

# BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 11

NOVEMBER, 1975



SUPER  
CHIEF: Dief  
and the flood of  
Diefenbooks, reviewed  
by DAVID LEWIS

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SUPER ACHIEVER: Pierre  
Berton and the Crisis of Standards,  
an essay by TOM HEDLEY

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PLUS: Fetherling on Sinclair; Evans on  
Friedenberg; Woodcock on the Komagatu  
Maru incident; and a love letter from Irving Layton

- Tom Hedley:  
Colossus from the North. *Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization of our National Image*. by Pierre Berton 3
- David Lewis:  
Colossus from the West. "I Never Say Anything Provocative": *Witticisms, Anecdotes and Reflections by Canada's Most Outspoken Politician, John G. Diefenbaker*. collected and annotated by Margaret Wente; *One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker. Volume I, The Crusading Years 1895-1956; Diefenbaker (Volume I): Leadership Gained 1956-62*, by Peter Stursberg 7
- George Woodcock:  
To Sikh a Newer World. *White Man's Country: An Exercise in Canadian Prejudice*. by Ted Ferguson 9
- Keith Garebian:  
Czeching Up on History. *Whatever Happened to Wenceslas?*, by Jan Drabek 11

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

- Douglas Marshall:  
*King of White Lady*, by R. Lance Hill 13
- J. L. Granatstein:  
*Exodus UK*, by Richard Rohmer 14
- Peter Thomas:  
*The Jurassic Shales*, by Robert Sward 15
- Aviva Layton:  
*The Cage*, by Martin Vaughn-James 15
- Michael Ryval:  
*The Broadbarren Diamond*, by Dee Korman 16
- Leonard Gasparini:  
*Journeys and Shows*, by Jan Michael Dryoff; *On the Eleventh Line in the First House*, by Kit James; *Multimonster in Paradise*, by Allan Shute 16
- Jamie Hamilton:  
*City Flowers*, by Artie Gold; *By Death Never Leave Me*, by Stephanie I. Nynych 18
- Clare MacCulloch:  
*Journal to the East*, by Gerry Gilbert; *Okira: Selected Translations from the Text of Okira*, by Allan Safarik 19
- Leonard Gasparini:  
*Virgins & Vampires*, by Joe Rosenblatt 22
- Richard Landon:  
*The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 142 to 297, 1501 to 1514*. translated by R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson 22
- Doug Fetherling:  
*Will Gordon Sinclair Please Sit Down*, by Gordon Sinclair 29
- Gerald Levitch:  
*Auld Acquaintance: An Autobiography*, by Guy Lombardo with Jack Altshul 30
- Gary Michael Dault:  
*Kurelek's Canada*, by William Kurelek 32
- J.A.S. Evans:  
*The Disposal of Liberty and Other Industrial Wastes*, by Edgar Z. Friedenberg; *Power, Influence and Authority*, by David J. Bell; *The Dilemmas of Modern Man*, the Winnipeg Centennial Symposium 33
- Neville Thompson:  
*History and Myth: Arthur Lower and the Making of Canadian Nationalism*, edited by Welf H. Heick 37
- George Melnyk:  
*Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth. 1874-1914*, by Alan A n & - 39
- Fred Armstrong:  
*The Kitchener Market Fight*, by Jack Pasternak 40
- Terrence li. White:  
*Years of Hard Labour*, by Morden Lazarus; *Democracy and the Work Place*, by Harold B. Wilson 41

## DEPARTMENTS

Script & Film by Forster Freed: A <i>Collection of Canadian Plays: Volumes I, II, III, and IV</i> . edited by Rolf Kalman 41
Soft & Recycled by Paul Stuewe 43
Letters to the Editor 44
CanWit No. 5 46

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Drawings by David Annesley 1,4
Drawings by Howard Engel 32,40,43
Drawings by Jon McKee 28

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## BOOKS IN CANADA

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# COLOSSUS FROM THE NORTH

If Berton's all that Berton seems,  
'it's time to spike our national dreams

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By **TOM HEDLEY**

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THE FUTURE OF Canada may be in doubt but the future of Pierre Berton is apparently secure.

This fact of our cultural life is no great comfort to the generation of writers (I count myself one of them) who respond to him with an ambiguity that varies from grudging admiration to downright contempt. We are younger and considerably less noticed and I would say part of this attitude can be explained away as sour grapes and part of it cannot. Many of us are people wandering on a landscape of anomie. Towering figures, such as his, cast intimidating shadows.

Those who dislike him are often those most suspicious of power and money as the justified reward of a creative life. Much of this dislike isn't so much personal as it is a condemnation of the system that helped create him and, in contradistinction, the system he helped create. As for me, I count myself as one of Pierre Berton's grudging admirers, believing he would have made even more money in virtually any other line of work he chose. If dentistry. Instead, had called him I have no doubt his astonishing energy would have saved the teeth, if not the soul, of the nation.

We are a nation, after all, whose collective imagination has never been able to overcome our institutions or our geography. The tradition of our culture heroes is that they are shaped by the mystique of space and distance — the myth of the land-and finally absorbed by our institutions.

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*If a whole notion could grow fat in the tea shop of the colonialist aesthetic, why shouldn't Mr. Berton?*

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It's pan of our cultural insanity that deep within our most private yearnings the Group of Seven lives, though most of us dwell in cities; our economic realities are one thing, our dreams another.

It's exactly this sort of conflict-this psychic time warp — that could drive a man like Pierre Berton, born of the Yukon, to believe that a railroad could be the national dream. It's no surprise that Berton, a genuine culture hem, now is an institutional figure. Nor is it his fault. He is rather a classic product of a counter-revolutionary culture: a culture created by a people who, in opposition to the American revolution, thought it a constitutional madness to try to legislate the pursuit of happiness and create a new world. Compared with the Declaration of Independence, the British North America Act originally read like a real-estate document. And that was the size of it: property ... space ... distance ... privacy ... law ... order ... boundaries ... Add to this our ancestor's conservative need to cling to a father-figure called the Old Country. If a whole nation could grow fat in the tea shop of the colonialist aesthetic, why shouldn't Mr. Berton?

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By the standards and limitations of such a history, Pierre Berton has had a career of integrity. Through hard work and dedication to purpose he has achieved well. It's a characteristic of a counter-revolutionary culture that those who have already achieved are allowed to achieve even more, while those who have not yet achieved are made to endure the humiliation of a long and spiritually destructive obscurity. This is sometimes called "having no identity," which

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*It is the habit of my generation to put down Berton because ... his books are not nobly eked out on the edge of pain and solitude.*

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really means "getting no recognition." The haves get while the have-nots don't. To a very few come the joys of a Gibraltar-like identity such as Pierre's. Like the historical faces etched in the granite of Mount Rushmore he and too few others are part of the Great Canadian Same-Old-Face Syndrome.

Today, at 55, Berton is the father of 22 books and eight children and has been a Great Canadian Same-Old-Face for two decades. He didn't win one Governor General Award for creative non-fiction; having achieved, he won three (*The Mysterious North*, *Klondike*, and *The Last Spike*).

He is seen weekly on *Front Page Challenge*. My *Country* and *The Great Debate* and heard twice daily on Toronto radio station CKEY. He is a first-rate television interviewer, surpassed in excellence only by Patrick Watson. He holds the Stephen Leacock Medal for humour and the ACTRA Award for integrity and outspokenness in broadcasting. He wrote and read the narration for the documentary film *City of Gold*, which has won more than 30 awards, not the least of which was the Grand Prix of Cannes. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada and holds two honorary degrees — an LL.D. from P.E.I. and a D.Litt. from York-and the City of Toronto's Civic Award for Merit. The achievers achieve, while the rest of us applaud from the cheap seats.

It is the habit of my generation to put down Berton because, you could say, his books are not nobly eked out on the edge of pain and solitude. Instead they are cranked out by a writing machine tuned to the memories of daily deadlines at the *Toronto Star*. But it should be remembered that he is a journalist and has never tried to be anything else. His columns in the *Star* during the late 1950s and early 1960s were masterpieces of investigative journalism.

Though he may have become wiser as a man since those halcyon days, his technique as a writer has remained the same. Above all, he has remained a newspaperman. Because Canada has a great newspaper tradition, newspaper techniques are still most often the methods applied to produce our magazines, our books of non-fiction, and even our current-affairs television programs. Add to this technique, boundless energy and a commitment to hard work and you will understand Berton's success. In *Klondike*, his most

honestly **felt** and authentically rendered book, there is an **important** insight into Pierre **Berton's** values:

The Klondike experience had taught all these men that they were capable of a kind of achievement they had never dreamed possible. It was this, perhaps more than anything else, that set them apart from their fellows. In the years that followed, they tended to run their lives as if scaling a perpetual Chilkoot, secure in the knowledge that any obstacle, real or imagined, can be conquered by the determined man.

With this sort of **determination**, Pierre **Berton** became this country's **star** example of its documentary tradition. Along the way he became a master in the art of recycling his material throughout the media and emerged as a national celebrity — the veritable **Juliette** of Canadian letters.

But now we must look not only **at Berton** and his fame but also at the documentary tradition that brought **him** to us in the first place. **For** it is the documentary **tradition that has** failed to address itself to our myths and this failure has had drastic consequences. Good in itself, but bad **when** there isn't anything else, this accursed tradition has created a national crisis of creative standards.

In our writing, both fiction and non-fiction, the heavy hand of the newspaperman is in **evidence** everywhere. The texture, the humanity, the credibility are all cut out; we're left with mere Kresge adaptations of much more costly items. It's hard for a **young** writer to **learn** technique when there **are** so few editors in the country who **know** how to read manuscripts, and so few directors who know how to read film and theatrical scripts. **There** is an art to the reading too. And this as much as anything makes publishers keep the Same Old Faces **around**. "What is all this new stuff about, anyway?" they ask themselves **fearfully**.

A great country **is one** that transforms its living emotions into a psychological reality. Art creates such **transformations** and fictions survive **where** facts do not. **There** is nothing more accurate than a fiction that survives as a larger idea. Facts are only contemplated prejudices and it is **our** obsession with facts — the dreaded documentary tradition — that keeps us in the ghetto of provincial life.

Pierre **Berton** up **until** now has been a purveyor of **facts**, not visions. He has managed to find only the story's surface. The intangibles that add the rich **texture** to our national tapestry are **never** isolated and defined.

Our **heroes** are **more** passive than active, & fending rather than attacking — a heroism of anguish and despair. So **much** of the inner person has fallen prey to outside forces that **the** last battle is being enacted within. In modern life,

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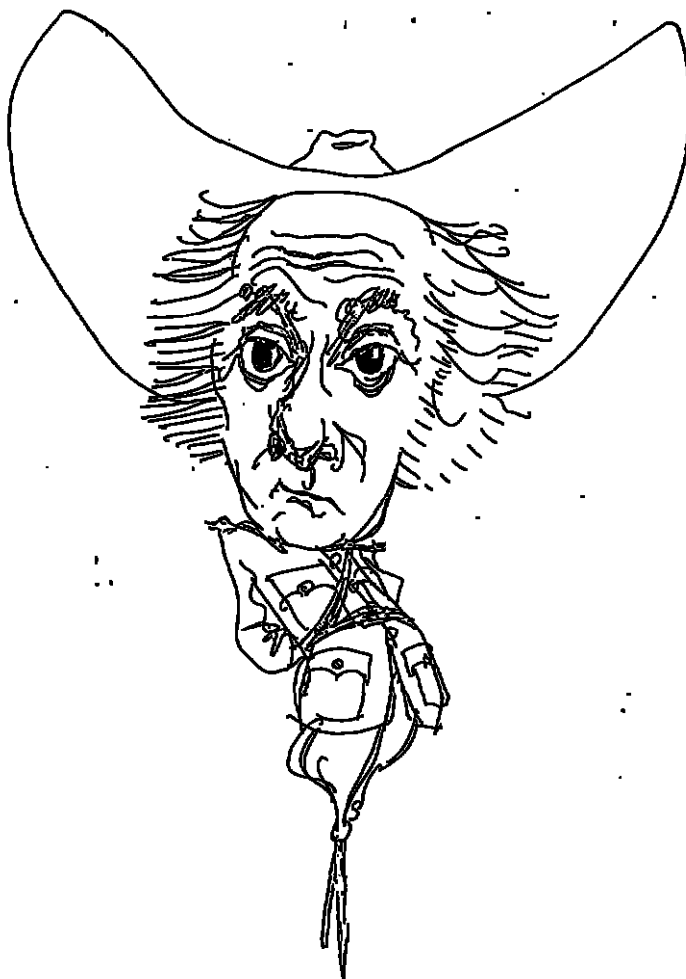
**Facts are only contemplated prejudices and it is our obsession with facts — the dreaded documentary tradition — that keeps us in the ghetto of provincial life.**

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this is how the tragic character is dramatically defined. But in our creative non-fiction, this tragedy continues **to** go unreported. Just as laws **will** not evolve until injustices become apparent, so values **remain** unseen unless they are articulated.

And so, with **nervous concern** and **no** small amount of hope, I turned to **Berton's** latest work, delivered one month ago from **Parnassus** to the hands of a grateful nation. Already the nation has shown its gratitude by **making Hollywood's** Canada: The Americanization of our National **Image** (McClelland & Stewart, illustrated, 303 pages, \$13.95 cloth) a best seller.

