issue's** contenders. There's still plenty of time **for** any one of them to get a good shot at the **crown**, or to do even better than that. **Fortunately**, in poetry anything is possible. □

WHORE WITH A HEART OF GOLDA

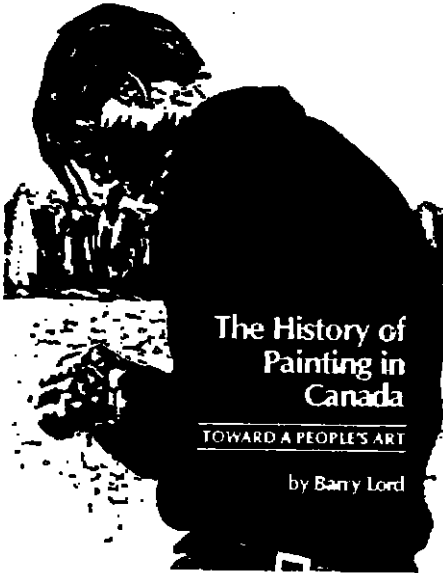


Crackpot, by Adele Wiseman, McClelland & Stewart, 300 pages, \$10 cloth.

By MARK SARNRR

AT 28 ADELE WISEMAN published her widely acclaimed first novel, *The Sacrifice*. Winning the Governor-General's Award for that novel in 1956 should have **confirmed** the auspicious beginning of a major **writing** career. In fact, as has been the case with numerous winners of the **Governor-General's Award**, it turned out to be a giant step towards **virtual** professional oblivion. **Wiseman**, it seemed, was yet another Canadian writer who had **marshalled** enough energy **for** one **fine** book, only to fade 'away'; she was not even fortunate enough to suffer from the **prominent** **obscurity** granted a Sinclair Ross. *The Sacrifice* didn't appear in paperback until 1968 and by 1971 **even it** was unavailable, its author **all** but unknown to booksellers.

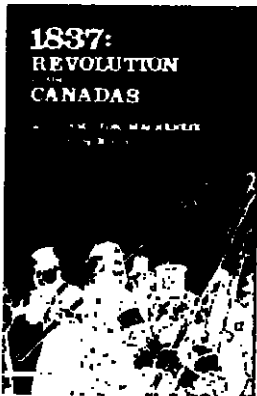
Wiseman's long absence from the literary scene **has** not been intentional. In the last 18 years she has completed three substantial works but, until recently, has been unable to put them before the public. **After** *The Sacrifice*, she wrote a play, *The Lovebound*. Six years in the **writing**, it concerns the **Jewish** refugee ships **which sailed** around the world in 1939 **seeking** asylum. So far **this large work** — it would run **four hours** — remains **unproduced** as does her subsequent play, *Testimonial Dinner*.



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In 1969 she completed her second novel, *Crackpot*. During the next five years the book was rejected by 27 publishers and it looked as if yet another of her efforts would remain unpublished. Finally Margaret Laurence, one of Adele Wiseman's closest friends, took the book to Jack McClelland.

As *The Sacrifice* makes clear, Wiseman is very much a Jewish writer. "The fact that I am a Jew", she said in a recent interview, "has determined my whole professional career. I sold myself, in a sense, early and willingly into community bondage. I don't expect the community to appreciate it or like it necessarily, but this is what I have to do." Her task as she sees it is to capture the truth of modern Jewish experience. She believes that the survival of the Jews is crucial to the survival of our civilization.

Instead of aiming for documentary realism in her recreation of aspects of modern Jewish life, Wiseman confronts her material in moral and spiritual terms. Through much of *The Sacrifice*, the protagonist, Abraham, is a conventionally pious Old World Jew whose life is dramatically transformed by life in North America. The denouement of his existence is his committing murder, an event so atypical in the fiction of emigrant Jews in America as to set the book apart.

But in spite of her compelling realization of what Wiseman calls "a maverick point-of-view," *The Sacrifice* still suffers from some of the weaknesses of other books in the genre. Wiseman did not quite succeed in avoiding the tendency of many Jewish novelists to allow a nostalgia for a rich heritage to translate into sentimentality.

Happily, she has remedied this situation to a large extent in her second novel. In *Crackpot* Wiseman returns to the unnamed pre-1950 Winnipeg Jewish ghetto, this time in a story built around a Jewish whore. Hoda, the "crackpot" of the title, lives in a world other writers might indict for being vulgar, crass, and morally bankrupt. Wiseman succeeds in portraying that world as a vital, human environment.

Hoda is the product of a strange union between a blind father, Danile, and a hunchbacked mother, Rahel, joined in matrimony by their community in Europe as a means of fighting a plague then ravaging the district. Superstition had it that the life-forces could be renewed if the two most God-forsaken citizens were brought together. Hoda's life amounts to a kind of test of the validity of the traditional wisdom that spawned her.

In deciding to move to North America, Rahel and Danile trade their roles as wards in their European town for the demands of poverty in a new world. Circumstances force Rahel to become a charwoman, an almost unheard-of occupation for a Jew, but the only way she can support Danile and Hoda. Though he eventually takes up the incessant weaving of baskets, Danile's chief role, as he sees it, is to be the source of Hoda's oral education in her Jewish heritage, so that when her time comes, she will be ready. That time does come, more than a little prematurely, when Rahel dies, leaving Hoda with a blind father and the prospect of a life of assured poverty.

Danile's blindness is, for him, a kind of blessing. Though he often appears the fool, he remains throughout a stalwart member of the congregation of pious Jews. His blindness is a defence against the new world and, for Wiseman, he "is to some extent [Hoda's] Judaism. Her father is her whole system of values and, in a curious way, her innocence, too. He's sort of the old purity."

In the cause of the survival of that purity, Hoda becomes the community whore.. It's a surprising occupation for a

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY.

Jewish girl in fiction, one **Hoda** would have found economically unsatisfactory were it not for **the equally startling number of clients she finds in the ghetto**. **Yankl**, the butcher, introduces **Hoda** to sex for reward when, in taking advantage of her lack of money, he has her masturbate him as payment for scraps of meat. At weddings and bar **mitzvahs** **Hoda** develops a good business in **quickies out behind the dance hall**. Her regular **patrons** include **neighbourhood adolescents** who come to her for their sexual education, urged on by **Danile** in the neat mom.

Hoda is a fascinating study. In spite of **occasional bouts with madness**, she remains remarkably free of guilt and despair. As brutal as is **her** experience of **the world**, she maintains a distance **from** its corrupting influence: **Wiseman** would like the reader to believe this is because **Hoda** is an intensely moral being. According to **Wiseman**: "You can strip the Jew of all kinds of things—as he **is stripped and as he strips himself** — and what I think you **are left with** is a **moral being**. A **particular kind of moral being** who will make a particular kind of choice." In **Hoda**, she has attempted to create just such a Jew. Although **Hoda** manages to support herself and her father through prostitution, she remains a moral being despite experiences as **potentially devastating** as giving **birth** to an illegitimate son and **anonymously** turning him over to the community **orphanage**, only to **have** him come to **her years** later for his sexual initiation. This particular test of **Hoda's** strength is probably the most poignant scene in the novel and serves as a confirmation of her **moral integrity**.

Although **Wiseman** makes the case for **Hoda** as exemplary of a "particular kind of moral being," she is **nonethe-**

"The fact that I am a Jew has determined my whole professional 'career'. I sold myself, in a sense, early and willingly into community bondage."
Adele Wiseman

less an imperfectly realized **character**. If **Hoda's** morality is meant as her **defence** against the onslaught of the world, then **Wiseman** has allowed it to **protect** her too much. Sleeping with her **unknowing** son is but one **example of experience** that seems as if it should have **touched, perhaps even scarred, Hoda**. Part of the problem is **Wiseman's** dedication to the integrity of her tone, a task she **carries off rather well**. In the process, however, she has not quite succeeded in translating the idea behind **Hoda** into a **character** driven by the **true** nature of her own experience.

The result is that, as **Hoda** moves into her 40s as den mother to the customers of the card **tables** at the **café**, which has replaced the synagogue as the community's focal point, she is too **much** like **she** has **always** been — a **pragmatist** whose moral stance, if somewhat **inarticulate, is still** unassailable. Her enthusiasm **remains** a little too naive, a little too irresistibly charming.

In any case, her **marriage to Lazar**, a **recently** arrived refugee from the holocaust, is a wonderful triumph for her **life, for the world in which** she has survived and for the book **itself**. **The new world has proven to be a kind of death-force for the Jews**. **The old guard of Danile's generation** die off, leaving behind children with an atrophied morality, the victim of **compromises** made in the cause of **prosperity**. But by marrying **Lazar**, **Hoda** enacts a variation of her own parents' strange union, thus **affirming** the **validity** of her faith and speaking for the perpetuity of what Adele **Wiseman** might label "**essential Judaism**." □

Slave of the Haldas, by Doris Andersen, illustrated by Muriel Wood, Macmillan, 166 pages, \$6.95.

Secret in the Stalakum Wild, by Christie Harris, illustrated by Douglas Tait, McClelland & Stewart, first published in 1972, 186 pages, \$3.95.

Sea and Cedar, by Lois McConkey, illustrated by Douglas Tait, J. J. Douglas, 31 pages, \$4.95.

The Boy Who Came With Cattier, by Chip Young, illustrated by John Mardon, Clarke Irwin, unpaginated, \$3.95.

Adventure at **Moon Bay Towers**, by Marian Engel, illustrated by Patricia Cuppes, Clarke Irwin, unpaginated, \$3.95.

"**If I were all these . . .**", by Lyn Cook; illustrated by Peter Ivens, Bums and MacEachern, unpaginated, \$4.95.

By SUSAN LESLIE

IN THE 1950s, I was a child and Canadian, and when I think about what I read then, I can scarcely **remember** a single Canadian author **that** graced my bedside table. I didn't read Ernest Thompson **Seton**, or Charles G. D. **Roberts**, and I confess that I never read Lucy Maud Montgomery. I was devoted to the historical fiction of British writer Rosemary Sutcliffe. and I read and re-read Laura **Inghalls** Wilder's books about American pioneer life. My favourite picture book was called **People of Other Lands** and it had a chapter on Canada.

I read children's magazines too, **Jack and Jill** from the United States, and **Girl's Own** and **Girl's Crystal** from England. And of course, my weekly allowance was parcelled out between candy bars and the **latest Donald Duck**.

I wonder how much **ail of this** has changed for Canadian children. To judge **from** Sheila **Egoff's** 1972 study, **The Writing and Publishing of Canadian Children's Books in English** (a background paper for the Ontario Royal Commission **report** on book **publishing**), **there is not** much more Canadian literature being read by Canadian children in the 1970s than there was in the 1950s.

When **Egoff** **researched** her study, she estimated that, for about the last 20 **years**, **the annual volume** of children's books published (in the trade **book category**) **fell** between 30 and 60. She contrasts this **figure with** the 2,500 to 3,000 published **annually** in the United States. And she reports that in the past two years, the **30-to-60** average has not changed, and that given the expansion in other sectors of Canadian publishing, the percentage of children's books being published has **shrunk**.

Appealing, **durable** children's books **are** expensive to **produce**. It appears that sales of 3,000 during one or two years is about all a publisher can expect. This 3,000 includes **retail sales**, sales to school and public **libraries**, and the meager export **sales** that a Canadian **children's** book might have. With this **sort** of expected market, **then**, a publisher is forced to sell **children's books** at \$5 or \$6. And his publications must compete **with** the attractive \$1 or \$2 paperbacks that American publishers **are** now putting into book stores. The economics of publishing children's books

in Canada are dismal; it's a mark of the concern and interest of Canadian publishers that they continue to publish children's books at all.

For the authors of children's books, there are slender financial rewards in Canada, and there are few of the other incentives — fame, serious attention, important awards — that exists for titers in other fields. And whether this situation is cause or consequence, there are, finally, not many good Canadian writers for children. Egoff quotes several publishers, lamenting the quality of the manuscripts they receive.

While all this sounds quite bleak, there are some encouraging signs. Since 1972 — when there was not a single full-time editor of children's books — at least two firms have hired children's editors. The National Library now is in the process of hiring a children's librarian, and it is to be hoped that this new position will stimulate interest among librarians in Canadian books. School librarians in particular have been depressingly eager to buy the flashier, more "relevant" productions of American publishers. To the neglect of Canadian books. And they continue to be worthwhile children's books appearing from Canadian publishers. McClelland & Stewart has been reprinting inexpensively — at \$2.95 — its "Canadian Favourites" (though in some cases, one wonders, favoured by whom?). Tundra Books has published some exceptional books in the past few years; William Kurelek's *A Prairie Boy's Winter* and AM Blades' two books about northern B.C. are so beautiful that one hopes they will stir book buyers out of their classic-at-Christmastime habits.

However, we have little hope of enjoying from our Canadian publishers the volume and high standards of American and British publishers. American firms have their vast domestic market and our much smaller one, too. British publishers can sell their books throughout the world, trading on the linguistic remnants of the Imperial connection. As well, many American and British publishers have rights to such classics as *Winnie the Pooh* and *Charlotte's Web*, which provide a continuing income to subsidize gambles on new books. There are no Canadian classics, save *Anne of Green Gables* and the rights to *Anne* are held by an American firm.

If there were an export market for Canadian children's books, publishers could hope to recover the high production costs that a limited domestic market will not meet. But to sell outside this country, Canadian books, must compete with the large and diverse production of American and British firms. And it is quite evident that of the Canadian production of perhaps 60 books, there are not likely to be as many worth buying as there would be from the thousands published elsewhere. The odds are against us; it's a familiar story.

Of the small number of new Canadian titles each year, the majority fall into a remarkably narrow range of topics. There are Indians, there are animals, and there is our past. There are, of course, such standards as buried treasure, mysteries and first kisses, appearing in unprepossessing, even if Canadian, forms. In books that deserve some serious attention, however, the staples of our landscape and our history keep occurring, and not always in a form that does them justice.

This year, as in others, there are several books dealing with the Indians of the Northwest Coast, whose wondrously complex creation myths, and astonishing artifacts have made them especially popular subjects for children's writers.

There is a peculiar tone that is nearly epidemic in books about Indians: it's a pomposity that seems as vulgar a misconception as the "How, me Indian, you white man" dialogue of the Western movie. Doris Andersen's *Slave of the Haidas* provides a good example of this tone:

Now paddle quickly. It is past the time
for our morning meal and my stomach cries
out for steamed clams and seaweed.

Such ridiculous dialogue nearly ruins what is an exciting adventure story, about a young Salish boy taken captive by the Haidas. Doris Andersen has been painstaking in detailing the houses, canoes, fishing methods and customs of the Haida and Salish peoples. But her detail becomes merely didactic, and like the tone of the dialogue, it drags down the story.

That it is possible to write about the Northwest Indians in a straightforward, respectful way has been amply demonstrated by Christie Harris in her books of legends, *Once Upon a Totem* and *Once More Upon a Totem*. The humorous, lusty quality of the stories is present in her retelling, and she manages to integrate all sorts of information about the Indians into the natural drift of the legends. McClelland & Stewart have just reprinted her 1972 book, *The Secret in the Sitlakum Wild*, in an inexpensive paperback. *The Secret in the Sitlakum Wild* works Indian myth into a modern fantasy about a white girl. The children of this book deliver an inordinate number of cute one-liners and never just say anything (always gloating, decreeing,

The economics of publishing children's books in Canada are dismal; it's a mark of the concern and interest of Canadian publishers that they continue to publish children's books at all.

