

BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

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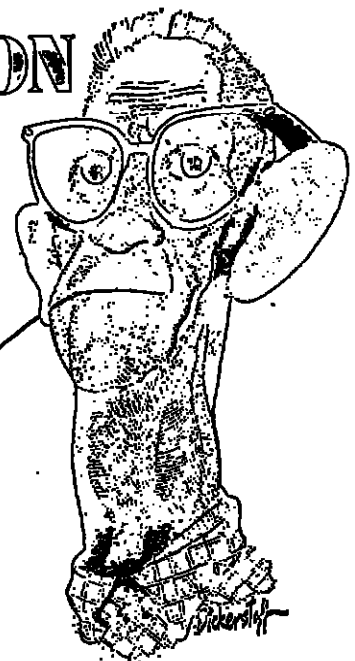
JULY, 1975



MATT COHEN
discusses myths
and fame with
MORLEY
CALLAGHAN



MIRIAM
WADDINGTON
explores
time and place
in
ERNEST
BUCKLER



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AVIVA LAYTON, ANNE ROCHE,
HOWARD ENGEL, LEN GASPARINI,
& PAT BARCLAY

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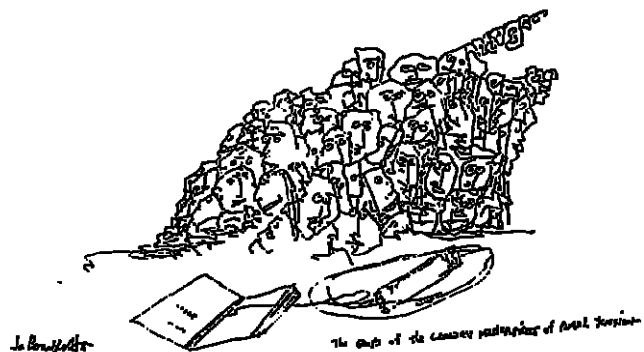
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"How We All Swiftly" by Don Coles

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NOTES & COMMENTS

THE MORE WE study the Canadian edition of *Time*, the more we are forced to admire the tenacity of this fat cuckoo in our fragile journalistic nest. At this writing, Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner's proposed bill to abolish the special tax privileges enjoyed by *Time* and *Reader's Digest* appears to have run into a parliamentary snowbank. Which is odd, because this is July. And odder still, because last February the bill seemed destined for swift passage against only perfunctory continentalist opposition.

What caused the snowbank? We suspect it was the blizzard of propaganda *Time* has managed to generate in a lobbying effort remarkable both for its financial muscle and its ingenuity. Lobbyists have won converts left and right by raising the bogeys of censorship, interference in the free flow of information, and damage to the economy. Compared with the *Time* machine, most Canadian magazines (with the exception of *Maclean's* the Trimmer) are economic underlings and political innocents.

And that, surely, is the point. There is no need to go into

the background to this issue. It was all admirably set forth by Isaiah Litvak and Christopher Maule in their book *Cultural Sovereignty*, reviewed in *Books in Canada* last October. Indeed, *Time* now has surrendered on a key principle by belatedly offering to Canadianize itself almost to the level of printing in maple-syrup ink.

But Canadianization — publishing an edition that is not "substantially the same" as the U.S. edition — won't meet the main charge. The fact is that *Time*, as Henry Luce insisted long ago, is *not* a Canadian magazine — and no amount of cosmetic surgery in terms of ownership and content can ever make it one. It is by its essential nature an American magazine — and a damn good one at that. But for the past 10 years it has been sucking advertising profits out of Canada at a voracious rate and giving little back in return. Grit weakness led to this irrational situation and now only Grit strength can redeem it. It is neither censorship nor unjust interference to force *Time* to leave this country and come back weekly under its true colours, as does *Newsweek*.

Obviously, deportation of *Time* won't solve all the problems facing Canadian magazines. And yes, it will create temporary hardships in the ridings of certain impressionable MPs. But it's equally obvious that if *Time* is allowed to stay here and grow even fatter, Canada's indigenous magazine industry will sooner or later be squeezed to death.

MORLEY'S COY MYTHRESS

Callaghan has written a novel about a novelist
—and another novelist examines it and him

By MATT COHEN

MORLEY CALLAGHAN'S most recent novel — and his first for some time — is *A Fine And Private Place* (Macmillan, 270 pages, \$9.95). He has been publishing books for nearly 50 years and the new one, like the others, is distinguished by an amazing clarity of narrative, characters who manipulate each other into isolation, and a style so plain that the story sometimes threatens to fall on its face.

The novel's main figure is an elderly gentleman named Eugene Shore. Shore resides in an affluent section of Toronto, undoubtedly Rosedale, dresses with exquisite taste in a variety of Cardin suits, and is, despite his obvious affluence and veneer of civilization, a mystery to his neighbours. As it turns out, Eugene Shore is a writer of world-wide fame. As the novel progresses he becomes the focus of a love affair between the other two major characters, Al and Lisa. Lisa is a wealthy young woman with a car, an apartment, and a well-organized mind. Al, the son of a successful hardware dealer, is a graduate student disguised as a taxi driver. He encounters Eugene Shore while trying to write a thesis on Norman Mailer. After suitable hesitation, he realizes that Shore would be a more appropriate thesis topic, and he concentrates his efforts there. As he enthusiastically describes Shore's books, we discover that they resemble in every detail those of another famous Toronto writer — Morley Callaghan.

Armed with a tape recorder and a briefcase full of his

books, I went to interview Callaghan at his home in Toronto. It is a large house, in Rosedale, and appears from the outside as sumptuous as that of his fictional creation, Eugene Shore. But the inside is dominated by the same strange contradiction in style that marks his novels. The living-room, which is large and well-lit, has peeling paint, and the furniture is old and comfortable. As I started to put together the machine, Callaghan told me that the tape recorder had destroyed journalism. I began to wish I was interviewing Norman Mailer. While he went to get a drink to console me, I made notes on the decor.

There is a large painting in the room, by William Kurelek. It shows a man in a hospital bed looking out of a window. On the sill of the window is a glass of water. It is night-time and everything is illuminated by moonlight. Outside the window, in the view which takes up most of the painting, is a field of luminescent cabbages. It is a very striking image. When I told Callaghan how much I liked the painting, he commented that it was many years old, done in fact before Kurelek became a success and changed the style of his work.

Eugene Shore, the famous novelist of *A Fine And Private Place*, has also been affected by success. In its aftermath he takes pride in appearing like a prosperous but retired businessman. His main amusements seem to be his weekly game of poker, the maintenance of his elegant wardrobe, gourmet food, and a mysterious young woman whom we meet only once, in an unmarked restaurant. Success has not ruined him; it has transformed him absolutely — into a man who contemplates his own myth. He is so far removed from

being a person that even his death is only the anti-climax of someone else's story.

Every novel has some autobiographical elements, but a

"Scott Fitzgerald wanted to believe he was a great writer. He asked me once if I thought I was great, and I couldn't reply. Of course I was only 25 years old then. You can't admit that you're great when you're that young."

novel about a novelist is particularly suspect. At one point Eugene Shore explains that what makes an artist different is that he can suspend his ego and see things as they truly are — the tree-ness of a tree, for example. "I had the idea about 40 years ago," Callaghan said. "In fact I discussed it with Jacques Maritain. He said I should write a book about it, a short book, and that he, for one, would be very interested in it."

Callaghan said he thought that a novel about a novelist using his own work this way, was probably something that had never been done. For some reason, that statement reminded me of *Death in Venice*. "The trouble with Tom Mann," Callaghan said, "was that he thought himself a great novelist." He went on to say that Mann's prose was too turgid, his view of life too painful, his books too grandiose.

"Scott Fitzgerald wanted to believe he was a great writer. He asked me once if I thought I was great, and I couldn't reply. Of course I was only 25 years old then. You can't admit that you're great when you're that young." This incident is also recounted in *That Summer In Paris*, Callaghan's memoir of his friendship with Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Most of the memoir centres around a series of afternoons Callaghan and Hemingway spent boxing together. Callaghan portrays himself as modestly victorious, Hemingway as stylish and courageous, but not a good boxer, and Fitzgerald as ultimately weak-minded. In some ways it reads as proof that men aren't any more mature than 12-year-old boys; in any case, by the end of the summer, their friendships are pretty well destroyed as a result of these matches. Despite this, Callaghan was obviously fascinated by Hemingway's fantastic vanity, his ability to believe in his own false image of himself, and especially that his great success seems somehow bound up with this self-deception.

The men in Morley Callaghan's novels are not fortunate enough to deceive themselves. They seem to be aware of their own motivations, and those of others, in total detail. Like himself in *That Summer In Paris*, the men in Callaghan's novels have a plain and matter-of-fact idea of themselves. It suits the world of short sentences that they live in. Nothing ever happens that cannot be flatly described and explained; if there is mystery in their lives it is because they are in collision with others.

It is a man's world that Callaghan writes about. The women have some sort of integrity, but basically exist as objects to be manipulated — though not always successfully. *A Passion In Rome* is a sort of Pygmalion story where the woman is so perfectly re-created that she becomes independent. In *The Loved And The Lost*, the hero wishes to save and re-create his woman. He finally gains her trust only to betray her. Eugene Shore also behaves towards Lisa in the way he thinks will benefit her. She too becomes independent — by taking a rather severe revenge on him — and this

gaining of absolute independence from human need seems to be the goal to which Callaghan's people aspire. It is something that the men give to the women, by possessing them and then releasing them. The men are never possessed by their women — only by desire.

In *A Fine And Private Place*, Eugene Shore talks about the "ordinary" quality of his own work, about the ordinary and unpretentious language that draws the reader in despite himself. It is true that there is something of this in Callaghan's novels. But I sometimes find myself wandering away from the reading, and not believing in the people. *A Fine And Private Place*, like *Such Is My Beloved* and *Strange Fugitive*, is an exception to this, and gets better as it goes along. It has an economy of action that manages to give the utter banality of the characters and the action their own fascination.

Like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, Callaghan keeps the focus on the story. But where Hemingway and Fitzgerald tried to attain this focus through intensity and elegance, Callaghan is perfectly plain and colloquial. "A writer has to pick his contemporaries when he's young and stick with them," Callaghan said. It was Fitzgerald who first got Scribner's to publish Callaghan. And in their publicity his name was associated with Hemingway's; even now, in the short biography that appears in the Canadian paperback edition of his work, the association with Hemingway, from their days on the *Toronto Star*, is mentioned again.

The names of many famous persons crowd into Morley Callaghan's conversation. He tells of the ease with which he was published in the most prominent magazines, of the great success of his stories. And yet, he wonders, has his recognition been what it might have? (Graham Greene, for example, is more widely read.) He says that Edmund Wilson once told him, that he "should be read wherever the English language is known." His Russian translator agrees. In fact, Callaghan's work is very popular in Russia, and large editions sell out immediately. He is also, of course, translated into numerous other languages.

Like Morley Callaghan, Eugene Shore had attained fame in the larger world. But he was totally unknown in his home town; and those few who were aware of his writings were academics who looked down their noses at him. However, Shore is not bitter about this, only slightly amused. "Everyone has to live according to their own law," he says at one point. In *A Fine And Private Place* each of the characters does live that way — willingly or otherwise. In the end they seem to learn that what is sacred about people is the distance between them.

Morley Callaghan regards *A Fine And Private Place* as his most serious novel. Its first draft was written a few years ago, and an excerpt from it appeared in *Exile*, a magazine edited by his son Barry. He felt there was something wrong with the novel, though he wasn't sure how to articulate it. Then, as he describes it, he woke up one morning and knew exactly what it needed. In two months it was completely re-written.

