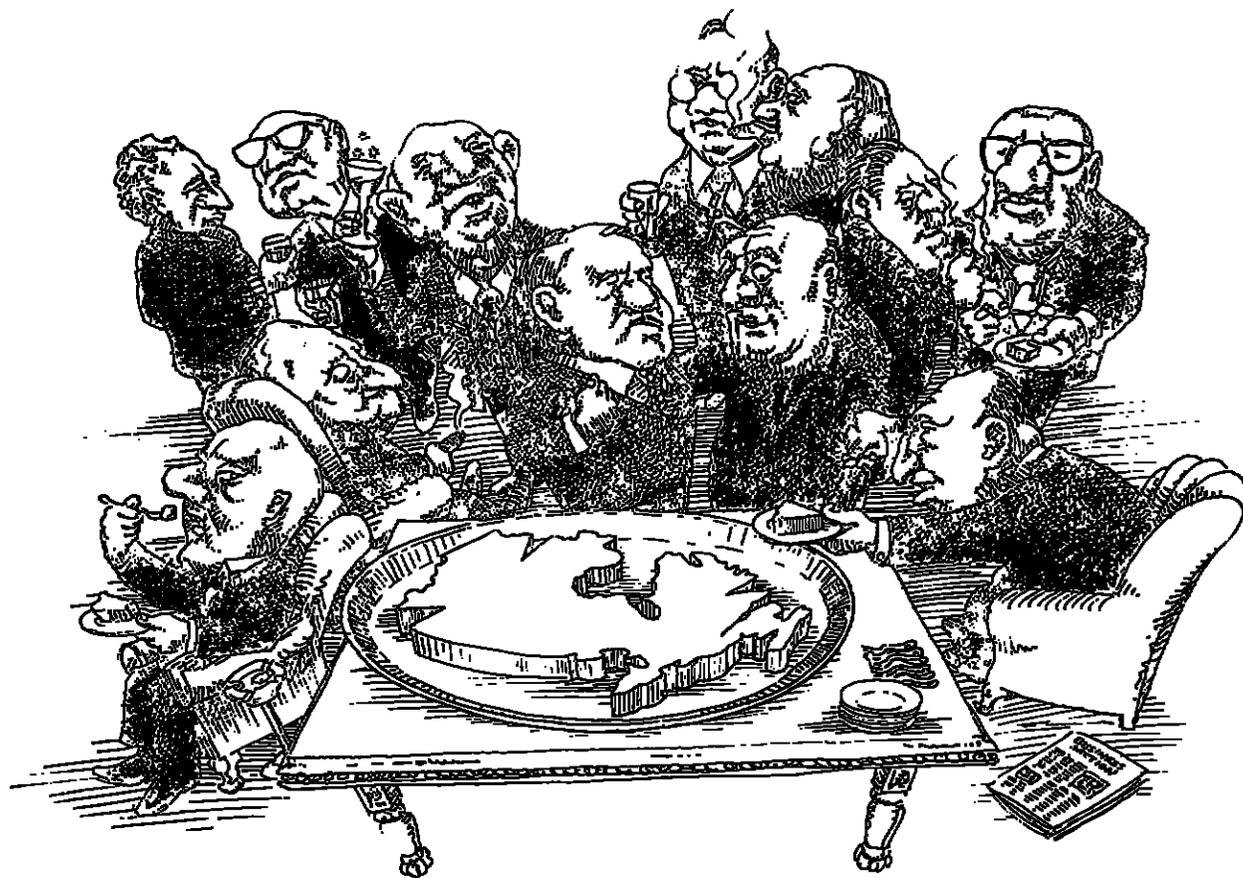


BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 12

DECEMBER, 1975



THE VERTICAL POWER TRIP

John Porter dissects Newman's Establishment

TWO CHRISTMAS PACKAGES

A KLATCH OF COFFEE-TABLE BOOKS

A CARNIVAL OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Plus Sandler on Hood and Vintcent on Davies

ARTICLES AND REVIEW ARTICLES

John Porter:
Where the Juice Runs. *The Canadian Establishment: The Great Dynasties*, by Peter Newman 3

Linda Sandler:
Near Proust and Yonge. *The Swing in the Garden*, by Hugh Hood 5

Brian Vintcent:
Posing and Disposing. *World of Wonders*, by Robertson Davies 7

Gary Michael Dault:
On Books as Things. *To the Wild Country*, by John and Janet Foster; *Four Seasons West*, by RH Macdonald; *Nova Scotia*, by Sherman Hines; *Western Shores: Canada's Pacific Coast*, by Ted Spiegel; *Persia: Bridge of Turquoise*, by Roloff Beny; *Campobello: The Outer Island*, by Alden Nowlan; *The Lighthouse*, by Dudley Witney 9

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Peter Such:
Mumbles and Snits, by Beverley Allison; *Bluetoes*, by George Polkosnik; *The Wild Canadians: Hockey's Bush League Champs*, by Chip Young; *The Witch of the North: Folk Tales of French Canada*, adapted by Mary Alice Downie 12

T. Bryan Hayter:
Piney the Talking Christmas Tree, by Mary Eustace; *There Are Trolls*, by John F. Green; *Mary of Mile 18*, by Ann Blades; *Yak! Le Yak*, by Rosemary Allison 12

Grace Richardson:
I Climb Mountains, by Barbara Taylor; *She Shoots She Scores!*, by Heather Kellerhals Stewart; *Strange Street*, by Ann Powell; *The Sandwich*, by Ian Wallace and Angela Wood; *Wordsandwich*, edited by Anne, Sue, Kirk, and Don 13

Janet Lunn:
Strange Companion, by Dayton O. Hyde; *Return to Rambow Country*, by William Davidson; *Sasquatch Adventure*, by Shelia Rolfe; *Packy, the Little Elephant Who Came to the Cold*, by Marjorie C. Morgan 14

Christine Forsyth:
Prescription Z, by F. W. Tamminga; *Mystery of Disaster Island*, by Ann Rivkin; *Oranges and UFO's*, by Muriel Leeson; *The Dynamite Flynn's*, by Leslie McFarlane 14

Anne Roch:
Shantymen of Cache Lake, by Bill Freeman 16

Janis Rapoport:
Controlled Childbirth, by Adele Birkbeck and Margaret Moore; *The One-Parent Family*, by Benjamin Schlesinger; *Teach Your Child to Read in 60 Days*, by Sydney Ledson; *Growing a Green Thumb*, by Lorraine Surcouf 17

Jim Christy:
Tales of the Foreign Legion, by Walter Kanitz 20

Chris Scott:
Frigate, by Martin Myers 21

Robert Dolman:
Miss Silver's Past, by Josef Skvorecky 22

John Burry:
Scrap Arrow, by Robert R. Robinson 23

Michael Fuhrman:
A Strange Glory, edited by Gerry Goldberg 23

Linda Pyke:
Poems, by Anne Hébert 24

Leonard Gasparini:
The Island Means Minago, by Milton Acorn 24

Linda Rogers:
Emily, by Florence McNeil; *Listen to the Old Mother*, by Helene Rosenthal 27

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco:
Money and Rain: Tom Wayman Live!, by Tom Wayman; *If You Love*, by Leonard Gasparini; *Through the Eyes of a Woman*, by Nancy-Gay Rotstein 28

Ken Waxman:
The Risk Takers: The Dreamers Who Built a Business from an Idea, by Alexander Ross 29

Glynis E. C. Barnes:
Helen Creighton: A Life in Folklore, by Helen Creighton 30

Michiel Horn:
Social Welfare in Canada: Ideals and Realities, by Andrew Armitage 32

Irving Abella:
Survival: Labour's Trials and Tribulations in Canada, by Mary V. Jordan; *The Politics of Labour*, by T. Phillips Thompson 32

Alexander Craig:
Working Papers on Canadian Politics, by John Meisel 34

In Brief:
The House on Cheyne Walk, by Perry Organ; *Swimmer in the Secret Sea*, by William Kotzwinkle; *Medicine Man to Missionary*, by Elizabeth Graham; *Ottawa Valley: Gateway to a Continent*, by Robert Legget 35, 36

DEPARTMENTS

Periodically Speaking by Linda Sandler 38
Notes & Comments 39
Letters to the Editor 40
CanWit No. 6 42

ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover design by John Martin
Drawings by Gail Gellner 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21
Drawings by Howard Engel 11, 23
Photograph of Hugh Hood by Linda Sandler 7

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WHERE THE JUICE RUNS

Peter Newman knows that the rich have more money than the rest of us — but he's not sure why

By JOHN PORTER,

POWER FASCINATES. It is tempting to add yet a further variation to Lord Acton's famous aphorism: absolute power fascinates absolutely. It is so for Peter Newman, as all his books bear witness, and, of course, for most of us. How otherwise can be explained the steady flow of biographies and memoirs of powerful people, and the way the powerful are hounded, through the celebrity world in which they intermingle, by the *paperrazzi* of our metropolises? Given the efforts that are made to record their activities, their public careers, their private lives and leisure, the question occurs: Why should ordinary mortals, like ourselves and Peter Newman, have this fascination?

One explanation is that powerful people have an aura about them that inspires respect. No ordinary person can begin to imagine what it is like to have one's income measured in millions of dollars each year and to have a lifestyle that disposes of a good part of that as do the cast of characters who feature in *The Canadian Establishment: The Great Dynasties* (McClelland & Stewart, 390 pages, \$14.95), the first volume of Mr. Newman's widesweeping picture of the Canadian élite.

In the potlatch ceremonies of the Kwakwiltl Indians, highest status was granted to the chief who could give away or destroy the most with an air of assurance that there was lots more where that came from. The person who commands so

Nelson Davis is reported by Newman to have a gross personal income of \$12 million a year and to spend this fortune "in the endless careful pursuit of perfection in its many forms."

much material wealth, when everybody else has so little, must have a link with cosmic forces beyond comprehension. And is there not an important parallel between the potlatch and the pecuniary capacity of our own super rich? One of these, Nelson Davis, is reported by Newman to have a gross personal income approaching \$12 million a year and to spend this fortune "in the endless careful pursuit of perfection in its many forms." After reading this book, Canadians need have no inferiority feelings about their own rich jet-setting it and wheeling-dealing it with the best.

If gods invoke awe and respect they also create resentment: and so the sacred and profane interplay. The profanity of the pulp mags, in their self-claimed exposés of the lives of the high and mighty, seems to want to say, for example, that in the long run the tycoon's or the politician's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under the skin. But awe and respect survive the profane exposé. What would Judy O'Grady do with Mrs. McDougald's "magnificent Toronto residence . . . large enough to require a permanent staff of six servants," and where. "the dessert silver is made of

gold" (sic). Would Judy, like Jim, (that is what "everyone" calls Mrs. McDougald) be "dominated by pink," with pink bedroom, pink study, and a pink dog's dish in her pink bathroom? Would Judy have her portrait painted, like Jim and the Queen, by Annigoni, and have her own racehorse? So the very act of dragging the gods down to our profane gaze, here through the medium of Mr. Newman's reporting in which he uses frequently the familiar Tom or Dick, brings about the awe that ensures the survival of power and our fascination with it.

Mr. Newman keeps a precarious balance between the serious-sacred and the profane-trivial, and is throughout in danger of falling into a void of uncertain purpose. Much of

Newman himself seems ambivalent about the social roles of his subjects, never quite condemning, never quite promising. Are these gods or devils he sees through his "working journalist's hourglass"?

the book reads like an extended gossip column (as when he describes the sumptuous living moms), or like a virtuoso performance of inside-dopesterism. (as with his account of the clash between Argus and Power corporations, when the latter attempted to take over the former, or the story of how the directors of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce plotted against and eventually ousted Neil McKinnon from the chairmanship). All these disclosures show Mr. Newman's considerable journalistic skills. His vignettes of some of our great tycoons have an intrinsic interest. We see how they play, mainly with race horses, large boats, and in remote hunting lodges. And how they work — ". . . what I look for in acquiring a company," "you are ultimately judged by your bottom line."

The chapters that consist of peckpoutrails of J.A. McDougald, Paul Desmarais, Neil McKinnon, and N. V. Davis are examples of Mr. Newman at his best and we are carried along by the sheer audacity and glitter that is a part of the lives of these extraordinary people united by their desire to acquire power and wealth. By the use of extensive quotations the author holds himself back, which must have taken some effort, and lets the élite speak for themselves. It is a remarkable and at times candid self-examination.

Along with individual portraits there are collective portraits of these men (all the women, not surprisingly appear as wives or as collateral kinship links that add strength to this tightly knit group) in the executive suites of our large corporations. From these always elegant, sometimes subdued, sometimes bizarre corner offices (they contain more windows than other ones), we learn enough about the styles and strains of work to evoke admiration but little envy. What is pitiable, both if it is true or if it is their shared illusion as presented in a chapter on the theology of private enterprise, is that they cannot imagine a society in which

leadership is provided in any other way than through the grossly disproportionate monetary rewards that they have received. Mr. Newman himself seems ambivalent about the social roles of his subjects, never quite condemning, never quite praising. Are these gods or devils that he sees through his "working journalist's hourglass"?

There is an interesting chapter on the Canadian banking system and the important role banks play in the economy. There is another on the group of men that C. D. Howe recruited to run wartime departments and agencies. The story is not new, but because the influence of these businessmen and bureaucrats on postwar Canada was so great, it's worth retelling. They probably came as close to a ruling class as anything that Canada has seen. And with a booming economy and population growth, and before Canada's influence in the international sphere had waned, they had all the arrogance of such a class.

For all the fascination of its subject matter and the author's easy style, the book as a whole has major weaknesses. It lacks any kind of organizing framework and it is quite bereft of analysis. These deficiencies mean that we are left with a confused picture of the economic élite and a set of unsubstantiated observations about power in contemporary Canada.

CHILDREN'S FICTION

RAINSPLOOSH, Marilyn Read

How the little raindrop "Rainsploosh" learned to live in the land of the clouds and the land of the earth, laughing at what had seemed to be terrible problems in his young life.

30 pp., illustr. \$4.95

TRR BIRD NO ONE NOTICED, Kenneth Radu

An intriguing story about a little bird's flight into self-discovery, this illustrated tale captures the spirit and some of the folklore of Maritime Indians in relation to the world of nature.

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THE POLLYWOG WHO DIDN'T BELIEVE

HE'D BE A FROG, A. P. Campbell

The lamentable adventures with happy ending of the very young pollywog who just wouldn't believe, until experience proved, that what his elders had told him was really so.

31 pp., illustr. 54.95

FAIRY TALES, Isabella Valency Crawford

Although Crawford is one of Canada's standard poets, her prose is scarcely known. Here, for the first time, is an example of the other world in which she lived — the wonderful world of fairy tale.

30 pp., illustr. \$4.95

KAKI WAHOO: The Little Indian Who Walked on His Heed,

A. P. Campbell

A story for children of all ages of an Indian boy who actually walks on his head. Beautifully illustrated. A Canadian children's story.

29 pp., illustr. 53.95

ALBERT THE TALKING ROOSTER, A. P. Campbell

A fascinating story of the effect on a family of a beautiful red rooster with the gift of talking on critical occasions. Illustrated by the author's eight-year-old daughter.

33 pp., illustr. 53.95

SILLY SALLY and the Snowman, Frank M. Tierney

Silly Sally's enchanting visit to the mysterious world of the snowman and the wonderful happenings that befell her during her great adventure into the land beyond the winter sky.

30 pp., illustr. \$4.95

SILLY SALLY and the Picnic with the Porpoises,

Frank M. Tierney

The charming happenings of Silly Sally, a little girl with a sense of wonder and flair for mischief. Imaginative. One of a series of Canadian children's stories.

26 pp., illustr. 53.95

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Even at the level of the trivial, it is difficult to sort things out: "They live in graceful ante-bellum mansions with white fluted pillars, twilight, book-lined studies"; and a page later, "They live in very English houses — very low key with lots of chintz"

In the long run, of course, it does not matter what the style of their houses might be, or where they race their horses, or which eminent artist paints their wives' portraits. What does matter is how they exercise their power as a group and the extent to which they perpetuate themselves as

His enchantment with the powerful individual as he sees him ... prevents him from seeing that power is not transitory but has its continuity and legal foundations in property and kinship.

a plutocratic élite. On these questions, Mr. Newman is less than satisfactory.

The absence of an organizing framework has serious consequences. We are never sure how Newman is using the term "establishment." It's quite clearly a key concept, the meaning of which he seems reluctant to share with us. Most of the time he uses establishment interchangeably with the economic élite. Most of the book is about the economic élite, but he talks also about the "social establishment," and he has a section on the very rich, old and new money, and the "eldorado crowd" of multi-millionaires, who rum out to be his economic élite, not in their offices, but in their roles as inheritors and possessors of great wealth.

There is every reason to keep the very rich as an analytically distinct group from the corporate élite. The first includes the families of great wealth and property who provide the continuity across the generations of a ruling class. The second, the corporate or economic élite, control the productive resources of the society and are parallel to, but very much interwoven with, the very rich. The corporate élite in large measure come from the families of the very rich. If not, they are co-opted by them. It is the texture and strength of this interweaving that we need to know about to provide a democratic critique of our power structure.

Mr. Newman has no clear view of the relationship between wealth and power. At one point he says: "Money can be a great comfort. In large quantities, there is nothing transitory about it, as there is about power." His enchantment with the powerful individual as he sees him, in an office or in a club wresting a multi-million dollar enterprise from another individual, prevents him from seeing that power is not transitory but has its continuity and legal foundations in property and kinship. Power and wealth are

Without the organizing framework, Newman arrives at what seems to me to be quite wild conclusions. One is that the Canadian establishment seems to be facing its Götterdämmerung.

linked within enduring social institutions through individuals who play transitory roles. Not to make the distinction between individuals and institutions is as though, in an analysis of boxing, a writer described only the individual boxers, their styles and gate receipts, but said nothing about boxing as an organized sport. Perhaps Mr. Newman never

intended to go beyond his individuals to a sociology of the establishment or of power. Unfortunately, he never makes his intentions in writing the book clear.

Without the organizing framework, Newman **arrives** at what seems to me to be quite wild conclusions. One is that the Canadian establishment seems to be facing its **Götterdämmerung**. Here ate his very last words on the subject:

The Canadian Establishment has not yet lost its enduring sense of safety and survival. But there is a warning of fever in their Wasp souls as its members brood in their drawing rooms, dispatching sullen butlers to draw noiseless curtains against the gathering night.

Now that may be true, if it can be understood, but it does not sound at all like the tough-minded, arrogant tycoons that he has taken so much effort to describe for us.

In his very brief concluding chapter, he even pulls out an old chestnut. "The powerful have always lived with a colonial mentality" He quotes Northrop Frye on colonialism and culture, and adds:

What he might have been describing is the prudery of spirit, the robbiish modesty, the unwillingness to take risks that characterizes all branches of the Canadian establishment as it has existed through most of the twentieth century.

Imagine! Unwillingness to take risks! And he has just led us

through an exciting story of some of the most startling economic dare-devilry, financial wizardry, folding of one corporation into another to the point where they become lost, and all this on a world scale. Then we are asked to believe that these people "afraid to take risks. How risky could they get?"

He also concludes that, unlike elsewhere, the establishment is not based on several generations of wealth; and yet he has just taken us through many pages of a city-by-city, cross-country account showing that in large part inherited wealth is just what the establishment is based on. In his chapter that catalogues Canada's multi-millionaires, Roy Thomson turns out to be the only self-made billionaire, and of course his son is now well trained to succeed him as has already happened in the Thomson Canadian operations. Because in an expanding system an elite recruits from outside its tanks, there are always new men coming up. But such co-opting does not constitute a threat to established fortunes or the structure of power.

These and other deficiencies will prevent Mr. Newman being considered as a serious analyst of the Canadian power structure. Fortunately power fascinates at many levels, and one can thoroughly enjoy the individual and anecdotal level at which Mr. Newman chooses to work. □

NEAR PROUST AND YONGE

That's where Hugh Hood grew up and why he's making a 12-novel bid for immortality

By LINDA SANDLER

WHAT MAKES a writer embark on a 12-part narrative epic that will take up his next 25 years? The question was gnawing at me as I walked along neat rows of houses in Montreal's Notre Dame de Grace to Hugh Hood's house, the one with the woodpile on the porch. Oberon press had just published *The Swing* in the Garden (210 pages, \$11.95 cloth and \$4.95 paper), the first volume of Hood's mammoth project called *The New Age/Le nouveau siècle*. It purports to be a novel about Matthew Goderich's boyhood in Toronto in the 1930s and is in fact an encyclopedic narrative of Canadian society, a fascinating bastard form that houses Hood the novelist, Hood the essayist, and Hood the social historian.