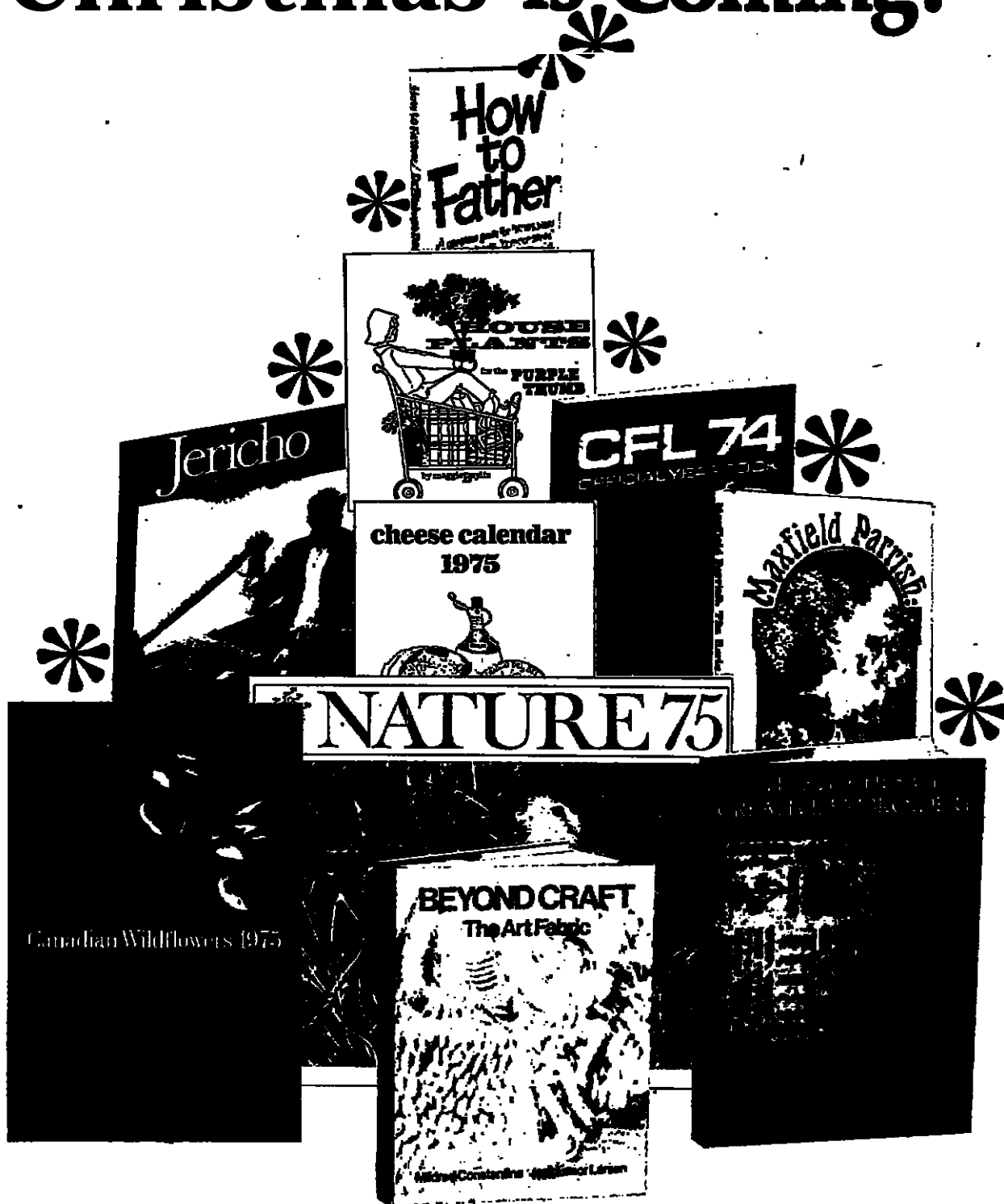
squealing, groaning, announcing). But Harris has done a wonderful job of translating the mystery and myths of West Coast mountains and forest into something tangible and scary.

In *Sea and Cedar*, Lois McConkey has tried too, to make the life and creations of the Indian peoples come alive for modern children. A lecturer at Vancouver's Centennial Museum, she has applied her knowledge of West Coast Indians to this non-fiction book. Their techniques for fishing, carving, hunting, making clothing are described very carefully, and Douglas Tait's clear, simple illustrations are excellent. But one might wish for a little more clarity in the text. Some of her explanations are difficult to follow, and the publisher, J. J. Douglas, really ought to hire a new proofreader.

One of this year's contributions to the historical field, Chip Young's *The Boy Who Came With Cartier*, has a surprising appeal. The surprise is that so unoriginal an idea presented in such unassuming prose could be so successful. The narrator encounters an old man who tells of what he has seen since his arrival in this country, as a stowaway on Cartier's ship. It's a simple device for covering great gobs of our past, but simplicity is the book's strength. As the jacket proclaims, *The Boy Who Came With Cartier* is best appreciated if read aloud.

Both Lyn Cook and Marian Engel have written children's books this year which are not conspicuously Canadian in either setting or content. But if they are free from the limita-

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*The Stitches of Creative Embroidery \$4.95 pb.



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tions of regionalism, they are still not books likely to enjoy an international audience.

It is difficult to believe that **Marian Engel**, author of *Honeyman Festival* and *Monodromos*, is the same **Marian Engel** who has written *Adventure at Moon Bay Towers*. One can only assume that Ms. **Engel** considers writing for children a **minor literary enterprise**.

Lyn Cook has been writing books for **Canadian** children for **more** than 20 years. "If I were **all** these. . ." does not show the benefits of such long experience. It is a series of rhymed speculations:

*If I were a frog, I'd catch the first log,
And sail down the creek.*

*If I were a rabbit, I'd make it a habit
To play hide and seek.*

The illustrations **are** not much better, and the text is done in a rounded script that is difficult to read.

In looking over some of the children's books published recently in Canada, I **realize** that no amount of loyalty-to-Canadian books would impel me to buy them. If I were setting out to buy my child a library, I'm **sure** that my first **expenditures** would be on such fine -and foreign — books as *Stuart Little* and *Where the Wild Things Are*. I would **certainly soon** add Ann Blades' books and those of William **Kurelek** and at least one of Harris' books of **Indian legends**. But I think I am not alone in feeling that there are few Canadian books **of the sort** that become part of a lifelong library. I still have tattered copies of **some** of my childhood books, and I remember the intense **pleasure** they gave me. There **are** few Canadian books that would be that sort of permanent gift to a child. □

PUTTING THE FOETUS FIRST

Morality and Law in Canadian Politics: The Abortion Controversy, by Alphonse de **Valk**, Palm Publishers Ltd., Montreal, **184** Pages, \$8 **cloth** and \$2.95 paper.

By ANNE **ROCHE**

A LAW PASSED recently in New York State provides that there must be two doctors present at **abortions performed** 20 weeks or more into a pregnancy. If the baby is tough enough to **run** the gauntlet past the first doctor's knife, the second doctor is there to try to save its **life**. In Boston, a doctor who **skillfully** aborted the "product of **pregnancy**" and **then left** it to die is being tried for manslaughter. These are examples of the **schizophrenia** that governs the abortion question: on the one hand, a recognition that it is now perfectly legal to take young **human life**; on the other, a deep-seated **moral objection** to doing so. Examples like the above multiply, because abortion, as Alphonse de **Valk** points out in this book, "is one of the **rare** examples of a legal reform that stirs up **more controversy** after the **law** has been amended than before." The controversy comes from the **slow** recognition by a large section of Western society **that it** is totally opposed to the assumptions about a basic principle made in its name by its legislators.

This important book is **an** attempt to study the history of the abortion debate in Canada in the larger perspective of the social revolution that swept Western civilization in the

From now on, the law gives human life only relative value, to be decided on utilitarian grounds.

1960s. It was in that decade that the West openly admitted that it was no longer Christian. **From** now on, for better or worse, we live in **the** post-Christian era. **The** agreement on basic principles has **broken** down: henceforth the State will only coincidentally **profess** the **great** guiding truths of the **Judaean-Christian** ethic.

be Valk sees as "the intellectual turning point" in this social **revolution** the 1957 **Wolfenden** Report in Britain on homosexuality, which drew that sharp distinction between legality and morality which has become almost a principle itself in recent legislation. Canadian law reform was **deeply** influenced by the philosophy of the **Wolfenden** Report and the **legislation** that followed it, particularly the **1967 liberalization** of abortion — so much so in fact that a **French-Canadian** writer accused us of "judicial **colonialism**." **Every** time **someone quotes Our Fearless Leader's** dictum **that** "the state has **no** business in the **bed-moms** of the nation," or some **pro-abortionist** scolds an anti-abortionist for "trying to impose his morality on society," we **are** hearing echoes **of the Wolfenden Report**. Even the Roman **Catholic hierarchy** of Canada succumbed to the siren song; though bitterly opposing abortion, it accepted the divorce between legality and morality and gave the many Catholic Liberal **MPs** an **excuse** to vote for a law they believed, so **they** said, would allow murder.

The great **historic** principle officially jettisoned during the abortion controversy was the **most** basic one of **all** — that human life has an equal **value** at every stage **from conception** to **natural** death. **From** now on, in Canada and Britain and the U.S., the law gives human life only relative **value**, to be decided on utilitarian **grounds**. This was made clear by one of **the key figures** in the abortion debate, Grace **MacInnis** (NDP Vancouver-Kingsway) **during the hearings** of the Commons Standing Committee on abortion. It was not, she said, "a simple matter of respecting or **not** respecting life" but of weighing **one** against the other, that of the unborn child, for example, against the well-being of the adult woman. However, **the new scale of values** has turned out to be barbarously simple to apply. **You** just use the criteria of self-interest, enlightened or otherwise. You talk about "quality **of life**," of your life. that is. You come, as Mrs. **MacInnis** did, to see vast new fields open to improvement by this concept. "I think it is time that we began to work toward quality population in this country," she told the Commons Committee. This "need for improving the population. . ." **Where** did we **hear** that before. asked some Hon. Members. Even pro-abortionists were startled.

Nevertheless, it is this quality of life argument that has taken hold. De **Valk** recounts how even some Christian churches came to accept it. The United Church of Canada came up with a most opportune **theological** discovery: "Every child has a right to be well born, and in some cases this means the **right** not to be **born** at all." And the Archbishop of Canterbury voted to include the quality of life of the mother's family in the grounds for abortion, in the end

voting for abortion on demand. "Even his own bench of bishops had their heads in their hands," said an observer.

Opposition to abortion has come to be considered "a Catholic foible ... like abstaining from meat on Friday," as Cardinal Heenan said. In Canada, as de Valk documents, this attitude has been lovingly nurtured by the Toronto Globe and Mail, which by charging that private, i.e. Catholic, morality had no place in public morality as expressed in law, created an atmosphere of bigotry and hurry in which no one stopped to consider whether Catholics (and very many Protestants and Jews) might have a point when they said abortion was against the common good.

The usual early argument for broadening the grounds for abortion was that this would serve the common good, by cutting down on the number of illegal abortions and deaths from them. Interested pro-abortion groups and the media quoted wildly inflated figures for both. There was no attempt to verify these, nor to consider the findings in other countries that liberalized abortion did not significantly cut down on illegal abortions, sometimes even had the opposite effect, and that abortion soon came to be used as the primary method of birth control. Scientific evidence about the sophistication of human life soon after conception was likewise ignored. De Valk recalls the panic haste of all concerned to prove that Canada was not lagging behind in abandoning the historical moral underpinnings of its law. Incredibly lumping the matter of taking human life with provisions to permit lotteries, Parliament voted on the Omnibus Bill on May 14, 1969, (along party lines, for no morality prevails over political expedience) to broaden the abortion law to include as grounds not only the life but the

"health" of a woman. This, as both sides expected, permits abortion on demand. The only hindrance being that Parliament left the administration in the hands of sometimes recalcitrant hospital committees.

The abortion debate nonetheless continues, at a rancorous pitch. Numerous pro-life groups have formed to try to persuade Parliament to tighten the law, and these are opposed by smaller but more visible groups with unlimited access to the media, (which are, with one or two honourable exceptions, closed to the pro-life position). The debate has long passed the point where anyone is arguing that the unborn child is not a human being. The motions of debate are gone through medical, demographic and ecological arguments are put and countered — but most people accept that abortion is not a medical or demographic question; it is a moral question. And the moral question is: "Are some human lives worth more than others?" To answer that question in the affirmative, as recent abortion laws have done, "is to corrupt the law and, thereby, ultimately to corrupt society." The immediate appearance, after the legislation of abortion, of the euthanasia question, suggests that we are merely at the beginning of a course that will tragically degrade not only the law, but the human life it is meant to protect. CI

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The Pole-Vaulter, by Irving Layton; McClelland & Stewart, 94 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Fire on Stone, by Ralph Gustafson, McClelland & Stewart, 90 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By KEATH FRASER

AS FAR AS SEX is con-d, it would be hard to find two poets of the same generation farther apart on the scrotum's spectrum. Yet something more basic than this distinction arises reading Layton and Gustafson together. At their best, Gustafson's poems resemble lakes. Layton's rivers. No more value judgment is intended in this distinction than in another, which is that Gustafson is more aware of poetry as art than Layton, who knows poetry's political value. Thus while Layton seems at home down in the marketplace, Gustafson appears happy studying the cathedral around the corner. Layton prefers to address us with the flowing cadence of a poet looking to seduce a gathered crowd; Gustafson, more aware of a cycle in things, likes to speak in an elliptical way that seems mainly concerned with convincing himself. No wonder Layton finds himself with "all the sweet ass/a man his years can safely handle" ("Poet on Cos"), while Gustafson examines his own "horny feet/stuck from the shroud/the sheet thrown over/to show him done" ("To My Love. R.N.").

While sex is important in different ways to both writers it is naturally their techniques as poets that interest us more than their performances as men. That's why the lake and the river serve well enough as critical metaphors, because the virility of each writer can be understood even when his creative juice may occasionally diminish to a puddle or a creek. For the most part the techniques in these two collections of recent poems do honour to two compelling lovers of their craft.

In one of his poems Layton confesses that there are days when he thinks "of nothing/but politics" ("What I Told the Ghost of Harold Laski"). In *The Pole-Vaulter* he tells us, in yet another of his Forewords, how a poet should vault over, in the style certain political undesirables have done, the tyrannical regimes that Layton condemns. "The world is redeemed by its pole-vaulters.": To a pair of political free spirits he dedicates his book-at the same time stating how he now views his own vocation: "To dream and to interpret dreams like my forebear Joseph and to spray from time to time the civet of poetry between the reeking aisles where people in civilized dress sit daydreaming of murder, violence and destruction. a smile of pleased gratification on their lips." In this way the poet redeems the world, and, as the title poem says on the last page, he vaults over his own grave. With his stance thus fixed on one point his trajectory would seem to invite a fall. But in this particular volume it rarely comes to that, since Layton's egoism is in turn redeemed by a regard for others who show an equal disdain for breaking down under the "hideous dreams" of Fascism ("For Anne Frank"), Bolshevism ("For Nadezhda Mandelstam"), death ("Lillian Roxon"), or simply old age ("Young Couple at Lum Fong Hotel") — an age over which Layton's "civet" of poetry Rows:

Each other's unbreaking pole
of imagination and love
you vault over
wisdom greying at the roots
and smelling of unalterable defeats,
the will-to-power that fleers
out of skincreases and hemorrhoids

As a rule Layton isn't as reflective a poet as Gustafson and tends to narrate more than meditate. In *The Pole-Vaulter* his themes of tyranny, poetry, power, individuality, Jewishness, flow into the ocean 'he creates in his own image. He can't, he claims, feel at home with "transcendental feelings" and so unloads them into a bay where "washed by the sea they will surface as white blossoms/ which the tide will present to me on bent knees" ("The Transfiguration"). Layton's reality is closer to what the philosophers call naive reality, and it is precisely this reality that contributes to his deserved popularity. It isn't that his images are more concrete than Gustafson's, but that they reflect fewer nuances than those of the meditative Gustafson.

For example Layton claims he knows "for certain/I could reach out and pluck the stars/one by one/and put them all into my notebook" ("The Solitary"). Gustafson is less sure of reality in this empirical sense: "What's beyond stark-staring is the meaning":

not the star but its nightly
Reflection in the lake, nor the lake's stasis
But the walk beside it.

In the same manner Gustafson's volume takes its tide from reflection, both in the visual and meditative sense: "Glass stained in the sun, on pillar/Thrown in flame, fire at our feet./Fire on stone, that hour at Chartres" ("Take, For Instance, Architecture").

In *Fire on Stone* what seems important about Gustafson's verse is not the plethora of poets, echoes and traditions it melds, but, like Eliot's poetry, the pleasure it yields when a reader who doesn't always grasp his allusions trusts the poet's authenticity, and delights in re-reading a poem because it sounds, like the best music, better for hearing it a second time. Perhaps the flaw in Gustafson is a certain ejaculatory quality in his syntax which, in its attempt to create tension, seems sometimes patchy. I like him best in those poems which, while seldom flowing with traditional rhetoric, reflect upon the lacustrine depths of existence: "Serenade for Eight Winds," "To Give Intuition a Certitude," "The Grandeur Was When," "The Tin Can Turned Back from Transcendence," "Cadenza With Green Sail." These poems are not always easy to fathom, though — perhaps like Wallace Stevens' poems — it seems they should be, if only for their vividness.

Great moments urge
galaxies.
Of lake and grass
prodigious repetitions,
alterations,
happen.