"You have to know what you're doing right from the beginning," Callaghan said. "When I was young, and first writing stories, I thought I knew the angle of the thing and I could write it straight out. Then, as I got older, I could see the story from three or four angles, and then I had to decide between them."

Despite this emphasis on planning, Callaghan also said that "the best writing is automatic. It's best when you just sit down and write without thinking. Sometimes I find I think about something so much it gets ruined before I write it." I was reminded that Ernest Hemingway once said that he

began work each day by starting at the beginning of his novel and revising everything.

While he talked, Callaghan would sometimes get up and pace about the room. Although he is more than 70, he gives the impression of having more energy than he knows what to do with. A few years ago, I saw him on television. The show must have been filmed in the study of his house, and I remember seeing him sitting at his desk, patting the manuscript of the novel that has become *A Fine And Private Place*. At the time he seemed sedentary and tired; now he seems younger. When he tells his stories and talks vigorously about the old places and people, his voice sinks into a cadence familiar from years of radio.

We talked for a while about the economics of surviving as a writer. "When I came back to Toronto, during the Depression, I was at a peak of my career," Callaghan said. "I did what everyone said would be impossible: I just kept writing the best stories I could." By the end of the 1930s, Callaghan, at least temporarily, had grown tired of writing stories. He became involved in Broadway theatre when a play he wrote was optioned. For six years, 1939-1945, he was caught up in the New York theatrical scene. Although there was a constant flow of money from options and advances, nothing was actually being produced. He realized that this could go on indefinitely, and went back to writing stories again. Soon he began work on a new novel — *A Passion In Rome*.

"You have to believe in what you're writing," Callaghan told me. "If you believe in the story, then your readers will believe in it." But then, a few minutes later, he said that he didn't know how he would survive if he were starting out today. "There's too much hooker literature," he said. I asked him what he meant. "Books by women," he said, "like Erica Jong and Sylvia Fraser. They're just come-on books. You know what I mean? Pornography." Then he went on to say that his American publishers hoped his new book would succeed because it was so much against the trend, so unmodern.

In those terms, *A Fine And Private Place* is a curious book. The biggest sex scene, between the beautiful young

"The best writing is automatic. It's best when you just sit down and write without thinking. Sometimes I find I think about something so much it gets ruined before I write it."

Lisa and the old (but virile) writer, never happens. "It would have been too predictable," Callaghan said. Instead, Lisa is sent home, to face the mess she is in with her boyfriend Al. As for their sex, it is best when it is violent. I suppose that is modern. So are the references to Nixon and Trudeau, and to the bare-breasted masseuses of Yonge Street. But there are also strange anachronisms in the book. People "loaf" along the street, as they do in previous Callaghan novels and stories, and they get "sore" at each other.

Interviewing Callaghan, I was in the end amazed that someone could survive with integrity for so long. His new novel is not a deterioration. Although it does not attempt the range of *A Passion In Rome*, or *The Loved And The Lost*, it is, like his stories and some of his early short novels, a simple and direct tale about people who take themselves seriously but are not overwhelmingly subtle. Those who admire his work will find it an unexpected treat. Those who have been puzzled by his importance will find this book as contrary as his others. □



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ERNEST'S IMPORTANCE OF BEING

Buckler's stories are psychodramas about particular people in a particular time and place

By MIRIAM WADDINGTON

THERE IS A MISSING LINK in Canadian literary criticism. I say criticism rather than literature because what I am talking about — psychological realism — does exist in some of the writing of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, but it hasn't been much noticed by our critics. This is because literary critics seldom live out of the psychological side of their natures. They develop the intellectual, analytical side at the expense of the feeling, imaginative one, so that they overvalue the kind of work they can analyze, and remain blind, uninterested, or even dismissive of work that speaks of and for itself in ways that can't be defined or categorized.

James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf all responded in their various ways to Freud's tremendous discovery of the unconscious. So did Djuna Barnes, Katherine Anne Porter, and Willa Cather. But our English Canadian writers of that period seemingly remained untouched, and our most influential critics insisted that if the unconscious was to be explored at all, it had to be in Jungian terms and even terminology.

The 14 short stories that make up Ernest Buckler's *The Rebellion of Young David and Other Stories* (McClelland & Stewart, 138 pages, \$7.95) were published between 1941 and 1959, mostly in Canadian magazines. Many of them were probably written in the 1930s, or at least out of the impulse of that decade. So they form not only a retrospective exhibition of Buckler's talent, but also a picture of the social and literary context within which they were written and published.

The second quality is almost as important as the first, and this book is also evidence of how the circumstances in which an artist must work can seriously cripple him. I use the word artist, and not writer, because the world is full of good writers who are not artists. Buckler is clearly an artist, and, like all artists, he is of his time and place and its limitations are a part of him too.

Psychological realism was the style of the *avant-garde* in the 1930s and 1940s. It was the new road to truth — the road taken by Raymond Knister in the 1920s, and by Ringuet and Gabrielle Roy in the 1930s. It owes nothing at all to the 19th-century spirit of Susanna Moodie or Ralph Connor or Frederick Philip Grove, but it may owe something to Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe*, or Jacob Wasserman's *Maurizius Case*, or Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, if we are to insist on antecedents.

Buckler had his influences, I am sure. He didn't spring full-grown as from a dragon's tooth from the tear-soaked soil of the Maritimes. He is no primitive, but like his compatriot, Alex Colville, is an educated and cultivated man who deliberately chose to live in the place of his birth and to make some meaning out of it. In that sense he is no more rural than Flaubert or Faulkner, both of whom lived in small towns.

All 14 stories are about psychological relationships and they do not lend themselves to thematic organization. It is, therefore, unfortunate that the compiler, Robert D. Chambers of Trent University, imposed this classification on the collection, because it only confuses the reader. Themes are timeless, whereas Buckler's stories are timeful and historical in attitude. They are imbued with the flavour of a particular time, of particular people in particular places living their individual lives, absolutely and uniquely. The life of the feelings, the fine nuances and gradations in the relationships between people, that is what Buckler writes about. People. People who struggle to understand each other, who try to love but who can bear to hate, and who, above all *can live* with each other, and grow through that living. People who are not isolated, or cut off, or horribly bound to the merciless wheel of self.

On the whole Buckler lends himself to his characters' necessities. Once in a while he compromises in order to achieve a marketable ending or a quick reversal. That's what I meant when I said that his time and place crippled him. Probably he had to earn a living, or maybe he simply longed for a mass audience. Whatever the reason, he cheapens an otherwise fine story, "Long Long After School," by giving it a surprise ending, an O. Henry twist. Also, I think he compromised himself into writing a number of Christmas stories where the issue — the bare fact of the holiday — dominates the action from outside.

The same is true of the title story, "The Rebellion of Young David," which is explicit to the point of didacticism

In a time when it seems more relevant to court and depict death, Buckler persists in being the recorder of life's small, individual rhythms for a world that is too noisy to hear them.

in showing what a relationship between a father and a son should and should not be. The truth of Buckler's understanding here is undeniable, yet the idea dominates so much over the action and feeling, that the story loses the rich amorphousness and flow that his other stories have.

The conflict between the necessities of art and the demands of life is something that Buckler understands through and through. He conveys the essence of an artist's life in "Glance in the Mirror" with subtlety and beauty. Even when he resorts to a false folksy language, as he does in "The Wild Goose," the story succeeds because of its honest feeling.

A few stories linger in the mind long after you have read them. That kind of lingering recurrence is one of the tests of art. Such are the stories about a stepfather ("The Dream and the Triumph"), about a father and his son ("Penny in the Dust"), about the vulnerability of the transplanted ("The Quarrel"), and about the hard lesson of his son's difference from him that the father in "First Born Son" must learn painfully.

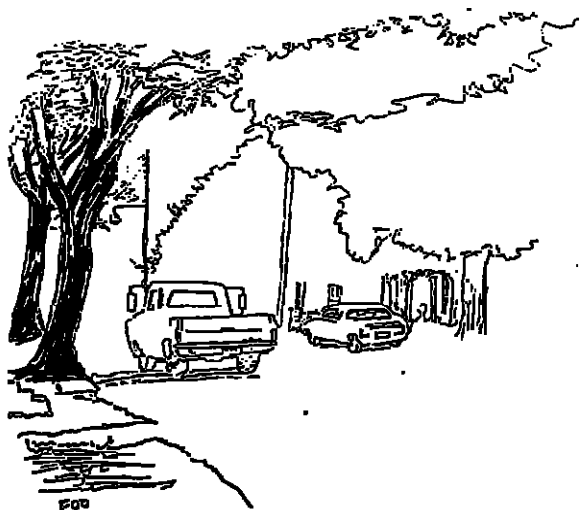
Buckler always comes out on the side of life. In a time where it seems more relevant to court and depict death, Buckler persists in being the recorder of life's small, individual rhythms for a world that is too noisy to hear them. He keeps on being the describer of men who are good ploughers and good dancers, and of women who cook and sew with love and dedication in a world that honours expertise but does not recognize skill. He tells of people who endure pain and suffer defeat when we want to be told about people who are anaesthetized to all that.

About his sense of place: much has been made of Buckler's rural love of the earth, yet his landscape is a generalized one. We know it's Nova Scotia, but it feels like everywhere. What marks the quality of this writer is not his regionalism or his so-called ruralness, but his fine and deep psychological understanding, and based on that, his consciousness and articulation of human history. These are the very qualities that most consistently have been taken for granted, undervalued, and not responded to in English Canadian literature. And this is the blank space that is waiting to be filled. □

HOW WE ALL SWIFTLY

*My God how we all swiftly, swiftly
unwrap our lives, running from
one rummaged secret to the next
like children among their birthday stuff—
a shout, a half-heard gasp here
& for a while bliss somewhere else
when the one thing we asked for all year
is really there and practically as perfect
as we knew it would be. Those beckoning passes
into what's ahead: first words, the run
without a fall, a bike, those books,
a girl whose nakedness is endless in our bed,
& a few public stunts with results that
partly please us. And on we go, my God how
invincibly among guessed profiles turning & lightening
towards us as we reach them—lucky
the ones who will more than briefly enter
that intricate journey which while it shines proves
some of the children right.*

(From *Sometimes All Over*, by Don Coles, Macmillan, 89 pages, \$5.95 paper.)



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CALL ME A GOOD THIEF



Donald Pollock

CALL ME A GOOD THIEF.

By Donald Pollock

Donald Pollock was 18 years old. He was hungry and cold. He stole \$12.75. He was caught by the police, charged and sentenced to 3 years in federal prison. The place was Montreal. The year: 1958.

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LARD TUNDERIN' JAYSUS

Next time you hear a Newfie joke, remember you're laughing at the victims of rapacious greed

By ANNE ROCHE

SOME MONTHS AGO, *Saturday Night* ran an affectionate article headed "Why doesn't Everybody Live in Newfoundland?" The author wondered why, considering its charms, the rest of Canada didn't rush off to live in that eccentric and cheerful island, and concluded, regretfully, that there were good reasons: the weather is a Newfie joke; work is scarce; pay is low; prices are high; life is strenuous. Which is why Newfoundland's chief export is its people, and why Canada is full of exiled Newfies longing to go home.

Two very different books by Newfoundland scholars indicate an uglier reason why life is so difficult there: since its discovery, Newfoundland has been treated as the private preserve of various commercial interests whose rapacity has been no more checked by the post-Confederation governments since 1949 than it was by the British colonial administration of the earlier period.

The first book, by R. Gordon Moyles, which rejoices under the charming title "*Complaints is many and various but the odd Divil likes it*" (Peter Martin Associates, 187 pages, \$12), is a collection of 19th-century accounts of Newfoundland life from British and American periodicals, island newspapers and the journals of missionaries and explorers. It's very skilfully done, and is the best sort of introduction to Newfoundland history, virgin territory for most Canadians.