Very soon after Hugh Hood opened the door, shook my hand and settled me with coffee and a muffin, we started debating what kind of book he'd written. Hood is a small wiry man of militant vitality, and his intellectual artillery is in good working order. He's writing, he says, in the allegorical tradition of Spenser, in the philosophical tradition of Tolstoy, in the recollective mode of Proust.

But literary precedents are only useful in a limited way, and eventually Hood concedes this. "I wouldn't mind not calling my books novels," he says. "Northrop Frye talks of a kind of fiction which begins with a genesis and ends with an apocalypse, and it's like the Christian scriptures. That's what I'm doing. Now what do you call that?"

Whatever you call it, it's an extraordinary undertaking. But then Hood was always an ambitious writer, and a con-

scientious one. Since 1962, he has produced five novels, three books of stories, a book of essays, and a book about hockey — all this while instructing refractory students in romantic literature at the University of Montreal.

Hood is not so much a novelist as an inspired social historian. Social history, for Hood, is what a man remembers plus what he can learn in a library. Hood has a good memory, and he prepares for his novels in a manner instinctive to an academic historian, but rare in a novelist — unless, like Hood's pop counterpart, Arthur Hailey, he is backed by a IO-person research team.

His imaginative power lies in his ability to construct credible worlds he's never seen. *The Camera Always Lies* "reproduces" the vast stage of Hollywood showbiz, complete with people, props, and inner tragedies. *A Game of Touch*, a superbly structured book with a Trudeau-ish hem, might pass for an insider's view of Quebec's politics and social scene. His most brilliant fantasy, *You Can't Get*

"Northrop Frye talks of a kind of fiction which begins with a genesis and ends with an apocalypse, and it's like the Christian scriptures. That's what I'm doing."

There From Here, is a wholly believable drama set in a newly independent, imaginary African state. Hood always seems to have been there, and to be writing as a well-informed citizen of whatever fantastic territory he creates.

His reconstruction of Toronto in the 1930s, in *The Swing in the Garden*, is the latest fruit of this gift.

Understandably, Hood was peeved when Robert Fulford suggested that his gifts were those of a journalist, not a novelist. But Fulford knew what he was saying, and he paid tribute to Hood's analytic gifts, his documentary impulse, and his hard labour. As Hood says himself: "I don't think there's a writer in Canada who has my power of mind."

This remarkable Canadian was born in Toronto in 1928. Like Matthew God&h. he's part Canadian, part Quebecois, and a Catholic. (His Catholicism, Frank Davey suggests, explains why he doesn't share the puritanic gloom of his Toronto contemporaries.) Like Matthew, Hood lived in Summerhill Gardens, played along the railway tracks, and remembers the world when movies were new and sinful, refrigerators were "new-fangled," and coal and ice were delivered to your doorstep. Matthew, the bright, articulate son of a university professor, with an eye for the shape and colour of trains, for the form of women, is the boy Hood might have been, but *The Swing in the Garden* is not straight autobiography. "It's documentary fantasy," Hood says. "I think Matthew is sometimes a real horse's ass! He's much stuffer than I am." If you're looking for Hood's ideal self, you'll find him in Matthew's father, the ethical philosopher who resigns from the University of Toronto because he believes it serves reactionary class interests. "My daughter said to me, 'You're really patting yourself on the back. The father's a sweet guy.'"

Hood remembers the U of T as a deathly institution where, he served a prolonged sentence and graduated with a Ph.D. (Eng. Lit.) in 1955. These were the days when you differentiated yourself not by dropping out but by sticking with it: Like many of his contemporaries — including his publisher, Michael Macklem — Hood had to cross the border to find a job. "A. S. P. Woodhouse controlled English education in Canada, and if you got a job you got it through him. He was very kind to me but he could see that there was something funny about me —" Pause. "— that I was really an artist

Hood was peeved when Robert Fulford suggested that his gifts were those of a journalist. . . . As Hood says himself: "I don't think there's a writer in Canada who has my power of mind."

and not a scholar." Hood taught at a small women's Catholic college, St. Joseph's in Connecticut, until 1961, when he was offered a post at the University of Montreal. He accepted gladly, not least because he believes a writer should be where his roots are. All the same, Hood had very mixed feelings when *Esquire* dangled an assistant fiction-editor's job in front of him two days later. David Newman, the man who took the job, is better known as the author of the *Bonnie and Clyde* screenplay. "You can see that it would have been a wrong move," says Hood:

"I think Mordecai Richler's life has been spoiled by the notion that Canada was a place to get away from. He ran off to Europe in the most mistaken way. The colonial mentality," he concludes with a definitive flourish, "is a matter of having cringed for years before superiors in an unimaginably distant location."

So Hugh Hood and Noreen Mallory moved to Montreal. Hood's wife is a painter and theatrical designer, and a serenely beautiful woman. They have four children, whom I



Hugh Hood

didn't meet. Hood and his wife absorbed most of my attention, but I seem to recall rooms with unvarnished furniture, the kind you inherit before it's chic to acquire.

Hood had been writing stories before he left school, but publishing little. By 1959 he had published one story in *The Tamamck Review*. (Another first for Robert Weaver.) The death of his father in that year was a turning point. "Some kind of dammed-up body material was released. I got very hot and wrote about 14 stories in 14 months and sold every one of them." Most of the early stories are collected in Hood's first book, *Flying a Red Kite*, published by Ryerson Press in 1962. In the title story, Hood reminds me, he confronts the fact of his father's death and decides that immortality is a reality.

Now I ask: "Hugh, how does a man decide to write a 12-part epic?" He answers slowly. "Hah. Well, it's got something to do with immortality. Remember that line of Hazlitt? No man in youth believes that he will ever die. I think the fact of mortality has got to me. When I listen to the music of Haydn, I can hear his mind working as clearly as I can hear you talking to me. So I think that the notion that you can have a conversation with the living and the dead is perfectly correct. And I think that through my books I'll be speaking for a long time."

But there are other roads to immortality. Why this one? And Hood says: "Anthony Powell said a very interesting thing. He said he'd done the 80,000-word novel, and that it would be interesting to save the characters and situations and take them up again." Powell is a writer Hood admires. He corresponds with him, and will be bringing one of Powell's characters to Ottawa on a state mission at the appropriate point in *The New Age*.

Montreal is hurriedly updating itself for the Olympics next year; there are huge cranes on every downtown corner, and I remember Hood's narrator saying: "Perhaps I am running a wash of illusory duration over a flux that cannot be contained" — a Proustian remark, and Hood's first inspiration, after all, was Proust.

He was reading A la recherche du temps perdu in 1968 when he conceived the idea of writing the spiritual history of his own age. It wasn't easy to find an adventurous pub-

lisher, but Michael Macklem liked the idea, and in 1971, with the publication of *The Fruit Man, the Meat Man and the Manager*, Hood became Oberon's best-selling author. He now is reading Proust for the fourth time, and is working on the third volume of *The New Age*. Oberon plans to publish the remaining 11 between now and the year 2000. But in case he's bumped off at a bustop, Hood tells me, he's designing the sequence "so that each set of three will make a nice package" - a trick he learned from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

Hood's mind is always travelling from an elevated metaphysical plane, through an esoteric literary one, down to the very solid soil. And the reverse. This is his pattern and it's evident in the narrative of *The Swing in the Garden*. Hood's name for this rhythm that moved between the child's concrete experience and the adult's revaluation is "expanding and contracting narrative."

Now he offers an amusingly earthy motive for writing an epic. "I may seem to be putting out all this octopussing, but nothing is simple. Let's suppose that I was struck down by cancer. I think that wanting to get to the end of the cross-mad in this work would keep me going." A long pause. "I suppose there'll be someone who's going to say, 'Hugh Hood is writing this thing and boring the ass off us just to keep himself alive.'"

The Swing in the Garden is sometimes slow going because it's weighted on the documentary side. Hood offers inclusiveness rather than selective details even when writing about candies, because he's compiling the *Ultimate Candy Catalogue*. There are precedents in Homer and Joyce.

Hood uses facts to get to analysis, and what he has to say about Toronto, city of warehouses, patch of the Empire, is well worth hearing. Henry James remarked that ultimately the quality of the artwork depends on the quality of the artist. "That's what I've been telling my wife for years!" Hood exclaims. "And a writer has to create the taste by which he's enjoyed."

Hood admits having as much ego as anybody.. "When Clark Blaise has a book out and I don't, and he's getting all

the reviews, I'd like to go over and punch Clark Blaise., or kick Alice [Munro] in, the bum, because they're getting all the attention."

But Hood doesn't feel unappreciated. And he has the rare characteristic of being doggedly egalitarian. A writer may attempt to record the life of his generation, to forge the conscience of his race, but "he is somehow like all his brothers. When I go to Jerry Park I don't like to sit there thinking, 'Here I am, this supersubtle intellect amongst all these slob's.'" His face alters. "When I go someplace I make a point of looking stupid. I let my mouth hang open and I wear a vacant expression and I can go anywhere." Pause. "I'm talking about innocence."

I look up at the wall beyond the fireplace, at an extraordinary painting that looms over the room. Noreen's. A group of boys dressed for hockey are sprawled on a bench. Their faces are frighteningly blank, the faces of idiots.

Hood, like Matthew's father, is "that rare bird. a

"When Clark Blaise has a book out and I don't, and he's getting all the reviews, I'd like to go over and punch Clark Blaise, or kick Alice [Munro] in the bum. ..."

Catholic socialist," and his project, *The New Age*, is an act of faith in Canada's future. Hood has written at length about Canada's moral imagination, which derives from the 18th century and forms the basis for what he hopes will be the first Just Society, where Quebec and Canada are reconciled.

People say he holds a romantic view of Canada. But he says: "If we had to choose between having a peaceful society and having a literature with, a heroic mythology — and this is what the romantics want — I would do without a literature.."

Meanwhile we have a literature that's somewhat devoid of romantic fire. "What we need now is to mate Margaret Laurence with Byron," says Hood. □

POSING AND DISPOSING

In concluding his trilogy, Davies finally comes to grips with the man behind the mask

By BRIAN VINCENT

WHAT IS ASTONISHING about Robertson Davies' Deptford trilogy of novels, now concluded with *the publication of World of Wonders* (Macmillan, 358 pages, \$10.95), is that it was so little expected. After a long writing career producing novels, essays, and plays best remembered for their facetious wit and the whimsy of a defensive poseur. Davies has surprised everyone by attempting to come to grips with that rankling problem that sows and disgruntles all men who rely for protection on a personality façade — the discovery of oneself. The result is not a masterpiece of revelatory fiction (some masks are just too painful to pull off at one yank and need time), but it is certainly a more gratifying read than anything he has written before.

Let us judge him by the highest literary standard. As a stylist, he has no peer in Canadian writing, except perhaps for poet, translator, and gentleman-of-pleasure John Glassco. No one can put a sentence together quite like Davies and so powerful and irresistible is the influence of his graceful prose that even the most hard-nosed of journalists, with a craggy and scolding writing style of his own, can find himself adopting Davies' cadences and idiom when writing an article about him or his work.

Less impressive is the variety and range of the characters that Davies creates. One of the characters who makes his first appearance in the trilogy in *World of Wonders* is Sir John Tresize, a type of actor-manager who flourished in the 19th century and who is a practitioner, very much out of his time, of the extravagantly romantic and melodramatic style of Henry Irving: It is good to find him here because he is what most of Davies' other characters are trying to be. Even

when off stage, Sir John declaims, he **orates**, he is imperious, and he is always on show. He is **the character** in the trilogy Davies admires most and one of the few for whom he displays any tender compassion. **Sir John** is entirely satisfying in **every** way because he behaves and does exactly **as** his character demands.

This is not always true of the other characters. Davies has some quaint notions about how the lower orders think and talk. They **invariably express** themselves in words like "jeeze" and "gimme" and there is **never** any doubt about Davies' unflattering opinion of them. No one who **saw** his recent play **Question Time**, which has also just been published by Macmillan (72 pages, \$5.95), could forget the acute embarrassment of hearing **Tim** and **Marge**, those **two representatives** of "the people" in Davies' mock parlia-

Davies has more sympathy and perception when he is dealing with the Upper Canadians of his three novels and the portrayal of this fascinating species is one of the trilogy's greatest triumphs.

ment, mouth their amazing nonsense. (The drama concerns a Prime Minister's struggle to discover his private self behind the public mask while waiting for **rescue** after an Arctic plane crash.) Such characters are figments of Davies' imagination and bear no resemblance to anything made of flesh and blood.

Less disastrous and infinitely more **amusing** because of their grotesque and picturesque lives are the "talent" in the seedy **touring** carnival show of **World of Wonders**. There

are some **spectacular** vignettes here — Happy Hannah the Fat Lady who powders herself with cornstarch and smells like a **nursery** pudding when she **sweats**, or Heinie who **brings** unease into the company by conducting a love affair with his pet monkey, or **Zitta** who keeps mauling her snakes to death. Such exotic riff-mff provide the best pages in the **whole** trilogy.

Most thoroughly realized in this collection of freaks is Willard the **arse-bandit** conjuror, who sodomizes 10-year-old Paul **Dempster** in the small Ontario **town** of **Deptford** and starts him out on that **eventful** life that **turns** him into **Magnus Eisengrim**, the world's greatest magician. It is **Magnus'** account of that life as narrated by his friend, **Dunstan Ramsay**, the one-legged school teacher, historian of saints and hero of **Fifth Business**, that forms the bulk of the material in **World of Wonders**. Yet Willard too is a chip off Davies' mythical lower-orders block. He too says "jeeze" and "gimme."

Davies has more sympathy and **perception** when he is dealing with the Upper Canadians of his **three** novels and the portrayal of this fascinating species is one of **the** trilogy's greatest triumphs. They are "establishment." Family Compact sort of people **of Scots** or Welsh background and, though inhabiting **the same** landscape, are quite different from the Southern **Ontarians** of, say, Alice **Munro**.

Davies **has** observed them with a penetrating, often satiric, eye: they have a nervous and highly developed sense of the importance of money (**Dunny Ramsay's** horror of unnecessary expense); they have emotional lives of great **disorder** and even repression (David Staunton's years of sexual inactivity in **The Manticore**); they bear heavy **burdens** of guilt for actions either **actual** or presumed (the entire

Look for these New Canadian Titles in Your Bookstore



\$10.95

WORLD OF
WONDERS

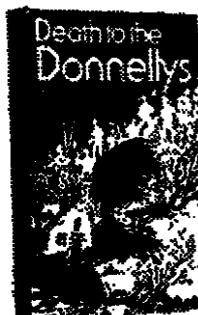
Robertson Davies



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THE LUCK
OF THE IRISH
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Jack Batten



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THE SLEEP
BOOK

Dr. James Paupst

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA

trilogy, **from** the fateful snowball thrown at the beginning of *Fifth Business*, rests on this psychological foundation); and they can carry grudges which they nurture for years (**Eisengrim's** exposure of the responsibility borne by one of the team filming his illusions in *World of Wonders* for the humiliation and death of **Sir John Tresize**).

These are the kinds of characters that have won for

Davies finds no one more fascinating than himself and is careful to let the reader know it. Such an Olympian manner has earned him a bad press in the past, but here ... there is 'a suggestion that a patrician pride is no longer enough.

Davies a passionate following of readers who find themselves, their foibles, and **their** hidden weaknesses so accurately **portrayed** in the Deptford trilogy.

But there is a nagging disappointment lurking in **all** this. Like Sir John, but without the justification of his florid character, these Upper Canadians declaim, judge, lecture, and defend. They may all speak different words and express different thoughts, but it is always done in the same voice. Needless to say, it is Davies' own voice we **hear** talking

through all these characters, (a weakness, it is worth observing, that was fatal in *Question Time*).

What this means is that Davies finds no one more fascinating than himself and is **careful** to let the reader know it. Such an Olympian **manner** has earned him a bad press in the past; but here in the **Deptford** trilogy, for the **first** time in his writing, there is a suggestion that a patrician pride is no longer enough. It is not by chance that *World of Wonders* closes with the word "Egoist!" shouted at **Dunstan Ramsay** by the monster woman **Liesl**, one of **the** few characters in the trilogy who is not an egoist. Self-awareness it would seem begins here with **learning how** to accept humility.

With this trilogy Davies has confounded **his critics**. He can no longer be dismissed. in even the loftiest of **intellectual circles**, as the court jester of Canadian writing. with all the showy glitter of **Jungian psychology**, **gothic castles** in Switzerland, the glamour and mystery of the **theatre in its** various forms, the **chatter** about good and evil, God **and the Devil**, it is easy to forget that the **trilogy** spans a **full** 60 years of Canadian life and gives a fascinating **picture** of those times. We may live in the midst of ice and snow, Davies is saying, with 'modest possibilities for **spiritual** nourishment, but by God things have happened **around here** you would never believe. And that-is something few **Canadian** writers have been telling us. □

ON BOOKS AS THINGS

What is the sound of a gift book? The voice of every travelogue you've ever seen

By GARY MICHAEL DAULT

EVERYBODY KNOWS A gift book when he sees one.

That such should be the case, however, seems to me more curious a phenomenon than it first appears to be. It has to do, I suppose, with our being hip to formats **and** the **feel** of things. It is not as if, for example, a gift book were a gift book only by virtue of its price or size. Scholarly and technical books, art books and even novels, **come** flooding from the presses **all** year round, each of them **bearing** impressive poundage and pricing.

Nor are **gift** books simply non-books, products of the eccentricities of publishers, one-shots, hobby-horses, bound for remainder tables everywhere (though here, it must be admitted, we are closer to our subject).

Rather, a gift book possesses not just avoirdupois and a **hefty** price to go with it but+ more importantly, it possesses a certain identifiable tone. A look and a **'sound**. An ambience (let us go all the way with this) that is a **not-unrewarding** study.

Here, for example, is the sound of a gift book:

Somewhere in a sunrise, a few years ago, we sat in a canoe surrounded by the golden glow of a misty September morning, diligently, almost mindlessly, fishing for trout. We stared into the dark water, somehow unaware that all around us nature was producing great works of art, offering moments of intense beauty for our inspection, and arranging a gallery of exquisite landscapes and miniatures at every bend in the stream. Perhaps the fish were not biting that morning, but all at once we decided we were wasting time. How could one sit there fishing when there was so much to see and photograph? We were ignoring nature at her moment of creation.

This is **from** the preface to John and Janet Foster's *To the Wild Country* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, \$19.95), a spin-off from a CBC-TV nature series of the same name that the Fosters both filmed and hosted. Its **main** thrust is comfort. Comfortable words and undemanding photographs. The Fosters, lifted from one kind of comfort (fishing), were suddenly drawn as if **by a force greater than themselves** (**another** comfort) into their **roles** as curators of nature's **great** art gallery in the wilderness (the great&t comfort of all). The fact that nature does not produce **works of art but only goes on producing more nature never seems to matter to any writer or publisher of a gift book**. And it isn't just that the Fosters then go on to do whatever it is that conservationists do; they pretend to take **the reader** along with them. To visit this great gallery. "For most of us, it is important to learn that, somewhere, unspoiled areas still

The fact that nature does not produce works of art but only goes on producing more nature never seems to matter to any writer or publisher of a gift book.

exist. 'Simply knowing it's there', as one writer has said, 'is a comfort'."

The book proceeds **anecdotally**. And with unflinching cheerfulness. Goats never bite your nose and rain never wets your jacket, as D. H. Lawrence more or less said. In fact, when you really stop and think about it (which is to **break** the rules of gift-book reading), a lot of hair-raising stuff befalls the Fosters. It's just that their sprightly Mary

Poppins tone never changes. They get soaked through, left behind by helicopters, threatened by snakes. Nothing. Here, for example, is an "ominous entry" in their journal from a risky trip to Triangle Island, a "miserable pile of rock" off the northwest coast of Vancouver Island:

Monday, June 6, 8:00 A.M. Rained hard and blew all night. A dark, grey day with heavy mist rolling in from the sea. Get up reluctantly and coax a fire into life at main camp. Bacon and eggs with hot toast and tea help lift our dampened spirits.