The themes of brevity, death, art, reality, music, myth, are themes Gustafson has been dwelling on for decades. Add to these the recurrent images of cold, stars, roses, fjords, bulbs, stone, and Gustafson's volume takes on the richness of Norwegian omelette. *The Pole-Vaulter* appeals more with its lack of fussiness; *Fire on Stone* uncovers more with its dissociating centre. □

CANADA'S SECOND-BEST BAD WRITER

Where is the Voice Coming From?, by Rudy Wiebe, McClelland & Stewart, 157 pages, \$4.95 paper.
The Temptations of Big Bear, by Rudy Wiebe, McClelland & Stewart, 415 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By MICHAEL SMITH

BACK IN 1970 Rudy Wiebe the writer presented a pretentious, spectacular Arctic story titled "Oolulik" in an anthology called *The Story-Makers*, selected and pretentiously introduced by Rudy Wiebe the editor. It simply wasn't good enough — and suffered further in contrast with some fine work by Joyce Carol Oates, Alice Munro, Albert Camus and Frank O'Connor, who were among the others represented.

Then in 1971 Oberon Press brought out its anthology of new Canadian writing, *Fourteen Stories High, and something happened*. In it was "Where is the Voice Coming From?" — another story dramatizing the clash between white law and native life — and suddenly Rudy Wiebe stood out among a list of contributors that included D. O. Spettigue, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Alden Nowlan and Marian Engel.

Both stories now are together in *Where is the Voice Coming From?* and, set in comparison with each other and the 11 remaining stories in this first collection, it's clear how Wiebe has crossed the line again and again between noble myths sometimes badly written and just plain badly written stories.

Wiebe, who won the Governor General's Award for his novel, *The Temptations of Big Bear*, isn't a particularly fine writer; or at times, he tries to be too fine. His dialogue is stagey, and often almost strangles his narrative; there's too much struggle and heroism (in this he is reminiscent of Hugh Garner, who is perhaps Canada's best bad writer), and too often his characters seem too large or foolish for life.

On the other hand, Wiebe is most successful at identifying and exploiting our native past in a way that solidly takes our literature back to historical roots that interest too few other writers. His appeals to history and myth resemble much of Margaret Laurence's work, though Laurence has a peculiar talent for relating myth to contemporary life while Wiebe's writing frequently seems historically (and therefore psychologically) isolated. Both are Prairie writers, but Laurence has chosen to examine her roots at a distance in time and place. Wiebe's roots remain planted firm, which may or may not be a problem.

His Bii Bear is a tragic figure, basically a wise and peaceable chief who can't accept the white treaty-makers' attempts to put boundaries around his world. He pays his price after the Worthy Young Men in his band rebel against the whites who have promised (and never delivered) a happy reservation life under the great Grandmother, the Queen.

The first rumblings come, aptly enough: when one warrior takes an axe handle to a government farm instructor sent to make the Indians appreciate the value of work and fences. Then at Frog Lake, in 1885, the Indians murder nine whites, priests and traders, all of whom Wiebe unfortunately over-characterizes until they appear like the bad guys in a lousy film.

Especially hem and at the beginning of the book Wiebe depends on stock characters and over-informative dialogue ("We're all together here, remember, them's only twelve or thirteen of us in the whole bush. . .") to carry his narrative. In such places the action appears theatrical and awkward, as if he had difficulty reconciling the need to advance his story with the equal need to make it seem real. Bii Bear's speeches are always long and usually confusing, but — maybe because of Wiebe's personal sympathies — only among the Indians is dialogue suitably cryptic, seldom false.

Temptations is written like a CBC documentary. Wiebe says it's based on real people, but "all characters in this meditation upon the past are the products of a particular imagination.?" The story alternates between fictional

NOVEMBER

i

*This creature heeling
dusted with snow, its teeth
grinding together, sound of old stones
at the bottom of a river*

*You lugged it to the barn
I held the lantern,
we leaned over it,
as if it were being born.*

ii

*The sheep hangs upside down from the rope.
a long fruit covered with wool and rotting.
It waits for the dead wagon
to harvest it.*

*Mournful November
this is the image
you invent for me,
the dead sheep came out of your head, a legacy:*

Kill what you can't save

*what you can't eat throw out
what you can't throw out bury*

*What you can't bury give away
what you can't give away you must carry with you.
iris always heavier than you thought.*

(From *You Are Happy*, by Margaret Atwood, Oxford, \$3.25.)

dramatization and fact-laden, almost journalistic material that Wiebe tries to relieve by **inserting** passages **told** by bureaucrats, survivors, soldiers and others.

When writing about Indians he faces the danger of falling into picturesque or travelogue-style writing, but in *Temptations*, at least, Wiebe successfully maintains the tension between realistic portrayal and overblown spectacle. This produces some nice ironies — the Indians **refer** to themselves as “people,” to blacks as “black **whiteskins**,” to dying as being “rubbed out” — without **submitting** to historical burlesque.

At times — too few — his writing is simple and droll (“There was a long silence, though horses galloped to the **river** in a **flurry** to drink **and** the **circle** was filled with the loud River people and the animals, living.”) while in over-long descriptive **and** stream-of-consciousness passages he can be uncommonly wordy, and sometimes obscure.

It seems likely that **Wiebe's** stories **were written** over a span of some years (I suspect all were written **before** *Temptations*) since only the second half of his collection reflects his infatuation with historical myth. Several earlier stories betray an interest in childhood that seems **typical** of many fledgling writers, and a couple **are gimmicky enough** to be labeled “experimental.” It's **probably** not wrong to guess that his publishers quickly **gathered** them up to capitalize on Wiebe's recent award.

Similar in many ways to *Temptations*, the title story, “Where is the Voice Coming From?” is a matter of **impres-**

sionistic **case-building**, an account of the 1897 shoot-out between Almighty Voice and the police built entirely **on** fact and cued by the guns, pictures, names and relics as they may be **researched** today.

Like *Temptations*, such stories have as a common theme the conflict between the round world of the native peoples and the rigid world of the whites; It recurs in “All on Their Knees,” in which a farmer hides an Indian **from** the **RCMP**, and, less successfully, in “**Oolulik**,” a story **of** madness, **murder** and cannibalism on the Arctic **wastes**. When Wiebe adopts a white narrator, it's one who understands the native language **or** defends **native** ways. As a little girl **in** one story **ironically** puts it: “It's not nice to kill people or Indians.”

In some of these he catches the myth, and in others he just falls. He **fails**, I think, in “**Oolulik**,” which is nothing but an adventure story larded up **with** Eskimo **lore**, and in “**Bluecoats** on the Sacred Hill of the Wild **Peas**,” a **supposedly** ironic account of a modern visit to the site of **Custer's Last Stand**. He catches it in “Along the Red Deer and the South Saskatchewan,” an Indian **battle tale**, and in “The Fish Caught in the Battle River,” a **teamster's** account of **capture** by rebel Indians.

In *The Story-Makers* **Wiebe writes** of “the impulse to make story” and makes it sound like the impulse to make water. Now it's time he stopped **preaching**. In several of these stories, and most especially in *Temptations*, **he** has shown us what he **can** do, and should do now. There is no longer any need to talk about it in such silly terms. □

U.S. BOOK CLUBS AND US

One million Canadians have opted for 10-day free trial offer in colonialism

By **PAUL STUEWE**

IF YOU'RE LITERATE and past the age **of** consent, there's a pretty good chance that you belong (or have belonged) to a book club. Given the opportunity to sample four shiny new bestsellers for only \$1 (plus shipping and handling), what sensitive book lover could pass up an instant gorge at the literary smorgasbord? In **the** nether **reg-**ions of your brain, of **course**, you know that you will eventually be spending a **fair** sum of money for books you **might** not otherwise purchase. But for approximately one million Canadians the **prospect** of a Chistmacin-July reading orgy has been too strong to resist, **and** as a consequence they have signed up with one of the 150 book **clubs** operating here.

Now for the cold **colonial** facts: of those million **Canadians**, slightly more than 3,000 belong to a Canadian book club: and of those 150 clubs selling books to Canadian readers, only **one** deserves a big bright red maple **leaf** as **far** as Canadian content is concerned.

For the **roughly** 100,000 Canadians who belong to **the** Book-of-the-Month Club, the largest single club operating here, about 15% of the books offered to them **are** Canadian,

and their **business** dealings are **carried** on with a **computer** in Camp Hill, **Pennsylvania**. The **80,000-odd** who **belong** to Doubleday's Literary Guild — another 120,000 or so adhere to such specialized subsidiaries of Doubleday as the Cookbook Guild, the International **Collectors** Library and the Military Book Club—deal with a computer in Toronto, **which** nevertheless offers them an overwhelmingly American diet **of** book selections. At the **other** end of the scale, the 3,000 members' of the **Reader's** Club of Canada (which celebrates its **15th** anniversary **this** month) **are** serviced **by** human beings in **Toronto**, and are offered Canadian books exclusively. Questions of modus **operandi** aside (ii the Reader's **Club** of Canada got big enough, it would probably use a computer **too**) it is evident that U.S. **control** over **Canadian-based** book clubs surpasses even its dominance of the Canadian economy as a whole, and it seems politic to ask just **what the** implications of this are for Canadian **publishers**, authors and readers.

I had always assumed that book clubs, foreign-controlled or not, **were** guilty of siphoning off sales from marginally viable local book stores. But **just** the opposite appears to be the case. Even such competitors **of the** American clubs as Peter Martin, who heads the Reader's Club of Canada, recognize that book-club selection **always** increases the bookstore sale, primarily because it provides a degree of **public-**

ity well beyond the original publisher's budget. Although the **profits** from book-club merchandising do end up south of the border, one can argue **that** the clubs are, on the whole, a significant, and perhaps even **necessary**, source of revenue to Canadian publishers as things **are** presently **structured**.

When one examines some of the **marketing** practices of the American-owned clubs, **however**, one becomes a **bit** less certain that their influence is a uniformly benevolent one. Both the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Literary Guild offer their Canadian selections in the context of a far larger and **more** prominently displayed potpourri of **Ameri-**

When the Reader's Club of Canada wanted to list the University of Toronto Press's Mike: Volume 1, which had already been picked as a Book-of-the-Month selection, they had to deal with Book-of-the-Month for the right to make it available to their membership.

can books. In the case of the Literary Guild the use of a red maple leaf N designate Canadian selections smacks of condescension. **Canadian are** going to buy American books regardless of how they are **offered**, of course. There **are** a host of obvious cultural conditioners at work here. But the suspicion remains that both clubs view **Canadian books** as a kind of **esoteric minority** interest quite peripheral to the serious business of **flogging** the latest **Philip Roth** or **Theodore White**. In this sense the American clubs help to perpetuate the status quo of a relatively underdeveloped publishing industry in Canada.

Given their dominance of a large and otherwise **unreachable market**, Book-of-the-Month and Literary Guild can drive some pretty hard bargains with publishers anxious for the sales and prestige resulting from "A Major Book Club Selection." While the Literary Guild buys its **Canadian** selections directly from the publisher—usually at twice the cost of production — Book-of-the-Month often tenders a flat fee for the publisher's **phototype plates**, after which it negotiates **directly** with the printer for the lowest possible production costs. Because both clubs offer their selections at a substantial discount from the retail price, the royalties payable to authors and publishers **are** also correspondingly lower. However, since book-club **sales are**, as previously noted, a supplement to book-store sales **rather** than a **substitute** for them, these royalties do **represent** a net gain to their recipients.

The **prospect** of a windfall from either **club** is somewhat lessened, though, by the requirement that a book sell **several** thousand copies in **order** to **recoup** production costs and show a profit. Whereas the Reader's Club of Canada can survive by selling a few hundred **copies** of such non-best sellers as Northrop Frye's *The Bush Garden* and Peter Such's *Riverrun*, the big clubs with their high-volume, **low** profit-margin operations simply can't afford to take chances with books that have only a minority appeal. **Thus** both Book-of-the-Month and Literary Guild spend a lot of time picking the **"sure fire"** hits and weeding out the "maybes." Among **other** things, **this means** that books published by the smaller **presses are** almost completely ignored in the rush to jump on the bandwagon of best **sellerdom**.

The whole idea of "best sellers" is just one aspect of the **hyperactive** mass-marketing **practices** of our entertainment industries, true enough, **but it's clear** that Book-of-the-Month and Literary Guild function as efficient distributors of the pre-sold **rather than** as pioneers of the potentially popular.

Some of the experiences of **the Reader's Club** of Canada in dealing with the Book-of-the-Month Club **illustrate** the manner in which **the** larger clubs look after their own interests. (No one expects **them to** do otherwise, of course.) Book-of-the-Month, like the Literary Guild, usually insists on the exclusive **right** to offer a **particular** title in Canada, and any exceptions must be cleared with the New York **office** (their **Montreal** address is merely a shipping and **distribution centre**). Thus when the Reader's Club of Canada wanted to list the University of Toronto Press's *Mike: Volume 1*, which had **already been** picked as a Book-of-the-Month selection, **they had to deal** with Book-of-the-Month for the right to make it available to their membership. Ultimately Book-of-the-Month **let** Reader's Club have **it**, but with two **restrictions** (one delaying its listing until **Book-of-the-Month** offered it and the **other** prohibiting its use as part of **Reader's club's** discount introductory package).

The Reader's **Club** went through similarly humiliating **negotiations** with Book-of-the-Month over the **first** two volumes of Pierre **Berton's** CPR saga, and here the irony of a Canadian club forced to **implore** an American club for permission to list a **Canadian** book is **compounded**: both **Berton** and **his** publisher, Jack McClelland, **are** well-known **"nationalists."** The quotation marks are intended as a **demonstration** of what can happen when **nationalist** beliefs confront imperialist realities. No matter how benevolently or discreetly administered, foreign control of the Canadian economy means that we **are** viewed as an **exploitable** market free **to be** manipulated in the short-run interests of whoever can **turn** a profit here, without even the minimal restraints exercised by indigenous shareholders or management in Canadian-owned **firms**. In **an** extreme case, this brings about situations such as Book-of-the-Month's feeling **free to** sell the American edition of a **Canadian book** (Duncan Pryde's *Nunaga*) to its Canadian members; but **even at the best** of times it results in a steady outflow of profits derived from the distribution of Canadian books within Canada, and diminution of **the** money available for investment in developing a strong Canadian publishing industry.

One area where this is clearly discernable is that of book club advertising. Book-of-the-Month **and** Literary Guild each spend **about** \$500,000 a year on advertising and **direct** mail promotions in Canada, but a hefty share of this is directed to **the** "Canadian edition" of *Time*, and thus does not help Canadian-owned periodicals. In addition, however, both **clubs benefit from the "spillover"** circulation of American magazines containing their advertisements into Canada, **with** two industry **insiders estimating** that **50 per cent of their Canadian** members are attracted in this way. This is obviously a **form** of competition that a Canadian book club **cannot** match, as **well** as an indication **that** neither Book-of-the-Month nor Literary Guild spend anything like the full cost of obtaining their Canadian members in Canadian-owned publications.

Thus a good case can be made for **establishing criteria** of Canadian ownership and **content** for book clubs. Unfortunately, the history of attempts to apply such **criteria** in other **areas suggests** that we will have **to first** raise the question and then wait out the deliberations of a Royal Commission **or two**. □

Oscillations of integrity

The **Collected Poems of A.M. Klein**, compiled with an introduction by **Miriam Waddington**, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 373 pages, \$14.95 cloth and \$6.95 paper.

By **DAVID LEWIS**

A.M. KLEIN'S poetry is modern, yet often classical in style and language; it is relatively direct but sometimes **difficult** in its occult allusions; it is moving and sensitive but occasionally indulges in distressing puns; it is frequently hopeful about the **human condition** and mom frequently despairing; it is at times derisive of **religion** and its spokesmen and at other times deeply religious. There are those who see these contradictions as flaws. To me they are evidence of integrity. No thoughtful and sensitive person can fail to oscillate between conviction and doubt, between hope and despair.

In any case, there is in Klein's poetry a wealth of language (or, more accurately, of languages), of passionate commitment, of imagery, of metaphor, of **irony**, of rhythm, and of rhyme. Many of his larger poems or groups of poems **are** an eloquent cry against man's inhumanity and God's apparent indifference. Whether some of them can be technically **faulted** or not, they are exciting and profound.

It would be presumptuous for a general reader of poetry, who does not **pretend** expertise, to try to **pronounce** on Klein's literary sources or mentors or influences. First, because I am not qualified and, second, because I am not **sure** I want to be. I am one of those who **enjoy a rapturous sunset without curiosity** about the manner of its appearance or dissolution. And Klein's poetry has often **affected** me like a **Prairie sunset**: dazzlingly brilliant, **presaging** darkness.