Anyone who is just a trifle bored with native people's grievances might be interested to find in "*Complaints...*" the description of one of the truly great rip-offs of the New World — the system whereby English merchants in New-

A handful of merchants kept a whole population in slavery, making them "the most destitute people in the world."

foundland issued food and gear to a fisherman at wildly inflated prices and in return took all his catch. Under this "iniquitous barter," a fisherman was charged £6 for a barrel of flour that went to a cash customer for 30 shillings. Thus the fisherman lived and died in debt and his children after him. A handful of merchants kept a whole population in slavery, making them "the most destitute people in the world." The great medical missionary Wilfred Grenfell and other reformers tried to break the stranglehold of the merchants, but with little success. Newfoundland's future was warped by their savage greed. The British government for two centuries treated the colony, in the merchants' own phrase, as if it were "a large English ship moored near the Banks during the fishing season" to sell to fishermen. Even the granting of self-government in 1832 brought no improvement: it had been better for "the English Nobs to make us laws than the

Marchants; for the English Nobs got no interest in cheating us, but the Marchants have."

The merchants have never lost their pernicious hold on Newfoundland's economy. One of the things that swept Joey Smallwood into power was his promise to "make the grass grow on Water Street." He couldn't do it. The names on Water Street—Job's, Ayre and Son's, Bowring's, Crosbie's — are the same ones that Grenfell impotently railed against, and consumer goods in Newfoundland are still more expensive and of poorer quality than anywhere else in Canada.

But time has blunted the pain of the injustices Moyles describes and "*Complaints...*" is great fun to read. The same cannot be said of *Dying Hard: The Ravages of Industrial Carnage* (McClelland & Stewart, 141 pages, \$3.95) by Memorial University anthropologist Elliot Leyton, the most heartbreaking book you may ever read. You don't expect tragic poetry from a social scientist, but that is what you get here. Actually, Dr. Leyton himself contributed only a first and last chapter. The other 10 are the tape-recorded life histories, with only the "unnecessarily pejorative, the excessively personal" passages edited out, of 10 dying miners and their widows from the fluorspar mining communities of St. Lawrence and Lawn on the south coast of Newfoundland. Here, since 1933, hundreds have died and hundreds still await death from the mining-induced diseases of silicosis and various forms of cancer. Dr. Leyton has let them tell their own bitter stories, from the beginning in the Depression years, when even ill-paid work in New York entrepreneur Walter Siebert's totally unregulated mining venture seemed a blessed relief from the British caretaker government's six-cents-a-day dole, to the dreadful realization that radioactive mine dust had doomed them all to hard and early deaths.

Leyton's deep, disinterested sympathy (all the royalties from his book will be divided among the contributors) and his editing tact have drawn these simple accounts together into something much more than a piece of interesting anthropological research. *Dying Hard* is a beautiful, tragic little masterpiece with universal relevance, which is of course what Leyton intended. He hopes the plight of Newfoundland miners will shock society into ending "the criminal irresponsibility of modern corporate industry and the blind indifference of modern legislation" to the murderous nature of many industrial processes. The St. Lawrence miner coughing out his lungs while a cost-watching corporation and a bored government try to do him out of his rightful compensation is meant to stand for Everyman caught in the toils of technology.

If one was given to feeling optimistic about the possibility of a real change of heart in merchants, governments, and carpet-bagging entrepreneurial capitalists, one would feel that this book must bring it about. The Irish eloquence, which is part of the Newfoundland inheritance, and which in "*Complaints...*" produced such splendid election-time invective, has here joined with that other Irish legacy, a pro-

found religious fatalism, to produce not a diatribe but an elegy, so poignant that it might move the hardest capitalist heart to penance.

The St. Lawrence miner coughing out his lungs while a cost-watching corporation and a bored government try to do him out of his rightful compensation is meant to stand for Everyman caught in the toils of technology.

I knew before I read the publisher's notes that Dr. Leyton was not a native Newfoundlander. For one thing, he was too appalled by the miners' treatment; and for another, too hopeful that something permanent might be done about that and similar abuses. Moyles' book has none of Leyton's outrage. Newfoundlanders have learned to expect the worst from those in power. Most of them, still deeply religious, accept what comes stoically: "If I lives another year, well all right, and if I don't, God's Will." "You're here and you got to stop till your time comes." A popular folk song that sums up Newfoundland's perennial economic condition thus: "Fish is low and flour is high" adds this sardonic comment on what can be done about it — "Fal lal lal ta diddle diddle di do."

But if these books suggest what drives people away from Newfoundland, they also show what makes newcomers like Elliot Leyton give their hearts to it — the enormous zest for life that Newfoundlanders have preserved through all their material wretchedness. They were, and are, optimistic, hospitable, curious, and tolerant. "You wants a good heart to stand it" and they all have one. Whenever I go home, I notice

how much we all laugh and how light my heart feels, in spite of the weather and the prices and the corruption. People do laugh in Ontario, of course, but they don't make a practice of it. I was charmed by the story from a mission journal in "Complaints . . ." of an old Newfoundlander who had got religion, and was trying to give up his "besettin' sins." "Baccy" he put aside. Such practices as "a scarcity of salt in the fish . . . and too much water in the lobster cans" he sternly abjured. But "the sin of joakin'" put his soul "in danger o' bein' hove overboard into the burnin' lake. . . . When I gets up in the marnin' . . . I feels like joakin' . . . particular if it do be a fine day . . . 'tis a great temptation, I tells you — 'tis a wonderful temptation."

All of us Newfies are subject to it and terrible hard we find it to suppress up here in Canada. I envy Elliot Leyton, from Saskatchewan, lucky enough to be living in Torbay, Newfoundland, "in a cliff-top house overlooking the sea," and I offer my sympathy to Newfoundlander Gordon Moyles, now in exile, his book jacket says, in Edmonton, because I know that the "odd Divil" whose heart is in Newfoundland can't really be happy anywhere else. □



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Up from the floor

Women at Work: Ontario 1850-1930, edited by Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith, and Bonnie Shepard, illustrated by Gail Geltner, Canadian Women's Educational Press, 405 pages, \$12.50 cloth and \$6 paper.

By SANDRA MARTIN

IT WAS NOT wages, hours, or benefits that motivated guardians of the "working girl" at the turn of the century. Rather, segregated toilets in the factories was the rallying cry of such groups as the National Council of Women say Alice Klein and Wayne Roberts in their article, "Besieged Innocence." As did many Christian reformers and, indeed, trade unionists, the NCW viewed women as future mothers and consumers, and not as members of the working class. So it was that chairs for shoppirls was a key crusade in 1913 because it was thought that prolonged standing would damage the reproductive organs. And, trade unionists feared the working woman would disrupt the male work force and abuse the ideal of "the woman's role." Women were to support the labour movement as consumers of union products, and not as fellow workers.

Written within a sometimes cloying Marxist framework, *Women at Work* is a collection of nine articles dealing with the history of female waged labour in Ontario. After Leo Johnson's professional overview, "The Political Economy of Ontario Women in the Nineteenth Century," there are successive chapters on prostitutes, domestics, nurses, and teachers, Klein and Roberts' women at work before the First World War, after the war, a case study of the Toronto Dressmakers' Strike of 1931 and, finally, women's attempts at organizing themselves.

Throughout the book there is a tension between women's perceptions of themselves as workers and societal pressures to make women conform to idealized stereotypes. For example, prostitution was considered symptomatic of a grave social crisis, when in fact it was predicated frequently by acute need brought about through women's very limited ability to maintain themselves outside of marriage. Domestic



Drawing by Gail Geltner from *Women at Work*.

service provided a home as well as a job and was considered an excellent training ground in the "womanly arts" of home-making and child-care. But many servants worked 16 to 18 hours a day, were easy prey for sexual exploitation, and were denied privacy. Many chose prostitution over the lonely and subservient role of domestic service. Despite the high ideals associated with nursing, abuses were common, particularly in nursing schools. In 1889 a trained nurse at the Montreal General earned \$12 to \$15 a month while the hospital rat catcher earned \$20. The examples are endless.

Women at Work with its myriad tables, charts, photographs, and, of course, Gail Geltner's excellent drawings, is a far cry from the Press's first books, and a timely antidote to their highly polemical *Never Done: Three Centuries of Women's Work in Canada*. It is a good-looking book, clear, and well-designed.

There are faults, of course. Of the three traditional women's professions, only teaching and nursing are examined. Why was librarianship ignored? Although 80 per cent of librarians are women, only 20 per cent of library administrators are female. Some research into this field would be valuable. The footnotes are sloppy, often minus such vital details as the location of primary sources. Who are the contributors? The collective approach is useful and indeed admirable, but the reader is entitled to know more about the authors' credentials than the

brief mentions in the table of contents. The articles aren't even signed on the title pages.

Still *Women at Work* is the first attempt at a comprehensive and scholarly history of working women and as such adds greatly to our meagre knowledge of labour history in this country, and presents a cogent (and readable) explanation of how women's work and status in society became denigrated when the work place moved outside the home. But, perhaps most important, such bromides as "a woman's place is in the home" and "women have been subjugated because they are by nature passive and unwilling to help themselves" have been challenged on an historical and statistical basis, and not merely from an emotional perspective. For that alone, we should be grateful. It's a long way from separate toilets to equal pay for equal work. □

Arma virumque cecinerunt

Broadcast from the Front: Canadian Radio Overseas in the Second World War, by A. E. Powley, Hakkert, illustrated, 189 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

By **HOWARD ENGEL**

A. E. POWLEY has written a workman-like history of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Overseas Unit which served alongside the Canadian armed forces during the Second World War. It traces the history of the CBC's involvement in reporting the war from the first secret password whispered to Bob Bowman that sped him to Halifax and then to Britain during the frustration of the Phoney War. Slowly, a team of professional broadcasters was assembled: Bowman, Art Holmes, Matthew Halton, Marcel Ouimet, Peter Stursberg, Bill Herbert, and the rest of that sturdy crew who had to be able to mix it with the toughest of the army PR types and come up bleary-eyed, but with a story.

It is a story of how the peace-time toy, radio, was geared for war. It tells how radio journalism depended upon bulky, soft-cut recording machines, which, through the perseverance of engineers like Art Holmes, gradually be-

came more portable as the war dragged on. This was broadcasting before the invention of the tape documentary, before Norman Corwin's *On a Note of Triumph* ruptured the eardrum. In those days it was enough to learn that the sounds we had just heard came from German 88s. For the engineers, it was always the problem of how to get the equipment close enough and still be able to ship the recordings out. Once Matt Halton was recording so close to the German guns that the stylus slipped because of the vibration, slewed across the recording, and a new disc had to be put on. Halton saw the drama in the accident and incorporated it into his commentary.

The style of reporting the war developed slowly. Some of the reporters went on talking as though they were still covering the 1939 Royal Visit, while others found an understated eloquence in the enormities they had to report:

The ships are spread out behind us in long lines with gun crews mounted, each flying a black flag and a white ensign. There are fighter-patrols like flocks of geese high up and the bombers are scurrying home in a low haze over the water. . .