What I think is really going on here goes on throughout most of these books. Nature, once red in tooth and claw, has been turned into bric-à-brac. There are a couple of

Their sprightly Mary Poppins tone never changes. They get soaked through, left behind by helicopters, threatened by snakes. Nothing.

failure-proof ways to effect this Walt Disney sea-change. One way, dear to the middle-brow mind (I don't much care for that term either but bourgeois is too political) is a quick recourse, in the face of nature writ large, to a cosy anthropomorphism. Machines act like animals; animals act like people: people act like Julie Andrews. "The stubby silver jet began to sigh, losing altitude like a migrant swan searching for a familiar marsh." Timber wolves come out of the bush to stare at them; the visitation is "somehow an honour." And of course the other nature-tamer is a jolly sort of sarcasm, always within easy reach. Here it is, in combination with the anthropomorphic: "Glaciers tend to be alive and dangerous. Only the most foolish explorer attempts to climb across one by himself. As well as the ever-present crevasses, there are delightful little traps called *moulins*, formed by run-off water." Delightful? They sound like a pain in the keister to me.

Eventually it dawns on you where this comes from. It isn't prose. It's the voice of every travelogue you ever saw at the movies. A voice so standard in rhythm and modulation that it is perfectly parodied by his cineastes everywhere. The sort of thing that gets big laughs when it's sandwiched just for fun between *Pink Flamingos* and *Reefer Madness* at your local 99c art house.

The photographs have the same tone, that numbing predictability. Grandeur as white noise, both in *To The Wild Country* and in most of the other gift books I have stacked here beside me. Gift-book photographs are invariably well-composed in an academic sense, use a lot of filtering for a general homogenized effect, and are either cranked up into a hot sunset technicolour or cooled off into pastels. One or the other. Some kind of polarization takes place in order that the big world look heroic, sublime (God in His heaven), or serene and misty (and all's right with the world).. There's big money in the Pathetic Fallacy. A photograph in *To The Wild Country*, by the way, shows photographers shooting the incoming surf. The authors write: "The long lenses will lend drama to the scene by making the waves seem both taller and closer together." In gift books, nature is rearranged as freely as Alexander Pope "improved" his grotto. It's like that exchange in Edmund Carpenter's books, *Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me!*:

"Oh, what a beautiful baby!" exclaimed a neighbour.
"That's nothing," replied the mother. "You should see his photograph."

Which leads us immediately to three 'expensive but quickly dismissable volumes: R. H. Macdonald's *Four*

Seasons West (Western Producer Prairie Books, \$25), Sherman Hines' *Nova Scotia* (West House Publishing, unpriced), and Ted Spiegel's *Western Shores: Canada's Pacific Coast* (McClelland and Stewart, \$22.50).

Granted that these books, which have to make it on photographic excellence alone, are very much at the mercy of the vicissitudes of physical book production. But I have been looking at these books for a couple of weeks now and I'll be damned if I can see anything in any of them to recommend to the normal book-buying public. I should have imagined that anyone with a Hasselblad and a sack full of lenses could have done as much. But then, the gift-book buying public isn't normal. They'll buy glamour, for example. They'll buy far-away places with strange sounding names. I wonder if it isn't like buying perfume or flowers or candy, but somehow less frivolous because it is a book. How can we tell the giver from the gift? Isn't that perhaps the idea? I give you the moon, the stars, the permanence of Prairie radiance in *Four Seasons West*. You know I care because I've laid out 25 bucks.

Four Seasons West, photographed by Macdonald and designed by Saskatoon painter William Pehudoff (who should be ashamed of himself), is subtitled *A Photographic Odyssey of the Three Prairie Provinces*. The colour is, for the most part, washed out; there's a lot of focussing difficulty (I suppose it is a printing problem, really), and the pictures are as static as anything you've seen on hardware-store calendars. Sherman Hines' *Nova Scotia* bears a foggy wrapper illustration of (what else?) Peggy's Cove. Here the photographs are of better quality than Macdonald's, but it's still calendar stuff. There are also some quotations from Thoreau meaninglessly used to preface the sections in the book. *Western Shores* is the best of the three. It will sell

All of these books have caught something of the gift-book tone — a dogged stolidity of approach to their subject that tries to conceal (but does not succeed) a pure unallayed lack of emotion.

better than the others, anyhow.' Spiegel is a *Time-Life* and *National Geographic* graduate. He knows how to make his pictures seem energetic. While many of them are no more than snapshots, their freeze-framing of swimmers and soccer players, Potlatch celebrants and loggers, gives at least a semblance of vitality to the book. It's mostly a trick but it will probably work. The remainder of the book is film advertisement material: close-ups of wildflowers, cormorants on rocks. Spiegel has provided a text as well. It's an essay about British Columbia so generalized that it is virtually unreadable.

All of these books have caught something of the gift-book tone — a dogged stolidity of approach to their subject that tries to conceal (but does not succeed) a pure unallayed lack of emotion. As a substitution for this lack of feeling, these books offer merely the formats of feeling — where there is no beauty there is instead prettiness. The result is, of course, sentimentality. And plenty of it.

Sentimentality leads to that triumph of design over content, of surface over meaning, this year's chief artifact of establishment graffiti, Roloff Beny's *Persia, Bridge of Turquoise* (McClelland and Stewart, \$45).

If there were a body of Roloff Beny criticism — which mercifully there is not — one would be tempted to add to it

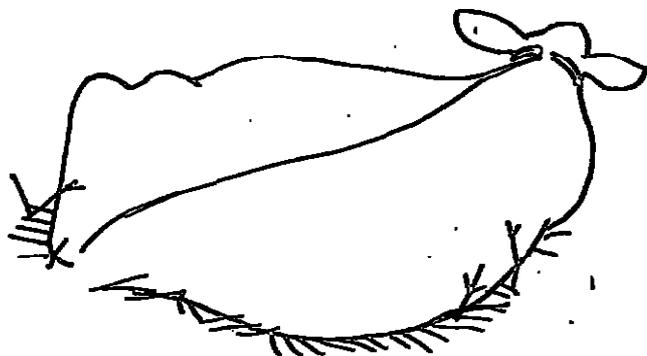
the suggestion that, having started **from the embarrassment of riches** represented by such **earlier** books as *A Time of Gods* and *To Everything There is a Season*, Beny will suffer death by patterning if he keeps on this way. *Persia groans* under calligraphic and decorative overkill: "Frozen music orchestrated in incised plaster ..." This is the sort of stuff out of which the maestro's sensibility is formed.

Persia groans under calligraphic and decorative overkill: "Frozen music orchestrated in incised plaster. . . ." This is the sort of stuff out of which the maestro's sensibility is formed.

In *Persia*, Roloff Beny acts the part of the richest tour guide in the world. This is Beny prose: "Now, having woven my way like the threads and knots of the most intricate carpet over **fifty** thousand kilometers — on foot, in jeep, by camel, donkey and helicopter- I share this record of my long affair with the land and the people in all seasons **which** began fourteen years ago." Still, Beny is a photographer and a **signer** and I suppose it is hardly **fair** to make fun of his writing. "How can I open the gate and guide my readers across the Bridge of Turquoise?" **Beny** asks. Presumably by providing a comprehensive essay on **Iran** and Iranian culture by Seyyed **Hossein Nasr**, by including maps and fold-out notes, by dividing the volume into four vaguely thematic sections — Light, Life, The Sacred Place, Domain of Kings, and an epilogue titled **Joy**. The photographs are full-blown Beny. Opulent, over-theatrical, oddly **stiff** (a quality that **comes** from trying to **affect** the hieratic without a concomitant inner dignity) though sometimes effectively juxtaposed (see, for example, plates **18** and **19** where the relative pictorial innocence, **for Beny**, of a **citrus** grove in **Jiroft** is placed opposite the twisted complexities of a Banyan tree in **Baluchestan**).

While Beny spends mom time photographing the people in *Persia* than he did in last year's *In Italy*, you will not find his analysis of the Iranians a **very useful** study of the Iranian personality. And **you** will find **no** beggars, no starving **children**, no families **in extremis**. That sort of **carry-on** musses up a book like *Persia*. Beny is not Lewis **Hine**, Robert Cape, **Henri Cartier-Bresson**, Werner **Bischof**, or **Dorothea Lange**. Roloff Beny is not a "concerned photographer." He is an extremely well-paid interior/exterior decorator.

Persia is twice the price of *To The Wild Kingdom*. That's the most interesting difference between them. We haven't moved very far aesthetically or ideologically. Or tonally. What you **are** hearing is still pure gift-book tone. High tone, for Beny. But the same sound, qualitatively, as the sound the others make.



The last two books on the **pile** are hardly gift books at all. They **are** included here because, they arrived during **gift-book** season; Alden Nowlan's *Campobello: The Outer Island* (Clarke, Irwin, \$8.95) and Dudley Witney's *The Lighthouse* (McClelland and Stewart, 927.50). For the most part, my animadversions upon gift books do not apply to **Nowlan and Whitney**.

Nowlan's *Campobello* is a **modest, likeable** little history in **12** chapters and an epilogue **of that** attractive wooded **resort island** in the Bay of **Fundy** best **known**, I suppose, as the Roosevelt summer home and **now** the site of "the Roosevelt Campobello International Park." *Campobello* has been, in itself, a kind of compressed history of the settling of North America and a **crystallization** of Anglo-American **relations** for **200 years**. **Nowlan** is, of course, an **award-winning** poet, novelist, and writer **'bf** short stories. He writes informal history well too. The photographs in the book are useful and admirably under-produced.

In 1972, Dudley Witney, in collaboration with Eric **Arthur**, produced *The Barn*, **one** of the handsomest gift **books** ever printed in Canada. Now, in *The Lighthouse*, he has written and photographed a book that, while it is perhaps not as plangently beautiful **as The Barn**, is a truly splendid **encyclopaedic** history of **lighthouses** from **Pharos** to Cape **Race**. Witney's text possesses an **elegant** workability. **His** photographs are **honest, illustrative, unromanticized** (no mean feat, considering the poetically charged object a lighthouse is) and **sure**. Altogether a fine accomplishment as scholarship and as photography. This one is no gift book; **this is the real thing**. Why not give it to someone for Christmas? Someone you like a lot. ☐

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UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA PRESS
2075 Wesbrook Place, Vancouver, BC

KidLit One: ravioli, elves, pucks, legends

Mumbles and Snits, by Beverley Allison, illustrated by Ann Powell, The Women's Press, 32 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$3 paper.

Bluetoes, by George Polkosnik, illustrated by Heather Collins, Clarke Irwin, 28 pages, \$6.95 cloth.

The Wild Canadians: Hockey's Bush League Champs, by Chip Young, Clark Irwin, 48 pages, \$5.95 cloth.

The Witch of the North: Folk Tales of French Canada, adapted by Mary Alice Downie, illustrated by Elizabeth Cleaver, Oberon Press, 55 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By PETER SUCH

A FAR MORE -subtle anti-sexist children's book than many previous publications by The Women's Press is *Mumbles and Snits*, romantically illustrated in a delightful blue wash by Ann Powell. Mumbles live in the valley and bounce by day, Snits live high in the mountains and twirl by night. (Both look like animated ravioli.) Mift the Mumble goes off by herself into the mountains to discover she too can twirl by night. She meets Stumble the Snit, who has come down a bit to practise his unconventional bouncing. Their realization that they are in fact the same kind of being, each capable of a wider range of expression in their joy of living, is handled without didacticism and the book ends in a whimsical dance of mumbles and snits.

A good buy for Christmas is George Polkosnik's *Bluetoes*, about how a fumble-fingered elf in Santa's workshop finds his true vocation as Santa's stocking-stuffer and also earns his name on a freezing Christmas night by taking off his own stockings so that a couple of poor kids can wake to find them stuffed with goodies. Heather Collins' illustrations are rich and Christmasy with the kind of interesting detail that will make youngsters poke at the pictures inquiringly. The text lapses into sentimentality at times and there could be more humour to lighten the tone. But any fumble-fingered kid will identify with the hero.

Chip Young's books, on the other hand, make such a self-conscious attempt to be funny that his latest, *The Wild Canadians*, is not so much good juvenile humour as plain childish. And yet Young has a certain sensibility and a foraging imagination that make his previous books readable and unique. Unfortunately, this is a case of trying too hard. What really spoils the book are hockey broadcasts in italicized sections: "*Hello. hockey fans in the United States and the great outdoors everywhere. This is Harvey Beaver along with Whitey Lemming in the broadcast booth at Hideout Pond. Tennessee, to bring you the big game between the Wild Canadians and the Smokey Mountainers . . .*"

Witch of the North, a beautiful Oberon production, is an adaptation of folk-tales from French Canada, uniquely — and sometimes terrifyingly — illustrated by Elizabeth Cleaver. The book ripples in gothic waters, Christian nod pagan symbols gliding in the shadows: cats, nuns, saints, wolves, all the Jungian cupboardful, roaming a strangely changed Canadian landscape. Probably only for the much older child, if not for parents — especially folklorists. Sample stories: "The Serpent of Lorette," "The Witch Canoe," "The Spectre," "The Three Devils," and "The Man from Labrador." Sample dialogue: "What happened to your late husband who is dead?" cried José Bedard, the bone-setter, who fancied himself as a humourist. "I'll tell you if you'll be quiet, you lummo! You have a head as hard as a caribou!" □

KidLit Two: trees, trolls wolves, yaks

Piney the Talking Christmas Tree, by Mary Eustace, illustrated by Manolo Corvera, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 30 pages, \$3.95 cloth.

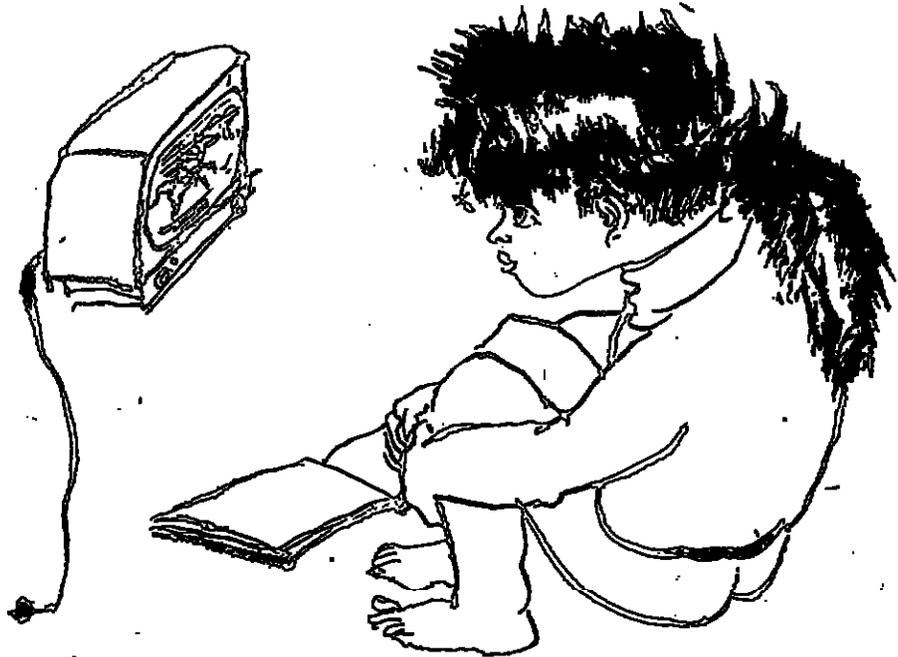
There Are Trolls, by John F. Green, illustrated by Kenneth R. White, Peguis Publishers, 17 pages, cloth unpriced.

Mary of Mile 18 (Third Edition), written and illustrated by Ann Blades, Tundra Books, 37 pages, \$2.95 paper.

Yak/Le Yak, by Rosemary Allison, illustrated by Ann Weatherby, Kids Can Press (Box 5974, Station A, Toronto), 47 pages, paper unpriced.

By T. BRYAN HAYTER

REVIEWING children's books has about it the air of a noble task. One is, after all, making recommendations that may help shape a child's mind. There is a natural temptation to be pompously selective, even protective, of supposedly impressionable children. It is so easy to lose sight of the reason for reviewing: finding books to please children. So while grown-up experts ponder the sexist, manipulative, or pandering qualities of the books, chil-



children rely on the exclusive critical tools reserved for themselves. **Adult** fallibility in such matters was demonstrated when a selected group of children overwhelmingly preferred the one book of the following four deemed least desirable by this reviewer.

The first of the group, *Piney* The *Talking Christmas Tree*, will be welcomed by many to the perennially thin ranks of Christmas stories. Children will like it, no doubt, because **the creators** have emulated Walt Disney's enticing world of slick **colour illustration** and **sugary plot**. In it, **Piney** writes a song for Santa's party. The villain figure, Red Tail Fox, overhears and claims the tune for his **own**. **But** a happy ending ensues when Twinkle, the good fairy of the **forest**, **successfully** intervenes. **Though** stylized, unoriginal, and all-too-familiar to an adult raised on comics and Saturday TV cartoons, this is the book most **favoured** by that group of young advisers mentioned above.

At first glance, *There Are Trolls* appears to be cast in the same **mould** as *Piney*. *It too* looks slick, simple, and **stylized**. Closer examination reveals **more** substance, more to **stir** the imagination. The book features black line drawings of trolls **romping** about in various nonsensical guises, shapes, and locations, accompanied by lively descriptions in rhyme. It's good entertainment and furthermore it teaches word and thought concepts. Bed-time reading sessions could be very lively **with these** trolls.

The other **two** works have an entirely different character. Each offers young readers a higher level of creativity in **both text** and design. The first, *Mary of Mile IS*, was actually published in 1971 and now appears in paperback form. Though the **manuscript** was originally **refused** by many publishers, it later received wide acclaim. And with good reason. Ann Blades tells a realistic but sympathetic tale of family life in **the** ragged winter of northern British Columbia. The **author's** own sensitive **water-colours illustrate** Mary's **day-to-day** life. While young readers will enjoy this **story** of a girl's love for a wolf pup, it would also be a welcome addition to a family collection of Canadiana.

Working with a **LIP grant**, Kids Can Press has fashioned **an** elegant fantasy called *Yak*. **Its** bilingual text gives the book a potential nationwide readership. *Yak is a caged* beast persuaded by a small girl symbolizing freedom to seek **its** own liberty. Thus convinced, it

breaks away to **“graze in a wide plain.”** Such a **lofty** theme, combined with fine line drawings and austere design, may not appeal to the average child. However, it is **a** novel blend of economy and imagination.

Surveying these four Books, it is **noteworthy that** only *Mary of Mile 18* offers real Canadian content; it alone has a locale and theme **reflecting something** of this country. The **other** books could really have been produced anywhere. □

KidLit Three: morals, trends, Facts, fantasies

I Climb Mountains, by **Barbara Taylor**, illustrated by **Barbara Yacono**, The Women's Press, 32 pages, \$6.75 cloth and \$3 paper.

She Shoots She Scores!, by **Heather Kellerhals Stewart**, illustrated with photographs by the author and Carol Gordon, The Women's Press, 54 pages, 95 cents paper.

Strange Street, by **Ann Powell**, Kids Can Press (Box 3974, Station A, Toronto), 32 pages, \$1.65 paper.

The Sandwich, by **Ian Wallace and Angela Wood**, Kids Can Press (see above), 56 pages, \$1.95 paper.

Wordsandwich: Stories by Kids for Kids, edited by **Anne, Sue, Kirk, and Don**, Books By Kids (32 Morewood Crescent, Willowdale, Ont.), 93 pages, paper unpriced.

By GRACE RICHARDSON

THE CURSE **OF** many stories for children is the belief that they should be **“educational.”** This is a self-defeating policy; **where fiction** is concerned, children learn **most** from **books** that aim only to **entertain**. A similar limitation afflicts stories that aim to **influence** young readers' values rather than impart facts. The simple-minded **morality** of **Victorian** fiction was **probably** less **inhibiting** than its modern equivalent: the moral of the story was **often** clumsily tacked on to a lively plot. The more **subtle** expression of moral values in children's fiction today tends to permeate a whole story, more **often** than **not** to its detriment. Most limiting of all is the aim of far too many children's books **to be** “trendy.”

The **books** listed above from both The Women's Press and Kids Can Press suffer from **these** faults. They are not bad examples of **their genre**, merely typical.