For them is much shadow in Klein's poetry. The source of his **weltschmerz** is evident: the **never-ending** persecution, culminating in the Nazi destruction, of the Jewish people. And one should not wonder why.

As a very young boy Klein had **listened** to stories of pogroms in Russia, **Galicia** and Rumania. He was 14 when Nazism showed its **head** in the Munich beer hall putsch in 1923. **He** was hardly 24 when Hitler came to power in

January, 1933. Young Jewish intellectuals at Baron **Byng** High School and, later, at McGill University followed developments **anxiously**. No one more so than Klein. **What** he saw was not only the humiliation of the **Jews** in Europe but the world's callous indifference to a growing barbarism.

Klein was a highly sensitive human being who was conscious of his roots and had hungrily steeped himself in the history, **traditions**, folklore and mythology of his past. What was happening to his people was a mirror of evil that caused him pain and anguish even other young Jews could not feel, because they lacked his sensitive **perception**. I **know** because I was one of **them** and his **most intimate friend during those years**.

But Klein's poetry reaches far beyond his feelings of personal tragedy, as is evidenced by his **social** poetry of the **1930s** and his **magnificent** collection in the book titled "The Rocking Chair." **He** loved Montreal, particularly the east end where he was **brought** up in the Jewish milieu and where **he** could enter the **French-Canadian environment** by walking **only a few blocks**.

Miriam Waddington, who has compiled this volume, emphasizes in her excellent study of Klein published in 1970, his **knowledge** and love of **language**. This is evident from his writing and I may add that Klein had **dictionaries** — English, French, Yiddish, Hebrew, Latin and even **Greek** — as avidly as he read **literature**. Even in daily conversation, he gleefully **rolled** his **tongue** around unusual **combinations** of multi-lingual words, especially if they sounded esoteric or had a double **entendre**, or produced a pun or striking



A. M. Klein

metaphor. And he would shake with laughter, his sharp **grey-blue** eyes twinkling, if he felt he had succeeded. This made being with him an endless **&light**. **And so** is reading his **poetry**.

Mrs. Waddington has done a **great** service in producing this volume. She has compiled all of Klein's published poetry — the four books in **their** entirety as **well** as poems published in periodicals but not previously collected in a book. She has arranged them in chronological order so that Klein's development as poet and his responses to experience may be easily studied.

The present collection, I have little doubt, is a rich poetic experience and, like all great poetry, gains in meaning and impact with every reading. When I first opened the book it struck me how well chosen was the photograph of Klein on the **frontispiece**. It is **as** true and unposed as the gamin-like look in the eyes. □

Six poets who found a critic

Oh, It's Ward Not to Be Immortal, by **Carolyn Struthers**, **Nairn Publishing House**, 72 pages, \$2.50 paper.

You (Poems 1957-67), by **George Stanley**, New Star **Books**, 86 pages, Paper unpriced.

The Forest City, by **Robert Fones**, Coach **House Press**, 125 Pages, paper unpriced.

Preparing **for** the Arc, by **Mike Doyle**, **Weed/Flower Press**, 70 pages, \$3 paper.

Night Mares, by **Jamie Hamilton**, **Pikadilly Press**, 38 pages, \$2.50 paper.

Woman, Be Honest, by **Sparling Mills**, **Herring Cove Press**, 76 pages, paper unpriced.

By **LEN GASPARINI**

THE RATIO BETWEEN the number of Canadian poetry books published each season and those that are **actually** sold must be dishearteningly **incalculable**, if not downright pathetic. The truth of the matter is **most** people are too damn lazy to give their **minds** a lyrical lift. **But** the Muse's dilemma **doesn't** end them. Over the past decade there has **been** a continuous gush of poetry, from the masterful to the most horrendously 'mediocre, and therein lies the **malignancy**. It would take a legion of **dedicated** critics to extricate it. **Fortu-**

nately, some space has been provided for the following half-dozen volumes of poems.

Despite the somewhat affected tide, Carolyn **Struther's** collection contains many fine, energy-charged poems. She records her impressions with the artifice of mood-associative imagery, and often superimposes the surreal on an ordinary scene, as in "Summer Air":

*today the air was so pure
I expected to see
divers
floating down amongst the clouds
wearing large fins
and oxygen tanks
and spearing startled birds*

Other poems offer splendid examples of irony and understatement, like "Marriage" and "Still Sometimes." **Struthers** employs ample eye-rhyme, and this gives her poetry a vigorous, *assonant cadence*. She occasionally lapses into tedious introspection and nostalgia, but her subjectivism rises above mere rhetoric. She is at her best when the juxtaposition of image and idea in her poems is vividly *equipoised*. "Beach" is short enough to quote as a model of this particular technique:

*the beach is silent
with the roar of noise
held frozen
near the waves' peak
sound begins a long way out
where water and sky
slide into each other*

All in all, **Struthers' Oh, It's Hard Not to Be Immortal** is a very worthwhile book.

George Stanley is an American poet newly arrived, in Canada. His work synthesizes various poetic traditions, but what he writes about is essentially close to home., "Tête Rouge" and "You," the title poem, are experiments in the narrative form. The latter piece is comparatively poignant, fraught with *angst* and anger. Some of the stanzas stand out like keloids in their starkness: "The broken handwriting aches itself into scripture. / I try to see again what I have seen —"

In the shorter lyrics, especially the "Pony Express Riders" sequence, the language is simple to the point of sing-song; however, the silhouetted *Prairie* imagery adds to the dreaminess of the symbolism. One is reminded of the atmospheric effects of Winslow Homer, and perhaps even **Zane Grey** could be conjured up in these lines: "In the

shadow/of a hill he rides,/ his shadow rides the hill."

Stanley's poems resemble the kinetic paintings of Jackson **Pollock** in a way that transfigures the content. The poem's meaning (if there is one) moves off into myth by the multiple force of shifting syntax. One line impels another in crescendo tonality. The only inconsistencies of style are the clichés and prosy commentary, otherwise it is interesting reading.

The Forest City is **Robert Fones'** second book of poems; One of Canada's younger poets, **Fones**, I feel, relies too much on gimcrackery and interpolated dialogue. He seems to have a penchant for acid-rock jargon and extravagant metaphor: "Queen you breeze thru thii city/wearing a wardrobe of trees/preaching that we/are the coat-hangers." His poems are cleverly contrived, and the abstruseness they bury themselves in weakens their true poetic intent. **Fones** is experimenting with everything at once, overloading his poetry with synecdochic devices for the sake of obscurantism. Even the titles sound strenuously disjointed. What are we to make of the following? "Effect Cup Vortex." "The Norfolk & Western Pigeon Off the Line." "Tri-X,"

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and others. One particular poem begins like a crossword puzzle: "Follow the mycelium you/yourself threadbare to the vacuum/will the objectship to criss-/cross this hiatus." If Coach House Press can print such unpoetic effusions, is it any wonder the average person is turned off poetry?

Mike Doyle's *Preparing for the Arc* is a bio-chronological prose poem about that inspired, resourceful patriarch, Noah. Wii the exception of a few lyrics, Doyle's *pièce de résistance* is book-length. It makes for difficult reading because the supposedly informative lines appear addled, and the typeface is so minuscule as to require a magnifying lens.

In the 25th psalm of this work Doyle utters the last pronouncement of Neo-Classicism: "Had Noah been an artist, his destiny would have been to drown with the others." Does this sound ironic to you? I always thought the artist was the suicide who decided not to.

The format of Jamie Hamilton's *Night Mares* is ideally suited to the contents. The format is attractive, and Hamilton's poems are precise as ail-verware. He thinks in imagery, and his diction (often rhymed and metred) flows in formal stanzas of lyrical beauty. Much of his work is effectively structured to impart the most subtle mood; each poem is a play of nuances. There is no waste of energy and purpose in the run-on lines, and it is comforting to know that Hamilton has, in some measure, restored music to poetry.

I'd like to single out several poems for special mention. They are: "The Poem as Hitch-Hiker," "Wreck Beach," "Detroit Art Show," and "Night Crews." The last one is a thought-provoking piece that seems destined for the anthologies. *Nigh: Mares* is a creditable second collection. It should be read.

Spading Mills is a Nova Scotian poet, but her poetry moves in a realm of love and other human relationships. *Woman, Be Honest* lacks spontaneity of expression because the subject matter has been chosen for a sort of soul-searching, confessional appeal. *Mills* is too subjective; the *noumenon* eludes her. Her poems are of one type only, a predictable essaying of the purely speculative. If she could write about things instead of her feelings, the result could be poetry.

And so, the ratio widens. Poetry will be written, good and bad. Let us hope there am no bad apples in the barrel. □

Non-poets who didn't know it

The 4 Jameses: Canada's Four Worst — and Funniest — Poets, by Willii Arthur Deacon, introduction by Doug Fetherling, Macmillan, 204 pages, \$4.95 paper.

By JEAN MELUSKY

BUY THIS BOOK. Now that you've got it home, immediately make space for it in the ready reference section of your bookshelf, near your *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, your *Rand-McNally World Atlas*, and *Bob Weaver's* collections of *Canadian* short stories. Why? Because this one is a classic, and you are going to be running to your shelf frequently to find bits to read to your uninitiated friends.

The subtitle precisely describes the book, with the stress on "Funniest." *The 4 Jameses*, originally published in 1927, was written by William Arthur Deacon. Doug Fetherling, the author of this edition's excellent introduction, describes Deacon as "perhaps the first important English-Canadian man of letters."

The 4 Jameses, however, is witness to the fact that while Deacon was nurturing Canada's *Greats*, he was also collecting Canada's *Abominables*. Four of them are the Jameses here assembled: James Gay (self-proclaimed Poet Laureate of Canada and Master of all Poets); James McIntyre; James Gillis; and James MacRae.

The quotations from these wretched poets are enough to make the book worth buying. But the way Deacon sets these gems is brilliant enough to warrant paying five bucks for a paperback. He adopts the standard critical stance and, in so doing, manages to send up his own craft as well as these four poets. He quotes a lot, to give us the full spice of these worthies, but offers as his reason "the lack of proper facilities for obtaining some of the books from which they are drawn, and with the hope of forcing out new complete editions." He rationalizes their failings, for example speculating that James Gay — about whom little biographical information is available — was not university educated: "The freedom of his composition from deformities resulting from the cramping rules of grammar was probably only possible to one who

had escaped the severer forms of a classical education." The result? Stuff like:

*I hope to cross the seas and let Old England know it,
And to see Her Majesty in her own home,
being the Master of all Poets.
As the greatest of Poets [Longfellow] have
passed away,
It appears it's left between Alfred Tennyson
and James Gay.*

My favorite among the four is James McIntyre, who was inspired generally by the dairy business around Ingersoll, and specifically by the 7,000 pound cheese once produced there. Fmm his "Ode on the Mammoth Cheese," I offer a stanza:

*We have seen thee, queen of cheese
Lying quietly at your ease,
Gently fanned by evening breeze,
Thy fair form no flies dare seize.* □

Behan with a touch of neon

Without a Parachute; by David Fennario, McClelland & Stewart, 229 pages, \$3.95 paper.

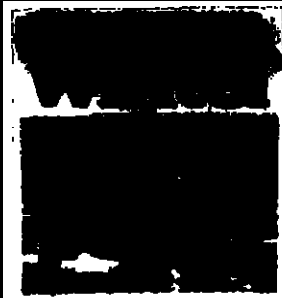
By PHIL LANTHIER

BACK IN 1969, 22-year-old David Fennario started a journal in an attempt to pull himself together after four years of the sort of desultory messing about that was the common affliction of youth in the 1960s. Fennario had been born in Montreal's Point St. Charles district, a rough working-class area of taverns and tenements lying southwest of the city's central shopping area. He quit school, went to work, quit work, went hitchhiking, bummed around, got attested, and finally ended up in Montreal's Dawson College.

When he showed his partially completed journal to Sally Nelson of Dawson's English Department, she recognized it as a piece of accomplished writing, and arranged for Dawson to publish it. The 1,000 printed copies were gone by the end of the year after receiving high praise from the French press in Montreal. The English dailies ignored it. But the book's growing word-of-mouth reputation now has resulted in this McClelland & Stewart release shortly to be followed by a French translation to be published by Parti Pris.


Fennario is a denizen of the inner city. "Give me sidewalks anyday," he says, staring glumly at the green and

OUR GIFT IDEAS GO ON AND



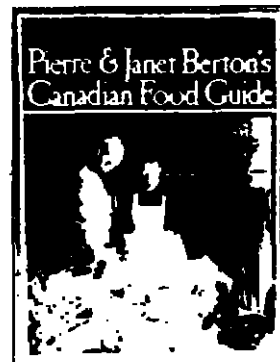
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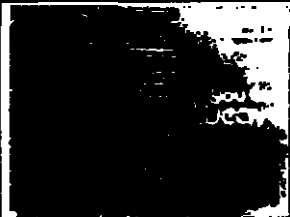
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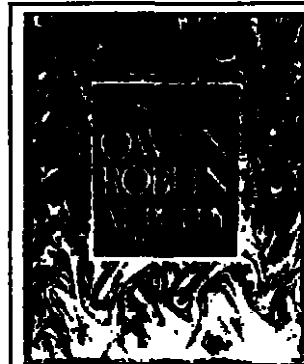
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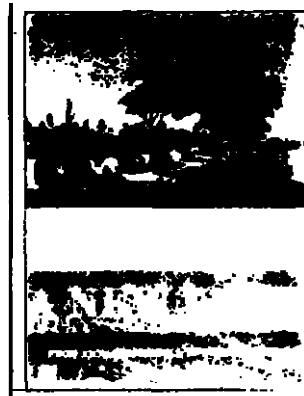


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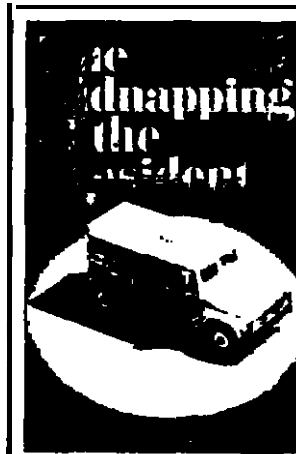
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splendid shores of **Lake Massawippi**. "All of the familiar landmarks were missing—the **Stelco chimney, Northern Electric, Redpath Sugar, Five Roses Flour signs** that I grew up with Yeah, bright lights big city. Nine o'clock in the morning and the **CN brakemen are sitting in the Fulford Street Tavern** having scold beer before going into the yard."

It's not that **Fennario** prefers concrete to trees. It's just that the city is full of people and talk. *Without a Parachute moves with the easy, natural rhythm of conversation over beer with old friends.* The streets and alleys, the neon-lit hallways and broken doors become a little less oppressive because stories are told and wild times are remembered:

Once a bunch of us carried two shopping bags full of snakes uptown and let them loose in a department store basement. We waited until the salesladies were looking the other way and then we dumped the snakes on the floor, a baker's dozen of them sparkling gold under the neon lights slithering away into dark corners and under the counters. We split the scene once little old ladies began convulsing, screaming blue murder. Big mystery back in the fifties, all sorts of speculations were made by the press. My mother sitting at the supper table weeks afterwards saying, "Oh Jim, they found another snake in Eaton's."

Fennario listens and makes legends with only slight exaggeration. His style is open, engaging and unpretentious. Neither his observations of the squalor and viciousness around him, nor the struggle with the depression that rises within him from time to time, stifles the journal's essential vitality and good humour. Although he is given at times to some easy political moralizing, it doesn't weigh his narrative down. There's a touch of **Brendan Behan** in the way he takes the scruffiness of life with irony and compassion. Ass matter of fact, since his sense of dialogue is so good, end since he has been working on a play for the **Centaur Theatre** in Montreal, he may well provide the people of Point St. Charles with the same sort of high-spirited dramatic image that **Behan gave** to the people of working-class Dublin. □

Demeter on the frontier

And Some in Fire, by **Dorothy Farmiloe**, **Allve Press**, 141 pages, paper, unpriced.

By **LINDA ROGERS**

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of a town in transition, leaving Venessa with only an unborn child and the thin hope for a future in the city, where the seasons may not be felt so cruelly. Farmiloe milks the Demeter myth, which works in spite of the hero overplaying it, because of Ven's real sympathy for her landscape and the victims of those who would corrupt it.