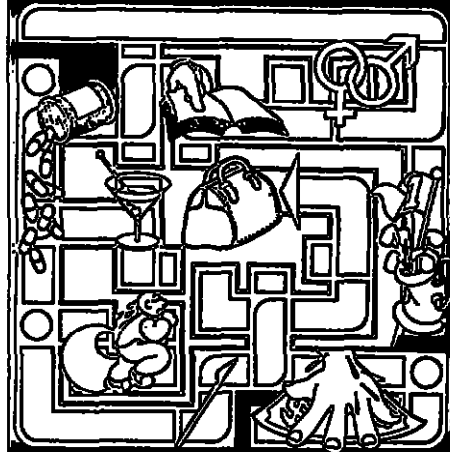
Or here is Matthew Halton:

There was just one more river to cross, and now it is crossed. In slit trenches and in cellars in the Hochwald, I had often listened to Canadian soldiers talking about the crossing of the Rhine. The last assault crossing, and perhaps the hardest. And now it seems almost too good to be true that the Rhine is crossed. There may be hard battles ahead. But the wide, swift, symbolic German river, the very symbol of Germany, is crossed; and there's no doubt that after some days or weeks, we'll break out of our bridgeheads and rush towards victory and the end. . .

It is hard to remember a time when the only 'good German was a dead German. We have come a long way



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since then, and the changed attitudes vibrate in Powley's book. The CBC's correspondents were dependent for much of their news on the forces' PR men. They were committed to the Allied cause and at times were willing agents of the propaganda machine. Today journalists discriminate more nicely between their loyalties.

One can't read these wartime exploits today with the same bland acceptance of the humourless facts as one could before *Catch 22* and *M.A.S.H.* Yossarian would have found these correspondents, as recorded here, a wooden, po-faced lot. Hawkeye Pierce would have called them "regular army clowns." Never for a minute was the war allowed to come into our living-rooms as slaughter, or the logical extension of politics. We were all convinced of the rightness of our cause, and we consequently backed the attack and sped the victory with our purchase of savings-bond stamps.

This sounds like grouching. We all knew that Hitler must be defeated, but we accepted and were moulded by a degree of thought control that in retrospect is frightening. The CBC correspondents were a part of this system, and to that extent they are

open to this criticism. If there was any questioning of journalistic principles on the part of the CBC Overseas Unit, we don't learn of it.

As you would expect in a book signed A. E. Powley, a respected CBC public-affairs alumnus, the book is well-written. It creates in prose the sort of radio documentary that was invented after the use of tapes became general. He brings in his examples from Halton, Ouimet, and the rest the way film clips overtake Lloyd Robertson on *The National*. This makes for an exciting narrative style, and helps when the drive of the war lets you down. Powley's writing belongs to a formal school that shaped up before Hemingway tore a swath through the language. One has to forgive his references to people who find sources of innocent merriment, are nothing loath, and rejoice in a name.

All in all, he has done a difficult task well. One could have wished for more of the politics inside the CBC, more behind-the-scenes incidents, more thoughtful reflection, and less insistence that a war waged with one foot in the Savoy Hotel was all hell. But I cavil: this is the only book in the field; clasp it to your bosom. □

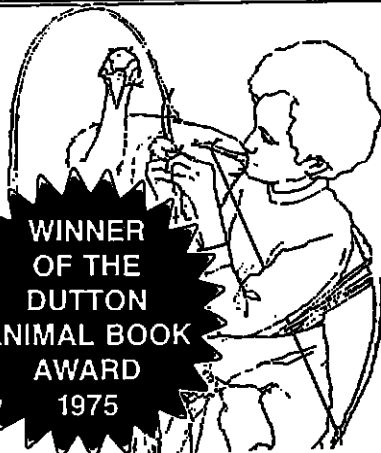
How not to be a mark

The Consumer's Handbook: 99 Commercial Rip-offs and How to Spot Them, by Lynne Gordon, McClelland & Stewart, 186 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Consumer, Beware! A Guidebook to Consumer Rights and Remedies in Canada, by Ellen Roseman, New Press, 238 pages, \$3.95 paper.

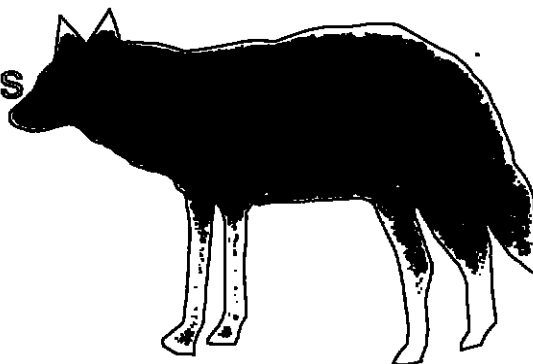
By CARLA WOLFE

KEEPING OUT OF the red is hard these days, even for an informed and careful consumer. It's nearly impossible for those who are of average knowledge and sophistication. How do you judge whether the insurance salesman is more interested in your protection or in his commission? Should you believe the man you've allowed to inspect your chimney when he descends with a horror-story and a brick caked with crumb-



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STRANGE COMPANION by Dayton O. Hyde

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CLARKE IRWIN the national publishers

ling mortar? Is the largest size of your favourite brand of breakfast cereal really more economical than the smallest one? Well, there are two books now on the market that might steer you away from some of the greater pitfalls of buying.

The more comprehensive of the two is *The Consumer's Handbook: 99 Commercial Rip-offs and How to Spot Them*, by Lynne Gordon, who deals with consumer affairs on the radio, on television, and in a couple of columns. Ms. Gordon touches on just about every area one could possibly be concerned about, from acupuncture to work-at-home rackets, with sensible down-to-earth advice. The main shortcoming of this book is that breadth takes the place of depth. We are given, for example, only 2½ pages on buying life insurance, and the same amount of space on food buying (plus another page on the merits of health food). Not enough information can be packed into that little space to provide anything more than a rough guide.

The second book is a revised edition of a guide that first appeared last year. *Consumer, Beware! A Guidebook to Consumer Rights and Remedies in Canada*, by Ellen Roseman, a consumer reporter for the *Toronto Star*, covers considerably less ground a great deal more thoroughly. (Curiously, *Consumer, Beware!* is also the title of Ms. Gordon's television show.) We are given, for instance, a 14-page chapter on life insurance, including some useful information on comparing costs, and 16 pages on food buying. The chapter on credit buying includes the formula by which you can figure out what interest rate you're paying on a loan or credit purchase. What Ms. Roseman concentrates on are those areas affecting almost everyone; in addition to those mentioned, she discusses drugs, housing, and cars. There are helpful chapters on how to deal with misleading advertising, how to use small-claims courts, and where and how to complain if you think you've been had. There's also a strong pitch for co-ops, with some realistic caveats. As a one-time member of a food co-op, I'd like to see a few more added — such as a warning about the problems of personal wrangling and of inequitable division of labour.

Also handy are the books' virtually identical lists of agencies to which one can turn for counsel or redress (although there are two or three discrepancies in the addresses given). No consumer need hesitate in deciding that

these are two good buys — *The Consumer's Handbook* for a quick guide to whether you really ought to sign up for all those dancing lessons or that attractive freezer plan, buy that encyclopedia, or take that "free" trip to see land in Florida, and *Consumer, Beware!* for more detailed information on the financial decisions that nearly all of us have to make at some time. □

Come into the garden, Muse

Vegetables, poems by Ken Norris with drawings by Jill Smith, Véhicule Press (61 St. Catherine Street W., Montreal), 56 pages, \$3 paper.

Gardening, by Paul Pouliot, Collier-Macmillan, 455 pages, \$5.95 cloth.

Planning a Garden (119 pages), *Trees and Shrubs* (119 pages), *Tropical Plants* (120 pages), all by Gaston Charbonneau, Greey de Pencier Publications, \$2.95 paper.

Gardening Off the Ground, by Art C. Drysdale, J. M. Dent and Sons, 125 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By ROBERT CARLGREN

DESPITE ITS seemingly pedestrian title, *Vegetables* should be regarded as an earnest invocation of the ancient moon-goddess or Muse, patroness of poets and mother of all living things, whose benevolent fecundity is symbolized by a packet of seeds affixed to the book's cover.

We are reminded that poets and gardeners are members of a confraternity of devotees — the poets relying upon the goddess for creative inspiration, the gardeners for loving insight into the life of plants. And just as poets must complement inspiration with the discipline of craftsmanship and acquired technique, so gardeners must support their enthusiasms with a solid practical knowledge of plants and their cultural requirements in the settings that suit them best.

Paul Pouliot's purpose in *Gardening* is to supply amateur Canadian gardeners with most of the information they may need for horticultural success in a somewhat refractory climate. He manages to compress a great deal of valuable material into a book of generally pleasing format; though the colour

photos are sometimes blurry, well-chosen illustrations abound. Entire chapters are devoted to such mandatory topics as shrubs, trees, annuals and perennials, kitchen gardens, and house plants. Unfortunately, typos are as plentiful as dandelions in May and the index, so-called, is nothing but a misplaced table of contents. The absence of a real index substantially diminishes the usefulness of this otherwise fine reference work.

Less satisfactory is a series of three short guides by Gaston Charbonneau — *Planting a Garden, Trees and Shrubs*, and *Tropical Plants*. The advice here proffered on the growing of outdoor plants is often perfunctory, and too little is said about the problem of selecting plant materials that will combine in aesthetically satisfying ways within an integrated garden design. *Tropical Plants* is the best book in the series, presenting in compendious form a treasury of information on the culture and propagation of nearly 100 house plants.

In *Gardening Off the Ground*, Art Drysdale shows with an expert's aplomb how would-be gardeners in those dreary warrens of urbanized humanity, the condominium and the high-rise, can yet succeed in raising an enormous variety of container plants on thin balconies, even in unpromising conditions of limited light and high winds. Clearly written and attractively illustrated, Drysdale's book could serve as a model of its kind. As well as a complete index and a short bibliog-



raphy, the author has appended a long list of Canadian horticultural societies, botanical gardens, and research institutes from which expert advice is available to the public. □

Correction

Apple Butter and Other Plays, by James Reaney and illustrated by Sandra Barrett, is published by Talonbooks. We regret that this information was inadvertently dropped from the review that appeared in our June issue.

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The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence, by Clara Thomas, McClelland & Stewart, 212 pages, \$10 cloth.

By CAROL FINLAY

NOTHING WILL BE more agreeable to a Margaret Laurence fan than to curl up with this book for an evening. Clara Thomas, friend of Laurence and already well known for *Margaret Laurence* (1969) in the M & S Canadian Writers Series, has produced a detailed and comprehensive examination of the Manawaka novels that will entice and satisfy the casual reader and provide indispensable material for the student of Canadian literature.

The Manawaka works, named because of their shared setting, include five novels that Professor Thomas says were conceived together as "an entire pattern that was present complete from the beginning." *The Stone Angel* (1964) delves back to the 1880s when "Manawaka was still close to its beginnings, with board sidewalks, oil lamps, a few businesses..." *The Diviners* (1974) leads through two generations into the present. In between and linking past to present are *A Jest of God* (1966), *A Bird in the House* (1970), and *The Fire-Dwellers* (1969).

The route is orderly. In the first chapter, Prof. Thomas deals with Laurence's childhood in Neepawa, Man., and the influence of the family's Scottish-Irish roots. Already one sees the autobiographical material emerging. John Simpson, Laurence's grandfather, a cabinet maker who later became an undertaker "as many cabinet makers did," is written into the character of Niall Cameron, the father of Rachel (*A Jest of God*) and Stacey (*The Fire-Dwellers*). And we realize that Vanessa McLeod in *A Bird in the House*, who was reared in her grandfather's house, reflects the dislocated childhood of Laurence herself, who was brought up by her aunt in her grandfather's house.

In her discussion of the early works, which ensued from Laurence's marriage and subsequent travels to Africa in the 1950s, Prof. Thomas traces the emergence of the first-person narrator technique, as well as Margaret Laurence's "passionate insistence on

the dignity of the individual." That dignity is the one over-riding expression of the later novels. In *The Stone Angel*, Thomas detects the "enormous affirmation of living and feeling that Hagar makes..." and our "pity and wonder at her stubborn gallantry..."