4 Books In Canada, November, 1975



**SINCE PIERRE BERTON** is so much the sum of his parts it's no easy task to separate the celebrity **from** his products. By **now** he has slipped **comfortably** into his reputation, and his writer's voice has **developed** a **firm surface authority**. Thus, **the** reviewer receives Hollywood's *Canada* not **so** much as a book but as a phenomenon. It is the latest **Berton**, and one is encouraged **to** feel a certain **urgency about** it all. Outside, it looks **formidable** and expensive, which it is. **Inside**, it's immediately noticeable that the illustrations **are poorly** integrated with the design, creating a feeling of graphic cheapness and lack of resolve. The press release and **dust jacket**, however, draw **attention** to the amount of work that **went** into it, and "work" is the key **word** here.

During the last 68 years, Hollywood moviemakers have made **575** films set, though **not** usually filmed, in Canada. We are **told Berton** has seen nearly **100** of them and has read the plot synopses of almost all the others. His research took him from **London to Los Angeles**, **to** the **files** of the RCMP and to the Public Archives of Canada.

"Jesus, what a load of work has gone into this," you tell **yourself**, settling down to read.

The **press** release also tells us **that Berton** was "superbly equipped to **write** such a book. A movie buff himself, he is also intimately **familiar** with the real **Canada** — its history, its geography, and its people."

I **for** one think Pierre **Berton** is **superbly** equipped **to** write such a book. Therefore it's a crying shame that, as his books go, this one falls so drastically **short**.

The famous **Berton** authority is as evident as ever in *Hollywood's Canada*. but this time it fails to convince. It's not a book at all, really. It's more of an extended newspaper or magazine piece — an attempt, I suppose, to be what is often called a "triumph of research." The **truth** is, by what I understand to be acceptable publishing **standards**, *Hollywood's Canada* is not yet a final or finished manuscript and therefore should not have **been** published.

Not that **there** isn't a fine book here somewhere. The right sort of relationship **with** the tight kind of editor could have made **all** the difference in the world. Them am, as I've said, very few **editors** in this **country** who actually know how to read manuscripts. And **though** this is a serious problem indeed for the developing writers of my **generation**, surely it **couldn't** be a problem for him. He's in the position to get any editor **he wants**. Or so **one** would assume.

Such a publication makes one suspicious that **Berton**, through the **natural** evolution of his career, might well be stuck squarely in the middle of a conflict of **interest**. Besides Pierre **Berton** the writer, there has always been Pierre **Berton** the careerist; and **somewhere** down the list of his **accomplished** ambition he **became** a director of **McClelland & Stewart**, Canada's largest and most powerful publishing house. **M & S** publishes his work and **therein** lies the **con-**

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*The fact is he publishes his work with a house in which he has an interest. Though this may be of some advantage to Pierre Berton the businessman, it's terribly unfair to Pierre Berton the writer.*

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**flict**. The question must be asked: Isn't this a form of vanity publishing?

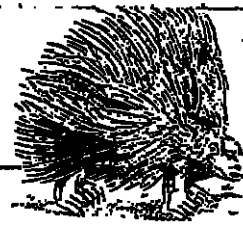
Whether it is or not, the fact is he publishes his work with a house in which he **has** an interest. Though this may be of some advantage to Pierre **Berton** the businessman, it's **terribly** unfair to Pierre Barton the writer.

In other countries, it is **considered** good form (as well as good sense) for directors and important **editors** to submit their own **manuscripts** to outside houses: The theory is that any **writer** is capable of writing a bad book. The staff of the house you're connected with shouldn't have to **endure** the **fears** of office-political **reprisals** that could **stand in** the way of an honest and objective appraisal of your manuscript. There's art in the eye of the good arbitrary reader and it's a disaster for a writer to be deprived of it. If, on the other **hand**, a director's manuscript **is** rejected by the outside houses, it then becomes a decision of the greatest integrity and **courage** to publish under your own imprint.

Pierre **Berton** is an extremely imposing man and frankly I can't see how people with jobs and profits on the line could **provide** him **with** the tough detached editing he apparently now needs.

Personally I couldn't care less if **Berton** owned **M & S** outright. But I do **care** that a writer of his energy and commitment would **gradually**, through **circumstances** outside himself, or circumstances he's **placed** himself in, be **pushed** unnecessarily into an **evident** complacency and a plain, bone-crushing dullness.

As it stands, the **thesis** of *Hollywood's Canada* is **intellectually** puerile, supported as it is by a mass of uncritical sod redundant research.



"... an **important** landmark.

It is for those in the know, those who want to be or simply for students of **Can-Lit** for whom Margaret Atwood's 'Survival is not enough.'

*The Montreal Gazette*

Frank  
**DAVEY &**

Clara  
**THOMAS**

#### OUR NATURE — OUR VOICES

Our *Nature — Our Voices* is Press **Porcepic's** series of **Canadian critical surveys**. It is **designed** to **give** students a **lively introduction** to this country's **literature**.

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Press **Porcepic** is distributed by General (Musson) Publishing, 30 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2T6.

— PRESS PORCEPIC —

November, 1975, **Books** in Canada 5

Baton's argument **simply** is that nearly all the 600 films Hollywood has made about Canada distort our image to the world. Or as he writes:

**If Europeans are baffled when they reach our shores to find that most of us live in cities — and they are — it is because the movies have misled them. And if Canadians continue to hold the belief that there is no such thing as a national identity — and who can deny that many hold it? — it is because the movies have frequently blurred, distorted, and hidden that identity under a celluloid mountain of misconceptions.**

What is he telling us? *That Hollywood is a fantasy factory?* But don't we know that already?

For instance, **Berton** expends pages on telling us how historically inaccurate was Cecil B. DeMille's *North West Mounted Police*. Yet it was a standing joke of the period that C. B. was always **historically inaccurate**. "History accord-

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**Berton misses another crucial point when he says American film-makers . . . were making "Canadian" movies. They weren't Canadian. movies; they were American movies about Canada.**

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ing to C. B. DeMille," they used to say. **or in** the case of his religious pictures. "The Gospel According to C.B. DeMille." This is hardly a revelation.

**Berton** has respect for DeMille's *Union Pacific* (about the building of a railroad across America) even though that film was more "inaccurate" than *RCMP*. The film DeMille made shortly after *RCMP*. *Unconquered* (about the Pontiac uprising in the British colonies), was also a work of fiction though billed as "history."

To attack DeMille for **historic** inaccuracy is to miss the point entirely. DeMille was a genre film-maker, concerned with epic fables. His authenticity was to the genre, not to **historical** truth. DeMille distorted Canada no more than he distorted the United States and the Bible.

**Berton** misses another crucial point when he says American film-makers working in Hollywood genres were making "Canadian" movies. They weren't Canadian movies; they were American movies about Canada. Anmioni's *Zabriskie Point*, by analogy, was **not** an "American" movie; it was an Italian movie about America.

Or when he puts down Randolph **Scott** playing a surveyor in *Canadian Pacific* "complete with a Texas accent," one is disappointed for the sake of our own **national superiority**. **Scott** has a *Virginian* accent; in fact, he was the only American of his period to achieve stardom with an **East-Southern** accent. Remember now, we're putting down them for not knowing us.

They are any number of inconsistencies hem but what **future**, I ask you, is there in wallowing in this trivia? I would have hoped the same question might have occurred in Mr. **Berton**.

A writer's worth is in inverse ratio to the number of scoundrels and villains he requires to make his **point**. **Berton** has approached Hollywood as if it were a conspiracy of villains. It's like trying to compare the book *Moby Dick* with the Classic Comic adaptation. There is something futile in the effort.

The films **Berton** is discussing attempt to be true to the **history** of cinema, not true to the history of place. They are **novelistic** in form, not journalistic. How could he possibly

consider them movies about Canada and leave it at that? They were American **Westerns**, or musicals, or **thrillers**, or whatever. True to the genre, they used "place" not as geography but as "ambiance." It is a fundamental question of technique to make genre **requirements** work **first**.

**Berton's** overall argument is weakened considerably by his tendency to discuss those films that conform to his thesis more than those films that do not. Most of the films discussed are B-pictures or C-pictures that died quickly on the bottom of double bills. Frankly, I can't see how they could have distorted our national image abroad. It's hard to believe anybody saw them. If they did, **doubtless** they were instantly forgotten.

Of the A-quality pictures **Berton** lists in the back of his book, fewer than one half are mentioned in the body of the text:

Why he bothers to point with scorn at Hollywood's love for the "scarlet" Mountie uniform, when the **overwhelming** percentage of the films were black and white, **escapes** me. For that matter, he fails to deal at all with *The Iron Curtain*, a major Hollywood film about the **Gouzenko** affair that established a trend in anti-Communist propaganda films. It did show **Mounties** in other than ceremonial dress, including detectives in civilian clothes.

When **Berton** writes that "the movie version of L.M. Montgomery's classic novel, *Anne Of Green Gables*, did have a few references to Prince Edward Island," one wonders which movie version he's referring to. There have been at least two.

The reader finds himself wanting **Berton** to dig deeper, to stop reporting on myths and start investigating them. It's the dreaded documentary tradition again rearing its vapid face. One gets the impression that Pierre **Berton** approaches an abstract idea carefully, with great fear, and with a certain nausea. Dig deeper, down inside the **ambiguities** and risk a little spiritual fatigue, **Pierre!** Damn it, turn off those memories of daily deadlines at the **Star!**

As if the audiences themselves were blameless — that **powerless** jumble of fantasy-seekers, immersed in

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*One gets the impression that Pierre Berton approaches an abstract idea carefully, with great fear, and with a certain nausea.*

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**Hollywood's** warm celluloid baths, dying to be manipulated. It is the audiences in the end who distort our national image abroad, for within them, cheering wildly behind the ladies in big hats, are our own film artists.

It is up to them to evoke our place with beauty and meaning. If we are not realized outside our borders, the fault is our own. **Berton** is concerned that Hollywood has made the word Canada "conjure up a vision of vast and virtually impenetrable forests, mysterious and almost enchanted." And yet consider this excerpt from his book *The Mysterious North*.> "To me, as to most northerners, the country is still an unknown quantity, as elusive as the wolf, howling just beyond the rim of the hills . . ."

And with that you have it, dear reader: The Documentary Tradition meets The Myth of the Land.

Finally, I should say that **Berton's** book could well be a product of our current cultural nationalism. If so, this is not

a healthy sign. It's understood that we must Face certain desperate political realities to secure some hope of a **future** of self-determination: Of this **there** is no question.

But going beyond having a **natural** devotion to a place and a way of life that you happen to believe is the **finest** in the world very quickly becomes, as George Orwell has said, "a habit of identifying oneself **with** a single nation ... placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than **that of** advancing its interests. ..."

This sort of **cultural** nationalism gradually becomes a negative energy at its base and **encourages** flagrant critical dishonesty in the ark.

One hopes it wasn't with this motive that **Berton** was **encouraged** to approach his latest **subject**. *Hollywood's Canada may continue to prove* that Pierre **Berton** is a big hit out them in **the** heartland. Them is, however, a sadness. **What** we have hem is an old pro in trouble, **and** that's the bloody shame. □

## COLOSSUS FROM THE WEST

To see himself as others see him, has never been one of Dief's abiding ambitions

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**"I Never Say Anything Provocative": Witticisms, Anecdotes and Reflections** by **Canada's** Most Outspoken **Politician**, John G. Diefenbaker, collected and annotated by **Margaret Wente**, Peter Martin Associates, 160 pages, \$10 cloth and \$3.95 paper.

**One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Volume I, The Crusading Years 1895-1956**, Macmillan, 320 pages, \$15 cloth;

**Diefenbaker (Volume I): Leadership Gamed 1956-62**, by Peter Stursberg, U of T Press, 278 pages, \$15 cloth.

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By DAVID LEWIS

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ONE DAY IN 1949 Mr. Diefenbaker met me in the **rotunda** of the **Centre** Block on Parliament Hill. He put his arms around my shoulders and said something to **this** effect: "Lewis, men like you should be in Parliament. If you invite me I'll be glad to speak on your **platform**, not for your party but for you, personally." (I was then national secretary of the CCF and a candidate in a Hamilton constituency for **the** expected Federal election.)

For obvious reasons we did not invite Mr. **Diefenbaker** to speak on my behalf, so that his offer was not put to the final test. But I have always remembered with warmth the kindly gesture. There are thousands — many thousands — of Canadians, who, in personal contact or **through** the mails, recall similarly generous gestures, his memory **of** their names, and his genuine concern for **their** welfare. They remember and love him for it. For them is no doubt about **the** widespread affection in which Diefenbaker is held in all parts of Canada.

But there is also another side to the picture. There have been **occasions** in Parliament, particularly since he lost the **leadership** of his party in 1967, when members of all parties, including his own, would cheerfully have banished Mr. Diefenbaker. He can be **aggravatingly** irrelevant and provoking in debate; his impish mm of **phrase** enables him to use innuendo in a devastating way to wound **his** own leader **and** colleagues as **readily** as his opponents; and he loves to be **the centre** of a parliamentary storm, **regardless** whether the issue is trivial or important.