Farmiloe, from her position at the cortex of Venessa's intelligent and sensitive mind, draws the supporting characters according to plan. All the men, except Gord, the schoolteacher and shrill conscience of the North, are stock villains of the new feminist literature. It is in Hester, the Indian matriarch, that Vanessa finds a true resonance. Hester lives in harmony with the realities of life and death. She is still proud in spite of the efforts of a town in flux to denigrate the Indian brother who was a part of the family united in the common determination to stay alive.

But Ven knows that Hester and her kind are doomed, so she leaves rather than sacrifice herself to the decay that has already cost her a daughter.

The square dance at the centre of the novel is the ritual pattern of life in the North. The dance, like much of the dialogue and description, is contrived, but somehow part of the mechanical process of a brain looking through conventional channels for solutions to conventional problems.

Superbly rendered is the silent expression of the love of a mother for her child and the land, which, according to myth and to habit, will regenerate itself. □

Portage and Mainlining

Winnipeg Stories, edited by Joan Parr, Queenston House, 223 pages, \$2.25 paper.

Life's Vagaries, by Step&GUI, Vesta Publications, 100 pages, \$2.50 paper.

By PAT BARCLAY

QUBBNSTON HOUSE, one of Canada's newest shoestring publishers, is the publisher of *Winnipeg Stories* a collection that includes contributions by Miriam Waddington, Fredelle Brusser Maynard, Chester Duncan, Maara Haas and a dozen more. An introduction by David Arnason, who teaches CanLit at the University of Man-

itoba, attempts to define the "Winnipeg style" that he says unites them: "Winnipeg is at once old and modern, provincial and cosmopolitan, radical and reactionary, a state of mind, a style . . . [The stories share] the confident conviction that the experience of living in the city is worth exploring."

It's a brave concept and it helped earn Mm. Paw a grant from the Winnipeg Centennial Committee, but the stories themselves defy easy classification. Some of them, in fact, can hardly be labelled as short stories. never mind the regional distinction. (And one, "The Baseball Game" by W. D. Valgardson, has a hem who voted for Kennedy, a politician not celebrated for his Winnipeg style.)

The best story in the group was written by William Paluk, who is currently president of the Canadian Authors' Association. Winnipeg branch. It's called "The Back Door" and its heroine, Anna Novak, is a character to remember. (When her daughter Halia wants to marry an Anglo-Saxon named Henry Smith, Anna is chagrined: "I know our boy name Pitkowsky, call himself Pitt. So you could be Smitkowsky. But no, no . . .") Sentimental, but also funny and compassionate.

Most of the "women's" stories, including those by Waddington and Maynard, have the misfortune to remind us of Alice Munro and what better use she makes of similar material. Others, such as "White Land, Blue Toe" by John Parr, sound strictly from high school. But *Winnipeg Stories* is still worth the time. Especially if you're a budding short-story writer yourself, and need to know how not to do it.

Speaking of short stories that are not really short stories, let's take a look at *Life's Vagaries* by Stephen Gill. Gill is Indian, educated at Agm, Ottawa, and Oxford, and author of half a dozen other titles — poetry, critical studies, a grammar text, etc.

Gill's prose alternates between kindergarten-spare and nineteenth century-florid; someone better versed in the vagaries of English as it is taught in the former colonies could doubtless account for how his writing got that way. It's a handicap, but in his stories about contemporary village people caught in the webs of ancient traditions, Gill's voice rises above the verbal underbrush. He is sensitive, alert and subtle. If he can match his prose to his perceptions in future, perhaps his stories will come out more like stories, and less like scrambled messages transmitted in an unfamiliar code. □

Fiction in d veil of tears

Angels of God, by Gildas O. Roberts, Torrance & Co., 76 pages, \$4.95 casebound.

The Gate at Madame T'sein's, by Duffy Paxton, Sierra Publishers, 99 pages, \$4.25 paper.

By P. L. SURETTE

THE FIRST OF THESE two novels, *Angels of God*, is a pathetic tale of a love affair between Gerald Davies, a teaching assistant at the University of Cape Town and a coloured student, Yvonne Eickhoudt. It should be of interest to those who enjoy the frisson of indignation occasioned by reading of the indignities visited upon the hapless inhabitants of South Africa by the laws of apartheid. Roberts invests the enforcers of South Africa's incredible laws with the grace of compassion, but fails to make his slim cast of characters otherwise interesting.

The novel begins in the flippant manner of Kingsley Amis with Davies happily married in England and earning his bread with predictable discontent as a schoolmaster. The opening section forms a peculiar introduction to Davies' recollection of the love affair five years earlier. As fiction, the tale is spare and clumsy. The couple successfully escape South Africa after an embarrassing brush with the police enforcing the laws against miscegenation. But Yvonne is killed in a train accident on their wedding day. The only redeeming quality of the novel is the possibility that the story could be true.

It is much more difficult to find any redeeming qualities in *The Gate at Madame T'sein's*. The story deals with the Chinese civil war, the Japanese invasion of China, and the revolution. This dramatic historical backdrop is recollected by an aged David Commerce and his similarly aged first love, Mai Tsui (now Madame T'sein) in modern Japan. The story is thoroughly improbably and extremely diffuse. With a few alterations of profession the novel might fit well into the Sue Barton series.

The publishers, Sierra of Vancouver, deserve no thanks for making this book available. But if they must publish such books (and at hard-cover prices) one might expect them to correct the misspellings of their authors.

Duffy Paxton has difficulty getting even his clichés straight. At one highly dramatic point David informs her grand-daughter that Mai Tsui has "left this veil of tears." □

Growing up abhorred

In Captivity, by Leib Braverman, translated from the Yiddish by Isaac Halper, Musza Halper, and Carla Wolfe, Jewish Dialog, Summer 1974 issue, 102 pages, \$2.50.

By GEORGE JONAS

THE ATROCITY literature of the last 30 years is immense and it ranges from comic-book stories to Solzhenitsyn. By now the best writers often shy away from the brutal and extreme in fear of being too obvious. Understandably enough, they wish their work to be judged independently of its subject matter, as literature.

Leib Braverman has no such ambitions. He wishes to tell it the way he saw and experienced it as one of the children a stop away from the gas ovens in Birkenau, one of the sub-camps of Auschwitz. It is precisely for this reason, it seems to me, that his book is especially worth reading. It achieves literary merit by aspiring to none, and reminds us that there is little subtlety or finesse in sheer horror.

Braverman writes about innocent victims. It's worth remembering that while all victims deserve compassion, not all are by definition innocent. Some may provoke the harsh, unjust and reprehensible measures taken against them, or contribute to the creation of the political circumstances to which they ultimately fall prey. They have been such victims among the inmates of the Gulag Archipelago, the Israelis and Arabs of the Middle East, or both sides of the Vietnam, Korean, and Second World Wars.

History is like a traffic accident in that its greatest penalties are assessed at random rather than by fault, and the totally innocent perish along with the half or completely guilty. Between 1939 and 1945 people were burned to death indiscriminately in Messerschmidts and Spitfires, Pearl Harbour and Hiroshima, the air-raid shelters of Dresden and the crematoria of Auschwitz.

Leib Braverman's victims in *In Captivity* are doubly innocent by being

West



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children between the ages of eight and 15. He employs few devices of plot or language. The greatest literary merit of his book is truth. □

Chester and Chou in China

A Memoir of China in Revolution from the Boxer Rebellion to the People's Republic, by Chester Ronning, Pantheon Book, 306 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States, by Denis Stairs, U of T Press, 373 pages, \$15 cloth.

By J.A.S. EVANS.

THE NAME OF the Canadian diplomat Chester Ronning was one that kept cropping up every so often during the Vietnam War, and before that, the war in Korea. In Professor Denis Stairs' *The Diplomacy of Constraint*, which is a political scientist's account of the Korean War and Canada's role in it, Ronning appears in a footnote. "Mr. Ronning's habit of engaging in easy conversation with the Chinese delegates [at the 1954 Geneva conference.]" writes Stairs, "was for the Americans a constant source of annoyance and suspicion. Walter Robertson, the American assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, had instructed his own staff to avoid any such informal contact with their Chinese opposite numbers, and he viewed Mr. Ronning's behaviour with considerable alarm." Not only could Ronning speak Chinese, for he was the son of a missionary to China, but he was also a long-standing acquaintance of Chou-en-Lai. He regarded Chiang-Kai-Shek as a corrupt warlord at a time when Chiang still passed in Washington as a symbol of all that was righteous. His view was that the Communist revolution in China should be taken in the context of Chinese history, and not in terms of a global conflict between international Communism and the free world. As one who as a boy had seen the exploitation of China under the Manchus, and later, after the last emperor abdicated in 1912, the misery of the civil wars, be thought of the revolution as a good thing. He was viewed with alarm in Washington, and no wonder.

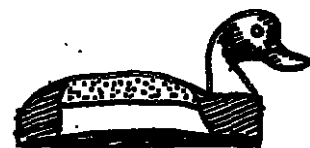
of course, that was before *détente*. Now that Ronning is retired and living

in Camrose, Alberta, voices such as his have a better chance to be heard. One wonders, with a trace of cynicism, if an American publisher would have brought out a book like this, by a Canadian diplomat! in the 1960s. Ronning wrote it as a private memoir, he tells us, without any intention of publishing it, and it is a disjointed account, reading like an old man's reminiscences put down for his grandchildren. Yet, it is an important book for Canadians to read.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Canada attempted to develop and maintain her own policies towards Communist China. She never quite succeeded; successive American presidents from Eisenhower to Lyndon Johnson made it clear that they expected Canada not to stray far from U.S. doctrine on China, and Canada never dared recognize the People's Republic until the U.S. attitude softened. Moreover, the media in Canada never understood, or explained to the public, what Canada's position was. Yet Canada did manage to maintain a policy that had some degree of independence, and Chester Rotating played an honourable role in developing it.

After Canada and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations in 1970, Ronning revisited China at Chou-en-Lai's invitation. His last chapter tells the story of his trip. China had changed, and for the better. The Chinese are "so much better off now than before the liberation that there is really no comparison."

Professor Denis Stairs' *The Diplomacy of Constraint* is a more solid work, printed in the uncompromising type that the University of Toronto Press reserves for heavy books. It is, however, a careful study of the Canadian part in the Korean War, and since Canadian universities are often the last place we would look for a Canadian point of view on anything, I am delighted to see this study by the director of Dalhousie University's Centre for Foreign Policy Studies. The book is mostly a history of events, and a good one. but no political scientist nowadays can write a mere history and expect to escape the maledictions of the behaviourists in his field. So in a final chapter, Stairs subjects Canada's role to a behaviourist analysis. How respectable! □



Foo

A crock of jargon

Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community, by Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis William Magill, McClelland & Stewart, 272 pages, \$4.95 cloth.

By ALDEN NOWLAN

AFRICVILLE. THE black ghetto in Halifax, N.S., could have been the handiwork of a perverse community planner determined to create the worst slum on earth. It was an urban slum, set beside the city dump and cut in half by the railroad; and it was a rural slum, with shacks, a dirt road, outdoor privies and polluted wells. In the mid-1960s the city decided to lance this festering boil. Africville's 400 inhabitants were relocated and it was bulldozed under. Practically everyone said, "Thank God for that."

The authors of *Africville*: "The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community," both of them professional sociologists, say that when their study was first proposed in 1967 they believed that the "Africville relocation might well be a model to follow." Later they became "more skeptical" of the "liberal welfare model of planned social change." The social and cultural climate had altered. Yes indeed. Between 1967 and 1974 the neckties got wider, the skirts got shorter and the sociologists switched brands. The thinking man used to smoke Relocation-Integration; now he prefers Neighbourhood-Community, because it tastes good like a panacea should.

Fortunately, the latest intellectual fashions are advertised nightly on television. There's no longer any excuse for anyone using an opinion or a detergent that is out of date.

Of course the destruction of Africville caused suffering. Poor and powerless people often suffer in their dealings with tribunes, sachems, bureaucrats and commissars. But bourgeois intellectuals who sentimentalize the slums — and such sentimentality is implicit in this book — strike me as being as frivolous as the eighteenth-century aristocrats who extolled the romantic shepherd and the noble savage. You can call a slum a sub-grouping with a collective identity, but it will still stink.

So help me God, Doctors Magill and Clairmont call bootleg joints and whore

houses "deviance service centres." I'd like to believe they were joking. It's distressing to think that anyone whose native tongue is English could keep a straight face while indulging in such silly-arsed sesquipedalianism. The academicians used to write in Latin. Now they write in jargonese. Digging out the facts in a book such as this is like trying to recover a ring that has slipped from your finger and dropped into the toilet bowl. □

Soft the sisters of yesteryear

The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada, by Catherine L. Cleverdon, U of T Press, 324 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Privilege of Sex, edited by Eve Zaremba, Anansi, 173 pages, \$8.50 cloth and \$3.50 paper.

Anne Francis: An Autobiography, by Florence Bird, Clarke Irwin, 324 pages, \$8.85 cloth.

The Indomitable Lady Doctors, by Carlotta Hacker, Clarke Irwin, 239 pages, \$8.50 cloth.

By MARGARET HOGAN

WOMAN'S SITUATION in 1974-going-on-1973 is not exactly joy-making, but anyone with a short fuse can at least be grateful it's no longer the tom of the twentieth century, at which time a short-fused woman could justifiably have gone about in a permanent state of apoplexy. Or — if her sense of injustice was underdeveloped — at a slow simmer, as she tended the soup on the stove in the kitchen to which she was confined.

Patience — and apathy — prevailed, says Catherine Cleverdon in her history of the suffragette movement in Canada. Cleverdon, an American, wrote *Woman Suffrage* as a 1950 doctoral thesis — under the tutelage of an expatriate Canadian at Columbia University. This book is the only story of the movement we have; it's a balanced chronicle and no duller than any other thesis.

Outrage was the typical Canadian response to English suffragette militancy. English suffragette Bargar Wylie urged on a Canadian audience in 1912 with the words: "Don't be submissive. Don't be docile. Don't be ladylike. Don't dread being conspicuous. Remember you are fighting for

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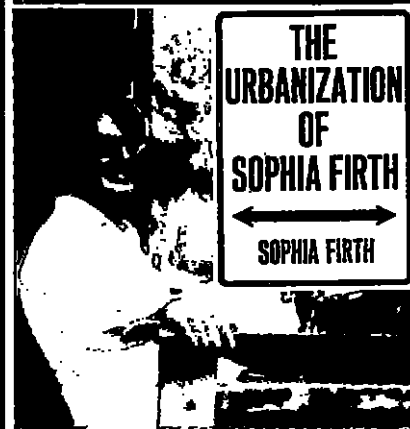
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liberty... Go to Mr. Borden in your thousands and demand votes for women at this session." But like so many others she bombed in her attempt to rouse her audience to unwonted behaviour — the peaceful facts of the movement in this country mirror the mythology of Canada as a peaceable kingdom. A CCF campaigner points out most Canadian suffragettes were Liberal or, at least, liberal; Cleverdon's analysis suggests that Canadian women had only to ask for the franchise and they received it. Thus, the suffragettes in Canada weren't forged into militancy by opposition to their cause. Women, Cleverdon reminds us, were themselves the traitors in the cause, a distressing but common enough story in the history of the movement. Women, maybe even more than men, are threatened by a change in women's status — the Privileged women by the thought of getting up off their backsides, underprivileged women by the necessity of taking the responsibility for their own circumstances.

Ontario pioneered the national suffrage movement, but Prairie women (backed by Prairie men, as a logical extension of that kind of equality that characterized settler situations) were the first to get provincial franchises (in 1916). The vote was withheld from Quebec women -federally enfranchised in 1918 — until the umpteenth suffrage bill finally passed the provincial legislative assembly in 1940. The unrelentingly reactionary attitude of the Roman Catholic clergy had been of no help to the women of Quebec.. The Quebec Church's attitude was peculiarly French-Canadian, and bore little resemblance to the Vatican stance on suffrage. The Protestant clergy in the rest of Canada were in the main staunch supporters of the suffragettes.

Eve Zaremba's *Privilege of Sex* could serve as an introduction to Cleverdon. It's a social-history source book — diaries and letters of women in nineteenth-century. Canada strung together by editorial comment. We're taken from the letters of Anne Langton, an 1837 British immigrant-a woman who constantly stepped over the bounds of accepted femininity and then constantly curbed her tendencies — to a sampling of the autobiography of witty, indefatigable Nellie McClung, a pioneer suffragette. Although McClung is an appealing character, Zaremba's excerpt doesn't indicate this: instead we're given a holier-than-thou Nellie looking back on her childhood and crediting herself with an ir-

ritating superiority in her attitude toward women. *Privilege of Sex, not incidentally*, is loaded with typographical errors — which are a nuisance. Doesn't Anansi have proofreaders?