Rachel (*A Jest of God*) is a character radically different, racked "by a self-debasing humility as destructive as Hagar's pride." Thomas adeptly handles the problems of the anti-heroine and how Margaret Laurence sustains the near-hysterical sound of her voice in the first person without losing our sympathy or involvement. Both novels are described as "religious quests" of very ordinary people.

A Bird in the House is, in Laurence's words, "fictionalized autobiography" and her largest attempt to "come to terms with her background." Vanessa's tale was a journey back in time and memory to exorcise the intimidating ghost of her grandfather.

It is however in the following chapters that the meat of the book lies. For one reason, the analysis of *The Fire-Dwellers*, allows us to scrutinize the Rachel-Stacey sister relationship. For another, Thomas quotes extensively from Margaret Laurence's unpublished lecture *Gadgetry or Growing... Form and Voice in the Novel*. This reveals more about the author's true intentions than any critic can surmise. However, I found Thomas's treatment of the Stacey-Rachel differences somewhat disappointing. If the focal point of criticism is the Manawaka world, couldn't the analysis be pushed further into the Cameron family's past and Manawaka itself? And wouldn't the neuroses (in Rachel's case) and isolation and sense of defeat (in Stacey's case) be connected to Hagar and Vanessa and their families?

When we reach *The Diviners*, the connecting links and cross references are once again scant. However, the novel's complexity of form and brilliant portrayal of character is examined exhaustively. One senses that Prof. Thomas considers this novel the apex of the works and the most successful. Her intensity of conviction, present throughout the thematic examination, makes this section exhilarating reading. And Morag's courage and passionate love are fine materials for the admiring critic's skill.

Finally, Thomas returns to Manawaka itself. The small-town psyche, based on the pioneer values of hard work, Godliness, and business enterprise, of course victimized Christie

Logan and paralyzed Rachel Cameron. Its influence is predominant in the *Manawaka* works and more than casually important to our Canadian history and personality. In conclusion, Prof. Thomas chalks out Laurence's place in Canadian literature and the special place she has gained in the hearts of Canadian women. The characters "grew through her adult perceptions about how it was — and is — to be an individual woman in a specific Canadian time and place. And in the broadest and deepest ways, their strengths and their vulnerabilities make connections with all women everywhere." How very true. □

Incest on the mount, preying in the dale

Hungry Hills, by George Ryga, Talonbooks, 184 pages, \$4.95 paper.

A Dream of Horses, by Fred Euringer, Oberon, 125 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.50 paper.

By AVIVA LAYTON

IT IS A CURIOUS experience to read George Ryga's novel *Hungry Hills*. One is transported from the complex, intense, experimental world of novel-writing in the 1970s to the relatively simple, straightforward, unambiguous world of the novel of social realism of the 1930s. It's not surprising, therefore, to find that *Hungry Hills* has been published in the Soviet Union and has met with a favourable critical reception there. Nothing in the style, the subject matter or the tone could possibly offend the official literary sensibilities of that country and this fact does, I feel, stand as a comment on the outdated sensibility of the novel; there is a lack of tension, of inner excitement that results in a flatness and monotony of tone.

The story is set in the drought-stricken farmland of a small Northern Canadian community that is slowly dying. Ryga's strength lies in his ability to convey the sterility, the desolation, the unremitting harshness of the land and the corresponding qualities of the people who inhabit it. The aridity of the soil is reflected in the aridity of its people, in their hostility, narrowness, and

lack of charity towards one another. Returning to this tight claustrophobic world after an absence of three years is the narrator, Snit Mandolin. Taken from his home by a welfare officer at the instigation of the community, he escaped from the institution to which he had been sent, and then worked at a garage in town before poverty forced the owner to sell up.

Why Snit, who now has some ready cash and an opportunity for a new life, decides to return to the community from which he has always been an outcast is not really made clear. There are intimations that the hills are bred into his bones, or that he wishes to vindicate himself in the eyes of the community, but these hints are not strong enough to justify Snit's statement: "I am going back to the hills or nowhere at all."

Many of the situations Snit encounters on his return are stock ones — just as most, if not all of the characters are stock characters. There is Snit himself, the boy who retains his humanity and sense of values despite the harshness of his environment; Johnny Swift, the "bad" boy, who has succumbed to this same harshness; the Bible-thumping preacher; the pious store-keeper who cheats the kids out of peanuts; and the

maiden aunt whose husband-to-be dies and who turns all her pent-up passions into a fury with the hypocritical world that surrounds her. In the portrait of Aunt Matilda, however, Ryga transcends the clichés and she emerges as the most moving character in the novel. It is a portrait full of compassion, pathos, and humour.

Too many strands hang loose in *Hungry Hills*: the significance, for example, of the Ukrainian community with their mandolins and how this relates to the name "Mandolin" of the protagonist; the strongly dramatic episode where Snit discovers that his mother and father were brother and sister (Ryga fails to make full use of this as a powerful metaphor for the inbred sterility of spirit of the hill-world); and the final breaking of the emotional drought with the tears of Aunt Matilda, the impact of which is lost in Snit's homespun comment: "Cry for both of us, because we gotta cry a lot if we gonna live."

The material as it stands just doesn't justify a novel. It could have made a really fine and intense short story.

Fred Euringer's first book of short stories, *A Dream of Horses*, is exciting stuff. All the stories are flawed, some to

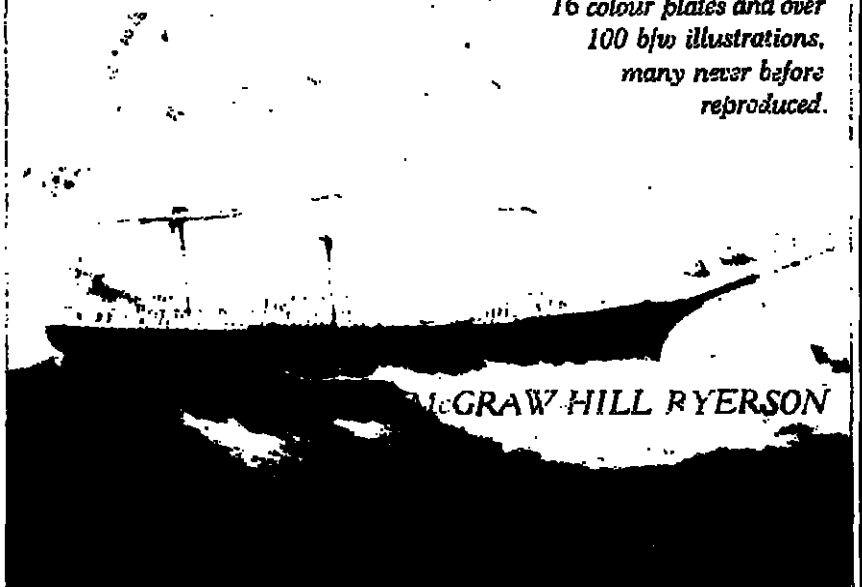
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an irredeemable degree, but at his best Euringer expresses his vision of life in energetic, imaginative prose that compels the reader's attention. What emerges in all of the six stories is a horror at the horror of life — the preying of one species on another, whether that species be animal or human. A rat gnaws the leg of a goose; cancer gnaws the uterus of a pathetic old spinster; cats mutilate pigeons and attack people; the crippled leg of the substitute teacher reflects his crippled dreams that lead him to prey sexually on his daughter. Like the animals — cats, pigeons, rats, geese — Euringer's characters are trapped in a cruel deterministic world. The fact that this world is an unsensational domestic one merely increases the horror.

The three stories that are told by a first-person narrator bear a strong resemblance to the confessional stories of Sherwood Anderson. There is the same tentative, hesitant, often naive voice of the narrator who seems to tell the story in order to discover in the telling something he didn't understand before; the same need for the narrator to list — almost obsessively — seemingly ir-

relevant details and the related need for seemingly irrelevant digressions.

In Anderson, however, the digression always leads the narrator to what the author called an "epiphany" — that is, a flash of awareness in which the truth of the situation becomes, for a moment, illuminated. Euringer all too often loses this opportunity, gives it away for a too-easy laugh or a cute touch, as in the irritatingly facile ending of what is perhaps his least successful story "One More for the Practical Cats." Many of the stories are marred also by a tendency to overwrite. In "A Christmas Pageant" for example, the first four pages only serve to blur the intensity of the story; they could have been reduced to one paragraph. The almost science-fiction format of "Homer's Door" is similarly superfluous.

By far the most successful is the title story, "A Dream of Horses." It is powerful, moving, and totally devoid of any trace of false sentimentality. The flaw — a really disappointing one — lies in the last two sentences. The almost surrealistic sense of horror surrounding Miss Finney's disease and her

pathetic fantasies about it is completely thrown away by the anticlimax of: "Cancer of the cunt. Fuck of a way to go." No matter that this tone is true to the character who expresses it; it violates the tone of the story as a whole.

If I might be allowed a digression of my own, I'd like to comment on the back-cover blurb. Whoever wrote it (and it just might have been the author himself) does no service at all to the book. There seems to be a positive mania lately for transcribing fiction to film, film to fiction, as if the two art forms were interchangeable. They are not. Therefore when I read on the back cover that "his narrative moves as a film moves, or a television script," I begin to foam at the mouth. If a short story moves successfully, it moves as a short story and nothing else, regardless of whether the writer makes use of a certain degree of cinematic technique. The final assault on the intelligence is the next little piece of information: "His fiction must be seen to be understood." What absolutely meaningless tripe. Thankfully, the book survives the comments. □

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Echoes from a lost utopia

Visitors Who Never Left: The Origins of the People of Damelahamid, translated by Chief Kenneth B. Harris in collaboration with Frances M. P. Robinson, University of British Columbia Press, 139 pages, \$10.95 cloth and \$4.95 paper.

By PAT BARCLAY

"OTHER VERSIONS of these myths have been published . . . None has hitherto appeared translated wholly by an Indian and from the Indian point of view." So writes Frances Robinson of UBC's Fine Arts Department, who was instrumental in bringing *Visitors Who Never Left* to publication. The book is a collection of the traditional stories of Damelahamid, a "utopian paradise" situated between the Nass and Skeena rivers in northern British Columbia. Today the descendants of the people of Damelahamid are the Gitshian, or Gitksan. Anthropologists consider them as part of the Tsimshian group, a former migratory people who lived by hunting and fishing and whose myths most nearly resemble those of their northern and western neighbours, the Tlingit and the Haida.

How this latest version of the ancient Gitksan myths reached publication is a story in itself. It seems that in 1969, Frances Robinson met Kenneth Harris, who informed her that he had recorded his uncle, Arthur McDames, telling the myths on tape in 1948. (McDames was the Chief of Damelahamid and Harris himself holds the title *Hagbegwaiku*, First Born of our Nation.) Now Arthur McDames spoke in Tsonmalia, the mother tongue of the Gitksan, and consequently his stories had to be translated into Harris's own language; this was accomplished by Harris's mother, then in her 80s. Finally, Harris himself re-translated and recorded the stories in English on tape, and Ms. Robinson has ushered them into print. As Harris says in another, but not unrelated, connection: "White people make things so complicated. Indians have evolved a simple way of looking at the world and of living."

However, it is pleasant to be able to report that the net result of Ms. Robinson's decision to play anthropological impresario is an attractive,

readable, and instructive book. Above all, *Visitors Who Never Left* preserves the colloquial flavour of myths that belong to an ancient tradition of oral history.

The eight stories fall into two divisions: legends of the origins of the people of Damelahamid; and significant events in their history. Several stories illustrate laws or ethical principles, including the rules governing man's relationship with animals, and warnings against incest and arrogance. (One prince, Deeepzeb by name, went so far as to complain to "Heavenly Father" about His weather: "Hail in the middle of summer? . . . We have already got spring salmon. What sort of nonsense is this that it should hail at this time?" Heavenly Father promptly sent a ruinous snowfall.)