In short, Diefenbaker, like all men of stature, is a complex person, about whom much has already been written and more no doubt will be. The above **three** books are an important contribution.

**"I Never Say Anything Provocative"** is a collection of quotes **from** Diefenbaker. Some are titillating, some **anecdotal**, some serious and meaningful, some revealing, and some banal. Together they give the **flavour** of Dief's wit and use of language. Ms. **Wente** has obviously done a loving job **of** research. She is to be commended not only for her perceptive and tasteful choice but also for the **helpful** way in which the extracts are organized and presented. The book is well worth the price, since **Diefenbaker** cannot be **held responsible** for the present inflation.

The **other** two books are, each in **its** way, fascinating. By logical coincidence one book begins where **the** other ends. Diefenbaker ends his first volume of memoirs in 1956, when he triumphantly won **the** leadership of the Conservative Party, the year and **event** with which **Stursberg** begins his. It is thus not possible to compare the way the two books interpret events, since **they** do not overlap in time, except for **the** 1956 **leadership** convention.

It is not easy to comment on **the** Memoirs, written by Diefenbaker himself, without arousing argument. One can say, without **hesitation**, that the book holds one's interest

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His *impish tam of phrase enables him to use innuendo in a devastating way to wound his own leader and colleagues' as readily as his opponents.*

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and is well **worth reading**. **Whether** its recital **of the role** of the main actor or of the events in which he participated is always valid, is a matter of interpretation.

Mr. **Diefenbaker's** *Memoirs* often **emphasize the** humility of his approach, his affinity with the common man, and his **human** fallibility. Nevertheless, the picture that **emerges** is **of** a man who never had a mean thought, was never guilty **of** a mean act, generous **to foe** as well as friend, invariably selfless, **meticulously** truthful, having only one objective in life, namely to serve his Fellow-man. Much **of** this picture is no doubt valid; but Diefenbaker was and is no angel, any **more** than the **rest of us**.

Humility is rendered somewhat shamefaced by the following ingenuous statement about his **stature** as a criminal lawyer, "When I **appeared**, **they** [the **jurors**] concluded that they must be something of injustice in the case. I **rep-**

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resented to them what a defence counsel should be." This may well be a statement of fact, but humble it is not.

Nor is balance restored in the pages that describe and criticize the Mackenzie King government's action against the Japanese Canadians during the last war. Mr. Diefenbaker manages to fill several Pages without mention of Angus MacInnis or M. J. Coldwell, who led the fight against the government's policy in the House of Commons — a parliamentary fight in which, according to Hansard, Diefenbaker took little, if any, part. It should be mentioned that MacInnis represented a Vancouver constituency, where the hysteria was at its height. Objectivity surely demanded that he, at least, should be recognized for his courage.

The Memoirs describe with insight the opening of the West in the early years of the century; they tell touchingly of the aspirations of an unusually sensitive and aware boy and young man; they reveal a genuine concern for ordinary people; they underline the author's commitment to the Monarchy and the British Empire and Commonwealth. Although Mr. Diefenbaker recognizes the political value of his social attitudes since, as he put it, "There are more votes on Main Street than Bay Street," there is no doubt that he was and is a populist, a defender of free enterprise who is ready to speak for the little man against the rich and the powerful — particularly for the little man in the West against the powerful in the East. The book underlines his well-known concern for civil-liberties and his rejection of the notion of hyphenated Canadians.

However, some of the general observations made by Mr. Diefenbaker leave me bewildered. Take the following. Speaking of the Depression of the 1930s, he makes this amazing statement: "I often think, when I contemplate the awfulness of those days, that the only reason for our failure to have a rebellion, or the reason that Britain has not had a rebellion since 1690, is that under the British parliamentary system we let off our steam in Parliament." Perhaps this naive remark was intended as a shorthand reference to the author's belief in the responsiveness of the democratic system. But it is pompous rather than illuminating when one remembers the Regina riots, the violence at the Vancouver post office, the treks to Ottawa, and the Bennett labour camps. There is little appreciation of the social and political turmoil that marked that period.

Similarly unsatisfactory is the reference to the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan in the late 1920s. The author carefully avoids mentioning the most distressing fact, namely that several well-known spokesmen for the Klan were Conservative Party candidates in the 1929 provincial election. Instead, he writes that the Ku Klux Klan "spread much in the same way as the Non-Partisan League or the Progressive Party before it." This transparent attempt to establish virtue by association for a racist organization is incomprehensible from a man who has dedicated so much of his energies to the fight for human rights.

Intriguing anomalies, captivating anecdotes, interesting pictures abound in the Memoirs and they are made alive. However, Stursberg's book is more revealing, indeed, more exciting.

The book consists of interviews that Stursberg taped with some 40 people, most but not all of whom had been members of Diefenbaker's cabinet. Others were important leaders at the national centre of the Conservative Party, important members of the Chiefs staff, a couple of journalists, and knowledgeable people of the era such as Senator Eugene Forsey and Tommy Douglas. Stursberg also interviewed leading Liberals but, unfortunately, not Pearson be-



cause of the latter's untimely death. The interviews were edited and each was divided according to subject-matter. The result is "oral" or, as the author prefers to call it, "living" history, arranged **chronologically** with intelligence and effectiveness and **woven** together with **narrative** links provided by **Stursberg**. I found the book absorbing.

The story of the major part of the Diefenbaker era is presented with a sense of the dramatic. Indeed, it **unfolds** like a classic tragedy: the **triumphant** hem winning his party; the inspired prophet winning his country; and the bewildered leader losing confidence and **support, ending in** near-defeat in 1962. The final act, the actual disintegration and fall of his **government** the following year, awaits the second volume.

One of the interesting aspects of the **Stursberg** book is that it tells almost as much about those interviewed as about the **man** who is their **central** subject. Before the reader pass the egotists, the generous critic, the relentless partisan, the objective analyst, the **loyal-but-saddened** supporter, and the disappointed disciple turned harsh critic.- The change of mood **from early** euphoria to later despair is fascinatingly portrayed in the thoughtful comments that **fill this** book.

In 1957 Diefenbaker **performed** the **miracle** of ending 22 consecutive years of Liberal **rule**, but only with a minority **government**. In 1958 he performed an even greater miracle by obtaining the largest majority in Canada's **parliamentary** history. Undreamed of was the fact that **50** of the 208 elected members **came** from Quebec. Yet only **four** years **later**, in 1962, he was reduced to a minority of 116 seats, which was a prelude to the loss of the government the following year. What happened?

This question will no doubt intrigue historians for years. The **narrators** in the **book** allude to **many** objective reasons: recession and unemployment; **the Coyne** affair, devaluation of the Canadian **dollar**, giving the Liberals the weapon of the **Diefenbuck; the defeat** of the **Union Nationale** and the

Quiet Revolution in Quebec; disloyalty on **the** part of the mp mandarins in the public service; and so on. On one important point the former cabinet members were almost unanimous: Diefenbaker was indecisive as leader of the massive majority government. Amazing though it may seem, their evidence is that the Chii **was** dynamic and decisive during the months of minority government but was sluggish and indecisive when leading the safest possible majority government.

Many of the former ministers seem convinced that the size of the 1958 majority was a disaster. Doug **Harkness** says: "**This very** large majority, in tny view, gave **Mr.** Diefenbaker a case of megalomania. It persuaded him that he **was** in an unassailable position." Whether Mt. **Harkness** is right in his particular formulation of the problem, there seems **little** doubt that the huge majority created undesirable effects on the Prime **Minister** and on the entire cabinet and caucus.

Another interesting impression is conveyed by another minister, **Davie Fulton**. He states: "One of the things that stands **out** in my mind about John Diefenbaker is **that, while** he had great concepts, he was not **strong on** an actual program by which they would be implemented. Perhaps this was a result of his training as a **defence** counsel. It was not his **responsibility** to build a **positive** case. **it was his responsibility to destroy the Crown's case; although** he **always** wanted **such a [positive] program, it was difficult to get him to agree to it in detail."**

This **observation** is supported by some others. How valid it is only future historians will be able to gauge.

When I **started this** review, I was sorely tempted to compose it entirely of excerpts **from** the *Memoirs* and, more particularly, **from Stursberg's** book. The recollections and comments of **important** actors during the Diefenbaker era illuminate a great political drama. I have **nothing** but **respect** for **Peter Stursberg's** impressive accomplishment. □

# TO SIKH A NEWER WORLD

## The Komagatu Maru incident and its bloody aftermath is a sad tale, sadly told

By GEORGE WOODCOCK

**ANTI-ASIAN FEELING** appeared in British **Columbia** when the **first** Chinese miners found their way northward **from** California in the Fraser **Valley** gold **rush** of the late 1850s. It was intensified and largely fostered by **labour** unions — when the contractor **Onderdonk** imported **coolies** in large numbers from China to build the western sections of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and **during** the 1870s no less a figure than that belated Father of Confederation, **Amor de Cosmos**, was assiduously advocating in Ottawa the merits of excluding Orientals. Later decades have seen such landmarks in prejudice as the Vancouver riots of 1907, when a racist mob **terrorized** the local Chinese but was routed by a Japanese counter-attack when it reached the **purlieu** of Powell Street, and the black days of Second World War when the whole Japanese community on the Coast, **hard-**

working merchants, farmers, and **fishermen**, was evicted in the **barren** valleys of the **Interior** and dispossessed of its property by the fiat of a federal government stricken with panic by the news of Pearl **Harbour**.

There **were** times in the 1950s and **the** 1960s when British **Columbians** seemed universally ashamed of their past **record** of racial prejudice, and it appeared that the minorities of Asian origin, **notably** the **Chinese** and the Japanese, had been accepted as responsible and congenial members of **the** larger community. And then, not far in the **1970s**, Vancouver began to show its old weaknesses, and racist incidents recurred with alarming frequency, this time **directed** mainly against the **considerable** local community of Sikhs, members of a militant sect from the Punjab who **are** often misleadingly referred to as "East Indians" or even as "Hindus" (to whom they **are** doctrinally unacceptable).

The recent outbursts of vandalism directed against the Vancouver Sikhs have aroused a great deal of anger among

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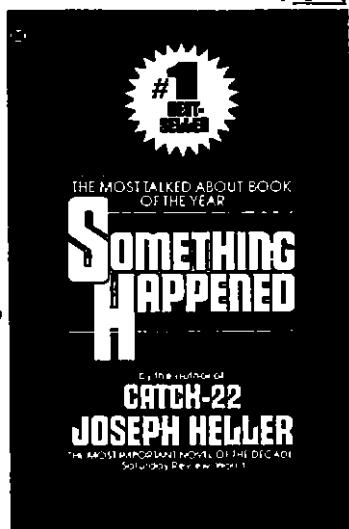
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the victims, who belong to one of the warrior communities of India; and the combination of white prejudice and sharp Sikh reaction (fanned by Maoist radicals) has inevitably reminded many people on the Pacific Coast of the most sensational of all the incidents in the long record of British Columbian racial prejudice, the case of the immigrant ship *Komagatu Maru* and its bloody consequences. The story has never in the past been fully written: but now an attempt has been made to fill the gap by Ted Ferguson, with his new book, **White Man's Country: An Exercise in Canadian Prejudice** (Doubleday, illustrated, 216 pages, \$8.95 cloth).

Like most historical episodes, the incident of the *Komagatu Maru* leaves one with the feeling that nobody who played a leading role was without blame, but that there were many gullible victims, and that popular ignorance and prejudice in Western Canada contributed to what eventually became a tragedy claiming many lives. Why such a dramatic story should have received so little attention in the past is easily explained; the *Komagatu Maru* arrived in Vancouver in the summer of 1914, and before it departed, still carrying almost all its cargo of 376 prospective immigrants, the shadows of the First World War were closing in.

The background to the incident is provided by the political decisions that led the federal government in 1910 to issue a number of decrees limiting Asian immigration. All Asians would have to show at least \$200 in cash before they could land, and immigrants of Indian origin would be admitted only if they sailed in ships coming from India; there was then, in fact, no direct steamship communication between the two countries. The regulations were effective; 2,623 Indians, mostly Sikhs, had entered in 1908, but only five were admitted in 1910. Whether they were legal was another matter; in 1913 the Chief Justice of British Columbia, ruling on a writ of *habeas corpus*, declared the regulation *ultra vires*, since Sikhs were British subjects and therefore free to go anywhere in the Empire. Such a ruling did not, of course, have the standing of a decision in a formal trial, but it was enough to induce a crafty Sikh speculator named Gurdit Singh, who operated in Singapore and Hong Kong, to charter a rusty Japanese tramp steamer, the *Komagatu Maru*, and to load her with Sikh veterans of the Indian Army, whom he picked up mainly in Hong Kong and Shanghai, where most of them were working as policemen and watchmen.