Many of the suffragettes were doctors, and hence are included in Carlotta Backer's *Indomitable Lady Doctors, but you won't learn* much about them from Hacker, who takes a regrettable names-dates-places (all the names, dates, places) rather than a human approach to her subjects. She thus achieves what is more of a grocery list than a book.

Fiily, there's Florence Bii (alias Anne Francis), broadcaster, journalist and bead of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. As to the future, Mrs. Bird is sanguine. As for her book, well, it's a non-book that Clarke Irwin should have exercised judgment in not publishing. A curious potpourri of autobiography, wishy-washy polemics, pats on the back for the author herself — who nevertheless seems a likeable person — and for nearly everybody else with whom she comes in contact. Everybody is described as intelligent, sensitive and what-have-you, except poor old Mackenzie King, The book is glib, superficial and lacking any sort of central focus, good for nothing but a door-stop — and a lightweight one at that. □

LEMON

The leaf
protects the pock-marked
yellow skin
protects the flesh within.

Cold knife,
frilled on one side,
cuts through, everything
bleeds.

Inside the wheel
spinning tenspokes round from navel
centre, teardrop rooms
and seeds
burst sour, wake up the sleeping lips
give tongue to contrast.

Sweet smell gives way to sour
fruit and skin
is warm although the heart
is chill within.
Earth's cool oceans
douse the fire at centre.

(From *Music for Moondance*, by Linda Rogers, Fiddlehead, \$2.)

A hardcell for humanity

For Everyone a Garden, by Moshe Safdie, Tundra/Collins, 340 pages, \$25 cloth.

By **MARSHALL MATSON**

MOSHE SAFDIE'S *Beyond Habitat* was reprinted in paperback last year and now his **new book appears**, along with an exhibition at the National Gallery organized by the Museum of Art in Baltimore. Since 1971, Safdie has been working near Baltimore on **Coldspring New Town**, his most **ambitious project** since Expo '67.

The great principle of **Safdie's** work on habitations is to combine a high density of population — **and thus** the economic and **cultural** advantages of the city — with the private outdoor space of the village. This is achieved by building outdoor space into the **structure through the use** of living **units** clustered in overlapping fashion **rather** than exactly on top of each other as in the fully packed high rise. Thus the roof of one unit or **space** cell is the garden of another. The repetitive use of space cells implies in **turn** the **industrialization** of home building. The cells can be tamed out by **an** assembly-line **process**. And by supplying cells for more than one building site, the **cost** of amenities such as gardens in high-density housing would be lowered.

Safdie's interest in industrialization is **one** indication of his practical side, his determination to get his **unconventional** designs built. Another indication is his readiness and ability to deal with people, especially in the community. The complex community relations of the **Coldspring** project are mentioned in the book. But the NFB film **on** the **Project** shows vividly how as an architect and planner Safdie became involved in harsh **conflicts** of race and class. Such practical humanity **distinguishes** him from an architectural fantasist like **Paolo Soleri**, whom incidentally Safdie admires: **Soleri's** city-as-a-building is designed on a totalitarian scale that overwhelms the individual, while Safdie's designs, with **their** comparable concern for environment, give him his own place in the sun.

Like *Beyond Habitat*, Safdie's new book is full of ideas, **but** unlike it, **For Everyone a Garden** is a picture book. The text introduces **and** accompanies

photos; **plans**, and sketches of his projects from the McGill thesis to his **plans** for the Western Wall **plaza** in Jerusalem. The writing is sometimes loose and repetitive (near the end a whole paragraph is repeated practically word for word), but the warm shaping **energy** of the **man** is present in **his** language. The book is a handsome one. The photos — some in **colour** — and the drawings are fine and informative; the jacket illustration by Safdie's daughter **Taal** is **particularly** attractive. The pages look good, but they do not always read well. **Page** and **figure-numbers** disappear too often, and **occasionally** captions **are** too remote from the **pictures** they explain. One is grateful for the index, but its typography and page references **are** **puzzlingly** inconsistent.

The book was prepared with the aid of the Canada Council. It is **& expressing** to **note**, however, that despite the office Safdie has maintained in **Montreal**, since Expo '67 **none** of his **commissions**, **apparently**, **has** **been** **Canadian** □

All about CanArt and Eve

Canadian Artists in Exhibition: 1972-73, by the **Roundstone** Council for the **Arts, Roundstone Press, illustrated, 255** pages, \$24.95 cloth.

Eclectic Eve, by Janice **Cameron** et al., distributed by The **Woman's Press**, illustrated, **unpaginated, \$3** paper.

By **WALTER KLEPAC**

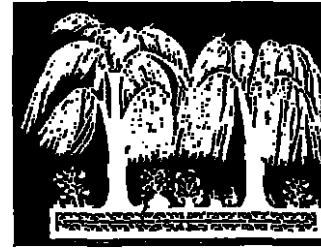
THE FIRS? OF these **books, Canadian Artists in Exhibition**, is an attempt to give **the** general reader as well as the art enthusiast a broad pictorial overview of recent work exhibited by **Canadian artists**. Oversized and **profusely** illustrated, it presents **us** with an almost unwieldy assortment of present-day art — not all of which is well served by the sometimes dark and indistinct photographs.

In **their** earnest **desire** to be **impartial** — and representative of the various artists, media, styles and levels of **sophistication** currently flourishing within the **Canadian art scene** — the editors constantly risk overwhelming and **confusing** the ordinary reader. Crowded together on one page we find a lurid, weakly drawn surrealistic fantasy, an all-too-pat and slickly rendered **for-**

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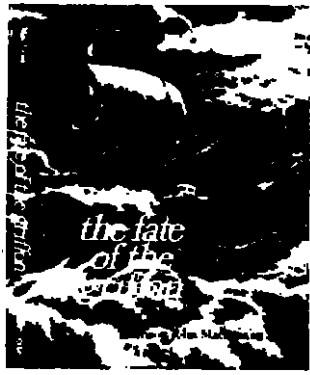
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AN OBERON BOOK

malist painting, a trendy conceptual art piece, and the obligatory **landscape** inspired by the **Group of Seven**. **This disorients the reader** and tends to **detract** from the **merits** of the individual works themselves. Such crowding occurs because the editors **have** insisted on arranging the artists in **strict** alphabetical order. In **this** respect, the reference aspect of **their project** works against their book's **coffee-table** format. Readers of such books have come to expect **every** page to be visually and conceptually **coherent** at **first** glance. It can only be hoped that the editors of *Canadian Artists* will be able to **strike** a better **balance** between form and function in **succeeding** volumes. Their work is too important for them not to do so.

Because the descriptions of **the** artists **contained** in the book were **submitted** by the artists themselves (and hence **&peed** **entirely** on each individual's initiative. **interest** and veracity), one is 'wise **not** to judge an artist's importance by the **length** of his or her entry. In fact, **there are a number** of **glaring** omissions, among them such notables as **Jack Bush, Robert Murray,** and Jack Chambers.

While restricted to practising women artists living and working in or around **Toronto, Eclectic Eve** follows an approach roughly similar to that of *Canadian Artists*. Compiled and **edited** by a **group** of former Ontario College of Art students, **Eve** features a personal statement by each of **the** artists and devotes an **entire** page to a single **representative** work. On the whole, **Eve** is a **mild,** pleasant, chatty little book. **While** the commentary offers **little** in the way of **critical** insight into the art of these women, it does provide the reader with a **refreshingly** candid and unpretentious view of their **roles** as women and as artists and of **the** present condition of the Toronto **art** scene. As a matter of **fact,** it is interesting to **find** that the major difference **between** male and female **artists** seems to be not so much quality or **intensity** but attitude. There is **little** in **Eve** of the sort of **High Art** theoretical talk, with its heady suggestion of cosmic and universal significance, so common **among** the Adams of the art world. The **artists interviewed** in **Eve** share a belief that their own **art** is **important** first of all because **it is** a mode of self-expression. □

Coming next month:

o Abraham Rotstein on Hershel Hardin

Currying flavour with nationalists

Enjoying the Art of Canadian Cooking, by Jebaae Benoit, Pagurian Press, 192 pages, \$8.95 cloth

Pierre and Janet Berton's Canadian Food Guide, by Pierre and Janet Berton, McClelland & Stewart, 135 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

Canadian Country Reserves and Wines, by Blanche Pownall Garrett, James Lorimer & Company, 133 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By CLIVE COCKING

"**THE ESSENCE** of cooking, I feel, lies in the tasting," says Janet Berton in *Pierre & Janet Berton's Canadian Food Guide*. That may sound to you like a **humdrum** commonplace — **but it isn't**. That is a profound statement. That is **pure wisdom**. So don't get obsessive about **your** pinches, teaspoonfuls, **tablespoonfuls** and cupfuls, listen to Mother Berton. She's right. I know (he said, grimly).

The arrival of these cookbooks for review was timely — and indicative of a certain genius on the part of the **editors** who must have sensed that I was ready for another **major** advance in my culinary skills. (I mean, being noted as a maker of rather **lumpy,** deformed — but nonetheless **tasty** — omelets, isn't much of a reputation. **is it?**) And, after all, **there** really is only **one** way to review cookbooks — that's **by getting out** your pots and pans and messing around with some of the recipes.

It seemed **appropriate** to begin one evening by whipping up some of Lord Clive's Curry from the recipe in **the Berton** book, which originally dates from an 1870s Canadian **cookbook**. Like my imperialist namesake, I have a **great** fondness for curry dishes. **But** there was one small **problem,** my knowledge of cayenne was sketchy: I **had** heard **only** that it was a **hottish** spice of some sort. The recipe called for half a teaspoonful of cayenne and half a teaspoonful it was.

I am convinced, now, that **this** is the carry that launched the Indian Mutiny! "Hot" isn't the word. **It doesn't just set your tongue aflame, it fires your brain,** your whole body — one dish of **this** and you feel distinctly rebellious.

In the interests of order and tranquility, I would recommend that in making

this curry dish you follow Mother Berton's rule and taste as you go. With considerably less cayenne it would be a very tasty dish for peace-loving Canadians.

I made Lord Clive's curry simply as a warm-up (ho, ho) to my *pièce de résistance* — a dinner menu developed the following evening from Madame Benoit's book. First, an appetizer, Shrimp Dijon; a salad, her family's favourite, Tomato Cucumber Salad; and the main event, Steak *au Poivre* with Tomatoes *Provençale*. The wine was a good Californian, Paul Masson Pinot Noir. And for dessert there was camembert cheese and green grapes.

Following Mother Berton's rule this time, this novice chef's meal was acknowledged to be a success — though personally I would make modifications in much of it if done again. The steak, sautéed in oil and butter and served in a consommé and red wine sauce, was particularly excellent, if I do say so myself.

On the wine-in-sauce business, I personally prefer to go easy on it. I would rather have the wine in my glass than in the pot and be sipping it while I cook. That way you enjoy the full bouquet of the wine and — if you drink enough — whatever comes out of the pot tastes superb.

Then wasn't enough time to do any of the recipes in Blanche Garrett's book, although I marked a few for future adventures in the kitchen. The book contains quite a variety of traditional recipes f&jams, jellies, pickles, relishes, preserves and wines using native Canadian plants — everything from fiddleheads to blueberries to dandelions. It sort of takes you back to your mots.

Speaking of roots, one of the benefits of using the recipes in these three books is the sense of nationalist virtue one feels in doing so. The Berton book (revised and expanded since its original publication in 1967) offers you a choice of almost 200 recipes from British Columbia salmon stuffed with oysters to Acadian Rapee Pie to Mrs. Berton's variety of historical and philosophical writings on food in Canada. To my mind, there's too much writing and too few interesting recipes to make the Berton book a mainstay in the kitchen. There is a far better balance between historical footnotes and recipes in the Garrett book. Madame Benoit's new book simply contains such a mouth-watering collection of wholesome recipes that it's bound to become an essential book in Canadian kitchens.

If you are what you eat. Canadian nationalists would be wise to plan their meals from these cookbooks. In fact, I would like to offer a few selections that would make the Ideal Canadian Nationalist's Dinner: Oysters Canadian. French-Canadian Pea Soup (of course), Coquilles Eskimo (Arctic char), and Winnipeg Butter Sirloin with Manitoba wild rice, fiddleheads and young P.E.I. potatoes. On the side, bannock with Saskatoon and apricot jam. For dessert, tipsy cake. And wash it all down with maple beer.

Now doesn't that sound tasty — and so Canadian too! □

Mutterings in the quad

Towers Besieged: The Dilemma of the Creative University, by Cyril B. Belshaw, McClelland & Stewart, \$5.95 paper.

By ROBERT CARLGRN

ALTHOUGH THE storm of radicalism that assailed the universities in the 1960s seems to have receded, the substantive issues of value and purpose that provoked it remain largely unclarified and unresolved. Students and faculty alike are generally dissatisfied: with the existing institutions, even if the student population has lost or suppressed its critical voice and though most teachers have chosen to swallow their discontents and get on with the job. In *Towers Besieged*, Cyril Belshaw, a social scientist at the University of British Columbia, proposes to identify the chief causes of discontent by first defining the nature of the university's informing values and goals, and by then showing how existing structures and practices within the university converge to frustrate their fulfilment.

No one would dispute the "three criteria specific to universities" as Belshaw states them. A university should: (a) engender an ability to ask questions and to use evidence, logic and intuitive judgment; (b) expand cultural resources; and (c) develop the powers of scientific, aesthetic and moral judgment. Difficulties emerge only when we begin to ask whether there may not be other, less abstract goals and values for universities, and in particular whether these may not impinge directly upon the great sociopolitical issues of modern society.

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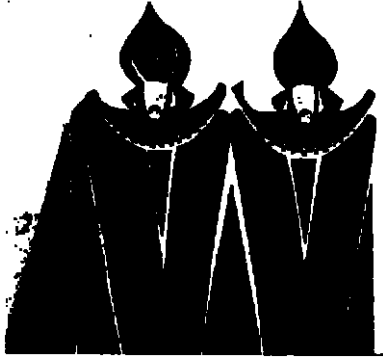
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Although Belshaw would deny the university a **direct** role in reforming society, he shows that within the institution **itself** there are **almost limitless** possibilities for **reform**. He offers an **exhaustive program** of structural reorganization aimed at countering **bureaucracy**, in the higher echelons of administration and at making faculties and **departments** better able to **fulfil** their **obligations** to the university as a whole.

Most of the **reforms** he recommends **seem** salutary enough. Academic **senates**, he suggests, should discourage attempts by professional associations to impose --oriented values on curricula. Laymen should have no **representation** on **governing** bodies; he observes that **corporate** spokesmen, who often control university boards of **trustees**, can **use their** position of **power** to **tempt** faculty into "compromising **academic** functions and values in the interests of **corporate** and political **ser-**vice."

Less plausibly, he argues that **university programs should be redefined** so that each discipline can be viewed comprehensively: the science program, for example, **would be required** to incorporate knowledge of the aesthetic, literary, moral, and even political dimensions of its constituent disciplines. This proposal seems to **derive** from "the holistic **trend** in contemporary **anthropology**," which **assumes** that **culture**, in the broadest sense, embraces virtually everything we can experience; think about or imagine. It's easy to foresee the enormous difficulties that **such extensive changes would entail** for students and teachers alike. Belshaw's **theoretical ideal** of education for the "whole student" will probably have to wait until we ordinary mortals have **eternal** lives and the wisdom of gods.

Despite Belshaw's concern for genuinely innovative **reform**, **Towers Besieged** is an essentially conservative document with aims that **could** be endorsed almost without cavil by the same corporate elite he would **exclude** from university **boards**. The **ideology** of **radicalism** is of **course** categorically repudiated; the university, he maintains, must be defended from **revolutionaries** who **would** destroy the present **structures** and **replace** them with organizations designed to intervene **directly** in the affairs of society. He **ascribes** the theoretical underpinning of the **radical** position to such writers as **Ivan Illich** (who is dismissed as a **posturing** demagogue) and Paul Goodman and **Herbert Marcuse** (who

are regarded as self-deluded, though intelligent and **sincere**). **These men** are castigated for having **provided** the **radical movements** with a **spurious intellectual respectability**.

Not surprisingly, **Belshaw** would **refuse** to allow students more than an **advisory role** in the conduct of **university affairs**; his general position is that decision-making most **remain exclusively** in the hands of faculty.