Some of the stories are comic, as in the tale of the princess who was kidnapped by the bear people and who later became the wife of the killer whale. Others, such as the origin of the Thunderbird, are wonderfully inventive. In this story a brother and sister are covered with pitch and feathers and displayed on a platform as a punishment for incest. After several days they become birds and begin throwing their dishes at onlookers. And that is how lightning began!

If the code of the Gitksan can be condensed into a few words, perhaps Ken Harris expresses it best: "You have to be able to differentiate between right and wrong. What is good does not harm the people. What is wrong leads to sheer destruction." That's a code I'd like to see somebody adopt beyond the "utopian paradise" of Damelahamid. □

A pyre engagement

The Full Furnace: Collected Poems of Douglas Lochhead, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 168 pages, \$9.95 cloth and \$5.95 paper.

By DERMOT MCCARTHY

WHILE LOCHHEAD's furnace may be full, one despairs of its combustion. And while there are many keen and clear thoughts, often revealing a quick and responsive sensibility, more often intensity flags; clarity betrays superficiality and roads not taken; and the poet's efforts at inflaming the mind with discovered analogies repeatedly



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find the matching damp and unilluminating.

The search for analogous structures — physical, emotional, elemental, and imaginative constructs to bridge the various dimensions of his experience — is Lochhead's *modus operandi* as a poet. The success or failure of a Lochhead poem usually depends on whether he can effectively externalize in his choice and structuring of language the subjective landscape that his sensibility harbours as a complete universe. This is complicated further by the objectivist pose of the persona that dominates much of the poetry (William Carlos Williams is an avowed mentor) and by Lochhead's falling victim to his own illusion of the poetry as an existential response to a world of disparate experience and random energies. Throughout *The Full Furnace* we are offered surface visions of things coming together and holding firm: the volume mirrors the poet's world; both hazard an atomic structure with the poet as the nucleus. But over and over again, it seems, the poetry fails because this cohesion is not achieved by any credible activity of the poet within the poetry: Lochhead does not persuade us within his world. For all the talk of heat

and fire, the poet rarely works up a sweat; and if much of his work appears effortless, it's because it is just that.

However, there is a vast amount of his work that, because of his side stepping of the more difficult paths of confrontation and exploration, remains slight, inconsequential, and unmoving.

Perhaps the most significant question raised by the collected work is what happened to Lochhead after *The Heart Is Fire* (1959) and *It Is All Around* (1960), his first two books. Selections from these make up the first two sections of *The Full Furnace*; selections from his other books — *Poet Talking* (1964), *Millwood Road Poems* (1970), *Prayers in a Field* (1974) — a long poem titled "October Diary," and the largest section of all, "Poems Roughly Divided, 1961–1974," make up the rest of the volume. But rarely, if ever, does Lochhead achieve in these the tension and complexity of "Lift the wet heart," "Even the hawk," "What stirs a bird" and the title poem from *The Heart Is Fire*.

The early poetry confirms the sea and maritime landscape as the sources of Lochhead's imaginative energies. With the move inland to Toronto, there is a painful diminishing of intensity. *Millwood Road Poems*, selections of which provide the second largest section of the collected poems, marks a disappointing focus on the mundane and the ephemeral.

The poet turns more and more to his family and the domestic apparatus in his environment, it seems, in the absence of the richer landscape of the maritime years. While some of the poems written to or about his daughters are successes, we miss the intensity and immediacy of his grappling with life that we witness in his first two books. And such poems as "A gull hung up on the wind," "I prosecute myself," "Today I am thirty-nine," "This Christmas" and "At Acadia and Millwood Road" reveal a hesitancy to persevere and strike below the obvious and easy that sadly becomes characteristic in the poetry of the final section.

The decline in poetic intensity that characterizes so much of Lochhead's later poetry is caused, perhaps, more by his being ill at ease in the urban/suburban world than to a loss of imaginative power. Segments of "October Diary" and the selections from *Prayers in a Field* actually suggest a recovered intensity, but the stylistic softening that has taken place since the poetry of the 1960s undermines his efforts to reacquaint himself with the "pulsing

blood and bone." the "power and wisdom/in the wave, wing, and opening petal" ("He sings alone," "Sunday rain at Ingonish"). There is no sense of his facing the "dark occupancy" of nature and man that he did confront in the early work ("Nova Scotia fishermen"). Instead, Lochhead is at his best now only in the posture of promising a new beginning, as in "Determinations" and "Tonight my shield fell." In this sense, *The Full Furnace* is perhaps premature: for poems such as "For certain," "At the top" and "There have been other nights" suggest that the poet could eventually come to terms with his imaginative dislocation.

Some ghosts are clearer than others

Ghost Towns, by Florence McNeil, McClelland & Stewart, 89 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Selected Poems, by Rona Murray, Sono Nis Press, 108 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

Welcoming Disaster, by Jay Macpherson, Saannes Publications, 63 pages, \$2.50 paper.

By LEN GASPARINI

RECENTLY, I returned to Toronto after a rather hectic sojourn in Vancouver. I was accompanied by three books of poetry, whose contents inspired the wanderer as well as the critic in me. Reading them en route was an experience in perspective, and I now feel as settled as the dust on the pebbly shoulder of a Prairie highway in the summer.

Florence McNeil's *Ghost Towns* (her fourth volume, incidentally) is an exciting and impressive flowering of poetic talent. She shows quite a mastery of language and imagery, combining these skills to produce poems that are technically remarkable and profuse in vigorous metaphor. Her poems flow limpidly in whatever element of feeling and experience she applies them to; whether it is a "too secular/to be haunted" ghost town or a "West Coast Christmas." The syntax crackles and there is nothing ponderous or affected to occlude the successive impressions

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that one receives from reading her poetry. It's as if all her poems were composed outdoors. And the subjects she chooses to write about have a vital wholesomeness: fishing, carnivals, Laurel and Hardy, skating, kites — each aspect of her perspective unfolds with light and life. Bookish gloom and self-indulgent symbolism are fortunately absent from her work. What we have instead is a joyous clarity so petal-bright that McNeil's words seem to emerge crystalline from her imagination.

There are dozens of good solid poems in this collection. "Meeting of the Animals" is an ironic piece of industrial-oriented ecology:

*The oil executives have called
a meeting of the animals
interrupting the hockey game
to show us
Disney-eyed creatures
who look at each other with only
limited rancor
their decision to live
ratified by the company ecologists*

Although McNeil's style owes something to the wry lyricism of Atwood, her voice is less impersonal. Poems such as "The Persian Cat" and "Having Said Love..." exhibit a kind of organic grace and leaping rhythm that brings Neruda to mind. McNeil paints with words, and *Ghost Towns* undoubtedly puts her near the front line of Canadian poets.

Rona Murray's *Selected Poems* are culled from three previous books. Her language moves into the realm of myth and Rilkean metaphysics; a type of symbolic transfiguration seemingly remote from reality pervades her ideas. The poems are woven into intricate tapestries, word mazes that lose the reader after the opening stanza. She tries to evoke esoteric devices such as the Tarot pack, the I Ching, and the Zodiac to make herself sound mysterious and profound. Consequently, her work reeks of another age — occasionally illuminated by the phosphorescence of decay: "Hell shall open all its gates/now she is gone./Dead the flowers in his hand,/brittle as thorn." What is she talking about? What, if anything, is she trying to tell us? Perhaps this kind of poetry is suitable only for chanting. Magic and dreams and religious visions abound above all else in this collection. It is a form of aesthetic escapism that eschews the common occurrence, the lyrical simplicity of human communion.

"Ootischenie," a rather long poem in 32 sections (with a prologue and

an epilogue), is the most ambitious offering. It attempts to define the Doukhobors of British Columbia — their culture and experience. Some of the poems reveal a quiet power, especially those passages that describe the movement of nature: "geometry of agate/mysterious as seas/where grasses undulate and make/cloudy transparencies/filamented moths' wings." But that's the extent of Murray's vision. Amulets do not a poem make.

Even more abstruse is Jay Macpherson's *Welcoming Disaster*. There are ghosts and a motley array of subterranean creatures in this collection. The fact that her poems are arranged into neatly rhymed stanzas is a major consolation. Fantasies and invocations are Macpherson's forte, but I wish she'd look down at the ground once in a while. A few poems do succeed, however, in touching reality. "In that Cellar" is one of them. And yet, Jay Macpherson seems intent on continuing a certain tradition that includes James Reaney and only a few others. It is sad, in a way, that her poems are unable to reach an essential balance between those who read poetry and those who don't; but I have to say that the fault is hers. Who wants cryptic murmurings? We want poems that speak from the heart. We want poems written by human beings — not angels. □

IN BRIEF

APPARENTLY, A SERIES of spin-offs is being issued from Barry Lord's sometimes useful but more often unpardonably silly *History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People's Art*. The first volume, *Leonard Hutchinson, People's Artist: Ten Years of Struggle, 1930-1940* by Lynn Hutchinson Brown (NC Press, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.95 paper), is a presentation of 44 prints by Hutchinson, all of them wood engravings, I think. (Nowhere is the reader given any information about medium, dimensions, date or size of the run.) The work is encumbered by Lord's strange, feckless introduction. His curious idea seems to be that those who labour for their bread inevitably possess "great inner dignity" and that Hutchinson's prints not only portray that dignity but are also embodiments of a "new democratic culture." They show (i.e. render) "the people's capacity to endure, to fight back, and eventu-



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*Photographs by Judy Cameron
Introduction & notes by Walter Terry*

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ally to win." Needless to say, no such thing happens in the pictures. Lord's preface is followed by a short, inept essay by Lynn Hutchinson Brown. As an effort at some re-recognition of his achievement, it is a dogged recounting of Hutchinson's qualities that does the artist more harm than good. Most of Brown's codified aesthetic and political virtues simply will not bear even cursory comparison with Hutchinson's work. The fact that he turned from painting to print-making does not make him, as if by magic, accessible to "the People." And social realism does not of necessity "ennoble the working and oppressed peoples." "Lone Birch" is not at all a "classic Canadian landscape" merely because it musters a solitary tree in "the still expansive space" of the countryside. Here Ms. Brown merely confuses "classic" with a rather simplistic emptiness; sparseness has no particularly functional relationship either to moral or pictorial integrity. No doubt Leonard Hutchinson has given us some skilful pictures. However, many are exceedingly ordinary, and only crude where they are meant to be direct ("Breadline"), while the landscapes are more often than not downright dull. There are some stirring portraits ("Tobacco Worker"), but even they are marred by a cinematically derived idealization of stance (eyes up, quasi-religious squint, out and over the spectator) which is time after time, in all left-wing social realism, taken to mean personal grandeur of spirit. All in all, the book is a triumph of thesis over content.

GARY MICHAEL DAULT

EX-ONTARIO NDP leader and (admittedly neophytic) political scientist Donald C. MacDonald has assembled a collection of essays — *Government and Politics of Ontario* (Macmillan, \$16.95 cloth, \$7.95 paper) — that breaks new ground in a couple of ways. First, Ontario, at least in scholarly terms, has been the neglected child of the Canadian confederation — too frequently Canadian studies are assumed Ontarian in essence with the result that the peculiarities of the region often have been overlooked. Historians have now breached this barrier (particularly with the much-touted Ontario Historical Studies series), and now political scientists will achieve a sort of helpful orthodoxy with this volume. Second, seldom has this reviewer been exposed to such a high standard of excellence in

concept, design, and execution as is displayed in this team effort. No dreary collection of constitutional and legal presumptions, the book, through case studies and penetrating political analysis by 19 superior scholars, reveals convincingly the considerable warts adorning the province's contemporary political visage. MacDonald's own essay, "Modernizing the Legislature," charts that institution's decline, analyzing the original design and the current reality; it should be posted on every street-corner in the province.