The Canadian government, then headed by the Tory Sir Robert Borden, had no intention of letting in this considerable contingent of immigrants it regarded as undesirable, and this time the courts supported it. Even if the authorities had been welcoming, the mood in Vancouver was such that the landing of the Sikhs would probably have led to even greater riots than those of 1907. Apart from a handful of socialists and Wobblies, few white men were openly sympathetic with the passengers of the *Komagatu Maru*, while both the Chinese and the Japanese — unwilling to call trouble down upon themselves — held aloof. The local Sikh community, however, was militantly in support of its compatriots who were held in mid-harbour during the weeks while the authorities tried to persuade Gurdit Singh to take his passengers back to Asia, and the situation was inflamed by the agents of a Punjab! terrorist organization, Ghadr, which was seeking to overthrow British rule in India by violent means. Ghadr hoped that the *Komagatu Maru* incident might work up to a violent climax and thus be turned into propaganda against the Raj.

The tense weeks between May 23, when the *Komagatu Maru* sailed into Vancouver Harbour, and July 23, when it

sailed out on a voyage through **unwelcoming** Asian posts that finally ended in Calcutta, **were** marked by tense negotiations and intrigues. The terrorists of **Ghadr** tried to smuggle arms on board and **passengers** ashore; a boarding force of 160 police and special constables was repelled by Sikhs

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*The Canadian authorities and the leaders of the Vancouver mob enact the least worthy roles of all, the racist roles that unfortunately still lurk not far below the surface of our society.*

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shouting their battle **cries** as they hurled down coal and **scrap** iron from the **decks**; in the end the cruiser *Rainbow* had to train its guns on the *Komagatu Maru* before the would-be immigrants **would** allow the scared Japanese captain to sail it through the **Juan da Fuca Strait** into the open Pacific.

**Miraculously**, nobody had by then been **hurt**, and it seemed as though Canada's racist regulations had been upheld without substantial cost. **But** the *Komagatu Maru* left behind the tensions its presence had created. A **series** of murders followed, some committed by Ghadr **terrorists** and some by an **anti-Ghadr** Sikh who worked as an informer for the Canadian immigration authorities. The most **colourful** victim was an ex-police officer from **Lahore**, an Anglo-Indian named Hopkinson, who had lived a life out of an Edwardian crime novel, doubling as a **pukka** uniformed official and a bearded Sikh **labourer** who listened in on the terrorists and reported their activities. Worse even than the **murders** in Vancouver was what happened when the *Komagatu Maru* arrived back in India, for there its passengers became involved in a bloody riot, British soldiers were called out, and 26 people, including 20 of the would-be immigrants, **were** killed. The final act of the drama came in **1934**, 20 years after the *Komagatu Maru* incident, when Bela Singh, the immigration department **informer** who had

**run** amok in **Vancouver** and had been acquitted, was caught by his enemies in a ravine in the Punjab; his limbs were hacked off one by one before he was finally killed by decapitation.

A melodramatic story indeed, in which the speculator **Gurdit** Singh, the **Ghadr** terrorists, and the **informer** Bela Singh, all play **unsavoury parts**; but the Canadian authorities and the leaders of the **Vancouver** mob enact the least **worthy roles** of all, the **racist** roles that **unfortunately** still lurk not far below the **surface** of our society. It is a story that needed a Kipling to **do its** justice — for much of it comes right out of Kim's world. **Unfortunately** Ferguson is no Kipling, and at most he whets our appetite for the real book on the *Komagatu Maru*. He has obviously done a great deal of digging among **records** and **survivors' accounts**, and gives **us** more in the way of facts than has been available before.

But his prose! What **can** one **say** of a book that, **in a** single page, **tells** us of "a sharp hike in the white man's resentment," of the Chinese helping to "punch a rail **route** through the mountains," of racial dashes that **are** "kids stuff," of the days when "the employment barometer took a downward swing." As the narrative continues the metaphors become **more** bizarre: "It was up **against** this **backdrop** of racial **turmoil** and legal confusion that the *Komagatu Maru* **wove** her **tapestry** of death and deceit, and, in the **process**, bequeathed white Canadians an **enduring** legacy of shame." Ferguson is not content to present the *Komagatu Maru*, which after all was only a ship, as Penelope weaving with one **hand** and writing **her** will with the other, a little later he shifts his metaphors to talk of "the *Komagatu Maru* pressure cooker" which "reached the boiling point July **17** and **18**, then blew its lid on the 19th."

Ferguson's views on **racism** are impeccable; his prose is indescribable this side of seeming offensive. Doubleday's editors nod&d more than **Homerically** when **they** passed this **script** for publication. □

## CZECHING UP ON HISTORY

The story of one émigré who succeeded in finding failure in a strange land

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By KEITH GAREBIAN

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**FROM** RUSSIA'S Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Switzerland's Max Ftsch to **Yugoslavia's** Alexander Vuco, Hungary's Arthur Koestler, and Germany's Heinrich Böll and Gunter Grass, there has appeared an **overriding** concern in much **contemporary** European fiction with war or exile and their consequences for personal identity. We find in such fiction an **extreme** political condition that often prompts an **absurdist** conclusion **about** human history. Mao becomes divided from remembered territory and often finds himself **bare** and **unaccommodated** in a psychic sense.

Out of Canada now appears an **émigré** novel that explores this critical condition of history. **Whatever** Happened to **Wenceslas?** (Peter Martin Associates. 210 pages, \$8.95 cloth) by Czech-born Jan **Drábek** focuses on the problems

and unrest of a post-war **émigré** by exploring in pathetic fashion — with broad strokes of satire — the authenticity of **failure** as it relates to **war** and exile. The advance publicity celebrates a "first ever" publishing project whereby this novel is supposed to appear simultaneously in Czech and in English. We **are** informed that the novel is a **comic story**, "in the grand Czech tradition" and that, while it tells a story of disillusionment, it is **coloured** by black **humour** reminiscent in many ways of **Jaroslav Hasek's** *The Good Soldier Schweik*. I think it discreet to caution that we must not be **overwhelmed** or misled by the hype.

Despite obvious lyrical and comic tones, **Whatever Happened to Wenceslas?** is a novel of disillusionment. Unlike Schweik, **its** central character strives for significance and understanding in a new historical era and **some** of his **catastrophes** are only momentarily comic. As the title suggests, this novel is about a loss of faith in a popular national myth.

The legendary St. **Wenceslas**, who is expected to free the Czech people from political oppression, disappointingly **deserts** them and they are accordingly left to the tyranny of Stalin and the Communists.

Politics — in a dialectic of truth and untruth— runs like a powerful current in the first part of the novel. It is concerned with knik **Dubsky's** childhood in Czechoslovakia during the Second World War, when there is considerable fear of an impending Communist takeover. Life becomes unpredictable and brutal, fraught as it is with the perils of political banditry where a dominant party can exploit and threaten the vulnerable. Janik **Dubsky** is innocent enough to conceive of his enemies simply as “master **puppeteers**” until the tough realities of persecution strike at his own family. His world loses false optimism as his family **fractures**: an uncle is guillotined for black **marketeering**; an aunt marries a **Social Democrat**; and his **father** is denounced by the State. The **summer** of 1947 becomes the “last bourgeois summer in Eastern Europe” as Jan and his parents prepare to escape to

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*Janik Dubsky is innocent enough to conceive of his enemies simply as “master puppeteers” until the tough realities of persecution strike at his own family.*

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America. where Uncle Harry awaits with “the classic look of the kind of rich businessman who does not have to appear corporate.” America becomes the one hope for a new beginning, a better life.

The striking quality in Jan **Dubsky** -his **flaw**, at times — is innocence. Actually, it is a quality apparently acquired from his father who, for his own part, exudes a **false** confidence in America. The father mythicizes himself as a piteously persecuted victim who **pleads** for world understanding and justice; but he is a man of stubborn pride, born into the middle class, who **refuses** to be turned into a **proletarian**. Later, especially in the second part of the book, this **pride** is **worn** down as America becomes an ambivalent ‘mistress, at times offering hope but often recording **zero** at the bone.

Yet, despite a **recurrent** political current, *Whatever Happened To Wenceslas?* is not simply a political novel or one with an **exclusively political** axe to **grind**. It is a **metaphysical** odyssey, which **traces** in various **settings** the **demythicizing** of Janik **Dubsky's** life.

Jan's innocence allows him to be easily exploited and disillusioned, and the lengthy second part of the novel exposes his **vulnerability** and **that** of his family. Attention is justly paid to the suffering of Jan's parents, who find that they **are** exiled as much from each **other** as they are from their native country. While the mother resigns herself **m** a **meagre** style of life, the father is involved in **émigré** politics—in a touching fashion. He battles for recognition “through articles in the ethnic **press**, through angry outbursts in the midst of Czechs . . . **on Saturday nights**, **and even** through long and lonely demonstrations in front of the Czech **consulate** in Manhattan **with** signs such as: **FREEDOM NOW! YOU MURDERERS!**” He writes monographs on the Czech **coup d'état** in atrocious English **and** bombards the New York press with letters to the editor. But he is a wrecked man -convicted in **absentia** of treason by the Czech state. It is only later that he makes a psychological recovery as he moves away from living simply as an **agitated political émigré** to become a (relatively) restrained American immigrant.

Jan, meanwhile, continues feeling dislocated and vulnerable. When his **mother** finally walks out on his father, she also abandons Jan and merely **confirms** for the youth the emotional void that he has always felt. Jan's life in **America** becomes a sequence of ruptured **relationships as he** drops out of a Southern university (after a friend is falsely accused of cheating), is blackballed by Continental Development, his sponsor at university, and suffers broken sexual relationships. It is because he is a foreigner that Jan is **particularly vulnerable**, for **he is either, extravagantly** patronized or discriminated against. He is told in blunt fashion by his **Southern** sexual filly's rich father that he is a bad risk to the family and company because of a threatening decisiveness on his **part**, which apparently shows a lack of malleability, a refusal to join the melting pot. But Jan believes that he is holding out for justice, **not perfection**, and he continues **being repelled** by what he discovers in America. He has a brief **navv** career, a **short, disastrous marriage to Diane, the Southern sexpot, and a fling at Americanization that fails** dismally. **Even Europe** disillusion him; he discovers that it is rife with conspiracies and counter-conspiracies (with cousin **Stanislav Zeman** as a fatality), betrayals, and brutalities. His story ends on the Canadian West Coast, on Vancouver's skid row, where his failure—Margaret **Atwood**, are you reading? — **has/a** ring of **Canadian authenticity**.

This is not a novel with the ribald scope, satirized lunacy, or **grotesquerie** of **Schweik**. Its grief and pains outlast the tingling flesh relish **or comic** sprees, and even the attenuation of the **war** theme in the middle and final parts does not diminish the sober sensitivity of the first section — for me, **Drabek's** most **interesting one** — where the subject of **victimization** is exposed with directness and poignancy.

There is a fundamental contradiction in Jan **Dubsky** that the author himself illuminates. It is the discrepancy between his appetite for perfection and his own imperfect responses to

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*He uses women as gym equipment, without any qualms, while he laments his own exploitation. Sometimes one wonders if his innocence isn't simply stupidity or perverse guile. . . .*

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life. Though Jan is quick to react against the malefactions of American society, he does try his band eagerly (albeit **unsuccessfully**) at capitalism. He can **neither** lick the Americans nor join them. Nor can he lick or join any other **side**. And the problem is compounded by certain unattractive traits in Jan. He uses women as **gym equipment, without any qualms, while he laments his own exploitation. Sometimes one wonders** if his innocence isn't **simply** stupidity or perverse guile — especially when he selects Diane, the voluptuous, wealthy, but vacuous Southerner, to be his wife.

An inconsistent performance, the novel does **however give** reason for praise. **Drabek** creates a convincing picture of solitariness and, at his best, has the power of raising his voice in consideration of human **honour** and authenticity. Moreover, his novel addresses itself, with substantial force at times, to themes that are especially relevant to **us**. The subject of exile or expatriation runs deep in Canadian Literature, and Jan **Dubsky's** anguish about his identity **runs parallel** to our Canadian **neurosis** about the same question. But where Canadians mistakenly **believe they** have no identity or try to evade one, **Drabek's** **central** character, though he refuses to become part of the North American **myth (except as a failure)**, never turns completely away **from** himself. □

# Just Snow Story

King of **White Lady**, by R. Lance Hill, Lester and Orpen, 246 pages, \$9.50 cloth.

By DOUGLAS MARSHALL

**NOBODY LIKES** A middleman, and in the illegal **drug trade** the dislike can **turn lethal** at any **moment** — **even** for a middleman with impeccable **connections** in **Bogotá** and **Montreal**. That is what King of **White Lady** is all **about**. As a **work** of fiction, it is nasty, brutish, and hot — so hot **that** R. Lance Hill, former drifter and **hot-rod** champion, is reported to have collected more than **\$70,000** in advances **for** foreign hardback, **paperback**, and film rights.

One can see why. Hill is as skilled a plot mechanic as he was a **driver** and **this souped-up** stockcar of a **thriller** performs beautifully. Precisely calculated injections of sex (“Sharp sounds came **from** her throat and she **arched** as his **tongue** and mouth moved on her”) and **violence** (“**It struck the skull of the man**

with **sickening force**, tossing **the** head at an acute angle”) keep **the** action spinning **through** the curves at compulsive speed and Hill **crosses** the finish line in a glorious **burst of** cynicism. The mass-market audience and **the** movie men will lap it up.