I Climb *Mountains* is a picture book for very **young** children. Two **girls** **boast to a sceptical** boy of all the things they can do, finally **earning** his respect. The obvious moral is that girls need **not** feel inhibited by traditional feminine roles. Amusing **pictures** and some light-hearted fantasy save this book **from** being merely trendy, **though** just barely. *She Shoots She Scores!* is **the story of** a 10-year-old girl who joins a boys' hockey team. The heroine is appealing, but the book, aimed at readers beyond the **picture-book** age, **is** too short and superficial to make the most of a **potentially** good **subject**.

The theme of the Kids Can Press seems **to** be, urban realism, but **“pseudo-realism”** would **be a** more accurate description. What's bad about pseudo-realism is not that it's unrealistic but that **it's** dull. *Strange Street*, in **spite of** appealing line drawings, is **both** unrealistic and unimaginative. The author creates narrow categories bearing **little** relationship to real **life**: “strange” (but nice) people **versus** “normal” (but awful) people. The **humour** does not **redeem the** weakness of the basic concept. *The Sandwich* is more successful. The hero is teased by **other** kids for eating “stinky meat”; he dreams of gorging on **peanut butter**, in defiance of his parents' Italian **tastes**; **these** things make him a real boy. The dutiful ethnic ending brings **us** back to the dull world of pseudo-realism. Both books make one long for **pure** fantasy.

Wordsandwich has an initial advantage over the products of The Women's Press and Kids Can Press. Since the editorial policy here is simply **to** publish **stories** and poems by children, the book is not obliged to restrict **its** subject matter or moral content. The **selection** is nicely varied and its **young** authors show **little** inclination **to** be trendy. If **there** is **not** much real originality, that is only natural, for one's imagination — **contrary** to common belief — **grows** rather than diminishes with age. The book's sole (although irritating) weakness lies in its cute title and the **editors'** condescending **introduction**, which **they** insist on signing **with** only their first names. Incidentally, the **royalties** paid to the young authors are one free **book** each.

Unfortunately, **judging by the Samples reviewed here**, **The Women's Press**, Kids Can Press? and Books By

Kids all share an **element of condescension** toward **their readers**. Could a **child** be blamed if he were to prefer a comic book? **It** might even be more educational, as well as more fun. □

KidLit Four: cranes, curses giants, jumbos

Strange Companion, by **Dayton O. Hyde, Clarke Irwin**, 152 pages, \$6.95 cloth.

Return to Rainbow Country, by **William Davidson, PaperJacks**, 181 pages, \$1.95 paper.

Sasquatch Adventure, by **Sheila Rolfe, Hancock House**, 128 pages, \$2.95 paper.

Packy, the Little Elephant Who Came to the Cold, by **Marjorie C. Morgan, J. M. LeBel Enterprises**, 77 pages, paper unpriced.

By **JANET LUNN**

FOR CHILDREN, as for everyone else, survival in the North is **still what** we write **most** about in Canada. And, as in **our** adult books, **the** old theme has begun to shift from man against the wilderness to the survival of the wilderness itself.

Dayton O. Hyde has distilled the problem neatly and **skilfully** in a **story** about a boy and a bird, one of the last of a nearly **extinct** species, alone in the wilds. **Strange Companion** tells how **13-year-old** David **stows** away on a plane and crashes in the **Northwest Territories**. Together he and **Archie**, the plane's pilot, retrieve a whooping **crane** egg from under the body of its dead mother. They **incubate** the egg, **hatch** it, and feed **the** baby bird. **Archie** dies, rescuing **it** from a charging moose. David and **Rusty**, the young crane, **set out** on the long trek home. David is a **resourceful** Robinson Crusoe, but their trials are serious and **it** takes **them** a year. In that time both the boy and the **bird** come of age.

Hyde is director of the International Wild Waterfowl Association and the Oregon Wildlife Federation. While his **fiction** is **pretty** standard, his **writing** is sturdy, his **nature** and survival lore are very good, and his message is loud and clear.

The same theme, **though** nor as well-handled, is clearly the point in a couple of light-weight **Northern adventure** tales -Return to **Rainbow Country** by William Davidson and **Sasquatch Adventure** by Sheila Rolfe. Davidson's **story** is a continuation in print of his TV series of a few years ago. The plot is more-or-less the Canadian **Boys' Own Paper** set piece — a **white** boy and an Indian boy off on a wilderness adventure in Northern Ontario. They encounter **the** river, bulldozers in the **forest**, an ancient Indian curse, **and** a bidden commune in the mountains. There's a **lot** of material here, **but** the story **doesn't** hold together and isn't **very** exciting.

Sasquatch Adventure is a fantasy about two children **stolen** from their Fraser Valley home by a pair of **Sasquatches** — **our** own **British** Columbia version of abominable snowmen. In a hidden valley **the** semi-hdman **giants** live as we may have done one million years ago. The children must escape or be eaten, and they must take with them an advertising **stuntman** they find with his balloon **in** a cave. **It's** a novel idea, but Ms. Rolfe hasn't enough skill for **either** the fantasy **or** the story-telling.

Packy, the Little Elephant Who Came to the Cold, a picture-story book by **Marjorie C. Morgan**, is both m&e entertaining and more credible. Ms. Morgan gives a semi-fictional account of a baby **elephant's** learning to survive on Al Oeming's **Alberta Game Farm**. While the writing **isn't** outstanding, the description of Dr. Oeming's farm and **the** joyous young elephant **playing** in the snow in her socks and **overboots** **might** make this simple book a treasure for young children. □



KidLit five: bees, islands, UFOs, bruises

Prescription **Z**, by **F.W. Tamminga, Scholastic-TAR Publications**, 96 pages, \$1 paper.

Mystery of **Disaster Island**, by **Ann Rivkin, Scholastic-TAB Publications**, 144 pages, \$1 paper.

Oranges and UFO's, by **Muriel Leeson, Scholastic-TAB Publications**, 144 pages, \$1 paper.

The Dynamite **Flynns**, by **Leslie McFarlane, Metbuen**, 128 pages, \$1.50 paper.

By **CHRISTINE FORSYTH**

IN A **LOCAL** book and toy shop **recently** I overheard the conversation of two **11-year-old** girls. "Have you read **Shardik** yet?" one asked. Her friend, **dressed** in a white T-shirt, jeans, and frayed sneakers, replied **that** she hadn't. "It's got a **lot** of violence in it," the first girl asserted and added, "But I like violence." Her friend not being able to hold up her end of a discussion of violence in Richard Adams's animal novels, the **first** 11-year-old **gracefully** concluded the **subject** by observing that **Shardik** "**didn't** get **very** good reviews anyway."

It seems that **despite** the mesmeric powers of television, youngsters have the time **and** the **appetite**, like the rest of **us**, for a good read. These two young bluestockings are undoubtedly **exceptional**, **but** they confirm the belief **that** there exists a discriminating juvenile audience for children's literature. The teens and preteens are reading **adult** literature **too**, and **are** **sensitive** to style, the pacing of **events**, **character** **revelation**, and atmosphere. **Some** extraordinary young **enthusiasts** **begin** to write their own elaborate novels at this age. How would discriminating readers react to these recently published books for young teens?

Such readers would, I think, find Prescription **Z** by **F. W. Tamminga** a grippingly detailed **account** of a boy's experiences when he is **transported** inside a beehive. **Francis** **participates**, as, a tolerated outsider, in the life and **habits** of the bees, the **dramatic** death of a **queen**, and the struggle for the good of the hive against **natural** enemies — birds, **fire**, and human beings. His bee

companion enlists his assistance in fighting a slug, **feeding** an injured bee, and battling a **fire**, and shares her feelings about flying, making honey, and dying.

Young readers might feel that there were enough "mysterious island" books already, but the idea is fascinating nonetheless, and *Mystery of Disaster Island* by Ann Rivkin is a fast-paced story with a modern Canadian setting. A family **recently** moved from Winnipeg to the British Columbia coast fight intruders off their island and find a buried treasure. The boy takes the **initiative rather** than his sister, but the **whole** family are portrayed as sensitive to each other's feelings.

Oranges and UFO's by Muriel Leeson on the other hand; doesn't offer much challenge or sustain interest. Two **brothers** and their friends in the all male Nicodemus Morse Code Club of Pillsbury are visited by the Small Ones **from outer** space and **are** taken to their planet, where they are attacked by the nasty Dark Ones. Lily **McGonigle** tries to join the club and share the adventures, but she is merely tolerated as an **obtrusive** nuisance. The girls in **the** toy shop would not be offended, however,



since they would **find** it too silly to read in the first **place**.

Hockey enthusiasts, whether boys or girls, **are** likely to enjoy **the racy narrative** and adult plot of *The Dynamite Flynn*s by Leslie **McFarlane**. Two young hockey players, nephews of the **Iron Mick**, graduate from **their** small home-town team to the world of the Big League. **It** takes several years' seasoning of hockey jargon to follow the descriptions of the crucial games, because they have all the breathless inventiveness of Hockey **Night** in Canada, and capture the **drama** of the hockey world on and off the ice.

*Since The Dynamite Flynn*s is intended primarily for the younger reader, the morality is simple and violent feelings as well as physical violence have been repressed. But for those like the girl in **the** toy shop who **like** violence, conflict, and **toughness**, the language captures the tension of the people involved in a high-powered game. **Ordinary** English words are forced into the **corner**, body-checked, jammed against the boards until they give **up their** usual meanings. Although they are bruised and manhandled, they still manage a **breakaway to net the essence** of our national sport. □

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FROM OBERON

KidLit Six: left, left, and left again

Shantymen of Cache Lake, by Bill Freeman, James Lorimer & Company, 160 pages, \$8.95 cloth and \$4.95 paper.

By ANNE ROCHE

THE MIDDLE OF a mail strike is probably not the best time to review a book glorifying union activity.. Indeed, considering the recent record of union behaviour, it's hard to imagine anyone writing such a book. Even if the difficulty today of shedding tears for big labour doesn't necessarily make one feel warmer towards big business, it ought to make unlikely a black-and-white treatment of a dispute wherein all the capitalists are bloated villains and all the union men athletic saints.

Yet this is the way in which *Shantymen of Cache Lake*, a novel for children intended for the Christmas market, deals with an actual event in Canada's labour history. the unsuccessful attempt to unionize the Cache Lake camp of the Percy Lumber Company, in the Upper Ottawa Valley in 1873. The company owner, Percy, is "pink and soft... pampered by servants and conveniences." Hi foreman, Hardy, a company man body and soul, is vicious and bard-driving, probably a murderer. The rich and their lackeys, dressed in "finest merino wool.. their knees draped with heavy buffalo robes" are pulled about by "fine Arabian horses" while the thin, brave workers wear "simple homespun clothing," which is "threadbare" naturally, and ride Shank's man through deep snow.

Perhaps this simplistic treatment of what, even in the days of unregulated capitalism, was a complex issue, might he defended on the grounds that a book for children ought to be simple. But the book is aimed at children in early teenage. — the heroes. John and Meg McBain, children of martyred union organizer Angus, are 14 and 15 — an age when young people are prepared for, even craving, a good deal of seriousness and complexity in literature and life. They might be expected, for example, to understand the motivations of a company foreman as well as of a union organizer. and they ought to be

expected, even from a novel, to require good strong evidence before they call a man a murderer. No evidence at all is adduced against Hardy; the shantymen have only their emotional conviction that the worst is always to be expected from the company. When Hardy himself dies at the band of John McBain, the intervention of the judiciary is obviously as uncalled for as it was shamefully lacking in the earlier violent death of John's father.

That the villains are too black and the heroes too shining is not simply the result of Freeman's not being a very accomplished novelist, although I think the novel is an artistic failure. There is far too much text-book style information about lumber camp activity — correct, no doubt, but not entertaining. And worst of all. there is not one gleam of humour throughout, not one taste of the skylarking, practical joking, and music of the lighter side of life in the shanties.

Nevertheless. for all its stylistic faults, this hook will not join most of the season's output of children's literature in limbo. for its significance is not literary. It marks the beginning of a serious attempt to politicize English Canadian literature for children, and as such ought to be taken very seriously indeed. The ideological struggle raging throughout the West has at last, sadly but inevitably, involved our children. And since most of the machinery of persuasion is in the hands of the Left, particularly of the academic Left, we can expect a stream of books like this



one designed to inculcate leftist attitudes in the young. Freeman doesn't leave one left-wing stone unturned. It's all here — women's lib, ecology, French-English fraternity, the ennobl-



KidLit Seven: births, parents tricks, thumbs

Controlled Childbirth, by Adele Birkbeck and Margaret Moore, J. J. Douglas, 190 pages, \$8.95 cloth and \$4.95 paper.

The One-Parent Family, by Benjamin Schlesinger, U of T Press, 186 pages, \$10 cloth.

Teach Your Child to Read in 60 Days, by Sidney Ledson, General Publishing, 207 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

Growing a Green Thumb, by Lorraine Surcouf, Greey de Pencier Publications, 80 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By JANIS RAPOFORT

ing quality of manual labour, especially when performed as a co-operative without a boss, the beauty of civil disobedience. New to us, but old hat in French Canada, China, and the Soviet Union. Next Christmas expect *Anne of the RCMP* (or *Chantal of the FLQ*), *Jimmy*, *Pacifist Pilot*, and *Judy, Girl Abortionist*.

Not that *Heroes of the Stock Exchange* or *Great Capitalists of Canada* would be more agreeable. But it is as well to see Freeman's book for what it is — a choosing of heroes, an attempt to manufacture a mythology and shape a future. Its deadly earnestness comes from the conviction that informs leftism, that the human condition can be materially improved by some particular rearrangement of society. In the struggle to bring this about as soon as possible, seeing both sides or telling funny stories is out of place.

Shantymen is clearly aimed at teachers, whose political coloration is increasingly leftist; I can't imagine any 14-year-old who would be more than polite about it without exhortation. It is a book to give to NDP professors to give their children.

"Someday we're going to defeat the company," promises one of Freeman's heroes, "and we'll be the power in the shanty." This sober little book for kids is serving notice on us: it's only a matter of time before we join West Virginia and Quebec in rows over text-book content. There is one brewing already, over, incredibly, the Roman Catholic *Canadian Catechism*, whose left-leaning authors have included the orthodox left view of the Spanish Civil War. Traditional politics and morality will have to take on the revolution in the contest for power in the shanty. □

OF THE MANY books around on the subject of child bearing, among the most recent to surface is the revised edition of *Controlled Childbirth*, complete with index and bibliography. Throughout the discussion of prenatal exercises and the labour experience, the concept of psychoprophylaxis serves as a framework. In psychoprophylaxis, as explained by Dr. Murray Enkin in the foreword, women "are given a focus of mental activity, of concentration, to block out unwanted sensations." The practical techniques for preparation for and use in childbirth are described in the chapters that follow. They are illustrated by generally unimaginative but accurate diagrams and pictures. The contractions of labour, for example, are graphically represented by peaks that resemble the teeth of a mythic Sendak beast. An actual printout from an ultrasonic foetal monitor, which records patterns of the about-to-be-born's heartbeat as well as the uterine contractions, would show a more irregular pattern.

In the discussion of labour and delivery, no mention is made of alternative delivery positions. Neither is there an allusion to the Leboyer practice of carrying out the delivery in a darkened room, so that the newborn's initial environmental shock is lessened by the similarity of his or her new surroundings to the womb's. In this section of the book the tone used by the authors occasionally strays from the straightforward to the sentimental, as in the projected description of the new parents in the delivery room who "together will gaze in admiration. . . ."

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The information on feeding the newborn is sensible and is clearly presented. An important section of the book contains the relatively short, unedited impressions of evaluative reports written by mothers or fathers who have been instructed in controlled childbirth methods and who have practised them during childbirth. The role of the father can be considerable, though one wonders how seriously, on reading the following comment on a prolonged labour given in a report by the father/husband: "None of this was particularly bothersome."

Approximately two thirds of *The One-Parent Family* is comprised of appendices and an annotated bibliography that contains brief descriptive comments of the contents of studies on related topics such as marriage and family, desertion, separation, divorce, widowhood, unmarried parents, and remarriage. While this information may be very useful to the student of sociology or to the sociologist involved in research on this subject or to the social worker in the state in which it is presented here, it is not especially interesting to the general reader. However, the summaries of the Guyatt study in Canada (which focussed on research, communication, education, and social action), the Canadian Council on Social Development's study (which investigated the lives of more than 100 heads of one-parent families), and similar

studies in Australia and Great Britain, provide valuable insights into the one-parent phenomenon. It seems that, in all the countries considered, whatever the reason for the one-parent situation, the most crucial problems are shared. The nature of these is financial and social.

The council's excerpted interviews are revealing, but because different people provide different answers to different questions, the net effect is one of a mosaic rather than a complete portrait. The translation of the experiences into the third person results in a loss of immediacy. The immediacy is further reduced by the occasional vagueness of, for example, a deserted father who arrives at a definite course of action by "thinking things through." For the specialist, *The One-Parent Family* is a splendid resource book; for others, it provides statistical as well as individual data on the lot of single parenthood now and suggestions for its future improvement.

If you're especially keen on teaching your preschooler to read, you might have a look at *Teach Your Child to Read in 60 Days*, a combination history, diary, and manual for early reading. The most practical part of the book is the third and last section wherein the author condenses and formalizes a method for teaching reading essentially devised by trial and error and recorded in detail in the preceding section. Ledson's approach stems from a central belief in stimulating motivation by enthusiastic praise and following achievement by material reward. Some of the devices he recommends using to stimulate and hasten the reading process certainly appeal to small children: puppets, flip-flop readers, blocks, and

the refrigerator game, to name a few. The rewards given need not be considerable, either in quality or quantity. Ledson himself used small food treats. Aside from a potential threat to meal routines or possible upset to the digestive system or a source of future dental cavities, these edible rewards may well provide enough impetus. However, there are many other learn-to-read methods (among them, the Montessori sensorial approach) where such external reinforcements are not necessary.

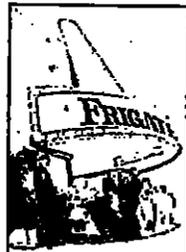
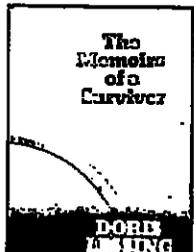
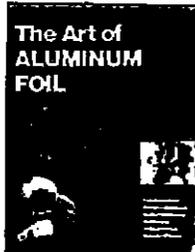
By advocating a method *derived* from his own teaching experience with his young daughters, but not actually used with them, Ledson is putting the proverbial cart before the horse. A chapter on the degree of the success of this method used by other parents would have been most enlightening.

An unfortunate tone, about one third gloating mixed with two thirds condescension, is adopted early on by the author. When mixed with the indulgence of extraneous personal detail, as in the middle section, this combination can prove quite taxing to a reader's tolerance. This reviewer questions the merits of a teaching method that, on some basic issues, still provides some bafflement for its originator. Several times Ledson refers to his daughters' inability to recognize certain letters and words previously "learned" at various earlier stages. No explanation is offered for this phenomenon.

Still, if all you've got is 60 days and you're especially anxious for your child to be one of the youngest readers on the street, you'll probably enjoy using a book that relies on imagination for the implementation of principles that will require patience and perseverance in their administering.

Lorraine Surcouf, in her gardening handbook for children, turns the concept of gardening into an enriching educational and practical experience. The type is large and easy to read, the directions are not at all difficult to follow and there are plenty of simple, useful diagrams illustrating growth of various plants and vegetables at different stages of maturity. Planting dates, seasonal check lists, a model garden plot, practical suggestions, and recipes for the vegetables harvested are also included. The stress, though subtle, is on organic gardening: soil fertilization by compost heaps and pest control by natural means are recommended. What better reward than the pride in achievement and the taste of fresh vegetables to any, but especially to the child-gardener? □

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GENERAL PUBLISHING CO. LIMITED

Keep it under your kepi...

Tales of the Foreign Legion, by
Walter Kanitz, Simon & Schuster of
Canada, 208 pages, \$1.75 paper.

By JIM CHRISTY

HERE IS AN engrossing collection of stories about the French Foreign Legion by a man who was there living them from Norway to North Africa. The Legionnaires are bastards more often than heroes and they don't look like Gary Cooper. The only women that follow them are Bedouin whores and the price of their favours can be emasculation. In other words, *Beau Geste* it isn't. Walter Kanitz has deromanticized the Foreign Legion yet in doing so has produced a volume of such unabashed *humanness*, and therefore so much appeal, that it should be a best seller. But it isn't a best seller, as would be the case in most other countries; in fact, *Tales of the Foreign Legion* has been completely ignored by reviewers and readers.