ROGER HALL

THE LATEST release in the "Critical Views on Canadian Writers" series is *Morley Callaghan* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, \$9.95 cloth and \$4.95 paper). Its uneasy blend of dated journalism, serious literary criticism, and assorted memorabilia suggests that the book might be more aptly described as "A Callaghan Miscellany." Editor Brandon Conron's introduction is a perceptive and balanced assessment that effectively summarizes an earlier book-length study (*Morley Callaghan*, Twayne, 1966), and extended essays by Edmund Wilson, George Woodcock, Hugo McPherson, and William Walsh are also worth reading. All but the Walsh are readily available elsewhere however — the Woodcock piece alone has been reprinted in three other paperback anthologies — and the remainder of Conron's selections seldom rise above the level of the book page in a weekend newspaper. Since most of them originally appeared there, this is not surprising: but it is surprising to find their superficial analyses and snap judgements rescued from well-earned obscurity and included in a book that purports to be a collection of "Critical Views." One of the more painful examples: Mary Colum's observation that F. Scott Fitzgerald's "mental nutriment seems to have been a trifle too jazzy." Cut to my mind, boggling.

PAUL STEUWE

TOM MCEWEN's *The Forge Glows Red; From Blacksmith to Revolutionary* (Progress Books, \$3.95) is, so far as I know, only the second book-length autobiography by a member of the radical left to have been published in Canada. The other is the Rev. A. E. Smith's *All My Life* (1949). McEwen, now 84, came to Canada from Scotland

in 1911 to work as a blacksmith and machinist. Soon afterwards he joined the Socialist Party of Canada and in 1922, the Workers' Party (later renamed the Communist Party). In the 1930s McEwen (or Ewen, as he was then known) was General Secretary of the Workers' Unity League. Particularly striking are his descriptions of his impoverished early years in Scotland and of his 1931 conviction as a communist, followed by a term at Kingston Penitentiary.

MW

BASIL JACKSON is running low on man-made catastrophes. *Supersonic* (George J. McLeod, \$6.95) is his third ecology thriller set in the near future and thematically his weakest. The first two dealt with disasters (an urban nuclear power station with a radioactive leak, a massive Arctic oil spill) that might conceivably affect us all and blight our lives. But who on earth cares about a trite gaggle of first-class passengers involved in an emergency aboard an SST high above the Atlantic? That's an elitist tragedy if there ever was one. Even assuming the supersonic transports don't go the way of the Zeppelin, the only damage they are likely to cause most of us is to our eardrums. A pity, because Jackson's skills as a writer and plotter of fiction have matured considerably. And readers prepared to endure the holding pattern of aerodynamic detail and Air Traffic Control jargon will be rewarded with a landing that delivers a splendid punch.

DM

THERE ARE THESE big hearings into the drug industry in Canada, see, and the battle gets pretty dirty. Lots of money involved in pushing ethical drugs to the doctors and pharmacists, and the multinationals don't want wiseacre Canadians messing about. What they need is a Canadian who knows his way around. And who better than that big time lobbyist, Joseph Mann? Especially when he's a friend of the guy who controls the Canadian TV public, Grant MacDonald. But the big boys in Ethical Drug Land have not counted on INTEGRAL, a secret net of civil servants that seeks to control drugs — in the interests of the people, of course. And what no one banked on was that Joe Mann would meet the beautiful Violetta Norgela of Food and Drug and turn the turgid Ottawa scene aflame with true love and sex, straight and

oral. Add a corrupt politician or two, and you can see that Ivan Shaffer's *The Medicine Man* (Lester and Orpen, \$8.95) has everything. A real downer.

J. L. GRANATSTEIN

THOUGH BORN IN New York, Alexander Dolgun had spent most of his life in Moscow and was an employee at the American Embassy there when he was arrested by the Soviet secret police for alleged espionage in 1948. *Alexander Dolgun's Story: An American in the Gulag* (Random House, \$11.50) is the tense and dramatic account that he and Canadian journalist and television interviewer Patrick Watson have put together of what happened to this tough-minded victim of 24 years of Soviet terror. Having endured every imaginable form of physical and mental torture during his interrogations in the notorious Moscow prisons, Dolgun was sent off to Central Asia where he survived in the prison camps by talking his way into the relatively soft job of prison doctor. Released in 1956 under Khrushchev's general amnesty, he lived in Moscow under strict KGB surveillance until he was finally allowed to leave for the United States in 1971.

More personal and with a more immediate impact than Solzhenitsyn's *The GULAG Archipelago*, Dolgun's story contains more raw adventure than most fictional thrillers. This is reportage of superlative quality and though Patrick Watson's specific contribution to the book is nowhere mentioned, the exceptional power of the narrative and the sustained sense of style bear his hallmark.

BRIAN VINTCENT

HOW DID Adrian Waller's well-researched, moderately interesting *Weekend Magazine* article get between hard covers? *The Gamblers* (Clarke Irwin, \$8.50) in the title are those compulsive bettors in every crap-shooting corner of the ancient and modern world, as well as a small group of self-confessed but anonymous Montreal gamblers and their long-suffering wives. The description of these characters is as excessive as their habit. The prose alternates gutsy but sentimental documentary style with fact-sheet deadpan. The hidden microphone lurks behind every self-conscious page, with the author occasionally breathing a

sanctimonious moral. There are respectful nods to the powers of state lotteries, the Mafia, and the Montreal vice squad. As for all the facts, it's hard to say whom they are meant to convince, and of what; and as a story, it's a safe bet that the ending was fixed.

CHRISTINE FORSYTH

THE EDITORS RECOMMEND

In the opinion of the editors, the following books, all of which have been reviewed on these pages during the past several months, represent the best in current Canadian reading.

FICTION

The Silent Rooms, by Anne Hébert, translated by Kathy Mezei, Musson, \$7.95 cloth. An oblique, intense book in which Anne Hébert further explores the isolated regions of human experience.

The Skating Party, by Merne Summers, Oberon Press, \$5.95 cloth and \$2.95 paper. Interlocking stories set in

WINNER OF THE 1975 COLLIER MACMILLAN PRIZE FOR JUVENILE LITERATURE



STAR MAIDEN

An Ojibwa Legend of the First Water Lily
by Patricia Robins, illustrated by Shirley Day

June Publication

\$5.95

The Collier Macmillan Prize for Juvenile Literature is an occasional award for a book of exceptional worth authored and illustrated by Canadians. The prize carries with it a \$500 honorarium, in addition to any royalties earned for publication.

The 1975 recipient, *Star Maiden: An Ojibwa Legend of the First Water Lily*, was chosen from some 300 submissions by a jury of ten prominent Canadian librarians and booksellers.

COLLIER MACMILLAN CANADA, LTD.

small-town Alberta and written with a penetrating clarity.

Tales from the Smokehouse, edited by Herbert T. Schwarz, illustrated by Daphne Odjig, Hurtig, \$8.95 cloth. Anthropological erotica? Yes, but also a subtle and moving reading experience.

Blackout, by Hubert Aquin, translated by Alan Brown, Anansi, \$8.50 cloth and \$3.50 paper. Another eccentric mystery story from Aquin.

Across from the Floral Park, by Kent Thompson, Macmillan, \$7.95 cloth. There are touches of Nabokov in Thompson's second novel. A suspense thriller built around a solipsist.

The Candy Factory, by Sylvia Fraser, McClelland & Stewart, \$8.95. A middle-class Canadian fairy story, not necessarily to everybody's taste.

The Crazy House, by Anthony Brennan, McClelland & Stewart, \$8.95 cloth. An entertaining picaresque novel almost blurred to death.

Lot's Wife, by Monique Bosco, translated by John Glassco, McClelland & Stewart, \$7.95 cloth. A piercing examination of modern woman highlighted by Bosco's vivid prose.

NON-FICTION

The Gaiety of Gables: Ontario's Architectural Folk Art, by Anthony Adamson and John Willard, McClelland & Stewart, \$17.95 cloth. The title says it all.

Colombo's Canadian Quotations, by John Robert Colombo, Hurtig, \$15 cloth. Essential Canadiana.

Halfway Up Parnassus, by Claude Bissell, U of T Press, \$12.50 cloth. A university president's bitter-sweet memories of the turbulent 1960s.

The Politics of Development, by A. V. Nelles, Macmillan, \$21 cloth. A study of Ontario Hydro as a unique example of public ownership.

Ontario Towns, by Douglas Richardson and Kenneth Macpherson with 99 plates by Ralph Greenhill, Oberon Press, \$25 cloth. Delightful.

Canadian Water-colours and Drawings in the Royal Ontario Museum, by Mary Allodi, The Royal Ontario Museum, two volumes, \$30 the set. An exciting historical catalogue.

The Siren Years, by Charles Ritchie, Macmillan, \$12.95 cloth. The notebook of a good diplomat and a better diarist.

From There to Here: A Guide to English-Canadian Literature Since 1960, by Frank Davey, Press Porcepic, \$4.95. Perceptive and incisive.

Canada: The Heroic Beginnings, by Donald Creighton, Macmillan, \$14.95 cloth. Superb prose.

The Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature, by Sheila Egoff, Oxford, \$19.95 cloth and \$6.25 paper. A revised edition, as authoritative as the first.

A Good Place to Come From, by Morley Torgov, Lester & Orpen, \$8.95 cloth. Funny and fond memories of a small-town *mensch*. Winner of the Stephen Leacock award.

The Learning Machine: A Hard Look at Toronto Schools, by Loren Jay Lind, Anansi, \$8.50 cloth and \$4.75 paper. Lucid, cogent, unsettling.

Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government 1939-45, by J. L. Granatstein, Oxford, \$18.95 cloth. Controversial but fascinating.

The Power and the Tories, by Jonathan Manthorpe, Macmillan, \$12.95 cloth. The first attempt to analyze why Ontario's Big Blue Machine has been running for so long.

The John A. Macdonald Album, by Lena Newman, Tundra Books, \$30 cloth. The man and his times, freshly presented.

Hard to Swallow, by Walter Stewart, Macmillan, \$9.95 cloth. A bill of attainder against Canada's food industry.

POETRY

I'm a Stranger Here Myself, by Alden Nowlan, Clarke Irwin, \$6.95 cloth. The ordinary made extraordinary by quiet wit and despair.

Timelight, by Robin Skelton, McClelland & Stewart, \$6.95 cloth. A lyric journey through a dark past.

Magic Animals, by Gwendolyn MacEwen, Macmillan, \$9.95 cloth and \$5.95 paper. A retrospective that illuminates MacEwen's Pan-urge.

You Are Happy, by Margaret Atwood, Oxford, \$3.25 paper. Atwood in a new voice and fine fettle.

The Collected Poems of Earle Birney, by Earle Birney, McClelland & Stewart, two volumes, \$20 the set. The poetic canon of an enduring star.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PRAISE AND PROTEST

Sir:

Owing to the vagaries of academic life I have only just read the April issue of *Books in Canada* and I find myself torn between praise and protest at Catherine Orr's analysis of last season's Canadian television drama.

When the *Performance* series is seen in the context of the previous season's series of plays (apparently commissioned from writers because they had earned a reputation in poetry of fiction — rarely in playwriting — with predictably disastrous results) this season's efforts do appear to be an improvement. I found Ms. Orr to be right on target when she analysed the plays that were specifically written for television. However, she does not turn the same sharp perceptions on Hirsch's laudable effort to bring the work of George Luscombe and Paul Thompson to television. The adaptation of *Ten Lost Years* focussed on talking head after talking head. The lively anecdotal illustrations to those grim narratives were hacked down into incoherence or completely omitted — with a corresponding diffusion of focus and loss of energy. *The Farm Show* suffered badly from obtrusive unrhythmical camera work and shots badly placed at odd angles, which made nonsense of the stage metaphors that are so basic to *Passé Murailles* technique. *Village Wooing* also suffered in the transition from stage to small screen. Performances designed to carry past the proscenium arch read in the living room as self-indulgent mugging.