But in a recent newspaper interview, Hill also demands that this, his second novel, be taken seriously as **fiction** — “and if somebody doesn’t take it seriously, I’ll ride them up **the** middle.” A **somewhat** obscure threat, at least to this automotive layman, but it **sounds** mean enough to **warrant donning** a critical crash helmet. Okay Lance, you’re on.

If **White Lady** is worthy of serious comment, it is not because **of its** literary **structure**, which is simply slick, but rather because of its moral structure, which is curiously sick. Hill introduces us to **the** world of Lee Henry, a Vietnam **veteran** who sets out to “move cocaine between **the** Americas more efficiently **than** any other.” **make** his snow pile by the time he is **30**, and then retire. It is a world **entirely** governed by criminal morality. Early on, an Antiguan customs **officer** with a headache gives Lee a bad few **minutes**, but that is **the** only rime the **forces** of the State and the civilized **rule** of law **they** represent

**intrude** into this picture of **serene** and mindless anarchy.

What Hill has produced (albeit **unwittingly**, since there is nothing in this **composition** to indicate he would know the **difference** between **Hobbes** and a hophead). is a **sort** of pop experiment with the darker themes of the **Leviathan**. Lee Henry and the cast of high-class hookers and ambitious hangers-on co-exist with each other much as **Hobbes** predicted man would in a state of **nature**. They **are** motivated solely by **self-preservation**, the fear of imminent death, and **the promise of future gratification** of pleasure. As **another**, and **better**, story-teller put it: “Now these are the Laws of the Jungle

However, we ate **manifestly not** living in a state of nature — at least, not yet. Those jet planes Lee Henry hails like taxi-cabs fly **under** sophisticated man-made **rules of** air-traffic control. The fast white Chevrolet he drives so lovingly is the product of a social contract between capital and **labour**. Cops still **frown** on dope smugglers and the State has not yet sanctioned individual acts of indiscriminate violence.

It is one thing to invent an ethical model and play out your little games

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within it; sci-fi writers make their living that way. It is quite another to set your amoral characters scuttling through what pertains to be the real world as if man were a little less organized than the cockroach, that's just exploiting a cheap theatrical effect.

The concept of "law and order" is, understandably, in bad odour these days. But even the most gullible liberal would have difficulty swallowing Hill's ultimate justification for his protagonist's vocation:

Did you know that cocaine has been the biggest thing to hit Hollywood since talking pictures? That high society wouldn't be high without it? That the entertainment and recording businesses would collapse without it? These people have money — they buy it, they don't commit crimes for it. At least, not what is generally accepted as crime . . .

Did you know that vicious, drug-based thrillers have been the biggest thing to hit the mass market since *The French Connection*? That low tastes wouldn't stay low without them? That the publishing and movie businesses would collapse without them? These audiences have money. They buy this stuff; they don't commit crimes to obtain it. At least, not what is generally accepted as crime. . . . □

## John- Bull caught short

*Exodus UK*, by Richard Rohmer, McClelland & Stewart, 256 pages, \$10 cloth.

By J. L. GRANATSTEIN

SCHLOCK IS SCHLOCK IS SCHLOCK. *Ultimatum* is *Exxoneration* is *Exodus UK*, and Richard Rohmer is Arthur Hailey with none of that famous Canadian expatriate's grace, style, and sparkling dialogue (!). Both have a knack for finding the subjects that are grabbers: for Hailey, such areas as the hotel and auto industries and the banks; for Rohmer, American threats at Canada, the oil crisis, or an influx of immigrants from one of the depressed areas of the world. England. To the subject, apply some research, just enough so the book reeks of verisimilitude, then sit down, bash it off, and await the royalties. What a country that can produce such men; what a public that will read such books.

Clearly Rohmer has done it again with *Exodus UK*. The plot is relatively simple and ultimately silly. Britain is devastated economically when the Arab states combine to pull out all their investments and bank deposits in England, a reprisal for the sale of a weapons system to Israel. This sale had been authorized by the Prime Minister alone, without reference to his cabinet. But despite this, and despite the disaster caused by the Arab actions, England rallies round, sort of, and decides to export six million citizens abroad as the best solution to the crisis. Why is unclear. Canada is drafted to receive two million, the U.S. two million, and other assorted Dominions the rest. In Canada, this threat is enough to make the Quebec National Assembly vote to separate if the cabinet in Ottawa goes along with the British request, and British Columbia and Alberta threaten to secede if it doesn't. In the best Perils of *Pauline* tradition, we never learn what the Trudeau-like Canadian Prime Minister decides, this being saved for next year's episode.

There are further complications, including the crash of the British Prime Minister's aircraft in northern Canada and his ultimate rescue by an air force

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Otter aircraft piloted by — is' there no limit to Rohmer's *chutzpah*? — a brigadier general who can only be the author himself. In addition, we have a female American Secretary of State who has slept around a bit, who can **outrink** the Russians, and **who** can out-talk the Saudi king, **as** well as an American ultimatum that assistance will be given to Britain only if the United States takes over construction of the rigs and facilities needed to get the North Sea oil field into production fast. Britain **can't** do it because the unions are too fractious to be **controlled**.

This is schlock and it should not be read at all, let alone taken seriously. But Rohmer, I suspect, does believe it all, particularly the attacks his characters make at the unions. Inflation in the U.K. is blamed on **greedy unions**, and we are reminded of Canada's strike record as well. **complete** with charts. Not a word about **profiteering by developers to keep rents up**; not a word about billions in oil-company —not just oil-state — profits. This is socially regressive claptrap.

Incredibly, Rohmer looks at political leadership with equally **blinkered** views. His **British** Prime Minister is guilty of such incompetence that he would have been immediately toppled by his **cabinet** and his party in reality. (His Canadian Prime Minister, however, emerges as a man of vision and a statesman.) His French Canadian politicians are similar **caricatures**. In the first place, **all**, with the possible exception of the Prime Minister, are fanatic **nationalistes** and **this** in a cabinet where, in addition to the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs are **Québécois**. **Cliché** is piled on clap trap, wooden prose tacked **over** cardboard characters.

The only possible significance that this book can have is that it marks the end of the lingering traces of the British en in Canada. A few years back, men such as Rohmer would have been **angry** if anyone attacked Britain or **wrote** it off as a lesser power. Not any more. Today even anglophilic Canadians, those who used to believe that Canada would be a good place if only everyone could **go** to Upper Canada College, cannot **summon** up much British sentiment. That British tie used to be the major drawback to the growth of an indigenous Canadian nationalism. It is probably too late **now** to develop that nationalism. This is a tragedy, as far as I am **concerned**. Rohmer's book, however, is just low comedy. □

## Avant-garde makes camp

The Jurassic Shales, by Robert Sward, Coach House Press, illustrated, 79 pages, \$4 paper.

By PETER THOMAS

PUTTING ASIDE the insistent question any experimental novel raises — Is the journey **really** necessary? — there are **even** more insistent questions raised by the current infatuation with camp. It is **worth** noting that **even** the best explanation of this phenomenon, Susan Sontag's, **took** the form of "notes"; it **appears** to defy sequential reasoning, to be random and unstructured by definition. Is it **enough**, though, to say that I don't know what it's about but that it's campy **anyhow**? *Jurassic Shales* seems to be prepared to ask **this** of its readers.

The chapters (there are 20, and 79 pages in all) are **headed** by successive distortions of photographed heads of Queen Elizabeth II. There is a **character** called the Queen, but she appears to be cohabiting with the **narrator** and someone called **Bride A**. On the other **hand**, Queen may only be the shared fantasy of **Bride A** and the narrator, **since** the latter possesses three **penises** — presumably requiring **recourse** to unusual stimuli. The **action** takes place in London and Mexico, **during** the **advance** of **Bride A's** pregnancy. But time and place are of relative unimportance, since the narrator **claims** to be merely the most recent incantation of a **being** having his origins in the **remote geological** past:

I go out of my body. I come back in. I say amnesia because sometimes when this happens I forget just who I am. I've been doing this, I believe, with some regularity, for a quarter of a million years.

Even with the assistance of **Queen**, **however**, all is not family **harmony**, Pebbles and **Bam** Barn. The narrator informs us on page 11 that he has at last begun to **menstruate**. He is hopeful of further advances. "**Secretly**, I want to be blind and to see **from** the back and the sides of my head, to have children. to bear and father, to **grow** not **two**, but three breasts. to suckle twins. I **want** to be God and to sign my name, X."

Perhaps **these** events will **serve** as the basis for a **sequel** to *Jurassic Shales*.

If we take it that everything is possible and nothing denied to the **mind** of **man**, the delights of *Jurassic Shales* are those of **ingenuity** and creative irrelevance. Since the **narrator** may, in a literal sense, be taken to be a sort of Rock of Ages, what happens to him **concerns** us all. Is there not what I-I. G. Wells called the novelist's first function, "**to** guide conduct," in the following passage?.

Bride A creeps **into** the **mom** and **paints** **bruises** on my legs. I wake and **can** barely stand. **She** **wants** to **paint** an **erection** on my **limp penis** and I **won't** let her. She makes **other suggestions**, **all** of **which** I **refuse**. **She** **leaves** and I **notice** a **burnt-out smelt** coming **from** **this** line of **punctures** **across** my **groin**. I have begun to **menstruate**. I think I'm **growing antlers**. My **arms** are **twice as long** as they were **this** summer. I **want** to **love** and am **taking** **shaman lessons**, but **still** **don't** know **exactly** how.

I **know** **exactly** how he **feels**.

Coach House have **printed** an elegant little book in an elongated format. The Queen heads are ascribed to **Mack McMack**. □

## Avant-courier cries gestalt

The Cage, by Martin Vaughn-James, Coach House Press, illustrated, 184 pages, \$14.50 cloth.

By AVIVA LAYTON

ON THE **FLYLEAF** of his new work, *The Cage*, Martin Vaughn-James **declares** that he has created a new genre, the visual-novel. Should the reader bring to it what the **author** **believes** to be an old-fashioned **set** of expectations. Vaughn-James quickly disabuses him of his quaint archaic notions.

**The** **book**, an **extremely** **handsomely** **produced** one, consists mainly of drawings, most of which are accompanied by lines of **text**. That Vaughn-James is a superb **draftsman** is indisputable. The images he presents to us are haunting, nightmarish, surrealistic. -We are **confronted** by **landscapes** of **alienation** emptied of human form. **landscapes** **in** which objects, vegetable and mineral, **proliferate** in a state of anarchy and chaos. **Although** **not** one human form **appears** in **any** of **the** drawings, the viewer has the **disturbing** **sense** that throngs of people have just **departed** the scene; there are twisted piles of clothes, an unmade rumbled bed, scattered

blank pages spattered with a dark fluid that might be ink or blood or some unknown noxious **effluvium** which splotches itself at random over an abandoned world.

The drawings speak their own strange and evocative language (although it should be noted that Vaughn-James' visual world is not an unfamiliar one; we find similar landscapes in, for example, Escher and the drawings of Patrick Lane). It's a shame that they have not been left to stand by themselves. The accompanying text is, quite simply, appallingly bad and it appears even more offensive in the light of the windy, derivative, political-literary jargon that appears on the flyleaf. The visual-novel, says the author, was created to challenge the traditional forms of narrative. "Anachronistic questions of characterisation, plot, psychological penetration, moral or theological assertions, social or political conflicts, fantasies or even plain story-telling are irrelevant" and the reader is called upon to destroy within himself "his language of preconceptions, that outmoded system of structures imposed externally by those who wish to preserve a stagnating culture."

What has Vaughn-James substituted for all these "irrelevancies"? Not to put too fine a point on it — gobbledygook, that's what. Mind-numbing. prolix, precious, hysterical, boring gobbledygook. A promiscuous piling-on of mangled and meaningless imagery that boggles the imagination and glazes the eye. **Hyperthyroid hype**. Some examples? It's hard to choose from the morass. but here are a few random selections (not, I might add, unfairly lifted out of an illuminating context): "a wingless, crippled and carnivorous repertoire of shrieks"; "a spattered crucifix at whose hysterical junction is impaled the final artificial insect"; "the sound of breathing subsides . . . or (more exactly) escalates to such an overwhelming volume as to appear inaudible . . . freeing the air to direct itself elsewhere to concentrate on some other noise (given that such alternatives existed) hanging hitherto unheard in this airless silent corridor." There can be no better way to describe this stuff than to lift the phrase of the author himself — "a vacuous, stale and airless bag of words."

In all fairness to the new form, I carefully read the commentary by Rowan Shirkie that accompanies it. Jargon sorely must engender jargon. "The personal internal iconography of the earlier books has experienced a, re-

versal giving way to an ever-expanding search for correlatives in the external 'documentary' world of the collective imagination." Or, "the images and words are completely separated sequences that contradict themselves and each other on a scale that completely baffles any resolution except in the gestalt of the imagination."

I can only come to the sad and reluctant conclusion that, if that is the case, my imagination just ain't got any gestalt, baby. □

## One that's not forever

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The **Broadbarren Diamond**, by Dee Korman, General Publishing Trendsetter series, 154 pages, \$3.95 cloth.