To his **credit**, **Belshaw** usually avoids the kind of **abstruse** blather so commonly found in the writings of social **scientists**; but all too often the text becomes fuzzily abstract and tediously prolix. **Towers Besieged** is not easy reading. The question is whether this is owing more to the **inherent complexity** of the subject matter or to the author's **deficiencies** as a stylist. □

WE ARE WHAT WE MAP

continued from page 1

natural universe. Yes — and no! For unless the external □ anrel universe is made convincingly present, we suspect "the poet's **attitude**" towards it. And in **recent Canadian** poetry — **particularly** the **poetry** of young men coming out of the **Prairies** — the landscape has **engulfed** myth and theme and stands in **direct** relation to man. The epigraph to the spring, 1974, issue of **artscanada** (which is devoted to "Maps and Mapping" and to which I shall come back), is from Stephen **Leacock**, and though it comes from a book called **Funny Pieces**, it is the sort of folly that attains wisdom: "What the English feel about the Armada and the Scottish about **Bannockburn**, the Canadian, **consciously** or not, 'feels about the vast geography of Canada.'"

In **terms** of maps and mapping, there can surely be no **better** compendium of the geography of Canada than the massive **National Atlas of Canada**, prepared by the Surveys and **Mapping** Branch of the Department of Energy, Mines and **Resources** and published by Macmillan. **Here** you will find none of the **pictorial embellishments** of **Jacobean** maps, for an **austere** informational restraint is inevitably the tone of such a volume in 1974. Yet the information so **severely presented** is rich and vast, and certainly its **usefulness** and fascination extend far beyond the world of **professional geographers**.

There are no general maps in this atlas, just as there is no gazetteer; the compilers have assumed that such **needs** are already met in other available volumes. Apart from a brief **preface**,

and a good geographical bibliography, the *National Atlas* consists only of maps, and each of its 254 maps conveys specialized information on a single subject. The mass of facts and even concept thus transmitted is extraordinary. If you wish to know about the rate of recession of the last ice age or the way the land rebounded from it, or to find out about earthquake-prone areas or the growing season in Prince Albert, or to trace where the explorers went or relate the names of old fur-trading posts to points on the land; if you are interested in the spread of populations or railways, or in Canadian meteorology or zoology or botany — it is all here. The agronomist and the economist, the political scientist and the ethnologist: the *Atlas* provides charts for them all. Man as *collective being, man in relation to his natural and humanized environment, is here displayed through colours and lines adapted to myriad purposes. The basic symbol is always the same; the shape of Canada on a less distorting projection than Mercator's — the world's second largest country reduced to a fifteen-millionth and shown on two square feet of paper. But 254 repetitions allow for amazing variations, and many times that number of written pages would be needed to convey the sheer quantity of information that the *National Atlas* graphically projects. It is a triumph of organization

In trying to play the role of Canadian Balzac, MacLennan has missed the role of Canadian Hazlitt for which he was much better fitted.

which becomes that very rare thing, a collective masterpiece.

In quite another way, maps figure in *artscanada's* special issue on "Maps and Mapping." True, the opening item is a well-illustrated historical piece on the varieties of Canadian maps by the geographer John Warkentin, but the remainder of the issue is principally concerned with the trend among younger Canadian painters to find maps a point of takeoff for exploring what one writer calls "borderlines of art and experience." It is a way of getting back to the landscape, seen through a screen of geographical schematization. But I confess that I found nothing among the paintings and graphics, inspired by maps and reproduced in *artscanada* that was as aesthetically appealing as the best of the real maps accompanying

Warkentin's article, notably an eighteenth-century topographical map by Des Barres of the Nova Scotia coastline and a satellite map of the Winnipeg area that would have ranked high if it had been transformed into a painting in the high age of Abstract Impressionism.

But in the last resort, for writers, geography must be distilled into words, and this Hugh MacLennan has done in his latest massive work, *Rivers of Canada*. Thirteen years ago, in 1961, MacLennan published his *Seven Rivers of Canada*, but this is quite a different book, embracing many more rivers and prepared for in a whole series of recent travels. It is a book whose immediate visual appeal is considerable. There are many commissioned photographs by John de Visser, whose lyrical touch is splendid in colour, but whose black-and-whites are surprisingly less subtle in their tonality than the Notman photographs included among the old photographs and prints recording the past of the rivers. In most respects, including the clarity of print and of reproduction, the production of the book is excellent, though the paper is a little too glossy; one notes, however, with regret that Macmillan should have found it necessary to have this so completely Canadian book printed in Italy.

Yet it is the words that matter; the illustrations and the typography merely reinforce what by any standards must be regarded as a remarkable combination of travel narrative and topographical description, of history and philosophizing about and around history.

The task MacLennan set himself is a massive one when one considers that Canada has more fresh water than any other country in the world, more great rivers and more lakes linked with those rivers and thus impossible to ignore. The complexity of the task is further compounded when one remembers that historically the rivers formed the great Canadian network of transport and communications, by which the fur traders explored the land and by which American expectations were frustrated through the westward thrust that eventually made Canada viable as a nation; beside the rivers, moreover, rose most of the important Canadian towns — Toronto, a lake city, and Vancouver, a marine-inlet city, being the notable exceptions.

Inevitably there are unevennesses in tone, and variations — mainly regional — in the degree of knowledge and understanding MacLennan applies to his

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rivers. The narrative loses in intimacy, but perhaps gains in grandeur, as he proceeds west and north. His chapter on his native province is called "Streams of Nova Scotia," and there he is writing of tiny hurrying waterways with a lyric clarity not impaired by the occasional nostalgic clouds that Boat over from his boyhood. Later there is a chapter on "Waters of Ontario," and if the rivers here are somewhat larger, they are still not the giants that rank chapters to themselves, but the small rivers that are pastoral in appeal, and endowed with the sense of history that permeates Canada's only thoroughly humanized landscape outside Prince Edward Island, that of Southern Ontario.

The great rivers of Canada—the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa and the St. John, the Red, the Saskatchewan and the Mackenzie, the Saguenay, the Hamilton and the Miramichi, are all given chapters to themselves; the best are perhaps those on the St. Lawrence, which draws on MacLennan's experience of half a life spent in Montreal and has therefore a rather impressively ruminative quality, and that on the Mackenzie, which is based mainly on a single vivid experience and has all the direct actuality of fine travel writing.

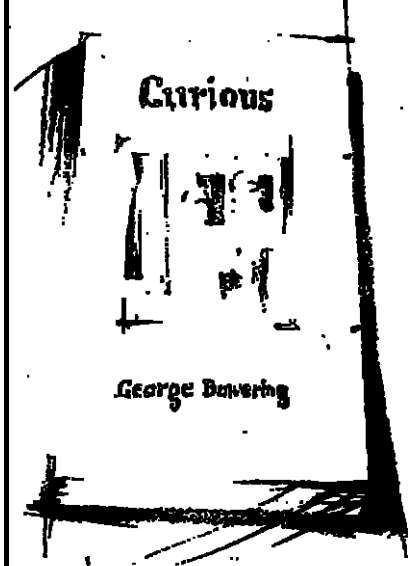
Inevitably — except perhaps for Maritimers and Southern Ontarians — readers will be disappointed that rivers they love are scantily treated or perhaps not even mentioned. Those who know the North will miss the great sweeps of the Thelon, the Kazan and the Back making their solitary ways through the Barren Land. And, as a man from beyond the Great Divide, I am disappointed that the chapter entitled "The Wild Waters of B.C." has no room for such delightful waters, which give special character to their regions, as the Similkameen and the Kettle, the Slokan and the Skagit (now under the threat of destruction by American greed for power). I am even more disappointed to find no more than the name of the great Skeena: no mention of its Indian villages with their groves of totem poles, of its formidable canyon, of the splendid and unknown mountains that tower over its course and that of its tributary, the Bukéley. But these are local grouses, and for the work as a whole, the sense it gives of rivers as the central geographical influences on Canadian life, its stirring individual portraits of rivers, one can have only admiration.

Rivers of Canada will certainly rank among MacLennan's best books, and it leaves one with an opinion to be un-

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ily recorded, that in trying to play the role of Canadian Balzac, MacLennan has missed the role of Canadian Hazlitt for which he was much better fitted. It is always a hard thing to say of a man that his greatest possibilities may not have been fulfilled by the books at which he toiled the hardest — in MacLennan's case his novels, none of which was achieved without a prodigious amount of application. Them is, in contrast: such a sureness and such an apparent effortless about MacLennan when he writes reflectively and talks of his own experiences or of that collective experience called history, that one senses that to be his natural field of writing. When one turns to his novels with this thought in mind, their best passages are — sure enough — descriptions of landscapes or journeys through landscapes, accounts of dramatic collective events with historical implications, and didactic passages in which he discusses, at great cost to the fictional unity of his works, issues that are of urgent importance to Canadians or to mankind in general.

With some writers one is never in doubt; the medium in which they write fits their talents like a glove. But MacLennan is so consistently good with non-fictional elements, whether in his novels or elsewhere, and so gauche at times in his rendering of the inner lives of invented people, that one is tempted to see him as a great literary geographer, a great historian of our attitudes and moods, but a novelist larger in texture and ambition than in achievement. One is also tempted to speculate that, if our age had valued the essay as our nineteenth-century ancestors did in the days of the great English and Scottish quarterlies, MacLennan might have been content with Hazlitt's role — that of the superb essayist. □

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TRADE & UNION

A report on the handicraft school of writing

By LINDA SANDLER

THE SEVENTH annual Writers' Workshop, organized by Gerald Lampert, convened for two weeks in August at New College, University of Toronto. The workshop was well publicized; the brochure featured an array of Canadian writers; 100 students from all over Canada and 10 states in the U.S. enrolled, each paying a fee of \$115. The idea behind creative writing courses is that writing is a craft and the master craftsman's hard-learned techniques can be taught. Clearly, two weeks is not enough time for hatching writers, so the bait in this case was the chance of meeting known writers who would evaluate your work and perhaps help you to publish it.

Because the workshop was a private enterprise — a private risk — numbers counted and the screening process was minimal. Amend a small hard center of good writers, there was an encrustation of hangers-on and earnest aspirants; the unevenness of talent complicated the instructor's job and spread patches of boredom through most of the classes. Yet the two weeks were surprisingly valuable; a workshop that succeeds in attracting a group of good writers — as

instructors and as students — can't go far wrong.

Two points are crucial to any remarks on the function of the workshop: (1) there is a special value in hearing a working writer (as opposed to an academic) talk about writing techniques; (2) if you want constructive advice about your own writing, you will not go to a writer unless he is capable of understanding your intentions. The second point was primarily a problem in the fiction field, where three out of five instructors had an exclusive bias towards what I will call "middle-class psychological realism" (rounded characters in sexual conflict). When I heard stylized writing (political, intellectual or expressionist) discounted, it occurred to me that had Camus been there, he would have advised them to play down the i&as and fill in with man/woman stuff. This means that for quite a few writers the real value of the workshop was not the professional evaluation of their work, but ideas received and debated among writers. New possibilities opened up. ;

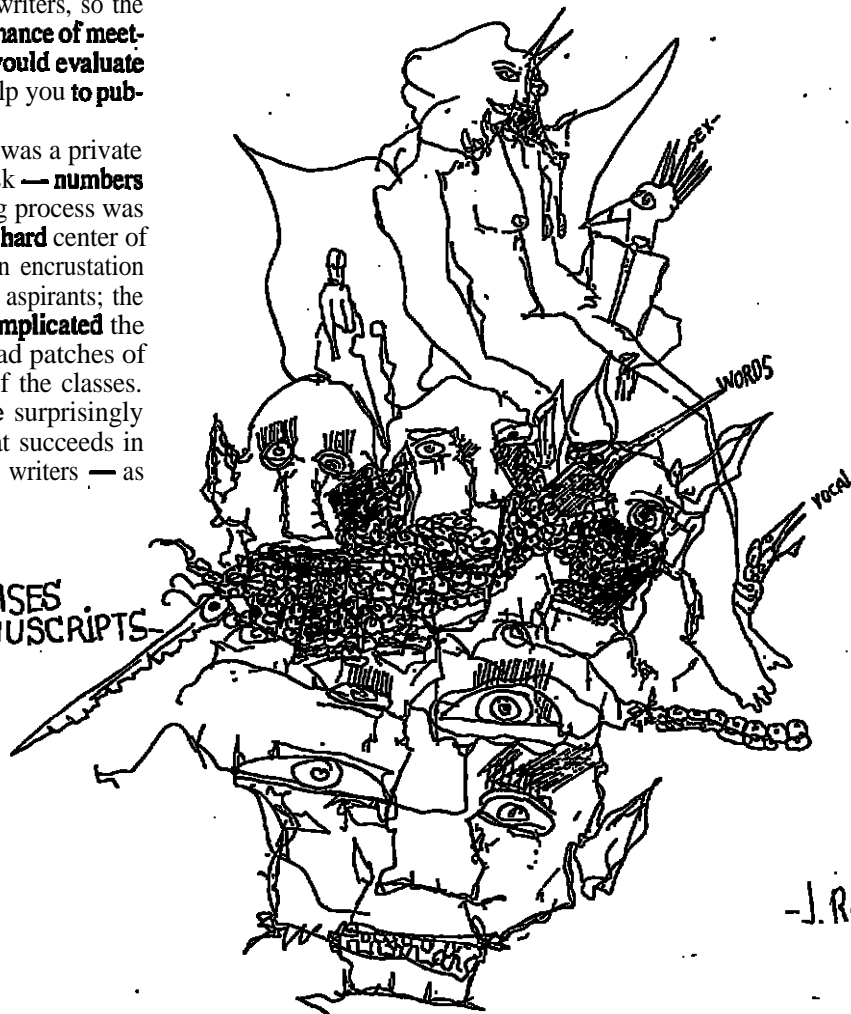
The workshop operated on a seminar system; time was divided between lec-

tures and the reading and discussion of manuscripts — the cells in the abysmal maze of New College seemed to impose a rigid schoolish form on the classes. Students were assigned to tutors but as the unofficial rating system got going, we moved around among instructors without much ceremony. Anyone with staying power could attend all classes in all four fields. I went to all but one at least once.

Drama was undoubtedly the best division. Harvey Markowitz gave a humorous and professional set of lectures on dramatic theory and craft—a complete strategy for a do-it-yourself theatre in what he called "the jungle of art." John Herbert has the rare power of communicating insights. He is supremely theatrical and knows every angle of his art: writing, acting, design, and direction. He used class assignments as springboards for extraordinary analyses of method and value, insisting always that the essentials of art ate social and psychological insight. The classes were punctuated with his virtuoso representations of flamenco dancing, Garbo and Bette Davis.

Poetry, like drama, was well balanced. John Robert Colombo gave a

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fiction or NON-fiction?

dashing exposition of **verse forms and metres** — in five days the free **versifier** could acquire a well **of information** that would save **him** a year of scrambling for rhythmic control. **He** attacked manuscripts with **vigour** but followed the golden rule, evaluating each poem in its own terms. P. K. Page set up **the** creative functions of the brain and moved into language games related to the sound qualities of poetry (verbal music being a **function** of the intuitive lobe of the brain). Her assignment was **imaginative**; she suggested we give a group of poems the unity of a book, with visual designs and **progression** of theme. **bill bissett** — **wait for it!** — is an eloquent exponent of concrete **poetry**. He has a **coherent** theory of language, expression and social awareness: he has a gift for freeing people trapped in **cliché** or rigid forms. He insists, too, that the **pome** takes precedence over self-expression, although this aesthetic tends to get swamped by his **strong** emphasis on liberating the word, the line and the rhythm.

The novelists **were** of uneven quality, as teachers and **counsellors**. And aside from Martin Myers, they used **their** own work exclusively to demonstrate writing **skills**.

The presence of Austin **Clarke**, as of Herbert, is more important **than** the **structure** of his class; **Clarke** is the **experience**. His interest in teaching

fluctuates; he is offhand about **manuscripts**. But when he chooses to discuss **his** art he does so with brilliance. And his emphasis on significant action in a **wide social** context sets him **apart from** the other novelists. Gerald **Lampert** gave a **well-constructed course**. He **focused** on psychological realism and used game theory (**improvised** drama) to illustrate **conflict** through dialogue. **Lampert's** teaching was more **imaginative** than his criticism, which was **narrowly** biased towards his own **kind** of writing. James **Bacque's** course had no **discernable** plan or **order**, so that the inevitable voluble women held the **floor** — spreading devastating boredom. **Bacque** took a census of our expectations **and** was startled to hear that formal problems were **our** priority. His real interest is style; he regards form as an offshoot **of style**. **Bacque** gave careful attention to manuscripts, and like **Lampert**, advised **several** people to **drop ideas and take up characters**. **I did not** visit Alice **Denham's** class (**the** single American **instructor**). **Those** who did **attend** found her criticism intelligent and her classes **reasonably** interesting, although she apparently shares the bias of Bacque and **Lampert**. Myers effaced himself somewhat by choosing the permanent **role** of chairman while students read from **their** **scripts**. He then invited **comments** from each member of the **audience**, closing with his own comment. **Myers' annul-**

ment of his presence was a **considerable** loss, but it did give **writers** the **rare** chance of gauging a wide average **response** to their work. The merit of the system **depends** of course on the **presence** of one or two alert **critics**.