Kanitz presents a gallery of characters quite unlike anything else in Canadian literature. The sum total of their actions is a wealth of raw experience that is staggering. Here is as much action as any reader would want as well as suspense, intrigue, daring escape, plenty of sex — both sweet and forced — violent death, humour, and camaraderie. It is full of straight-out passion and that is, no doubt, the exact reason it hasn't been noticed here by the official legislators of taste who must have inherent and unfailing scanning systems to steer them clear of anything interesting. Better to elevate a handful of people whose talent will never exceed the level of the *me-too* genre to the top of the literary heap than to have to deal with someone who writes with power and imagination. Unfair, yes; but having operated all his life in the real world, how much can Walter Kanitz really care.

Kanitz began his writing career on newspapers in his native Vienna. At the age of 17 he was "Uncle Walter" and from his column in a woman's magazine distributed advice to thousands of Austrian children. He had already published two popular chil-

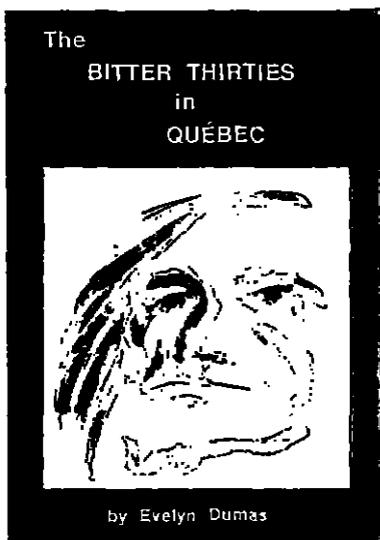
dren's books by the time he was 21. The Nazis, however, put a stop to his literary career. Foreseeing the takeover of Austria as imminent and knowing that in such case he was destined for Dachau — his cousin was a socialist member of the Senate and his brother a playwright who constantly criticized

Kanitz presents a gallery of characters quite unlike anything else in Canadian literature. The sum total of their actions is a wealth of raw experience that is staggering.

the Nazis — Kanitz fled Austria. He managed to stay a step ahead, living for a time in Switzerland before going to France. By 1939 France was beleaguered by thousands of Eastern Europeans and by Spaniards who had come north after the Civil War, all wanting to fight Hitler. The regular army was not equipped to deal with these men, most of whom spoke no French. The solution to the problem was to dispatch them all to that traditional dumping ground for misfits, the Foreign Legion. This is how Kanitz became a Legionnaire.

SAANNES

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After serving for three years and again escaping the Nazis, Kanitz went to Spain where he served six months in prison before being repatriated. He came to Canada and for several years supported himself by a variety of jobs. He was a salesman and a freelance writer and was involved in missionary work in Africa. He had a show on CBC-Radio from 1953 to 1955 called *Continental Carousal* and was a familiar voice to thousands in the Toronto area with his CFRB program, *Continental Concert*, on which he played and commented on music from around the world. In the meantime he wrote for men's magazines, did a column for the *Toronto Star* and in 1956 published in the U.S. *The White Kepi*, a casual history of the French Foreign Legion. During the last few years Kanitz ran his own travel agency, but recently sold it to devote his time to producing more books.

Kanitz' service with the Legion was terminated in 1942 when he was designated by the Germans under the extradition clause of the Armistice Treaty. He knew that extradition meant the firing squad. Kanitz managed to secure his discharge, and his escape from the Nazis and flight from North Africa provide the most exciting reading in *Tales*. In his flight he kills a Gestapo agent, is hidden by an Oran prostitute, and smuggles himself on board a ship to Marseille, which is intercepted by a Nazi patrol boat. This predicament requires Kanitz to exit overboard. His description of the two-mile struggle in the middle of the night through the cold waters of the Gulf of Lyons is a fine piece of writing, a portrait of a man staring death in the face.

This book is about some of the basest of human activities and some of the



noblest, and thus it is a bit of a swash-buckler in spite of itself. Buy it by all means unless you demand the usual polite literature. To this reader, anyway, it is worth the last dozen bloodless and successful Canadian novels. □

Member in poor standing

Frigate, by Martin Myers, Trendsetter series, General Publishing, 200 pages, \$4.95 cloth.

By CHRIS SCOTT

AT THE BEGINNING of Martin Myers' new novel, the hero's private parts detach themselves in the urinal of the Rialto theatre — an inguinal debacle that, these days, is not so very strange. The severance is bloodless and painless; miraculously, the parts remain alive. Gilbert Frigate, we are told, "stood there like a juggler, feeling himself warm in his own palms." At the stroke of a pen that is sharper than any scalpel, Gilbert Frigate has been transformed from a nondescript projectionist, seedy, forty-ish, into a unique eunuch with a mission for these troubled times.

Readers of Myers' first novel, *The Assignment* (1971), will know him as a richly inventive author, a comedian driven by the quirkiness of world and time. Spiegel, reincarnate and junkman, moves through that novel as the *Zeitgeist* of this modern age, always collecting but never finding, until he meets with the millionaire philanthropist, J. J. Jonas. The same moral and philosophical games are played in *Frigate*, though on one level the book can be read (and was perhaps conceived) as the hero's quest for actual reattachment and symbolic reintegration.

In one of the funniest scenes in the book, Frigate tries to explain his predicament over the phone to his doctor's nurse. "Could these parts be described as limbs?" she asks him. "As appendages?" His reply is equivocal. "I see," she says. "And are these appendages sensory, like ears, nose, lips?" More equivocation until Frigate finally gets his message across and she offers to send an ambulance. "That's not necessary," he says. "I'm no longer amatory, but I'm still ambulatory."

Myers is a genius of the one-liner. Frigate's doctor sends him to a urologist and a plastic surgeon: "Take your parts with you and keep them clean." At first he carries them in Saran Wrap, and then he has a special case made from morocco, with a blue-velvet lining and a brass nameplate, a little

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coffin *cum* reliquary and pyx. The urologist is more intrigued by the container than the contents: "I look at genitals all day, you know. But this really is a treat." The plastic surgeon offers Frigate a silicone dildo; a psychiatrist tells him his problem is psychosomatic; and a marine biologist, who has discovered the secret of limb regeneration in crabs, can replace his *membrum disiectum* with a claw.

Amusing though they are, these encounters do not a novel make. There is some suggestion, however, that Frigate, like Spiegel, is divine. The permanent, possibly infinite, attraction at the Rialto is the Serbian movie *YE GODS!* and the narrative includes a series of italicized extracts from its soundtrack. Adam, Moses, Jonah, Joseph and Mary, Joshua (a fine scene this, in which Joshua submits a tender for a demolition contract), Noah, and a peevish, petulant God, all make their appearance. These sections may or may not be Frigate's fantasies; they are adrift in time and space, and they are written indifferently, as if the author were unsure of their place in his design.

In a *deus ex machina* aside to the reader, Myers observes: "And what I'm trying to say is everything. A synoptic conceit." Saying that you're trying to say everything is one thing, actually doing it another. The selection is random: a plague of frogs; Women's Lib complaining of deistic anthropomorphism; Chris arrested on a liquor-licensing contravention — "*I am not a moonshiner or bootlegger. I did not make the wine illegally, nor did I sell the wine.*"

There is too much authorial direction. The Shandy-esque needs wit and verve, linguistic energy and historical resources that, on this showing at least, Myers lacks. In another on his asides, this time in his role of God-Author, Myers observes to his principal character: "Your real problem is not that you are emasculated. You are emasculated — for the moment at least — because you need a plot." This, dear reader, on page 132 of a 200-page novel!

The upshot of that plot, so tardily discovered, lies in the curative power of Frigate's parts. Homosexuals, beginning with Halley Onlackley (an outrageous pun, like the hero's name), are turned straight at the touch of the member, whereupon, for no more reason than they had departed, Frigate's organs return.

Frigate, a maculate misconception of a book, is no greater than the sum of its parts. But then, in the author's

words: "*Remember me as a flawed God, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your attention and good luck.*" □

Other Christie, other curtain

Miss Silver's Past, by Josef Skvorecky, Random House, 297 pages, \$10.25 cloth.

By ROBERT DOLMAN

JOSEF SKVORECKY is a Czech novelist who fled the Soviet invasion in 1968 to teach and write in Toronto. He also runs with his wife a successful Czech-language publishing house (see *Whatever Happened to Wenceslas*, reviewed in the November issue of *Books in Canada*). *Miss Silver's Past*, the most recent of his novels to be translated into English, is a detective story that was intended to "look like light literature, like an entertainment," as the author writes in his foreword, "so that it would escape the attention of the man with the rubber stamp." But it didn't, since Skvorecky chose to make the censors and the publishers of Prague the objects of his satirical attack, and they saw past the book's disguise. As a result, it was banned before publication in 1967. During Alexander Dubcek's reform interlude, 40,000 copies were printed and sold out immediately; but in 1969, after Dubcek's removal and the return of censorship, a second printing was confiscated.

It is difficult to see how Skvorecky expected to fool anybody. As a murder mystery, the novel quietly tells a rather uninteresting story in which the editor-in-chief of a publishing house finally is killed off on page 260 and the mystery of his murder is solved 30 pages later. But as a diatribe against literary censorship in Czechoslovakia, the novel loudly and clearly exposes the hypocrisy, the aesthetic snobbishness, and the political behind-licking that prevent one honest writer among many from publishing her first book.

The two plots are linked by the novel's narrator, Karel Leden, and his involvement in both. He is the observer who not only records the hypocrisy of the world he sees around him, but who participates in it with the worst of them. But unlike Huck Finn, who is too innocent to distinguish between what's right

and what's wrong, Leden is sensitive to every degree of his own hypocrisy. Too gutless and too self-indulgent to do anything about it, he is a failed poet, impotent because he confines his art to the limits of "social realism" imposed upon writers by the state, but it is his sensitivity as a poet that enables him to see his falseness and the falseness in others. Leden "stopped appraising the world and its wickedness from the viewpoint of moral ideals and began to regard it from the viewpoint of personal safety." For Leden, and all but a few in the publishing company where he works, personal safety means the sacrifice of personal belief.

The result of such a sacrifice is apathy and amorality. Stripped of his convictions, Leden can be evil, can hurt other people, can deceive without conscience — even though he is well aware of his iniquity. "I got the vague but highly unpleasant feeling that I was a swine," he says when he coldly ends an affair with a woman who still loves him. "But over the years I had gotten so used to that feeling that I stuck to my principle of making a clean surgical break." Though he admits — to himself and to the author — that he admires her controversial novel, he votes against its publication in deference to majority opinion. He is able to describe — sometimes humorously, sometimes bitterly, always perceptively — the fear, the cowardice, the phoniness of the people he works with; but he hasn't the integrity to reject them. For Leden, "the world is rushing toward extinction anyway; life is short, so why court danger?"

The book's title seems purposely misleading. The most powerful and interesting female character (and the one most integral to the serious themes of the novel) is not Miss Silver but Dasha Blumenfeld; it is she who, through her position as an editor, takes risks to publish suppressed literary works and to assist unjustly treated writers. Lenka Silver figures more importantly in the novel than she perhaps deserves because Leden happens to want to sleep with her; and being as self-indulgent as he is, he spends more of his energy (and his narrative) following his own desires than he does concerning himself with the desires of others. He uses Miss Silver's "past" as blackmail to coerce her into bed; the title should belong to him. But perhaps Skvorecky intended the title of his novel as part of his unsuccessful evasion of the censors in the same artful way he uses the "mystery" attempt — to disguise this attack

"against the private ownership of aesthetics by a handful of hacks in the top echelons of a dictatorship's bureaucracy." □

Light on a darkling plane

Scrap Arrow, by Robert R. Robinson, Trendsetter series, General Publishing, 227 pages, \$3.95 cloth.

By JOHN BURRY

REMEMBER THE ARROW? Maybe that should read: "Remember the Arrow!" Surely we can find some niche for that fading memory in our forlorn shrine of favourite Canadian follies. Perhaps over there, beside that bust of John Diefenbaker and all those other mementos of promises unfulfilled. We might even find a place for this book, which tries in its way to bring the whole moribund business back to life.

Robert R. Robinson was the PR coordinator for A. V. Roe Canada Ltd. during those days when the hopes of everybody connected with the Arrow were flying high — little suspecting that, behind the scenes, dirty Dief was gunning for them. Robinson has obviously drawn heavily on his A. V. Roe experience to lend his novel authenticity. One is almost tempted to dig back through the newspaper files and begin matching fact to fiction.

This might be an interesting diversion, if only Robinson could convince

us that it was really worth while. Certainly the events are all properly in place and are, to a degree, significant enough in themselves; but the fiction should have provided us with much more than just one man's account of those events. History has provided the ingredients for a good piece of fiction. Here, however, the ingredients have been thrown into a pot and left to boil over.

Events take precedence over people, to the point where the entire novel begins to resemble a sort of classic morality play. Each character becomes not so much a personality as the embodiment of some human quality: Stanford Adams, company president, whose callous ambition brings about his downfall; Vince Troop, the conscientious scientist mindful of capricious fate; and Dief, of course, playing himself in the role he made famous — God.

Robinson tinkers a bit with the characters and speedily brings the narrative to its expected climax. In the end, Robinson relies on history to carry the fiction and instead of some new insights we are left with little more than what newspapers have already told us. And who really cares anyway? Robinson tries to convince us that the demise of the Arrow was and is an issue of grave national import. But was it? Perhaps the only thing characteristically Canadian about the Arrow was its unique success. □

Begin the Le Guin

A Strange Glory, edited by Gerry Goldberg, McClelland & Stewart, 144 pages, \$5.95 paper.

By MICHAEL FUHRMAN

ANTHOLOGIES OF English poetry and prose have for years been greeted by high-school students with a dismal recognition of new boring matter, contained in the same dull package. These bleak volumes, the ostensible purpose of which has been to introduce the delights of English literature to eager young minds, have done more harm than their authors could possibly imagine; for their failure, in most cases, to engender enthusiasm or interest in literary expression has left many high-school graduates with a memory of English literature that is like a bad taste in the mouth. There is one

person I know whose class-room experiences with *Word Magic* had the effect of dissuading him from pursuing advanced English studies, and were so far from magical that today he cannot crack the spine of any hardbound volume whose external appearance conjures up mental images of that hateful tome.

We should welcome, therefore, Gerry Goldberg's exciting new anthology, *A Strange Glory*, which is a striking departure from the traditional paths of high-school English pedagogy. The author follows to a large extent the methods of his earlier work, *I Am A Sensation* (McClelland & Stewart, 1971), in which short, carefully selected poems and prose passages, photographs, and graphics are juxtaposed and linked in successive thematic chapter units. Goldberg's way of organizing diverse types of literature is both useful and original, and cannot help but stimulate students, and make understandable to them some of the more important realities of artistic expression.

One warning, however, must be issued. While *Sensation* is to be commended for its broad approach, the new companion volume is severely limited in its thematic scope. Indeed, Goldberg focuses entirely on one subject: mysticism in literature.

The selections (a few of which are regrettably second-rate) are grouped around the various stages of a mystical quest, and seem designed to take the reader on a psychic exploration that extends from the recesses of the unconscious mind (in the poetry of Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, and many other poets — both major and minor) to the limits of outer space (in the science fiction of Lovecraft, Le Guin, and others). Along the way, Goldberg exposes us to poetic manifestations of different states of consciousness, in which romantic assumptions about the imagination, dreams, the child, nature, and the mystical oneness of the universe all figure high. And in order not to lose his readers in arcane regions, the author has inserted, periodically, fragments of sober exposition (from Aldous Huxley, Rollo May, Arthur Koestler, *Time* magazine, etc.) — a clever device that serves to explain abstruse subjects (such as "poetic inspiration"), and gives fantasy and mystical vision an undeniably real significance.

Obviously, an anthology that serves as an introduction to mysticism in literature or, for that matter, any specialized branch of literary thought — rather



than English literature in general — is bound to be of limited usefulness. Nevertheless, Goldberg's intentions are serious. His book is directed toward expanding students' conception of reality, and implicitly recommends that man recover his lost purity and realize his potential of mystic vision. The volume's intelligent design is almost certain to capture student interest; and while some elements in the anthology may mystify, others will surely illuminate. □

Living and dying rooms

Poems, by Anne Hébert, translated by Alan Brown, Musson Books, 76 pages, \$9.95 cloth and \$5.95 paper.

By LINDA PYKE

IN HER ESSAY "Poetry Broken Solitude," which is included in this volume, Anne Hébert writes: "Poetry is a profound and mysterious experience that we try in vain to explain, to place or grasp in its sources and its inner ways Whoever approaches the unknown land of the work of a new poet must perhaps feel disoriented, disarmed" She stresses the necessity of the poet to be faithful to his or her inner voice, to strive towards honesty, clarity, precision. Sooner or later, Hébert trusts, the reader will fall under the spell, will feel comfortable within the realm of the poet's personal vision.

So it was that I found myself on first reading *Poems* almost as bewildered and lost as Hébert's traveller in a strange land, although the first half of the book seemed more immediate and tangible than the last. While the former is concerned more with the persona's spiritual quest, her sense of enchantment, and her childhood visions, the latter was Biblical, abstract and impersonal.

The Silent Rooms and *Kamouraska*, Hébert's two novels (although superficially quite different from each other) are commentaries on disillusion with the romantic myth. The heroines, Catherine of *The Silent Rooms* and Elisabeth of *Kamouraska*, are both doomed because of their belief in the fairy-tale ending; each is carried off by a prince who immediately reveals the face of a tyrant. Their lives are circumscribed and, captive princesses,

they wait. In both novels, there is a sense of timelessness; their solitary characters, living out their nightmares, are under a spell. There is also violence (emotional and physical), passion, illness and or death. Hébert's ultimate vision is a bleak one, almost comically so, were it not for the rightness of her language.

In the first section of *Poems*, one finds oneself in a similar realm of solitude, silence, and enchantment: "I close my eyes/To keep night continuous/Perpetual this silence/Drowning me." "The echo of silence weighs/more ponderous/Than any word of threat or word of love." The persona sleeps in a charmed forest, blessed amid beauty, cursed in solitude. In "Dusty Image," as in "Life in the Castle," one finds the theme of the fairy-tale-as-*lie*:

*The rage
That presses in our breast
The cord we carry
And the ebony beam
We seek
Under the peak
Of the loveliest tower
And ancient image
Castle village
Crumble in the sun
From the feather-weight
Of one hanged body.*

As in her novels, Hébert often uses the image of a woman confined to a room, be it "The Wooden Room" (a forest) or the room in "A Small Dead Girl" that one cannot leave because of a corpse on the doorstep. In "The Closed Room," "Inventory" and "A Kind of Feast," holy ritual and violence are juxtaposed. Only by using her novels as the key can one unlock the intensity of these works. Another poem, "Narrowing," portrays a woman at the window watching; it again brings to mind scenes from both novels: "This woman at her window . . . moves not/The day-long/For fear of crashing on the wall of silence/behind her." The last poem of this section, "Tomb of the Kings," describes a descent into the most nightmarish of rooms, where the persona is embraced by the dead.

The second section of this collection is comprised not of "poems" but of pieces of poetic prose. Hébert's aim is best described in her essay: "Poetry is not the rest-time of the seventh day." Indeed, she appears to be starting with the earth's creation, giving name to and breathing life into all things. She chronicles the first six days, describes the origins of man, sin and misery. In "Eve," "The Murdered City," "An-

nunciation," and "Captive Gods," one is forced to confront the poverty of the human soul, its suffering and its redemption. The abstraction of this section, its generally impersonal and Biblical tone, is at times annoying, at times obscure; one remains uninvolved. However, for some readers she may well have succeeded. Although biased in favour of the book's first half, I recognize, paradoxically, that the second section is almost the necessary complement, finally offering hope in the face of despair.