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By MICHAEL RYVAL

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A GLANCE AT the ghastly, blood-oozing voodoo doll on the cover of *The Broadbarren Diamond* immediately built up in my mind a promise of gore, hair-raising tortures, and other enjoyable pleasures of the gothic mystery. This is also what the blurb suggests. But, to say the least, Dee Korman does not deliver.

This is her first novel and though she shows a certain amount of skill at handling the rudiments of character, plot, and suspense, the effort is hardly memorable.

The ingredients are predictable enough. Claire Broadbarren, the young naive heroine — writing in the first person — is summoned to the Broadbarren estate, in an unnamed part of the country, to receive her share of an inheritance left by the Old Mao, Andrew B. Sure enough, she inherits the whole shebang, including the fateful Broadbarren diamond of the title.

Claire's relations don't think too much of the will, nor of her, a small-town secretary. Soon she has the distinct impression one of them wants to kill her. The mystery is, which one. More about this later.

Of course, Claire has to cope with the numerous intentions of a distant cousin-cum-layabout. No sooner does he sweep her into his arms — that's about as far as it goes — than the greedy dolt gives himself away. True romance, alas, does eventually emerge with another cousin Claire wrongly suspected of being her enemy. She

changes her mind of course when the fellow — tall, dark, and scientific — proves he is on her side after all.

Now, what about all those mysterious clues? The voodoo doll, a strange circle of paint-daubed stones on a beach near the Broadbarren mansion, a strong-box hidden in a cave, the disappearance of the diamond and, lastly, Great-Aunt Lucy's murder? Any armchair detective can piece it all together in a couple of chapters. Claire takes 18. Which, I suppose, is owing to the dictates of fiction, more than anything else.

There are a few redeemable aspects in *The Broadbarren Diamond*. It's a short, breezy read and allows you to eat supper, watch the TV news, and argue with your spouse all at the same time. That's how light it is.

Ms. Korman would have done much better, I believe, to soup up the eccentricity of her characters. They're merely pathetic, not sinister. I'm not suggesting their teeth should actually drip with blood, nor should Evil gleam in every eye. But what's a good gothic mystery without a rich pastiche of madness, terror, and plot twists? □

## Applaudeth one in three

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Journeys and Shows, by Jan Michael Dryoff, Borealis Press, 80 pages, \$4.50 paper.

On the Eleventh Line in the First House, by Kit James, Cumberland Press (1266 Bay St., Toronto), unpaginated, \$3 paper.

Multimonster in Paradise, by Allan Shute, Tree Frog Press (10717 106 Ave., Edmonton), unpaginated, \$4 paper.

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By LEONARD GASPARINI

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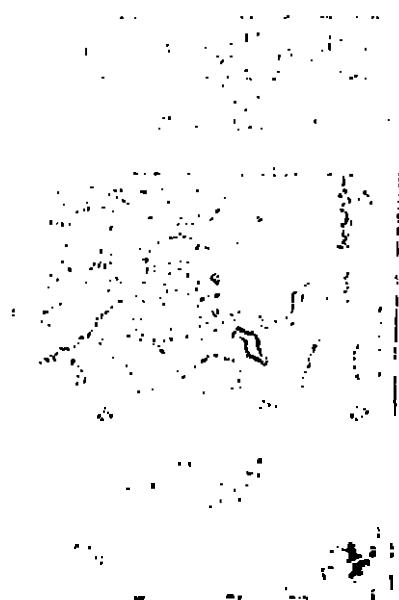
THE UNCEASING spate of poetry books published in Canada each month brings to mind an issue raised in this magazine's Notes & Comments column recently. Since I endorse its argument, permit me to quote from it: "In any creative endeavour, nationalism by itself is not enough. There must also be either excellence or financial intelligence — and preferably both. On that count there are a number of small and smaller presses that should close down tomorrow. To keep them artificially alive is a form of cultural cruelty we can





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ill afford." A moot point perhaps — but one that will undoubtedly raise intellectual brows to the level of common sense and honesty.

Of the three poetry books listed here, Jan Dryoff's *Journeys and Shows* is easily an exception to the above. His collection is remarkably well-balanced in form and content, and he evinces a mastery of craftsmanship that is too often lacking among young poets today. Equally at home in the villanelle and the sonnet, and also the more lyrical ode, Dryoff's poems thrust deep into the integral seed of feeling from which all images emanate and coalesce in full, spontaneous rhythm, covering a wide range of subject-matter, from the pubescent pendency of "Skinny-Dipping in the Fog" to the symbolic properties of "Lead." His poetic diction is always precise, though never pedantic, and he can integrate various metaphors into a significant idea beyond their fancy fictions, as when he describes a flood tide as "heartbeats bent on destruction."

*Journeys and Shows* is divided into four sections, and the last one is probably the weakest. At any rate, its tide, "Mine Own Death Show," and the mock threnodies that accompany it; show that the poet has a good sense of humour.

Jan Dryoff's poetry is best exemplified in the following stanzas from "Lead":

*They do not make bells of me,  
Nor do I clasp fine jewels  
Or slyly nestle to a lady's skin:  
I line coffins.*

*And if you make a monument  
Of me, I swear that I will stare  
At the succession of eternity  
With a lacklustre eye.*

Kit James's *On the Eleventh Line in the First House* is one tide that completely confounds me. I don't know whether he's referring to joists or a skeleton in the closet, and his poems do nothing to clarify this enigma for me. If he's trying to be deliberately esoteric, then he succeeds; but his poems are made to suffer as a consequence. Not only are they the slick effusions of an inferior sensibility, but their turbid inconsistencies on what "the ideal of poetry ought to be" fail to verify the objective correlative he has in mind, which is "a story." Most of the poems in this pamphlet are quasi-cool in the hip, counter-cultural sense. The words are active, but the imagination isn't. Certain poems, such as "Hymn to a Sis-trum Shaker" and "Rubber Johnny's Z

Pmtection," would probably attract pseudo-heads, but not much else. As it is, this collection seems frazzled from too many trips and rock-concerts.

*Multimonster in Paradise* is another excursion into the surreal reaches of reasoned derangement, but, unlike Rimbaud, Allan Shute offers us a vision that seems congested with buggery and graffiti (it's spelt wrong in the book), and philosophical insights into monstrous fables, all of which smack of pretentiousness. Some of Shute's poems are good, but the rest are blown away out of proportion by the mythopoeic liturgy he imposes on them. In short, they are dreadfully dull and not as iconoclastic as they would like to appear.

The book has an attractive format and coloured illustrations. But what really turns the reader off is the publisher's pompous, long-winded preface. He sounds like a "Step right up, folks!" carnival barker, thumbs tucked in his suspenders. You have to read it to believe it. Alas, the whole thing is mediocrity at its nadir.

Oh, when will this vapid parthenogenesis of poetry stop? □

## Visual filters, Pyrex forms

City Flowers, by Artie Gold, Delta Press, 51 pages, paper unpriced.

By Death Never Leave Me, by Stephanie J. Nynych, Fiddlehead, Poetry Books, 107 pages, \$5 paper.

BY JAMIE HAMILTON

IT IS REFRESHING to find a new collection of poems with the vitality and immediacy of *City Flowers* by Artie Gold. The energy in his poems is not common; each is written as if it could be the last before the earth sinks into the sea of mediocrity that drowns so many young poets.

Gold is a young Montreal poet, whose poems are generally fast-moving, framing perceptions and images almost as quickly as they are received. To Gold, seeing is an active process; he steps out of the passive receptor role, and reaches out to look into and beyond the ordinary to find all the details.

While most people are conditioning themselves against the constant assault of sensory perceptions, he manages to hold his filters open long enough to

grasp his visions in poems. With **quickness** of style, he glues them **together** with pointed insight and pricks the **reader** inw opening his eyes, into wanting w see below the surface. "You know **life** passes by so unnoticed/until one day **we** begin w **paint** it on our eyes." The poet cannot wait for **the** poem to happen.

He nonchalantly changes **the** mood and tone of **his poems** and satirizes cleverly. His poem on Alice B. **Toklas** uses her name in **profuse** variation w imitate the style of Ms. Stein, and he draws it **w the absurdity so frequent** in her work. **The** poem is circular, the **reader** is stuck on the **merry-go-round** of **words**, wondering how to get off.

The American poet, Frank **O'Hara** is one of the living ghosts in Gold's **broad** perspective. His seemingly meaning less death, one of those incomprehensible but nonetheless real occurrences, haunts him. Tensions between wanting **w** understand and seeing only senselessness, lead to an uneasy acceptance of the reality of his death and "No one had bothered w arrange a **thunderstorm** /and **sandpipers** didn't shriek their brains out/for this crushed gentle poet." **O'Hara** and Jack **Spicer** (another of Gold's inspirations) are not **dead**, although they have **been** buried. Gold revives **them** in a **very surrealistic** and philosophical dialogue that ends **with** the assertion that there is as much chance as **ever** for them.

On **the** death of his father, he again expresses the capacity **w see beneath the surface**, even in retrospect. He sees the living in his father's death; **unpretentiously** and with a passion, he invokes him to get up and do it again. Like **O'Hara**, who "showed them what was real," Gold injects the perfect portion of himself into each poem.

He would not set about to write an elegy.

Stephanie **J. Nynych's** book, **By Death Never Leave Me**. is, an elegy for John V. Nguyen (1944-1963). In it young woman meets young **scientist** in a faraway place. They fall in love. He commits suicide. She **writes** an elegy.

Either she is a scientist, perhaps an anthropologist, or his tongue really touched her mind. The poems read like lab reports. She uses a **pyrex-coated** vocabulary that is impervious to the imagination, and each poem is rigid and as fixed as a microscope slide. No matter how **many** times one reads them, they are the same: unmoving, emotionless. and dead.

The second half of the book, "Pilgrimage: Follow a Dream of

Love," is a little less mechanical, but she is locked into the scientist's way of seeing and expressing. This does not allow the imagination **w** function and the reader is led into consistent dead ends.

And sometimes there is more wisdom in her words than **she** might realize:

*We re-string hieroglyph tablets  
real graphic thoughts in dead syllabary  
upon the imaginable modern value cord  
like coloured beads obeying conventional  
harmony  
to clasp around our necks a convincing  
history  
but it does not reveal itself  
at its beginning or end.*

Maybe if Miis Nynych were reading her reports in a science-faculty lab, they could be passed **off as** "creative," but as poems they shatter with the lightest tap of a critical mallet: And not all the king's hoes, nor **all** the king's men.... □

## Th lly fadth & ltd r haikus to illuminate

**Journal to the East**, by Gerry Gilbert, **blewointmentpress** (Box 8590, Station H, Vancouver), **unpaginated, unpriced.**

**Okira: Selected Translations from the Text of Okira**, by **Allan Safarik**, **Blackfish Press** (1851 Moore Ave., Burnaby, B.C.), 29 pages, unpriced.

By **CLARE MacCULLOCH**

**AS EVERYONE** must know by now, the haiku school of poetry originated in Japan. In three lines of **five**, seven and five syllables, it stated a clear **picture** which was intended "to arouse a distinct emotion and suggest a specific spiritual insight." **This** poetic form had a **significant** influence on American poets in this century, first in the formative stages of the Imagists and later in the **poetry written** just after the Second World War. Two new books of Canadian poetry **share** in nature, if not intention, much that may be traced to that lodestar.

**Journal to the East** by Gerry Gilbert is "dsignd & typeset by th author" and "printid ins ltd ed uv 700 copees." It is published as "a **blewointmentpress** buk." The influence of hill bissett is

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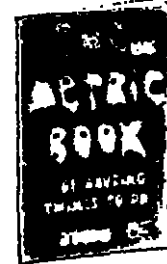
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too apparent before this note on the last page. It is too much the product of the mentor, a recurrent complaint of bissett's publications: pale horse, even paler riders.

The book is an amalgam of many effects: visual, rhythmic, harmonic, pantomime, and even oral, one would suppose. "Total Effect Poetry" is what Marq de Villiers once labelled its kln. In form, it aims for the conciseness and intent of the haiku, subjected to many, liberties; in structure, it has grown out of 1960 rock music and a dissatisfaction with traditional form.

Much of the content is concrete poetry (three-dimensional syntax). another aspect of what is credited to the West Coast revolt against the tyranny of spelling and punctuation. Consider "WINC."

you can s  
top now s  
tart late  
r s  
lee  
p out of t  
he win  
d d  
id you close the do  
or d  
ie let the c  
it  
y f  
all d  
own f  
or a  
ll i car

E

Steve McCafferty, one of the Four Horsemen, has observed: "It is the desire to expand language beyond the single limited form of verbal expression." A weak justification for poems such as these four:

**MERGE**  
or else  
all ye citizens of home

**ITFIT**  
qu  
o  
i  
e

**POSTCARD**  
it was so beautiful there  
your mother cried

**GIGGLE**  
april 11  
room 101  
1 pm

If these four separate and complete poems are intended as more than nonsense — "caveat emptor."

Photographs, some in focus, some like Rorschach tests, a page of very bad

writer's scrawl, a portrait of someone who could be the poet, a found poem, one in French ("AT WATER: la mare la/grenouille le/plouf"), a couple of one liners ("slipping into real," "new york is still there"), pretty well da scribes the bones of this skeleton. Huckster poetry? Tallaluh Bankhead, another and better iconoclast, once observed of a cultural event: "There is less in this than meets the eye." Very succinct. Very appropriate.