Nor should Ms. Orr be unchallenged when she says that distinctively Canadian television drama is a "no man's land" and that "the CBC's best productions have always sprung from foreign sources." That really is a misrepresentation of the facts. Paul St. Pierre's series *Cariboo Country*, Charles Israel's *The Open Grave*, several episodes of *The Manipulators* and *Wojek*; to name a few over the last decade, would refute her.

The quality of television drama has indeed declined in the last seven or eight years but to dismiss 20 years of considerable craftsmanship, willingness to experiment and the high quality programs that came from these years is to distort the present as well as the past. Canada suffers from a dearth of informed television criticism of any kind so I am particularly delighted that *Books in Canada* has found space for a consideration of CBC television drama. Ms. Orr has certainly done a thorough survey — but perhaps in the future she will try to place her judgements of current output in the perspective of past achievements at the CBC.

Mary Jane Miller
Associate Professor
Department of Drama
Brock University

WE HAD THE GUTS

Sir:

In response to Catherine Orr's review "What Hirsch Hath Wrought" (April issue), I offer the following lines (author unknown):

*The farmer hauled another load away
You could tell by the smell it wasn't hay.*

I hope Ms. Orr can learn to open her senses to future plays she reviews and give us an honest review instead of this patronizing crap which

praises plays which were "supposed" to be good theatre and were anything but.

She is so typical of reviewers and adjudicators (at festivals) who are too gutless to stand up and say that they liked an "old-fashioned" type of play over something considered to be more fashionable. Hell, someone might say they weren't "in" or "cool" or "with-it" or whatever! Honesty, of course, must be sacrificed.

S. R. Blackwell
Dawson Creek, B.C.

P.S. I also believe that you haven't got the guts to print this letter.

P.P.S. I apologize for the cheap attempt in the P.S. in which I try to get you to print my letter simply by insulting you. Choose for yourself, as you undoubtedly will. You know my feeling.

THE RIGHT TO DISAGREE

Sir:

It is a sad thing when the expression of a difference of opinion about the nature of literature in the letters section of a literary magazine is described as "cowardly." And it is truly depressing that the refutation of an argument should be brought to the level of an infantile barrage of personal insults and obtuse threats. Jim Christy's reply to my letter casts disturbing doubts on his concept of freedom, which I always understood to be the fundamental right to disagree. And I disagree — not only with the basic precepts of the bourgeois novel, but with the underlying concept of the novel as expressed in Christy's article — and for the same reasons — the novel of "experience" is dead.

Martin Vaughn-James
Toronto

C. W. JEFFERYS

Sir:

I am working on a biographical and critical study (to include a catalogue of paintings, drawings, etc.) of the Canadian historical artist, illustrator, and painter, Charles William Jefferys (1869-1951), and would be most grateful for any information pertaining to him. Copies of, or references to, letters, manuscripts, artworks, photographs, and other relevant documents, in public or in private collections, would be appropriately acknowledged, and the author of this note is willing to pay the cost of reproducing and mailing such materials to the following address:

Robert Stacey
65 Metcalfe St., Apt. 3,
Toronto

IN DEFENCE OF POWELL'S

Sir:

I'm not sure that it would be safe to form any conclusions about the health or otherwise of the Canadian retail book industry using as sole criteria, whether the bookstores choose to distribute *Books in Canada*.

Over the years I admit some strange yardsticks have been applied, but yours, I think, is a bit much. If Powell's feel that they don't want to distribute a competitor's ad free, who can blame them? I don't believe that it has ever been demonstrated conclusively that ads of the kind under discussion either help or hinder bookstore sales. One can get lots of opinion but that's all it is and if research exists, either North American or European, either pro or con, booksellers would be very glad to hear about it and I'm sure would be prepared to do their homework.

I don't know the contents of Powell's letter but, assuming that it was merely terse as you describe it, and not downright abusive, and granted that all we have at the moment is opinion, yours, Powell's, or anybody else's, don't you

think that "narrow-minded, short-sighted, erroneous, self-interest" is a bit hard?

We all know that Book Clubs are here to stay in one form or another and we'd all like to know a lot more about their effect on book retailing. Until we do, not much purpose is served on either side by getting too worked up about their possible, but unknown, effects.

In support of your contrary argument that the retail industry is in pretty healthy shape, since it has recently developed attractions for stick-up artists, you will be interested to learn that Books Canada on Confederation Square in Ottawa was knocked over a couple of weeks ago at closing time. As you say, a nasty experience. We're still looking for the bright side.

Bill Roberts
General Manager
Shirley Leishman Books
Ottawa

WRONG ONCE IN AWHILE

Sir:

There is an editorial error in the March issue — specifically in the article by Jim Christy on page 10. In the last paragraph on that page he says: "... I take a job every once and awhile." That is incorrect. He should have said: "... I take a job every once in a while." I'm sorry, but any way you slice it he's wrong. If you check the Concise Oxford English Dictionary and find: "AWHILE, adv. For a short time" and think you are safe, forget it. Because the words "every once and" are inappropriate if simply tacked on ahead of "awhile." If, on the other hand, Jim only took one job in his entire life, the use of "every" is still unnecessary. You might like to try some other possible avenues of escape. What I would recommend is that you turn to WHILE in the Concise OED and find that one of its uses is in the expression "once in a (wiggly line), occasionally, at long intervals." Isn't that what Jim really meant?

A. L. Stewart
Winnipeg

CanWit No.1

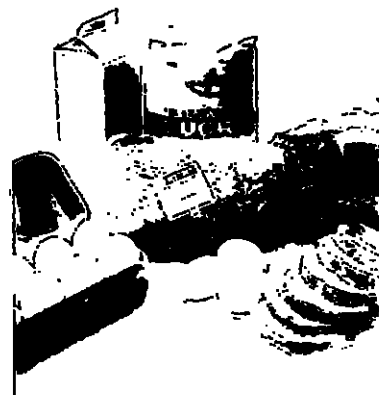
QUESTION: Who is cooked by adding a dash of symbolism to a cup of Crisco and blaking the mixture in a fearfully symmetrical oven for a cycle of four principles? **Answer:** Northrop Frye. Readers are invited to concoct similar recipes involving the essential ingredients of any well-known figure or character in Canadian literature. Book prizes will be awarded to the winner and runners-up. Address entries to: CanWit No. 1, *Books in Canada*, 501 Yonge Street, Suite 23, Toronto M4Y 1Y4. The deadline is July 30.

SOLUTION TO ACROSTIC NO. 6

S(ylvia) FRASER: THE CANDY FACTORY Sam looked at Miss October spread across a haystack with the frost definitely off her pumpkins, then thought bitterly of the alimony that kept him poor. All any broad had to do was trap one poor sucker and she had it made for life.

The first correct solution opened for Acrostic No. 5 was from Mrs. J. I. McKenty of Winnipeg. She will receive a copy of Ernest Buckler's *Or Bells and Fireflies*.

FOOD



The POLITICS OF FOOD

Don Mitchell

Mitchell carefully analyses the politics and economics of food production and consumption in Canada.

He describes in detail what has happened to farmers since 1945, how agribusiness has muscled into Canadian agriculture, and how federal food policies are sacrificing farmer and consumer interests to serve the corporations. Milk, meat and bread are the three case studies Mitchell uses to demonstrate this system at work.

Mitchell offers an alternative approach which could end high prices, private profiteering, and the continued exploitation of farm workers, food industry workers and consumers.

\$4.95 paper \$11.95 cloth

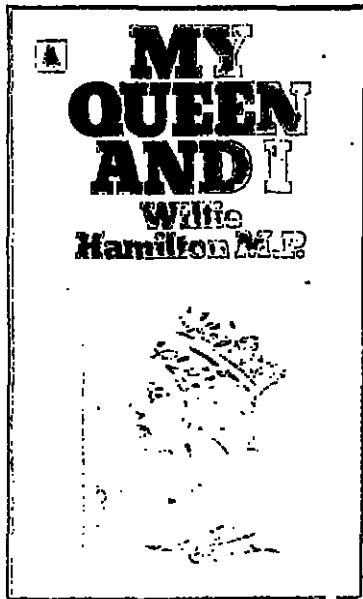
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Willie Hamilton, M.P.

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This is a scathing attack on the British monarchical system by the well-known republican Labour Member of Parliament Willie Hamilton. "The monarchy," says Hamilton, "is an outdated institution that perpetuates a class system of privilege and favour which is immoral."

MY QUEEN AND I, a best seller in hardcover in Britain and in Canada, examines in a well-documented yet highly readable manner, the tremendous cost of maintaining the monarchy, the vast personal wealth of the royals, and the inevitable metamorphosis that this institution must make in the 20th century.

"There is certainly nothing stifled in *MY QUEEN AND I*. At the risk of being sent to the Tower of London . . . Willie Hamilton roars out his personal convictions."

—Hamilton Spectator

TANGLE ME NO MORE

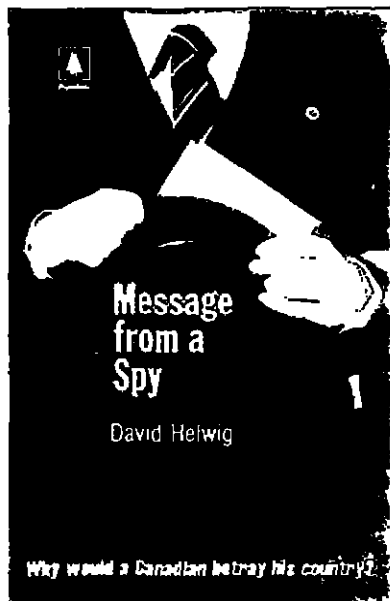
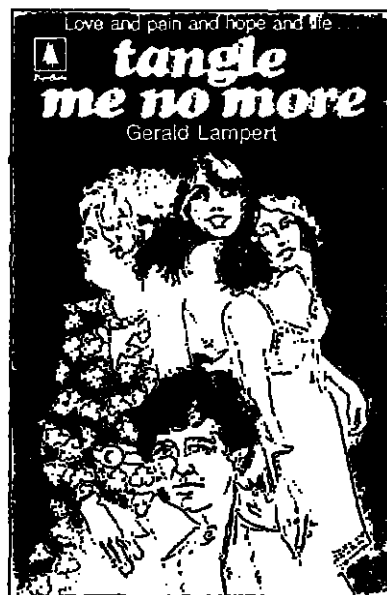
Gerald Lampert

1.95

Peter Munroe is a man struggling to free himself from his obsessions with his need for love from his mother and from Ruth, the former, whose passions lie elsewhere and the latter who cannot conform to the image that Peter has of her. He is a sensitive man in an insensitive world, demanding much more than he can give and desperate in his need to free himself from these insatiable demands.

"The book is exceptionally fine and very stimulating. It's a damn good book."

—Austin Clark



MESSAGE FROM A SPY

David Helwig

1.75

When a man becomes a traitor in his attempt to "step into history" the results are devastating and confusing for his friends and family. And who can determine the moral nature of this man's betrayal in times such as these?

David Helwig, author of *INSIDE AND OUT*, takes us into the all-too-real world of spies and espionage. He explores this world and the people in it in a tough-minded fashion yet, always with a certain humane tenderness that makes one ask — "Who is the betrayer and who is the betrayed?"

The Canadian Paperback Publisher