Poems is a fine book: the work it contains is carefully wrought, honest to the poet's vision. Nowhere is there a false note (for this, one must also credit the translator, Alan Brown). However, some readers may find Hébert's world ultimately too intangible or too grotesque to inhabit. □

One Milton who is living at this hour

The Island Means Minago, by Milton Acorn, NC Press, 122 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By LEONARD GASPARINI

I FIRST MET Milton Acorn at a poetry reading he gave in Windsor, Ont., in March, 1973, on his 50th birthday. He had been invited there to read by a group of young activists who ran a bookshop that specialized in national liberation literature, and whose shelves were stocked with such items as the *Peking Review* and other periodicals and paperbacks of Third World cultures and politics — all of a decidedly socialist nature. The reading was a promotion for his then newly published book *More Poems for People*, and it took place at a community center in the city's East End, in an industrial slum abscessed with dingy taverns and soot-blackened factories. Although the locale was a far cry from the wine-and-cheese mini-auditoriums in most universities, where poetry readings are usually solemnized, it couldn't have been more in keeping with the rugged spirit of Acorn's poetry and his honest concern for working-class people. Moreover, it was the perfect place to give his appellation ("People's Poet") the acid test.

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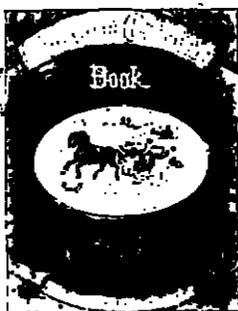
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The audience that evening was certainly a motley one. When I walked in a few minutes before the designated time that Acorn was scheduled to read, I didn't know whether I had stumbled upon a Tupperware party or a locker room chalk-talk. What a variety of people! Of the 50 or so present, there were girls in their teens and housewives (some of them even had babies in their laps), looking for all the world like their only means of support was mothers' allowance; there were neighborhood dudes who had wandered in off the street, curious to see what a poet really looked like; there were gnarly men in work clothes in-between shifts; there were a few pensioners; and there were social workers, some students, and others just standing around looking cool. I had expected to see the whole EngLit faculty of the University of Windsor there, but only a few had decided to attend.

The room where Acorn read was a gymnasium-cum-lounge. There was a barbell-dumbbell set and a weight-bench in the corner. Acorn slouched over the lectern, a cigar in one hand and his book in the other. There was a billiard table behind him. He wore a plaid shirt with the sleeves rolled up at the elbows, scuffed work boots, and faded, wrinkled trousers. He looked like a lumberjack just in from the bush. The audience immediately identified with him, probably because he didn't come on like some smug, tweedy intellectual — the kind who clasps a book to his breast as though it were the Eucharist or something. When he read his poems, they listened: "You growing and your thought threading/The delicate strength of your focus . . . Wherever you are be fearless . . ."

There was none of that forced, uncomfortable silence — the strained feeling of a plugged fart — that one can sense almost tangibly at a poetry reading. Acorn and his audience communicated with a kind of earthy panache. There was a terrific rapport between them. And almost every person left the reading that night with an autographed copy of his book.

The Island Means Minago is Milton Acorn's eighth collection of poems. His first, *In Love and Anger*, was published 20 years ago. Although not as prolific as some of his contemporaries, his books have had a lasting impact on Canadian poetry. His latest one is about Prince Edward Island — its history and its folklore. "Minago" is the aboriginal name given to the Island by the native Micmac people:



Milton Acorn

*Indians say a musical God
took up his brush and painted it,
named it in His own language
"The Island".*

Acorn has interspersed his poems with chunks of prose, old archival photographs, and fragments from his unpublished play *The Road to Charlottetown*. There are passages of such incredible beauty and rhythmic structure in this volume that one finds it difficult to associate the disheveled poet in the photo with the finished craft of the poetry inside. Perhaps there's a reason for this in the following stanza:

*The spattered colour of the time has marked me
So I'm a man of many appearances;
Have come many times to poetry
And come back to define what was meant.*

I could go on quoting his poems for pages, but it's time for me to stop. Acorn's poetry is (or should be) well-known enough without me having to give it my critical approbation. If he's not the best poet in this country right now, I'll break my typewriter. And now to end this review on a facetious note: Acorn's book is the answer to everything you've always wanted to know about P.E.I., but didn't know where to look. □

That old Carr smell

Emily, by Florence McNeil, Clarke Irwin, 64 pages, \$5.95 cloth.

Listen to the Old Mother, by Helene Rosenthal, McClelland & Stewart, 96 pages, \$4.95 paper.

By LINDA ROGERS

IN HER BOOK of poems written in the voice of Emily Carr, Florence McNeil has taken on a formidable lady; Emily is no easy skin to crawl into. She still looms large in her own writing and painting. In her House of Allsorts, the wings she painted under the roof still guard her attic studio. Her memory reverberates in the unchanging tempo of Victorian life.

Her city, a garden on the edge of the sea and the dead Empire, remains as it was — an island in the wilderness. Victoria — Empress, city, and surplice — was the angel Emily wrestled all her life. It was her refuge and her prison. The town laughed, but in the English way tolerated and even encouraged her

eccentricities. She was an exotic flourishing in that garden.

So Emily Carr, Imperial changeling, kept a monkey and a most peculiar boardinghouse, bred dogs, made friends with the Salish Indians and raged, exploding her considerable sexual energy in word and paint.

McNeil has attempted to capture this rococo personage in what appears to be a verse play for one voice, a soliloquy expanding over the large canvas of a remarkable lifetime. She can hardly succeed. Emily was one of a kind and the best record of her own life. She learned from the Indians, a non-verbal people, to speak straight and from the heart; and from her friend Lawren Harris, whom I remember in his grand and beautiful old age, she learned the same forthrightness in philosophy and paint. McNeil intrudes on Emily Carr with awkward exposition and description. She is intimidated by her subject, and yet she has laboured conscientiously with the paradoxes of Emily's life as metaphor, to set up the tension between tea-rose and totem. Sometimes, as in "Discoveries III," she manages to

*Learn the arithmetic
of the seagulls
tuck my feet backwards*

*to go exuberantly
ahead*

Recently, my husband's aunt wrote to me of her experiences as one of Carr's scholars at Crofton House School in Vancouver: "Miss Carr smelt." That smell is hard to press on the page. A few verses reek Emily:

*oh God your arms
in my branches are your creation.*

And they are worth turning to.

Helene Rosenthal has the advantage of a microscopic knowledge of the central character in her drama. She sings, snaps, snarls, and giggles in a catalogue of voices out of her own marrow. There are as many orifices for sounding in her body as there are follicles in one human skin. She is the sum of her considerable experience as daughter, mother, lover, teacher, and purveyor of words.

Listen to the Old Mother is a powerful book of poems, new and selected, written in the rhythm of waves passed over city streets. Rosenthal is an urban photographer. The poems are culled from prints developed in pavement cracks, sucked through the eye and leaked from the brain, the mouth, the womb:

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*My balance is the mind see-sawing with
the lunar pull -
riding it out*

The Old Mother has so many disguises: poet "dancing the string of saliva across death's toothy invitation"; feminist, "Shall we not speak in blood?"; hermaphrodite, for she would read her own blood history and assume her right to be cantor, "to turn ploughed hope into a sword fit for the Maccabee"; and child, mourning the death in life of her Jewish immigrant father, whose cold song was the noise of the sweatshop sewing machine, knowing

*that the only growth
he ever experienced
was cancer*

Rosenthal is obsessed with the function of woman as poet, her bloodright to "trawl a net of floating fingernails". She is one of the few poets who can write about their craft on the high wire between arrogance and self-consciousness. The same is true of her documentary poems. Politics and art are merely brilliant facets of the humanist imagination that is always in ascendancy.

The Old Mother can make you laugh and she can make you cry. She has been there, watching the

*shadow
praying the Idea, O
praying*

From Chile
con amor.

Money and Rain: Tom Wayman Live!, by Tom Wayman, Macmillan, 150 pages, \$5.95 paper.

If You Love, by Leonard Gasparini, Borealis Press, 64 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Through the Eyes of a Woman, by Nancy-Gay Rotstein, Griffin House, 56 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By PIER GIORGIO DI CICCO

TOM WAYMAN'S second book with Macmillan further insures what is by now the most entertaining poetic reputation of the last few years. In fact, as the title indicates, Wayman is playing this role for all it's worth. This time he has punctuated the poems with informal comments on their genesis, their

concerns, their aftermath — altogether extending the Wayman persona beyond the arena of the poem. And for those who want more, a cassette is available for \$9.95. Not having heard the soundtrack, I'll stick with the poems.

They are, as they were in *Blues, Yells, and Chuckles*, talky, wasteful, and tremendous by turns. Certainly, the book is far too long. The lyrical touch of *Waiting for Wayman* is diminished. The "everyman" concern of the "Unemployment Insurance" poems seems to have run its course. But the elegiac strain is there, and it is better than ever. Wayman saves this particular strength for the penultimate section called "The Chilean Elegies." These are inspired poems, whereas the first two sections lose themselves in more talk about Wayman's time in the work force, the mundane but cherishable lives of fellow workers, some "road" poems and some interesting sketches of Wayman's West Coast base. Where these succeed, they succeed in his previous volume as well. But the Chilean elegies are what the book is preparing for. It is there that the interminable line length becomes buoyant, is lifted technically and emotionally by more than any sadness over the financial state of Prairie farmers; these poems deal with death, the plain, awful fact of it — and Wayman has the knowhow to translate the death of one like Neruda into implications for a Vancouver worker. It is in these poems that Wayman's own line on Neruda takes double impact — "those who receive him risk everything."

Leonard Gasparini restores to recent poetry a real sense of the sublime. *If You Love* has its share of good-humoured poems and *scherzos* that make delightful reading; but the gift here is lyric, whether it be for love poetry, portraiture, or landscape — the result is affective. The volume is replete with the delicate touch of such lines as:

*The rain ripens these perspectives
for a still life. To study them
is to unearth the archives
of another tree, another autumn.*

or:

*and the Yin principle unfolds its petals
in supine undulation
like a woman in love
who feels like a placid lake
that's been gently rained upon.*

It is hard to quote the best of these because the poems are complete; these are not "punchline" poems — the endings reverberate back into the poems where no one passage is an excuse for

another. Poems such as "Recitative," "Vin Villa," and "Pastorale II" invite several re-readings at first encounter. And there are some poems that go so far as to evoke a genuine pathos; at least this reader is happily surprised to see someone actually succeeding at it.

The poems are so arranged as to provide a relaxed and satisfying pace. There is formal variety here too, from the typographical poem to the strophic to the stanzaic — all of them handled equally well. My complaint is that there aren't more poems. Beyond that, Gasparini's lyric talent is something unique in Canadian poetry circles.

For all the parading on the cover about 20-20 vision and whatnot, Mrs. Rotstein's book affords very little insight. It's a premature volume; the bare essentials are mastered, and that's it. It's always heartening to see someone working out old growing pains, but one resents the glib assignation of the term "poetry." □

Perchance to dream? Not in this cold clime

The Risk Takers: The Dreamers Who Built a Business from an Idea, by Alexander Ross, Macmillan, 192 pages, \$11.95 cloth and \$6.95 paper.

By **KEN WAXMAN**

WITH THIS BOOK, Alexander Ross becomes the Boswell of the Canadian bourgeoisie. *The Risk Takers* is a chronicle of Canada's entrepreneurs, the people who parlay a workable idea into a successful and sometimes spectacularly profitable business. But if Ross is Boswell in the celebration of the trials and triumphs of his seven entrepreneurs, he moves beyond mere reporting in the course of the book and brackets his subjects with hard, well-argued theories about the entrepreneurial process.

Ross sees the basic entrepreneurial urge as the lifeblood of a successful country. In Canada, that lifeblood has been sluggish, to say the least. He prints a dreary catalogue of inventions that were dreamed up in this country but developed somewhere else — usually the United States — because someone there had the know-how to finance and market them.

This is still a pretty cold climate for dreamers. If any one group is at fault, it's the overly cautious, close-fisted Canadian financial community. Ross points out that there is plenty of venture capital in this country, and plenty of agencies to hand it out — banks, private companies, and an alphabet-soup of government bodies. But the chances of the right idea and the right backer coming together seem to be as remote as drawing the winning number in the Olympic lottery.

Perhaps that's a bit of an exaggeration. But if venture capital were easier to come by in this, "the world's best-paid colony," generations of businessmen wouldn't have to play out what Ross calls the "Clamjuice Cocktail Scenario." Named after a drink in the New York Stock Exchange dining room, the scenario involves businessmen who spend years scratching for funds in the inhospitable north, then fly down to New York where they find a "capitalistic Shangri-La" — a community of moneymen prepared to put up cold cash in exchange for some control of an idea or company.

All well and good for the entrepreneurs, who after all are the heroes of the book. But this reliance on outside

capital doesn't help Canada develop as a nation. Ross says we must encourage our own entrepreneurs or we'll never have a proper manufacturing sector. He adds: "We must become a manufacturing nation, or we won't be a nation at all."

As for the entrepreneurs themselves, they are a diverse crew who range from a former assembly-line worker to sci-ons of the Establishment. They're united by an awareness that invention is simply the mother of a further necessity:

Once you've built the better mousetrap, you have to figure out a way to sell it. Even more crucially you have to convince outside investors that your product has the potential for profit, and that you're the man to exploit that product.

That's from the chapter on Vancouver's Russ Benson, who invented the best garbage compactor in the world. But the same problem faces every one of Ross's entrepreneurs. It's not man against man, but man for money for his idea.

Thanks to Ross's journalistic talents, these men emerge not as cartoon-figure Daddy Warbucks or Sammy Glicks but as well-rounded human beings. Even

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readers with a deep-seated aversion to wealth may find themselves almost cheering when Ron Southern finally lands a \$2.5-million contract from Boeing. We're aware that the money will help push Southern's firm, ATCO, into the front ranks and thus create another world-wide Canadian company.

My favourite chapter tells about Phil Japp, an average working stiff who became an entrepreneur at the age of 43 when the factory he worked for closed down. Within four years Japp had become involved in three successful enterprises and moved from the working class into the middle class. Although he now wears a suit more often and has learned how to order expensive wine, the main evidence of his upward mobility is in his head — "the worries that keep him awake at night, his friends and his dreams." He has exchanged an "environment of security" as an assembly-line worker for an "environment of risk" as an entrepreneur, and he seems to thrive on it.

In a way, that's the philosophical weakness of this book. These are middle-class men reflecting middle-class drives. Ross is a good enough stylist to excite our interest in their ambitions. But he can't quite hide the fact that, no matter how they rationalize their lives, what motivates them is the acquisition of wealth as an end in itself. Ross may believe that the entrepreneurial process is vital to Canada's national development; it is questionable whether many of his subjects believe in anything but themselves.

However, if the book encourages more people to take the entrepreneurial plunge — and if Canada becomes a more prosperous and more independent nation because of it — the collective end will probably justify the selfish means. □

Psalms from oblivion

Helen Creighton: A Life in Folklore, by Helen Creighton, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, illustrated, 224 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By GLYNIS E. C. BARNES

"WAS IT prophetic that I was born in a caul? This . . . is universally known in folklore, and folklore was to become my life's work." This is certainly an appropriate nativity, and an appropriate opening to the autobiography of

Canada's best-known folklorist, but one that strikes a deceptively folksy note. One would like to think that Helen Creighton began her studies in the time-honoured way of imbibing her traditional lore at her mother's knee. But instead of the requisite homely rural background, she was born into a family well-established in the turn-of-the-century Halifax-Dartmouth community. It was 30 years before the prophecy of her birth was fulfilled and she turned to the collection of the folk-songs and folklore of her native Maritime provinces.

Helen Creighton was still at high school when the First World War interrupted what would doubtless have been a conventional middle-class progression from graduation to marriage and motherhood. Instead, she found women gained greater freedom from their war-work tasks, and was loath to return to the confines of domestic routine. Her experiences in the great Halifax explosion of 1917, when she commandeered the family car as a voluntary ambulance, led naturally to a term as a driver with the Royal Flying Corps in Toronto and for the Red Cross Caravan in its tour through the Maritimes. Post-war attempts to settle on a career were interrupted by spells of ill health that have since dogged her throughout her life.

Helen Creighton was still seeking direction in her career when she came across W. Roy Mackenzie's book *Ballads and Sea Songs of Nova Scotia* (1928) and it was suggested to her that she might look for similar songs in her home area around Halifax. Her initial attempts were so encouraging that she soon turned it into a full-time research project, and in 1932 published the results in her first book *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia*. Since then her career has embraced lecture tours and broadcasts, collecting trips under the auspices of the Library of Congress and in association with the National Museum of Canada, and the publication of a dozen books, one of which (*Bluenose Ghosts*, 1957) became a national best seller.

Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia is a model collection, of interest to the general reader and the scholar alike, giving the words and music for 150 separate songs and tracing a number of related variants in the published collections of that date. It is difficult to reconcile this highly polished product with Helen Creighton's accounts of her initial trips to make contact in the fishing communities when, equipped with only

pencil and paper, she found she was totally unqualified to transcribe the few songs obligingly sung to her. A rudimentary attempt to reproduce musical notation was abandoned in favour of a borrowed melodeon, and the patient singer would repeat each phrase of the tune until she had mastered it. Even taking down the words could be a problem, and she soon learned to concentrate on writing down the first line of every verse at the first performance of a song, for a harassed singer could become so confused at being asked to constantly repeat it that he would forget the sequence and perhaps whole verses unless he could be prompted. A dictaphone was a precious acquisition, since 20 or 30 songs could be recorded in one session and then transcribed at leisure. When Dover reprinted the book in 1966, she took the opportunity of correcting some of the tunes that she had laboriously acquired, replacing them with the more accurate versions recorded later.

Modern folksong collectors, painstakingly campaigning with the most approved scientific methods to infiltrate a community and gain the confidence of "informants," will read with fascinated horror of Helen Creighton's blatant approach, knocking on doors and stopping passers-by to enquire honestly for information about songs and singers. But they will also be consumed with envy at the apparent ease with which she charmed songs and tales from even the most recalcitrant character. Her techniques may seem amateurish to the graduate folklorist today, but their success is indicated by the total score of more than 4,000 songs that she has collected over the years from a variety of sources, including the Gaelic, German, French, Negro, and Indian communities in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

Contrary to the traditional practice of "wetting the whistle" of a singer, Helen Creighton disapproved of encouraging a singer by providing him with drinks and relied on her own novelty value:

The men kept hinting that I should have brought something along to loosen their throats, but I had concluded early that if a young woman couldn't get a man to sing without bribing him with drink she wasn't worth her salt. Those who drink will take all the free liquor you supply, and then their singing gets muddled. The secret is to make your singer want to sing. A male collector might use liquor effectively, . . . a woman, particularly a young one, would forfeit respect.

Many collectors have problems with censorship, and are often accused of

bowdlerizing or otherwise interfering with the material they collect. Helen Creighton had the opposite problem; her singers would cut out verses or deny knowledge of certain songs they felt were not suitable for a young lady to hear.

All these collecting experiences are touched with a light hand, with amusing incidents related and tribute paid for help and kindnesses received over the years. But they make up a smaller proportion of the book than one would wish. Surely her first and possibly most important "source," Ben Henneberry, and the fascinating community on Devil's Island, deserves a whole chapter to itself; yet this immensely rich area is dealt with in a few short pages and a couple of later references. This light touch does less than justice to her important career, as she presents many of her own achievements as a series of lucky chances and coincidences. It becomes obvious that she must have used considerable ingenuity and energy to promote and finance her many unusual ventures, but she glosses over the difficulties that she found in her path. One hopes that the tables will be turned on Helen Creighton, and that an enter-

prising young folklorist will one day make her the "informant" and recover the fascinating tales she alone can tell about her lifetime in folklore. □

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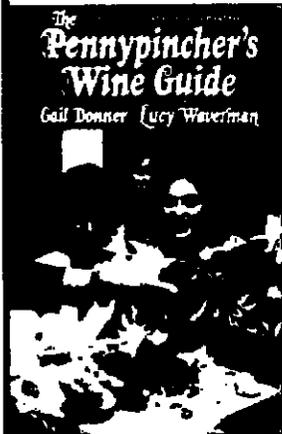
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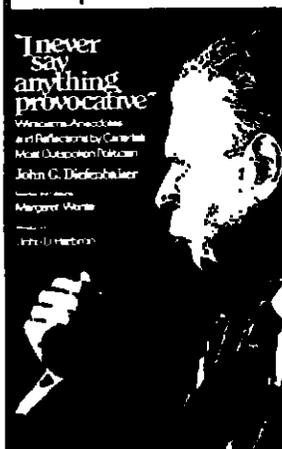
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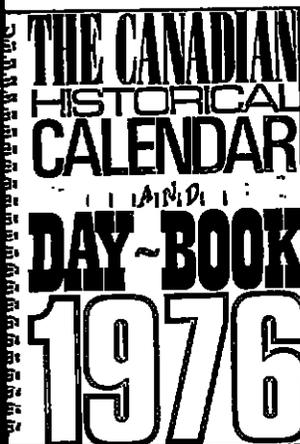
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Welfare checks and balances

Social Welfare in Canada: Ideals and Realities, by Andrew Armitage, McClelland & Stewart, 234 pages, \$4.85 paper.