The second book under observation is *Okira* by Allan Safarik. Its debt to the Orient is apparent in design and content. Not as restricted in budget it would seem as *blewointmentpress*, the Blackfish Press have "made in British Columbia without government funding" 300 copies on "Ivory Telemark Text/Handbound in Grey Smoke/Rhododendron Covers." A mite self-conscious an assertion, perhaps, but his book is intended as an organic piece of art. Part of the recurring appeal of *Okira* is its physical structure and artistic good taste. The six Oriental illustrations by Jean Wong are handsome indeed: detailed, sensitive, decorative and perceptive in their own right, often as appealing as the poems they divide.

The book's subtitle is *Selected Translations from the Text of Okira*. Two trips to a university library and some pretty fancy ferreting reveal nothing. The last entry in the collection reads like a found poem and must be taken as the only clue to the title.

**OKIRA**  
(Born 1852)

His full name was Osani Thei. In spite of the poverty of his family he succeeded in gaining an education in the Chinese classics. He had several pen names. as was the custom, but retained Okira for hk published works. There k little known about hk life. though be lived during the crucial period of sweeping western influence. Rumour tells us that he wandered the country as a poor travelling artist. He lived his last days in solitary, and had the habits of eccentric hermitage. The date of his death k undetermined.

Between the front cover and this are what Northrop Frye might generously label 20 "constructs." The images are sometimes precise as haiku, sometimes in sheep's pmse and a bit woolly. In "Again and again/From my sickbed I ask/How deep is the snow?" these two stanzas are linked:

Soon to die  
I am noisier than ever:  
I am the bird that has  
forgotten to leave.

At my side there is no soft voice to whisper  
"How dear to me you are." I have only the  
grave in the snow & a son far away.

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Some images are Romantic:

winter  
has deceived spring  
leaving one sad night  
its frosty sleeve

and some are embarrassingly simple:

the horses  
on the road  
running  
to dust

and,

the willow  
wears  
a beard  
of frost.

There is a fragility there, a sensitivity that one senses upon seeing common butterflies pinned to a board by a boy.

Both *Okira* and *Journal to the East* lack any sense of form, however eccentric, and both need a more perceptible content. However, one is drawn back to *Okira*, with its images like lazy water spiders, going nowhere with no intent. There is a mesmerizing quality here, partly owing to the handsome structure of the book. A strange collection: a unique phenomenon.

Two short and interesting letters from the West Coast these books are. No news for the folks back East: the family is doing well. More to follow. □

## Toading the line

*Virgins & Vampires*, by Joe Rosenblatt, McClelland & Stewart, 112 pp., \$4.50 paper.

By LEONARD GASPARINI

THE ALLITERATIVE whimsy in the title of Joe Rosenblatt's seventh collection of poems is not accidental; rather, it is indicative of his fondness for the *double entendre*. In this case a gauche one that implies pierced hymens and jugulars, which, taken figuratively, epitomize a ritual bloodletting. With this analogy in mind, the contents of the poems slip into the usual Rosenblatt pattern, their vision as predictable as a nun's period.

There are obviously too many filler poems (thrown in by M & S editors, I suspect, to give the book bulk) in *Virgins & Vampires*. Of the 80-odd poems — at least one third of them could have been safely omitted. This jumble is further inundated with the

poet's drawings, which bear little or no relation to the poems. These are scratchy, febrile sketches of reptilian swamp orgies, piscine sex-in-the-suburbs, and other such repressed psychic material of a dubious zoomorphic nature. It's a grotesque combination of Hiionymus Bosch and Carl Jung, but a fake representation at that.

The poems are another matter. They abound with entomological and animal symbolism, mixed metaphors, and inverted logic. The toad is a recurrent symbol: "thick as toad lice," "venerable toad," "toads have no hearts." and "the toads in the mud impersonate children." Rosenblatt's imagination whirls with increasing wildness until he finds the ultimate sanctuary in negation, as in "Who Am I?"

*The body desires the cover of anonymity,  
the cover of darkness, the robe of iron  
silence.*

*h desires, feels the enclosures, the sullen  
weight  
of eons, the deadening of all the nerves.*

Rosenblatt works within a subject-matter of ecological and evolutionary violence, almost in the same manner as Britain's Ted Hughes. If he looks at nature, he finds there predators and victims; if he shows nature looking at man, as in the toad's-eye view, the same assortment is seen. His vocabulary is sometimes daring, and his rhythms jarring. In "Portrait of a Shrink" the wit is mordant: "a bird of human power/in the affinity of feathered sobriety/among the lower birds/he stands pulsing light/feared by paranoids & housewives."

*Virgins & Vampires* is an uneven collection on the whole, but it contains occasional flashes of brilliance that illuminate even the darkest recesses of the soul. Perhaps the hypothesis of poet as vampire is a plausible one. □

## Freelancing for big Henry

The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 142 to 297, 1501 to 1514, translated by R. A. B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson, annotated by Wallace K. Ferguson, U of T Press, illustrated, 374 pages, \$25 cloth.

By RICHARD LANDON

THE FIRST VOLUME of the University of Toronto Press edition of *The Collected Works of Erasmus* appeared to international acclaim last year. The an-

nounced intention of the editors was "to make available an accurate, readable English text of Erasmus' correspondence and his other principal writings" and they succeeded magnificently with the letters written between 1484 and 1500. If anyone was inclined to reserve judgment on the principle that second volumes often do nor live up to the promise of the first, his fears will be completely alleviated by the appearance of this second volume. In fact, the one deficiency pointed out by serious reviewers of Volume I, an inadequate index, has been largely overcome by the considerably expanded indexing of Volume II (a complete topical index will eventually be published as the final volume of the edition). It gives me considerable pleasure to mention that the indexer, whose important function usually goes unacknowledged, was, for Volume II, James Farge.

This volume of *Correspondence* consists of some 150 letters written by Erasmus, and including a few written to him, from 1501 to 1514. This seemingly small total is all that survives for this period, even though Erasmus emerged during this time from relative obscurity to a position of international

repute. From Dec. 22, 1509, to April 10, 1511, no letters at all have survived and for some of the other years there are only odd scraps. For other periods, notably 1511 to July, 1514, when Erasmus was living in Cambridge and London, a full and rich correspondence is set forth and it is on the basis of these that Erasmus' reputation as a master of the epistolary art was established.

The dating of the letters of Erasmus has presented a difficult problem, since he seldom bothered to append the year to the date line of his letters until he had occasion to edit some of them for publication. At that time he filled in the years as best as his memory would allow with the result that more than one half of them were demonstrably wrong. The editors of this edition have chosen to follow the daring assigned by P.S. Allen in his *Opus Epistolarum* as they consider that one of Allen's major achievements was his establishment of a chronology for the correspondence.

Most of the letters in this volume were printed in Erasmus' lifetime, a fact that may seem peculiar. During this period a, dedicatory preface to a book in the form of a letter, usually addressed to an influential and wealthy personage from whom the author hoped

to obtain patronage, was common. For this was the era of true freelance scholarship when the physical survival of an author depended on private largesse. Erasmus was lured back to England in 1509 by the promise (exaggerated, as it turned out) of the munificent patronage he would receive from King Henry VIII (nor octavus so much as Octavius, according to Henry's former tutor and Erasmus' patron William Mountjoy). Thus Erasmus was able to address Henry as "of all kings most illustrious" in his dedicatory epistle to a translation of Petrarch. But Erasmus, unlike many lesser scholars, did not pander. He provided Henry with a succinct essay on the importance of distinguishing true friends from false, cleverly illustrated with examples from classical history. Henry did not, of course, heed the advice but that was not expected of a patron. (For Erasmus' comments on Henry's later career we shall have to await further volumes of this edition.) Apart from dedications, many of the letters in this volume were first published, with Erasmus' consent, in the *Farrago Nova Epistolarum Erasmi* (Basel, 1519).

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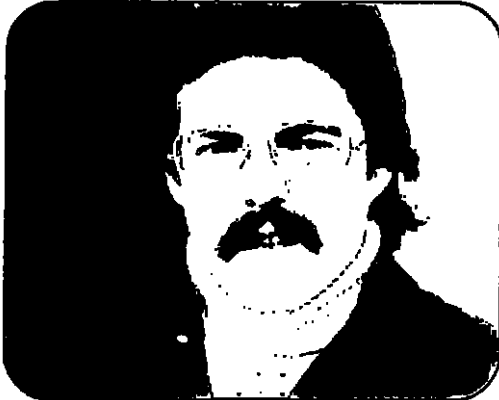
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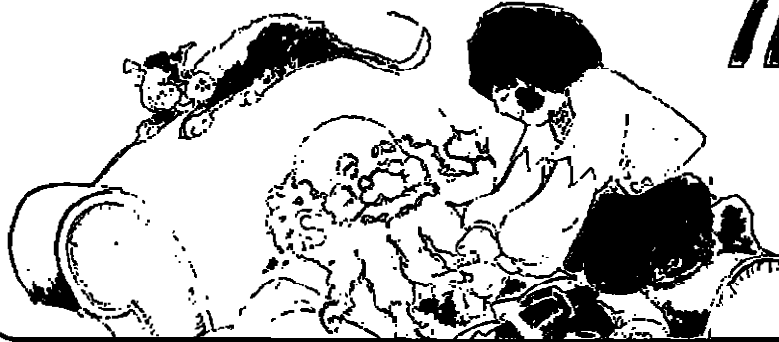
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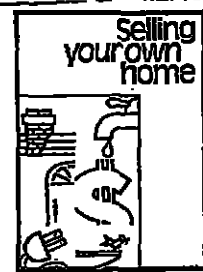
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## Answer:

The answer can be found at your favourite bookstore. Just ask for the New Books from Collier Macmillan Canada. And don't be disappointed if you can't find *How To Waste A Kitty*. Really, we wouldn't wish anything bad on our little furry friends. Except under suitable provocation of course.

ist tradition in northern Europe has long been recognized. H. W. Garrod, a perceptive critic who was one of the editors of Allen's Latin edition of the correspondence, called them his best piece of literature. placing them above the *Praise of Folly* and the *Colloquies*, and for readability this judgment is probably hue. In a letter of 1501 m Antoon van Bergen. the Lord Abbot of St. Bertin, a prospective patron from whom, as the editor comments, Erasmus "hoped much, but received little," a delightful story of sorcery is told. The sorcerer was able, through a diabolical rite-involving the body of Christ, a virgin, a sword, a three-faced head, ninefold wrappings, and 1,000 representations of the Greek letter tau, to summon the Devil, who promised him vast treasure but required an educated man to complete the ritual. Accordingly, a Dominican Prior was summoned and although pretending to go along with the plot, tricked the sorcerer and had him arrested. Erasmus uses the episode to comment on the base and degenerate times that produce such wickedness and characteristically quotes Horace: "Though our crimes will not permit/Heaven to lay its thun-

derbolts aside." Pagan verse is often used to support Christian morality.

The list of correspondents in this volume, though not especially long, is distinguished, and particularly interesting as a number of the members of his English circle are included: Thomas Mom; John Colet, Dean of St. Pauls and founder of St. Pauls School; Lord Mountjoy, an important court official; Andrea Ammonio, Latin secretary to Henry VIII; Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester and others. Erasmus says of More (in a letter to Richard Whitford) that "nature never created a livelier mind, or one quicker, more discerning, or clearer — in short, more perfectly endowed with all the talents — than his," and More clearly returned this respect and enthusiasm. But then Erasmus obviously loved England despite his financial disappointments, which virtually reduced him to penury. He was also constantly exposed to plague and was inclined to hold the quality of the beer responsible for a severe attack of sweating sickness. Ammonio seems to have spent considerable time procuring Greek wine as a remedy for physical ailments.

The period covered by this volume

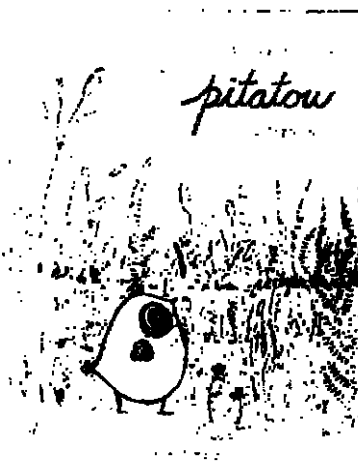
was of great importance in the development of Erasmus' career. By 1514 he had reached the age of 45 and thus what we commonly regard as a time of consolidation and production for scholars was passed during these years. Erasmus did write the *Praise of Folly* and the *Adagia*, two of his best-known works, during these years but, more importantly for him, he was able to lay the foundations for his edition of the Greek New Testament. In a letter of 1501 he commented that "Latin scholarship, however elaborate, is maimed and reduced by half without Greek," and taking the example of Cato the Censor, who devoted his old age to learning Greek, as an inspiration he set out to perfect his knowledge of the Greek language. He found it difficult but persisted and one of the most significant editions of the New Testament was the result. He also edited the correspondence of St. Jerome during these years.

A curious "letter" appears under the date Jan. 4, 1506. It is a dispensation from Pope Julius II freeing Erasmus from any canonical impediment to his acceptance of ecclesiastical benefices on account of his illegitimate birth.