Lotta Dempsey and **Val Clery** are veteran journalists who know their trade. In terms of **information** alone — common facts about markets as well as inside dope on editors — the **courses** were useful. **Dempsey** tackled the hack side with great **vitality**; **Clery** did upper-middlebrow radio and **journalism**. Both instructors discussed tactics and research; **Clery** offered a competent **analysis** of the devices of **New Journalism**.

That's the teaching side. The evening **kulchur** was part of the **real** vitality of the program: there **were** readings of work in **progress** by each instructor, talks by **publishers** and journalists, and a performance by the **Four Horsemen**, reminiscent of the chanting **of** the inmates of **Charenton**. There were small gatherings and large **parties**, with the unexceptionable **undercurrents** of **sex**, ambition and friendship. The workshop was only secondarily a social event, **but** one of the undeniable joys was the chance of meeting a range of **writers**, known and unknown. **Very** few people felt they had wasted **their** time or money. The workshop didn't quite **correspond** to its advertised phantom, **but** it did have a **real** value. □

SCRIPT & FILM

'Dawn' comes up like blunder

By GARY MICHAEL DAULT

JON VICKERS SAID on CBC radio a short time ago that if he felt his role, the audience wouldn't. He was speaking, of course, of singing. And in particular he was speaking of singing a dramatic role. Implicit in what Vickers said, however, is an argument for the virtues of artifice over reality and a hint about the major difficulty with the Martin Ransohoff film of James Houston's *The White Dawn*.

Houston's novel and hence the film concerns the fate of three of the crew of a New Bedford fishing vessel that is spending a part of 1896 decimating the whale population of Baffin Bay. The

three are separated from their ship and are ultimately (after what does not look like much suffering) taken in and nursed back to health by a tribe of gentle and benevolent Eskimos. The remainder of the film deals with the varieties of unhappiness and with the jejune plans for exploiting their hosts by two of the three, Lou Gossett and Warren Oates, and with how the third, Timothy Bottoms, gradually becomes what he beholds (as Edmund Carpenter almost put it).

In the first place, *The White Dawn* is possibly the most derivative film ever made. No one should be fooled by the fact that it makes use of genuine Eskimos who speak their own language (with sub-titles) or that it was filmed in the Canadian Arctic. There is nothing here that persuasively suggests an idea of North. What is suggested is a northern Western. And the only amusement or instruction afforded a weary audience is for it to sit compiling filmic equations and lists of stock bits of business.

Into the microcosm of the larger world that is the Eskimo community come three Melvillean characters. Lou Gossett who plays Portagee, is Quee-

queeg, Id and dark Otherness — a man, the natives think, possibly not unlike themselves. They are destined to be disappointed of course. Portages is a spoiled article, a real super-fly bad-ass black, wily and corrupt. Warren Oates is an impoverished Ahab, a poor man's Robert Newton, who tries most of the time to be the hearty old salt of the I'll-be-a-son-of-a-fishektill variety; a James Coburn cowboy hanging around from *The Hired Hand*. He introduces the tribe to gambling and in a flat and supremely bathetic scene he acquaints them with the evils of drinking what looks like cranberry sauce but is apparently alcohol. Timothy Bottoms, the blond, inevitably victimized Sandy Dennis of male sensitivity, quivers his lower lip, keeps his eyes vaguely focussed, and becomes a parody of the sacrificial Billy Budd. As Kakuktak (the name the Eskimos give him), he strives to understand their ways. He feels the honesty of their customs and behaviour. He feels strangely at home. His innocence, needless to say, is not appealingly drawn. Looking as if he possesses a law degree from *The Paper Chase* he undergoes painfully embarrassing love scenes. (These, by the



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way. **just** in terms of **tit-show** would have earned the film an **R rating** if it **weren't that the** young ladies are just Eskimo girls. So it's all right. Beautiful in fact. **Anthropologically** virtuous.) Bottoms is actually made to **run with** his native lady in a quasi-slow-motion over the **tundra** to Henry Mancini's music (at this **point** the film looks a little like *Women in Love*). **Sometimes Bottoms gets** to muse **abstractly** into her devoted **but uncomprehending** eyes about his beloved **San Francisco** and the rose-covered home he will take her to when they get out of this mess (**the** screenwriters have suddenly forgotten his Ronald **Colemanish** empathy with this frozen **Shangri-la**). Everyone seems cranky and humiliated at having to mouth the awful dialogue **provided** by Houston, Ransohoff, and someone called Thomas **Rickman**. But strangely, the Eskimos seem magically **excused from the high-school play** going on around **them**; they maintain a haunting sweetness throughout the film.

As if the totally inept screenplay **weren't** enough, **the** film also suffers from the most **wilfully** perverse and inappropriate direction since Billy

Wilder's *One, Two, Three*. It is directed by Philip Kaufman **but** in a sense shows no sign of being **directed** at all. There is **no development of character or** intermingling of character. Events (**and there are** not many of them) **occur** with no lead-in **or** build-up or any other **attempt** at cinematic coherence. Things just happen. The tribe decides to move the location of **their camp**, for example. So they do. **No reason**. No **result** of the move is ever shown. The shaman **suddenly appears** — **for no reason**. Then he **is gone again**. A seal **is slain**. **So it goes**. It's as if everything in the **film**, every event in time or **object** in space, were **cinematically** equal to everything else. (The film **is not intelligent** enough to have arrived at this as a serious deliberate' experimental evocation of North.) Nor **are** you ever told *where on the screen* to look, or why. The essential problem **for the** director, I suppose, one he fails even to recognize let alone solve, is that spatially the North resolves itself **filmically** into one **large** figure-ground **problem**. Static **clumps of people** stand around looking for some place to go and **when** no place is suggested **to them they** continue to **stand** around where they were. Editing

must have been another problem. When you have to cut from snow to **more** snow, **nothing** happens on the screen. And **nothing** continues to come from nothing for what seems **like** all of the **15** hours Ransohoff claims originally **to have** shot.

All of this is unfortunate, **because** the novel Houston **wrote wasn't** at all a bad book. Its value lay in its **precise** and detailed **presentation of Eskimo life**. When you grew impatient with **the** slender plot you could enjoy the **intimate** and **convincing evocation of Eskimo** ways. It had a dogged authenticity. All of this is **swept away** in the film. We could have suffered the inanities if we had been given some anthropological detail. It would have **been** all right, **for example**, to have seen **how to** make a snow house. But in the film, as soon as the first cut is made in the ice, Henry **Mancini starts** his **Aaron Copland** barn-raising music, and instead of the building **process we** get a close-up of Timothy **Bottoms** trying to look alert.

The book made intelligent use of an aged bur classically satisfying device for purveying **its** detail and motivations. The entire novel is **narrated by** a 'misshapen, and **therefore objectified**

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and distanced, member of the tribe who because he is regarded by the others as less than a man, has the literary freedom of movement of the omniscient narrator of nineteenth-century fiction. In the film, this narrator should have been accurately replaced by the camera. It was not, and as a result the film has absolutely no value as a documentary. No dramatic value. No literary value. No cinematic value. No ethnographic value. Two and a half million dollars for the slowest film this side of *Song of Norway*.

As I was saying about artifice and reality, nobody who knows anything about art ever allows them to get mixed up. The fact is, that in *The White Dawn the real Arctic looks* flat dull and stupid. The people in it, look like slow-moving organizations of bad colour against nothing. Just as you can't write a novel by taping your friends, you can't film a movie about the Arctic in the Arctic. It should have been done in Wales, say, or on Paramount's back lot. If you want an audience to think it's North you can't leave anything to chance. You have to build it yourself. □

IN BRIEF

JOHN FRASER argues in *Violence in the Arts* (Macmillan, \$7.50) that violence in serious art reveals valuable social and psychological facts; such works as *King Lear*, Brown's *Brig* and Céline's novels show that violence is the operational law under the veneer of civilization — the violator mirrors our own destructive tendencies. But he points out that violence is now intellectually respectable; critics have switched from disdaining violence as the stuff of mass entertainment to sanctioning gratuitous violence in art. This is a strange study. Fraser is clearly fascinated by violence, and its current vogue has impelled him to formulate a moral framework for his interest. His combined involvement in the subject and recoil from irresponsible violence results in a weirdly perceptive exploration of attitudes to it. LS

NAN SHIPLEY's short and expensive paperback titled *Churchill: Canada's Northern Gateway* (Bum9 and MacEachern, \$3.75) contains some history, lots of anecdotes, and a massive sense of grievance. According

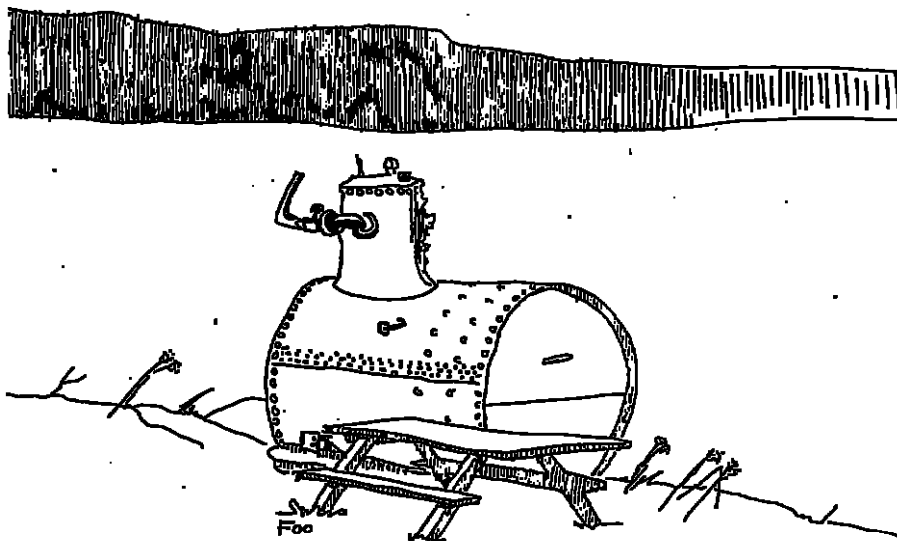
to the author, Churchill has been short-changed and neglected by the government. The chapters consist of unconnected paragraphs, quotations from a wide variety of sources, a lot of northern booster talk, and information on whales, polar bears, flying, etc. No mention is made of the insurance rates that govern shipping into Hudson Bay. Nor is the plight of the native people discussed. Ms. Shipley writes well, and knows a lot. Unfortunately she has not created a coherent book about a fascinating part of the North. JL

ANNA LEVERIDGE emigrated to Canada in July, 1883, with her six children to rejoin her husband who had fled a crippling debt in England the previous year. Your *Loving Anna: Letters from the Ontario Frontier* (U of T Press, \$2.95) is a series of her letters home. We see the astonishing strength and optimism of a woman who overnight exchanged the comforts and civilization of England for the fly-infested, rocky country north of Coe Hill in Hastings County, Ontario. The pioneering shanty life demanded not heroics but ingenuity, patience and grinding hard work; Anna's letters make a moving reminder of how difficult and how rewarding was life in Ontario 90 years ago. RR

A 138-PAGE bibliographical guide to 28 Manitoba writers, *connections: Writers and the Land*, has been published as a provincial Centennial project by the Manitoba School Library Audio-Visual Association (\$5.00, 191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg). The book contains sections on such well-known

figures as Ralph Connor, James Gray, Paul Hiebert, Dorothy Livesay, Nellie McClung, Ernest Thompson Seton, Rudy Wiebe, Adele Wiseman and Scott Young. And on such well-known figures as Henry G.L. Strange and Kathleen Redman Strange. *connections* is sloppily edited and written — it was produced by a committee and feels like it. Given the book's title, one would expect at least a brief attempt to explore what, if anything, is distinctively Manitoban about the writers included. No such thing happens. The idea of such a book is a good one, and perhaps someone should now try to do the thing right. MW

FASTEN YOUR SEAT belts, *Spencer Dunmore's Collision* (William Heinemann, \$7.95) is a thriller and a half. As *Bomb Run* suggested, Dunmore's natural position as a storyteller is in the right-hand seat of the flight deck at 32,000 feet. This time up he presents a British 707 pilot suffering from epileptic blackouts, an American DC-8 pilot under severe emotional stress, and a novice Canadian flyer joy-riding in his private plane. They converge in a violent thunderstorm over Toronto International. The climax is as taut as it is surprising. Readers who have wondered what would happen if Arthur Hailey's phenomenal powers of research were ever combined with creative writing ability now have an answer. The publishers warn that *Collision* should "not be read at any point of departure or during the course of flight on an aircraft." Roger, we copy. DM



ONE OF THE things revealed by the Canada Council's recent publication, *An Analysis of Performing Arts Occupations* by Christine Panasuk, is that Canada Council social scientists are as unreadable and as foolish as social scientists anywhere. We learn, for example, on page one in a summary of their major findings, that "Performing artists (male and female) without spouses, on average had no dependents while males and females with spouses had 2 and 1 dependents, respectively." Despite this, those interested in the role of women in the performing arts will find some of the statistics in this pamphlet fascinating. There were 21 composers surveyed; one was a woman. Of 69 directors, nine were women; of 26 designers, five were women; of 22 playwrights, three were women; of 42 stage managers, nine were women. The mean income of male directors, stage managers and designers was \$7,500; that of women was \$4,500. And so on. The pamphlet is available from the Canada Council on request. MW



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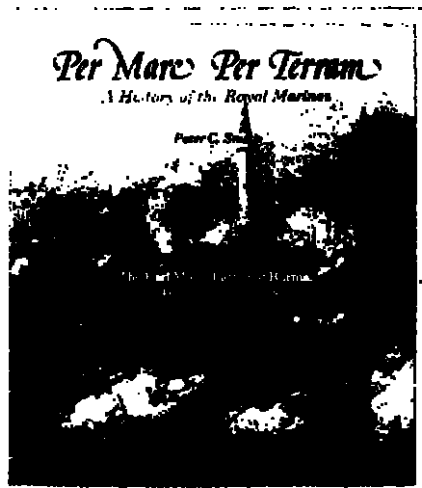
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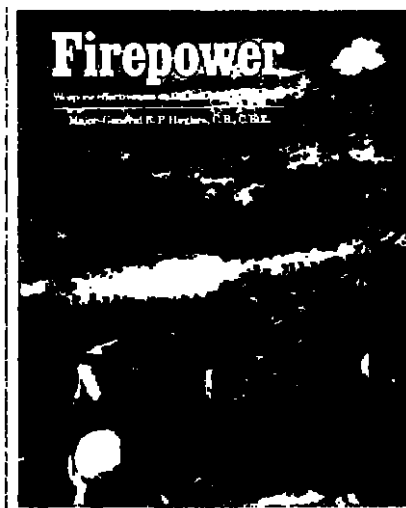
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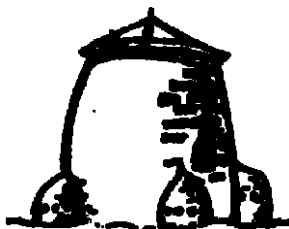
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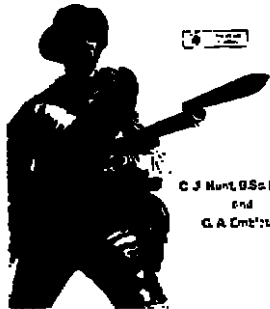
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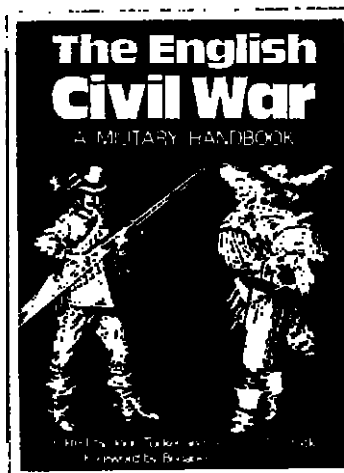
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