By MICHEL HORN

ONE OF THE truisms of public affairs is that Canada is now a welfare state. Mostly this is held to be "a Good Thing," though occasional denunciations of the alleged morale-sapping effects of some welfare scheme or other remind us that there are Canadians who still hanker after the good old days.

Professor Andrew Armitage of the School of Social Welfare at the University of Calgary has written a book that serves as a useful commentary on and critique of the truism. By discussing within an analytical framework the various services available he shows that, in fact, the truism is only partly true.

His own bias is towards humanistic values, "concern for the individual, faith in democracy, equality and equity, social justice and community." These, he believes, have been primarily operative in the extension of social-welfare services in Canada during this century. But the grave inadequacies that he points to, and the existence of a taxation system which he shows to be regressive in its effects, should make the reader pause. An awareness of the course of Canadian history in the past 75 years suggests that the desires for social control and for shoring up levels of consumption have been more important than Armitage is prepared to grant.

There is an implicit warning in this book to those NDPers who proudly claim to have inspired most of the welfare programs now in effect in this country. Society is probably more kind to misfits and the poor than it was 50 years ago, but not a lot more. Left-wing radicals used to see social welfare as part of a new society in which the distribution of income and wealth, and hence power, would have to be significantly altered. As Armitage shows, however, existing welfare schemes have changed the relationships of wealth and power very little.

Armitage may not be as sceptical about the motives of politicians and bureaucrats as he should be. Yet he is an honest and intelligent observer, and

the anomalies and weaknesses in the patchwork system we have are made abundantly clear. His discussion of alternatives is interesting and reflects his values admirably.

It is easy to approve these values. It is impossible to do the same for Armitage's style and grammar. He writes clumsily: jargon is compounded by a syntax that can charitably be described as infelicitous. And what can one say of an academic who mixes up "principle" and "principal," "deprecate" and "depreciate," to mention two of the more annoying instances? This aspect of the book suggests inadequate in-house editing; so do the confusing format of the bibliography and the incompleteness of the index.

The book has a helpful glossary and a brief chronology of the period 1900-1974. The historical material is disappointingly meagre, at least to an historian, and occasionally inaccurate. The early leaders of the CCF were *not* drawn principally from the ranks of the clergy, for example. The bibliography is anti-historical in that it virtually ignores what was published in Canada on social welfare before 1945.

But these complaints must not be allowed to obscure the important contribution this book makes to our knowledge of a field so far insufficiently researched. *Social Welfare in Canada* should do much to inform those who manage to work their way through it. □

Cock-ups and muscles

Survival: Labour's Trials and Tribulations in Canada, by Mary V. Jordan, McDonald House (125 Davenport Rd., Toronto), 292 pages, \$9.50 cloth.

The Politics of Labour, by T. Phillips Thompson, introduction by Jay Atherton, *Social History of Canada* series, U of T Press, 280 pages, \$17.50 cloth, \$5.95 paper.

By IRVING ABELLA

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS of Canadian labour neither of these books is of much use, though *The Politics of Labour* does have a unique interest of its own. The same, however, cannot be said of *Survival*. It is a disaster from beginning to end. Even its title is grossly misleading. *Survival* is most assuredly not the

story of "labour's trials and tribulations in Canada." Rather, it is the biography of R. B. Russell, and a bad one at that.

Russell deserved better. He was one of the most colourful and talented labour leaders of this century. He helped found the militant One Big Union, played a key role in the Winnipeg General Strike, was imprisoned for his activities, and for the remainder of his long but active career as a unionist from the 1920s through to the 1950s, was integrally involved in many of Western Canadian labour's most important battles. Despite this, and despite having Mary Jordan as his secretary for all of those action-packed years, the man who emerges from this muddled hagiography is dull, superficial, and completely unrecognizable to students of Canadian history.

Clearly this is a book that should never have been published. It is confused, disorganized, badly written, and worst of all, crammed with ludicrous, totally inexcusable errors. There is absolutely no evidence that Ms. Jordan has ever read any Canadian history; indeed there is much evidence she has not. For example, she has "Jas. Woodsworth" founding the CCF (which she sometimes calls the "Canadian Cooperative Commonwealth") in 1943, which was quite an achievement for a man who had died the year before. She credits Russell with organizing the Nova Scotia coal miners in the 1920s, a job in fact done by J. B. McLachlan whom Jordan does mention twice in passing, each time spelling his name differently. Ms. Jordan also claims that the notorious labour radical, Sam Scarlett (naturally misspelt Scarlet) was "never seen again" after a trip to the East with Tim Buck, and was probably "murdered," (whether by Buck or not, she never says). Needless to say, Sam Scarlett, or at least someone who looked and talked exactly like him, was active in labour and radical circles for the next 15 years, and was the subject of a good deal of newspaper and police attention. Easily Ms. Jordan's most embarrassing — and certainly most telling — mistake, however, is to identify Russell, her boss and close friend for 40 years, in a picture of the Winnipeg Strike leaders, as Fred Dixon. Indeed, in that photograph of the eight leaders — all of whom she knew personally — seven are incorrectly identified.

Obviously this is not a book that can be taken seriously. Before I stopped counting midway through the book I

had found upwards of 50 serious mistakes in facts, dates, identifications, and spelling. But perhaps the most distressing part of the book is the acknowledgements in which Ms. Jordan profusely thanks the Manitoba Federation of Labour for "accepting the responsibility" of distributing 1,500 copies of this book throughout the province. Surely, the federation owes it to the people of Manitoba to renege on this promise. Enough damage has already been done to the reputation of the unwitting victim of this fiasco, poor old Bob Russell.

The Politics of Labour first appeared in 1887 and made no discernible impact either here or in the United States. Aside from a handful of graduate students and professors, nobody heard of it again until it was resurrected this year in the superb Social History of Canada series published by the University of Toronto Press. After reading it, one can only wonder why. Of what relevance to Canadians today is an analysis of American socialism in the 1880s by a Canadian social critic of the time? Unquestionably, as Jay Atherton's useful and informative introduction makes clear, T. Phillips Thompson was a fascinating character and one of the most important, and least-known, of Canada's social thinkers. Thompson was a prolific and acute writer (a tradition clearly being carried on, with somewhat more public recognition, by his grandson, Pierre Berton) who made his mark as a labour journalist. Much of our information concerning the conditions of labour in Canada in the first years of this century comes from Thompson's incisive reports and columns in the *Labour Gazette* and the *Palladium of Labor*. Indeed, the best part of this book is the appendices in which four of Thompson's articles for the *Palladium* are reprinted, along with the enjoyable "Labor Reform Songster" he put together. In fact, though Atherton does not mention it, Thompson was still writing a regular column for a labour newspaper — *The Worker* — in the 1920s when he was well into his 80s. And his writing was as spritely and as trenchant as ever.

Unfortunately, there is not one mention of Canada in the *Politics of Labour*. Indeed this is a rather pointed commentary on the state of Canadian socialism in this period, when its leading proponent writes a book on North American socialism without once mentioning his own country. Ironically, a few years later a prominent American socialist, Gustavus Myers, began to

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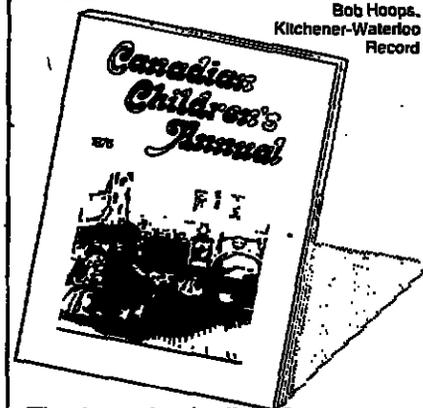
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Toronto, Ont.

work on a book, *The History of Canadian Wealth*, which would concern itself exclusively with Canada, and whose impact on Canada would be infinitely greater than Thompson's on America.

Nevertheless, as an analysis of late 19th-century American socialism, *The Politics of Labour* is of more than passing interest. In effect, the book is a plea for the creation of a labour party to represent the concerns of the American working class. For the average reader, however, it would have been helpful had Atherton spent some time in his introduction detailing the ideas of Henry George and Edward Bellamy, which Thompson found so intriguing. This would have made Thompson's analysis more relevant to most readers. But what emerges most clearly from this book is how desperate is the need among students of Canadian history for a full-scale study of the ideas and career of one of our most profound — and most forgotten — social thinkers, T. Phillips Thompson. □

Canada's top poll-vaulter

Working Papers on Canadian Politics, by John Meisel (second enlarged edition), McGill-Queen's University Press, 289 pages, \$6 paper.

By ALEXANDER CRAIG

THE TITLE AT first glance may seem pedestrian, but the more one reads this book, the more apt it seems. John Meisel, professor of politics at Queen's, takes pains throughout to stress that each of the six long papers, or chapters, is, in different ways, a tentative analysis capable of elaboration or extension; in his foreword he states, "I look forward to hearing from readers who might wish to discuss any aspect of the papers."

The book's main concern is with Canadian voting patterns and how these reflect the public's political attitudes and behaviour. The first four papers are based on the largest and most comprehensive electoral survey yet carried out in Canada, in 1968, the year of the first Trudeau-Stanfield contest. They analyze what seemed to the voters to be the main issues. Much has changed

since then, but much has remained the same: the fundamental topics examined, such as relations between the English- and French-speaking sectors, and the different images of the various parties and their leaders and candidates, are still of crucial importance in Canadian public life.

This is a stimulating and sophisticated work. The author raises many questions, and then sets about to suggest how to try to answer, systematically, quite a number of them. He rightly warns against simplistic approaches and answers. For instance, writing about linguistic cleavage, he begins by pointing out that a recent survey "shows that at least 14% of the electorate cannot be so classified without ambiguity."

This is all done in a very readable manner; the figures are given their due prominence and weight, no more. Seldom does the author slip into jargon, and even then one can work out for oneself what one thinks a "gateway" or a "screen question" must mean to a pollster. At times, indeed, the style is quite engaging, as Meisel expresses his desire for a dialogue with his reader. This, fortunately, does not become too frequent and thus coy.

Who will these readers be? People teaching and studying Canadian politics will, obviously, have to be acquainted with this work. But this book is also aimed at the layman interested in understanding more fully the Canadian political process.

Here some reservations are in order. This is not the product of a wealthy publishing firm, so the lack of an index can be understood, but still regretted. The book has otherwise been put together well and solidly.

At times the analysis seems to go into excessive detail, but on the other hand many of the findings on, say, levels of tolerance and hostility within different language and religious groups, on all sorts of issues, are often fascinating and provocative. The author makes few comparisons with other societies, but perhaps at Canada's present stage of national development and introspection one should be grateful for any comparisons at all.

Another qualification that might more justifiably be made, at least as far as the prospective general reader is concerned, is the need for some introductory remarks, however simple, on the polls and how they were conducted.

Properly concerned as he is with system and method, Professor Meisel seems to overlook that many readers will want to know how this data was amassed and arranged before it was analyzed. There can be no question that this was done reliably and responsibly, but the ordinary reader is often capable of more curiosity (and skepticism) than academics give him credit for (or, occasionally, than academics themselves, for that matter).

It should be emphasized, however, that these are minor reservations. This is basic material, ably presented. A wide range of issues are discussed by Canada's most experienced scholar in the field. The components of Canada's emerging national political culture are skilfully examined, and such central features as the immense importance of regionalism, the continued dominance and "smug paternalism" of the Liberals, the "shaky, ill-fitting presence in Ottawa" of the Conservatives, are dealt with at length. The likely trends indicated by these studies should interest and influence others besides policy-makers.

Public opinion is, as D'Arcy McGee put it, "that many-headed monster."

True enough — but it is still one of the most important of political animals, and it must be faced, or at least viewed. Meisel guides us around this part of the public bestiary with skill, acumen and, to use one of his own favourite words, style. He lives up to the impressive quotation he ends one of his papers with. In her book on Ontario reptiles, Barbara Froom refers to "one of Mother Nature's better maxims: Behold the turtle, it makes progress only when its neck is out." □

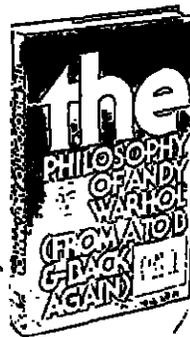
IN BRIEF

BACK WE GO once more, back through the misty haunted years to Daphne duMaurier's *Mandalay*. This particular reincarnation of that reliable old gothic edifice is called *The House on Cheyne Walk* (William Heinemann, \$9.95). The architect is "Toronto" author Perry Organ, who obviously knows the *Rebecca* blueprint off by romantic heart. Thirtyish Boston spinster is summoned to gloomy household in London's Chelsea by attractive, ambitious, troubled brother-in-law, ostensibly to look after mysteriously dead

sister's precocious five-year-old son. The traditional sour housekeeper, friendly young maid, and hint-dropping friends are all in attendance. Was the sister's death accident, suicide, or murder? Is Charles all he seems? Readers who plough through this competently overwritten thriller for the answers will be rewarded by one or two respectable plot twists. But Heinemann ought to be soundly scolded for the promotion band on the jacket. "First Novel by Toronto Author," is how it describes this effort by California-born, Harvard-educated Ms. Organ. As my own precocious eight-year-old son asked: "Dad, does that mean nobody in Toronto has ever written a novel before?"

DM

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Eve). Most interesting, however, is their promotion of another author, William Kotzwinkle, who sometimes lives in New Brunswick. Kotzwinkle is an Avon "in-house" author. That is, he has been published directly by Avon and never by anyone else. All his publications have been in paperback, the first four with moderate success. His last book has so inspired Avon that they have chosen to print up several thousand copies of it in what they call a "flare advance reading format," sort of high-class galley with glossy cover that would put many regular paperback printings to shame. The story itself first appeared in *Redbook* magazine, a fact that gives some clue to its content. *Swimmer in The Secret Sea* is about a young bush-living couple's first tragic experience with parenthood. The baby dies at birth and the young husband buries it back up on the hill. A novellette, really. It has a simple and, at times, quite appealing style; but its attempt to plumb the depths of life, love, birth, death, and so on remains inevitably fixed on the *Redbook* level — quite a safe level, it might be added, for the mass readership.

PS

THERE WERE NO "Wounded Knees" in Upper Canada. By the time settlement began in earnest, missionaries of various faiths presided over Indians living quietly on scattered reserves. In *Medicine Man to Missionary* (Peter Martin Associates, \$8.95 casebound and \$3.95 paper) Elizabeth Graham looks at evidence that suggests that, although missionaries played a large role in the suppression of traditional Indian life-styles, they were second-hand villains. Contact with British officials and unscrupulous traders had very early begun a process of cultural decay. Lost between two worlds, the Indians had gambled on Christianity and "civilization." Unfortunately the missionaries saw the Indians as heathens and savages in need of salvation. They plied the natives with European education, hygiene lectures, and admonitions to temperance. But as Harold Cardinal has bitterly noted, the Methodists, Baptists, Moravians, Catholics, and Anglicans all disregarded the cultural values, spiritual beliefs, and traditional ways of the Indians. They were well-meaning pragmatists, these missionaries. If they conspired to turn free-roaming hunters into peasant farmers, they nevertheless helped temper the fear, arrogance, dup-

licity, and contempt engendered by dealings between Whites and Indians. What emerges from this balanced study is a curiously sad and squalid tale of defeat. It is small comfort to reason, as does Elizabeth Graham, that "processes of change have a logic of their own."

GORD RIPLEY

ROBERT LEGGET's *Ottawa Waterway: Gateway to a Continent* (U of T press, 320 pages, \$15) is obviously a labour of love and the product of an author who understands and enjoys his subject. Legget begins at the beginning with the geological formation of the Ottawa River and then goes on to describe its importance to early explorers, missionaries, and fur traders. In each case, rich descriptions based on excerpts from the original accounts of these early travellers enhance the text. The historical significance of the river is further illustrated by the role it played in the timber trade and in encouraging settlement to the area through which it flows. Nor does the story of the Ottawa end here. In the final chapter Legget discusses the river as it is today. More than that, the author indicates the best roads for viewing the river and mentions some of the more unusual places to be seen "on personal journeys of discovery." This book is an interesting blend of local history and travelogue. It will add a new dimension to the reader's appreciation of the Ottawa River and its role in Canada's history.

LINDA GRAYSON

SILENCE

*a white arctic owl
 slow stroking by
 a backdrop of snow
 half a mile away*

*head of a dog
 on blue sea ice
 small drift behind it
 frozen snow fingers*

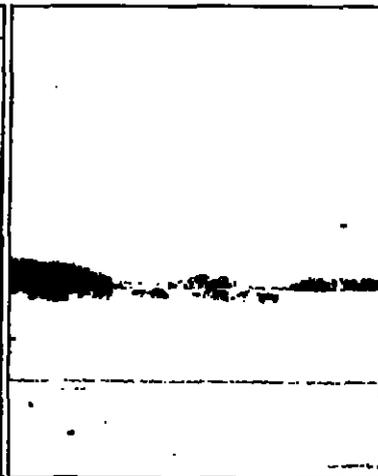
*small tent ring
 on ridge crest
 bones
 of small birds
 under stones*

(From *North Book* by Jim Green, illustrations by Nauya, Blackfish Press, 1851 Moore Ave., Burnaby, B.C., 55 pages, \$4.95 paper.)

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PERIODICALLY SPEAKING

By LINDA SANDLER

JUDGING BY THE recent women's issues of *The Canadian Forum* and *Canadian Dimension*, International Women's Year is a general embarrassment. Phyllis Grosskurth of the *Forum* (who's out of the picture, somewhat) objects to feminist rhetoric because it gives all women the same "bad name" — she likes men and doesn't want to antagonize them. Political feminists object to IWY because it's an extravagant sham enabling governments to co-opt a few *bourgeoises* and leave the rest of us as we were. This is the stand taken by Marlene Dixon in *Dimension* and Lorna Marsden in the *Forum* — but the use they make of this perception proves that the Great Gap between Marxists and Canadian socialists is wide and more real than the media myth of a United Feminist Front.

The fate of Women's Liberation, Dixon writes, is the fate of all the mass movements of the 1960s: middle-class *avant gardes* make bad revo-

lutionaries, and the movements eventually split along class lines. The reformist feminists move up into the male hierarchy, but the factory "girl's" only hope is radical social change; she must fight with her class against men and women of the corporate ruling class.

LET'S TAKE *Dimension* first, where Nellie McClung, the early Canadian feminist, is presented by Gwen Matheson as the model radical. In her review of McClung's autobiography, *In Times Like These*, Matheson says McClung diagnosed a lack of humanity in society and presupposed a radical cure.

One way of understanding a complex society is to examine the forces in a simpler one. Claire Culhane, who was a hospital administrator in South Vietnam, writes about the necessary equality in a country rebuilding itself; Margaret Randall updates her book, *Cuban Women Now* and Margaret Benston and Pat Davitt undertake a fascinating reconstruction of women's changing status from pre-agricultural to post-modern times. One of the myths they assail is the existence of matriarchies. Agricultural societies were matrilineal rather, kinship following the female

line, but there was close co-operation between female farmers and male hunters.

The part of feminist doctrine that never had much exposure on the media was the assault on all privilege and social hierarchy — something incomprehensible to reformers such as Betty Friedan. (This is absurdly evident in Friedan's account, in a recent issue of *The Saturday Review*, of her meeting with that intransigent Marxist, Simone de Beauvoir.) And although the essays in *Dimension* are generally jargon-free and more informed than those in the *Forum*, the ideological stand would be alien to most of the *Forum* writers.

THE *Forum* is an academic journal of the moderate left, and while its contributors are consistently concerned with working-class women, it's the liberal conscience we're hearing. Lorna Marsden holds a view the Marxist might call "left-opportunist-revisionist," but it's entirely in accord with the Canadian socialist tradition: she believes that change is possible within the system; that the government can be compelled to make female workers equal with their male colleagues. She doesn't believe, appar-

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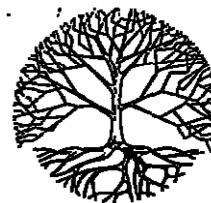
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ently, that the end of the ruling class is imminent or desirable.

Pamela McCallum though, does an amusing Marxist analysis of the *True Confessions* genre. As she says, it's not the feminine stereotypes that are most disturbing, but the view of society. Middle America is portrayed as God's gift to mankind, as the conformist's reward and paradise.

This perspective is notably absent from Renée Goldsmith Kasinsky's jargon-ridden article on rape; she deals justly with her victims but she doesn't see that rape is also a symptomatic example of the many violations and injustices that are harder to redress than to endure.

The occupational hazard of academics and Marxists is their remove from reality; they tend to regard ideology as their ground, their fundamental reality. The most interesting *Forum* feature, "The Land of Beginning Again" (which is excerpted from Peter Martin's forthcoming *Women in the Canadian Mosaic*), studies the experience of Latin American immigrant women; it is unusually convincing because it's grounded in the experience of the women the authors have interviewed. Ana Lizón Alberro and Gloria Montero argue that the working-class immigrant comes to Canada because it's a consumer's paradise; the middle-class immigrant sees Canada as a cultural alternative to American consumerism. Makes one think, doesn't it?

In the *Forum's* Arts section, a man-and-woman team looks at female grievances in recent fiction: Doug Featherling gives a superb account of the progress of Candice Bergen; Judy Keeler interviews P. K. Page in disorderly fashion; and Bernice Lever interviews Dorothy Livesay (the only author who has space in *Dimension* as well as in the *Forum*). Livesay's an old pro of Can-Lit; her stories and opinions cover four decades, so it's an interesting interview — badly edited, if at all. As a reviewer says in another connection, it's a poor advertisement for *journalisme verité*.

I don't know if the editors have a theory about what constitutes female writing, but the poetry and fiction features tend to the baroque style: Janis Rapoport's baroque poems are strikingly expressive; but the style of Katherine Govier's fable is mannered, which spoils a good story.

All in all, it's a fair issue. And if it could be livelier — well, at least some of the names are new. As Bobbe Besold's cover painting suggests, the women are surfacing.

NOTES & COMMENTS

Time, Digest and Malone's toy Globe

THE TORONTO *Globe and Mail*, once the pride and glory of daily journalism in Canada, has become a most peculiar newspaper since it was acquired by FP Publications Ltd. and came under the control of Richard Malone. True, Malone has not yet succeeded in doing to the *Globe* what he did to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, which was to destroy utterly that publication's reputation for journalistic integrity. Inspired by publisher Malone's neurotic anti-socialism, the *Free Press* tried desperately — by fair means and foul — to bring down Manitoba's newly elected NDP government a few years ago. The issue was government auto insurance and the news columns of the *Free Press* carried a daily barrage of propaganda on behalf of the private insurance companies. No new peg was considered too flimsy to support yet another major scare story about the evil machinations of the NDP. Rumours became facts, facts became perversions, and perversions became editorial policy. In the end the government prevailed and Malone fled east to rally Tory Ontario against the advancing socialist hordes.

So far Malone's influence has not been readily detectable in the *Globe's* news pages. But the editorial pages, which for years had been bastions of sound (if conservative) common sense, are a different matter. Among other things, the newspaper has consistently opposed Bill C-58, the legislation to end the special tax privileges enjoyed by the so-called Canadian editions of *Time* and *Reader's Digest*. When Ottawa finally declared that "not substantially the same" meant 80 per cent Canadian content, the *Globe's* answer was an editorial headed "Content? Silly, risky censorship." It argued that the decree "achieves the rare feat of being both fatuous and dangerous," and concluded: "Governments become extremely heavy-footed and clumsy when they stomp into areas where they do not belong."

Now that line has the old Malone ring to it. It is also, of course, the line

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Time and *Reader's Digest* have been forced to fall back on. This last-ditch argument for cultural continentalism concedes, reluctantly, that Canadian publications should be at least 75 per cent Canadian-owned, but claims the rule limiting the amount of cheap, foreign-produced content in Canadian magazines to 20 per cent is a form of government censorship. In a free society, charges of government censorship stir up strong libertarian passions. However, in the context of Canadian history and economic reality, this particular charge is simply ludicrous. And for readers who may be seduced by the *Time* line it is important to explain why.

First, this is tax legislation, not content legislation. The original idea, remember, was to give indigenous Canadian magazines a chance of survival against the mounting flood of foreign competition. Okay, so what is an indigenous Canadian magazine? Manifestly not one owned, controlled, and largely produced in Manhattan or Pleasantville, N. Y. — as any reasonable Icelander or Papua-New Guinean could see. That many Canadians, some of whom are federal cabinet ministers, can't see it is part of the very problem the legislation was designed to counteract.

Second, *Time* and *Reader's Digest* have used their special tax advantage to build up an enormously powerful circulation base in Canada during the last 10 years. They now find it expedient to

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turn themselves into Canadian magazines overnight. Leave aside the question of whether, given their economic head start, that would be fair to the rest of us. The real question is whether it would be possible. Again the answer would be obvious to any Icelander or Papua-New Guinean. Indeed, it was obvious to Henry Luce. From political serif to cultural comma, by every meaningful philosophical test that can be applied, *Time* and *Reader's Digest* are American magazines presenting an American view of the world. And no editorial cosmetic surgery, accomplished by prodigious feats of rewriting in Montreal, can change their essential natures.

Third, the content rule is an arbitrary *ad hoc* figure arrived at only because *Time* kept insisting that an abstract concept — Canadian-ness — be spelled out in concrete form. *Time* was evidently prepared to accommodate itself to 60 per cent Canadian content but bridles at 80 per cent. Why? For one thing, the overheads required would drastically shrink the fat profits *Time* Canada has been carting out of this country. More to the point, the magazine couldn't meet the 80 per cent criterion and still remain *Time*.

Fourth, it has been suggested that the 80 per cent content rule may come back to haunt indigenous Canadian publications — particularly the new *Maclean's*. Unlikely, but not unjust. If a Canadian publication ever reaches the stage where it no longer is written and edited predominantly by and for Canadians, and no longer reflects a Canadian view of the world, it should no longer enjoy any tax advantages that accrue to distinctly Canadian magazines. That's not censorship; it's logic.

Finally, there's the argument that the government is stomping into areas where it does not belong. This is piffle, of the most perverse kind. As a matter of national policy, Canadian governments have been responding to American economic and cultural challenges with similar protective legislation since the days of "manifest destiny." That's why we have wheat boards, utility boards, energy boards, film boards, and broadcasting commissions — all of which administer regulations much more protective and specific than those related to Bill C-58.

Malone may wish to undo history by setting his toy *Globe* spinning on a free-enterprise continental axis. But it won't convince rational men that *Time* was, is, or ever can be an indigenous Canadian magazine. □

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A 'PRETZEL' REPLIES

Sir:

In reply to Irving Layton's somewhat stentorian letter in your November issue (regarding my review of Seymour Mayne's *Name*), let me first put to rest his rhetorical query as to my sociopolitical advocacy by stating that I am neither "an ideologue of the extreme Right (nor) the extreme Left." Nor am I naive enough to think that art is apolitical. There is no such animal. Although it is possible to concede to such an expedient subterfuge, however tenuous, on Layton's part, it most certainly was not my intention to raise hackles by affronting those tenets of his faith that he considers sacrosanct — if only for the sake of his art. I am sorry that Layton misconstrued the *tone* of my criticism *a priori*. If he chooses to deduce a certain bigotry from the premise of it, he is quite free to do so; but it's his *stack of chips*. We're both fair game in that respect.

Aside from his usual belabouring allusions to anything his hypersensitivity detects as being even remotely anti-Semitic (viz. "Stalin's directive...." I'm surprised it wasn't Horst Wessel or the SS; but then he's overworked that one), his rebuttal reminded me of the bellowing of a bull moose caught in a barbed-wire fence during a hail storm. To all intents and purposes the man is unquestionably, though sometimes obnoxiously, hortative when it comes to issues, especially those that smack of jingoism and intellectual mollicoddling; but when he comes on half-cocked like Wyatt Earp, reluctant to draw his gun — ("I don't want to launch into my familiar diatribe against....") — who does he think he's kidding? The state of book reviewing in this country has never been better than it is at present. I'm sure even George Woodcock would attest to that. I suggest that Layton acquaint himself with Virginia Woolf's and Gottfried Benn's discerning treatises on the subject. As for what he repudiates as "kitchen-sink kitsch," he should be the last one to speak. If my mention of "Zionistic sensibilities" offended him enough to resort to a racial slur, then the man is sorely in need of some good unbiased counselling. And as for the utilitarian alternatives he proposes for me — well, it gives you a clear idea of just where he stands on his mount: looking down perhaps, but with a sty in one eye and a tic in the other.

Leonard Gasparini
Toronto

TOKENISM DENIED

Sir:

I read, with more than passing interest, Leonard Gasparini's review of *The Fleur-de-Lys Affair* by Hal Ross (October issue) and I feel obliged to refute his charge of "tokenism," which is completely unfounded. (And, I may add, totally out of place in a book review.) Obviously he is not aware that Doubleday Canada has its own publishing program, which focuses on Canadian writers and writing. Among our authors are Alan Fry, Barry Broadfoot, Donald Jack, Clark Blaise, E. G. Perrault, and Harold Horwood — names familiar to readers across Canada.

We are committed to seeking out and developing new Canadian talent, and, despite the

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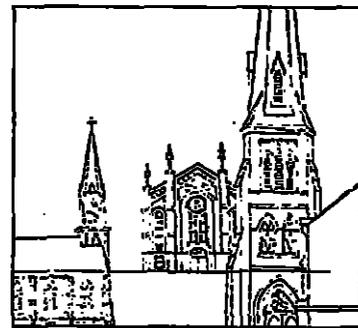
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reviewer's opinion of *The Fleur-de-Lys Affair*, we believe that Hal Ross is one of several authors on our list with a promising future.

If this be tokenism, Mr. Gasparini, make the most of it.

Betty Jane Corson
Managing Editor
Doubleday Canada Ltd.
Toronto

THANK YOU, MR. GOLDBERG

Sir:

I should just like you to know that I think the review of *Coroner* by Richard Lubbock is one of the most inept I have ever read.

It's in your October issue in case you missed it in your editing.

George Goldberg
Toronto

Mr. Lubbock writes: I'm delighted to embrace Mr. Goldberg as an ally in my campaign against safety-first "liberalism" such as Shulman's. If Goldberg is in fact more "epic" than I at defending free enterprise, I pray that he expend some of his invaluable talents in support of the cause.

ALL IS NOT VANITY

Sir:

We at Pile of Bones Publishing — while naturally flattered by Jim Christy's generous praise of *The Meadowlark Connection* (October issue) — were outraged by its description as a "vanity-press book." This is substance for libel.

Yes, *The Meadowlark Connection* is cheaply and simply printed, and we take frank pride in its "utterly dumb" cover. But it is no more a vanity book than the *samizdat* of dissident Soviet writers or, for that matter, the appearance of one of Pierre Berton's *oeuvres* under the M & S imprint. Self-publishing is not necessarily vanity publishing, which is usually a pathetic arrangement whereby an unsuccessful writer is fleeced by a printing company and ends up with several thousand expensive copies of his memoirs in his basement, soaking up backed-up sewage with the passing years.

If he read the introduction, Mr. Christy might have seen the book's appearance in this format as a protest against the fraud and greed of certain sectors of the "Canadian publishing industry." In the last few years (at least) there has developed a new kind of "vanity publishing" in this country, and it is this: a writer will willingly give up a decent return on a book just for the prestige of seeing his name on the cover of a "real" trade edition. He is increasingly asked, directly or indirectly, to subsidize the cost of publication.

The glory is illusory, and the writer in this instance is not feeding himself, but the editors, publishers, compositors, proof-readers, designers, promotion managers, and a whole host of fat-cat parasites who continue to pick the bones of Canadian writing talent. I and Pile of Bones Publishing agree with the Writers' Union of Canada that it is time to put an end to it. No writer should accept less than a 10 per cent royalty, and must be encouraged to hold onto a realistic percentage of the future and auxiliary rights of his book.

There is an enormous ripoff happening in this country, much of it under the guise of cultural nationalism and literary patronage.

The Meadowlark Connection is not mouldering in our basements. Without a distributor,

without hype or promotion, the book sold out its first printing in a month. The second printing will be sold out by Christmas. How? By word-of-mouth, and we have filled orders from Australia, the U.S., and England.

A final correction. Our address is most emphatically *not* the University of Saskatchewan, Regina. It is 2709 13th Ave., Regina, Sask.

Ken Mitchell
Production Supervisor
Pile of Bones Publishing Co.
Regina

CANADIANISM DOUBTED

Sir:

In regard to the article, "So long Sono Nis" (October issue), I wept all the way through. Could the fact of Sono Nis Press failing have to do with the fact that Michael Yates still doesn't know what country he's in? The first novelist the press "discovered" was a U.S. writer in the U.S. When it published an anthology of contemporary B.C. poets, it left out a number of B.C. poets and included some non-B.C., recent U.S. arrivals in other provinces!

Michael Yates went to a national poetry reading, attacked our most distinguished woman poet during her presentation, and he had to be removed from the hall. More recently, he broadcast and wrote in Vancouver that he is really a better Canadian than born Canadians. Maybe Michael Yates knows how to build an audience for his publications, but is he right in thinking the audience will be in Canada?

Robin Mathews
Ottawa

CanWit No.6

OUR OLD FRIENDS at McClarkan & Newspider, the all-Canadian publishers, are in a pickle again. They are ready to go to press with the committee-written epic *Resurfacing in Sarnia*, which promises to be the long-awaited great Canadian novel. (See November issue for opening and concluding paragraphs.) But the novel's computer-selected author, Joyce Castor, lacks a credible history. Where and when was Castor born? What has he or she been doing since then? The usual prize (see below) for the most interesting dust-jacket biography (maximum length, 75 words) of this new literary luminary. Address entries to CanWit No. 6, *Books in Canada*, 501 Yonge Street, Suite 23, Toronto M4Y 1Y4. The deadline is New Year's Eve.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 4

ARRANGING BOOKS by author or subject can be dull; it's much more fun to mate titles. Readers were asked to supply possible pairings. The winner was Alex McGregor of Weston, Ont., who receives a copy of the award-winning art book *John Fillion* by Dorothy Came-

ron and John Reeves (Martlet Press, \$19.50) for these delightful combinations:

□ Frank Underhill's *In Search of Canadian Liberalism with Roughing It in the Bush* by Susanna Moodie.

□ Dalton Camp's *Gentlemen, Players and Politicians with Wild Animals I Have Known* by E. T. Seton.

□ *The Scalpel, The Sword* by Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon with Morton Shulman's *Anyone Can Make a Million*.

□ James Gray's *Booze with Seven Rivers of Canada* by Hugh MacLennan.

Honourable mentions:

□ Alice Munro's *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You with God is Not a Fish Inspector* by W. D. Valgardson.

□ Hugh Garner's *Violation of the Virgins with One Damn Thing After Another* by Hugh Garner.

— Penny Johnston, Toronto

□ Gordon Sinclair's *Will Gordon Sinclair Please Sit Down with Sitting Bull* by Grant MacEwan.

□ Helene Rosenthal's *Listen to the Old Mother with Muhammad Ali* by Wilfrid Sheed.

— Stan Plomish, Hamilton, Ont.

□ Irving Layton's *The Pole-Vaulter with She'll Only Drag You Down* by Norman Levine.

□ Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House with I'm a Stranger Here Myself* by Alden Nowlan.

□ Robert Zend's *From Zero to One with You Can't Get There From Here* by Hugh Hood.

□ Earl Birney's *The Cow Jumped Over the Moon with Lies* by John Newlove.

□ Joe Rosenblatt's *Virgins and Vampires with French Kiss* by Nicole Brossard.

□ Walter Stewart's *Shrug: Trudeau in Power with From Cliché to Archetype* by Marshall McLuhan.

— Linda Sandler, Toronto

□ *The Pennypincher's Wine Guide* by Gail Donner and Lucy Waverman with Pierre Berton's *The Last Spike*.

— Marjorie Boyle, Toronto

□ Richard Rohmer's *Exxoneration with Literary Lapses* by Stephen Leacock.

□ Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman with Delight* by Mazo de la Roche.

— Keith Garebian, Dollard des Ormeaux, Que.

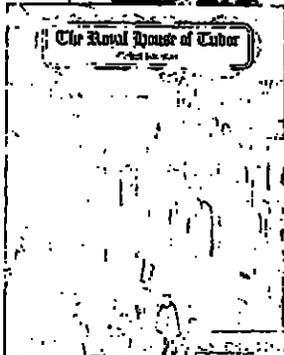
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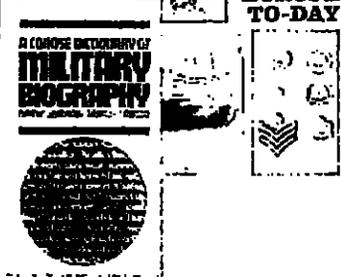
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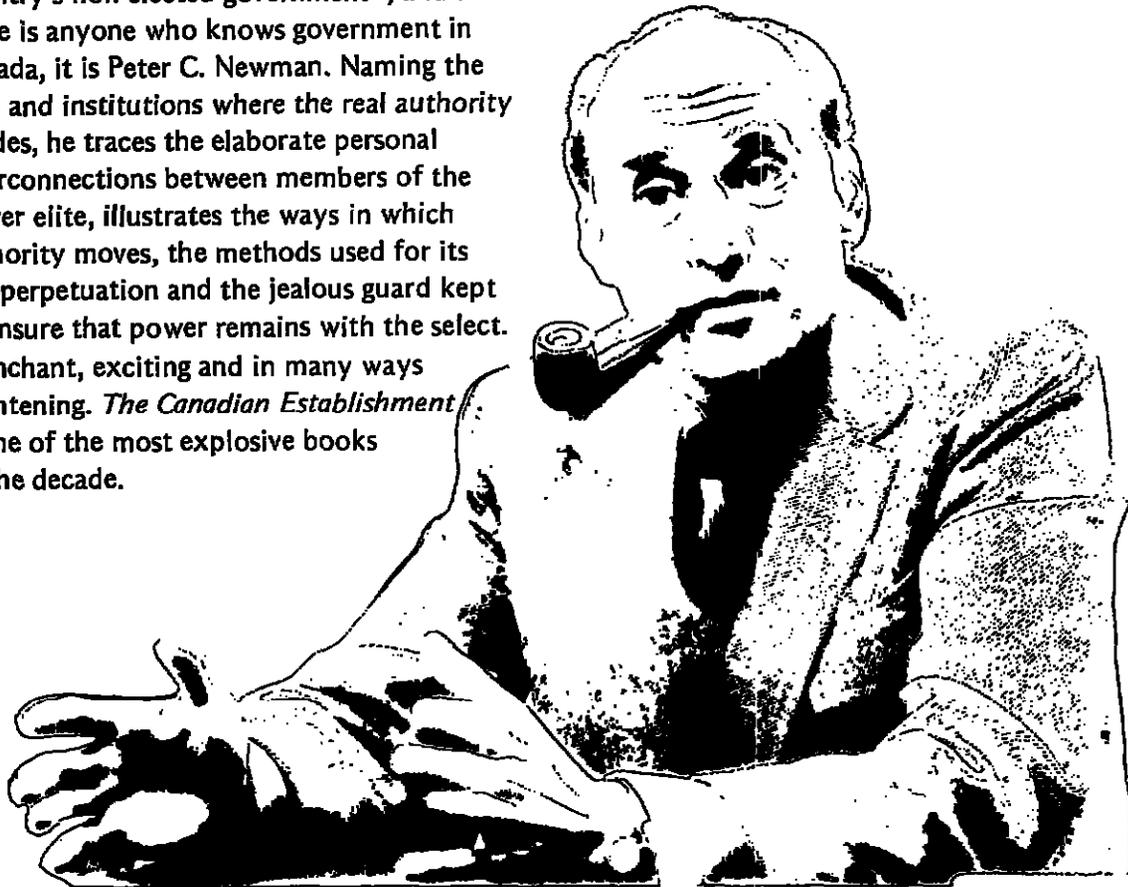
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