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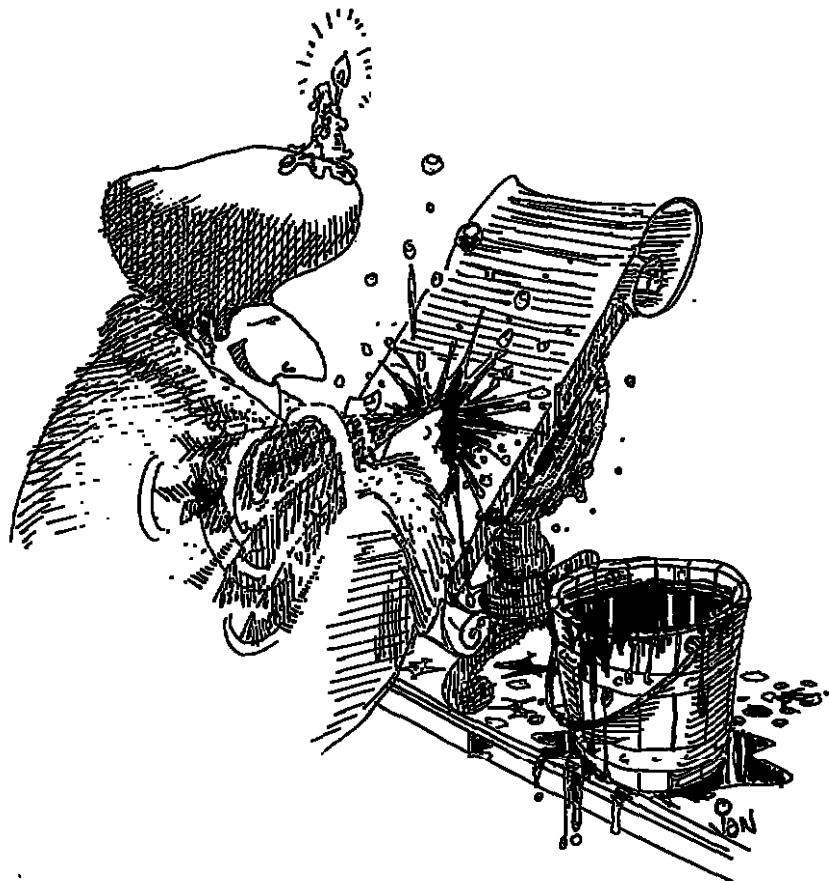
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Erasmus belonged to the Order of St. Augustine and was, at **this** time, a canon of the Monastery of **Steyn in Holland**. **His** prior had attempted to force him to take up residence in his home monastery, which would have seriously affected his **intellectual** development and his scholarly publication. As he hoped to receive **ecclesiastical** benefices in England (and was finally given the rectory of **Aldington** in 1512) it was necessary that there be **no** official **impediments**. His case was **complicated by the suggestion** that not only did he have a "**defect of birth**," as Julius delicately expressed it, but may have sprung from a sacrilegious and **condemned** union; that **is**, his **father** was already a priest at the time of his birth. At any rate he received a fuller dispensation from Pope Leo X in 1517. Erasmus also did not wish to wear the garb of his order and the dispensation freed him from this regulation as well.

There are a few letters to **printers** and **publishers**, specifically **Aldus Manutius** and **Josse Bade**. In 1507 Erasmus offered two **translations** of Euripides to Aldus saying that he would be willing to take **200 copies** himself to lessen the **publisher's** financial risk. His perceptive **recognition** of one of the greatest scholar-printers and his **real** reason for offering his work to the press is **revealed** by his statement: "I should **consider** that **my efforts** were given im-

mortality if **they** were to be published in your type. . ." Erasmus understood **the value** of editorial **method** and format. **Of his** edition of Cicero's **Offices**, which he had published as a "pocket handbook," he says: "I have appended a large **number of brief** notes. **my** intention being that, like little stars, they should conveniently illuminate **each obscure** passage."

**The** brief notes of this edition, while hard to **think** of as "little stars," do illuminate **the obscure** passages and the format facilitates easy reference. The lines of each letter are numbered and the annotations **are placed at the foot** of each page. **The editorial** and design staff of the U of T Press and the coordinating editor, Beatrice **Corrigan**, are to be congratulated for the **utilitarian** elegance of the volumes.

Montaigne, in his essay "Of Repenting" (**Florio's** translation) says: "**Had** any heretofore **shewed** me Erasmus. I could hardly have been induced to **think**, but whatsoever he had said to his boy or **hostes**, had been **Adages and Apophthegmes**." Montaigne had obviously not had an opportunity to read Erasmus' correspondence. Although one **encounters the occasional adage or apophthegm**, the letters **reveal** in the fullest possible way **the reason** why **Erasmus** is considered to represent the **best** of Renaissance **humanism**. □

# Metro man tells all — again

**Will Gordon Sinclair Please Sit Down**, by Gordon Sinclair, McClelland & Stewart, 222 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By DOUG FETHERLING

LET IT BE remembered by skeptical historians that the Toronto *Star* has had two successful tries at being one of the best newspapers in North America. The second of these was in the 1960s, the era of the op ed page, when its roster included such men as Ralph Allen, Pierre Berton, Nathan Cohen, and Peter C. Newman, and when it was a spritely and as well put together as any daily in the language. The first, of course, was in the 1920s and 1930s, when it was Hearstian in approach but liberal in outlook and featured such men as Fred Griffen, Roy Greenaway, and Gordon Sinclair.

This period fell during the peak years of Holy Joe Atkinson and of H. C. Hindmarsh (whose initials did not, as some wag suggested, stand for Hard Cash). These were men who, above all else, knew how to use the writers they had to the best possible advantage. Gordon Sinclair is not only one of the last reminders of that better-managed time, he is also in some ways the best indication of what old-time *Star* men were like, as this new volume of memoirs proves.

It is indicative of the *Star's* genius in those years that someone down them sensed in this cocky little Cabbage townner with a g&eight education the potential to become a pop oracle and the conscience of an older, middle-class, British Canada that now is fast dying out. In an age when Hindmarsh-erected placards in the city mom implored the staff to "Put a punch in every paragraph," there, in Sinclair, was a drone who did so quite naturally, and who talked and thought the same way.

He knew prime ministers and doxies by their first names and treated them accordingly. He was a spokesman for the little guy but not above stealing the poor man's photograph fmm atop the nest-of-kin's piano. He was and is, like the *Star* itself in those years, shrewd, loud, compassionate, unpretentious, sentimental, smart-assed, lively, aggressive, and never too well-informed. He was the very embodiment of what it

was then thought a good repotter should be.

This volume is less a sequel to his 1966 memoir. *Will the Real Gordon Sinclair Please Stand Up*, than it is another go at the same story. Like the earlier one, the present book concerns mainly his experiences during the Depression as a roving correspondent in Europe, India, and Asia. As in the previous book, Sinclair writes with a sort of sloppy brio. His short sentences are full of adjectives and ellipses, as though he were still trying to make the deadline for the five-star. It's the kind of style many feel obliged to denigrate publicly, even when it's perfectly suited to the task. Yet as one who devours journalistic memoirs on trains and in bed, the way many people devour mystery stories, I find it quaintly delightful.

Sinclair's stories, of course, are very good as stories. He knew Shanghai when it was the epicentre of capitalistic chicanery. He witnessed the Japanese invasion of China and for his trouble received a bayonet in the chest. He joked with Gandhi, was snubbed by Mackenzie King, and found Sinclair Lewis a fellow who "always looked as if he were about to wet his pants." This is one side of the book, the side that is

*His short sentences are full of adjectives and ellipses, as though he were still trying to make the deadline for the five-star.*

very much in the tradition of Bob Casey and other newspaper memoirists.

The other side is made up of moving but unemotional personal accounts of, for instance, his daughter's untimely death and his own three heart attacks. There is no doubt but that this second side is down-to-earth and factual. As to the other — well, even though the stories are good, it's bard to resist the temptation to point out some of the errors.

At one point, Sinclair tells us there were hippies in Yorkville in 1961. Hmmm. At another, he attacks Hemingway with, true to form, rather more zest than accuracy. He has Hemingway working in the *Star* building at 80 King Street West, which wasn't opened until 1929, when Hemingway was five years gone. He also has Hemingway writing *A Farewell to Arms* while in Toronto, which is patently absurd.

The fact of the matter is that Hemingway was in Toronto only four

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months when Sinclair was at the Star. (Hemingway's first bout' with the paper was in 1921, the year before Sinclair went on the payroll.) What is clear is that, if they did know each other, they certainly did not get along. Considering their different personalities, this is understandable enough.

Sinclair's principal objection to Hemingway seems to be that Hemingway never wrote about the Star after he left its employ. This is true, though he certainly threatened to write something. The real difference between the two men in Star terms was that one of them was a company man and the other was not. The company, of course, has been altered almost beyond recognition, but Sinclair remains in Toronto, still getting himself into hot water. He's a holdover from a more naive era that was also, by this and all other accounts, an era which was much more fun. Long may he prosper is what I say. and remind us of what it was like.

□

Not yer  
average  
pub band

**Auld Acquaintance: An** Autobiography, by Guy Lombardo with Jack Altschul, Doubleday, illustrated, 295 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By GERALD LEVITCH

"THE SWEETEST MUSIC this side of heaven" always drove this writer up a wall; but the Lombardo formula, unchanged for nearly 50 years, incontestably works. Guy knows his audience and what draws them to the band. While it may look simple on paper, the sound is a show-biz phenomenon, which means that Lombardo continues to survive while his imitators vanished 30 years ago. In Guy's words, the formula reduces to this:

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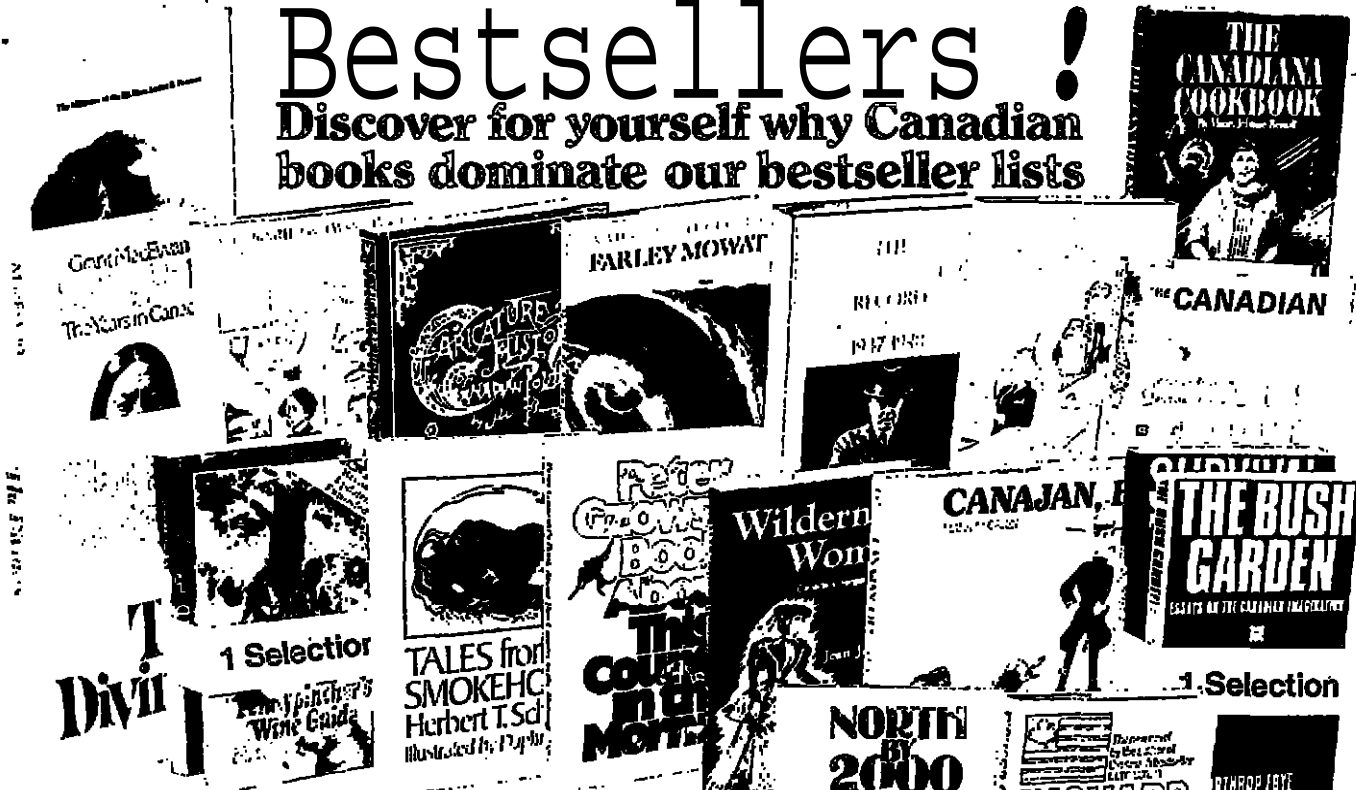
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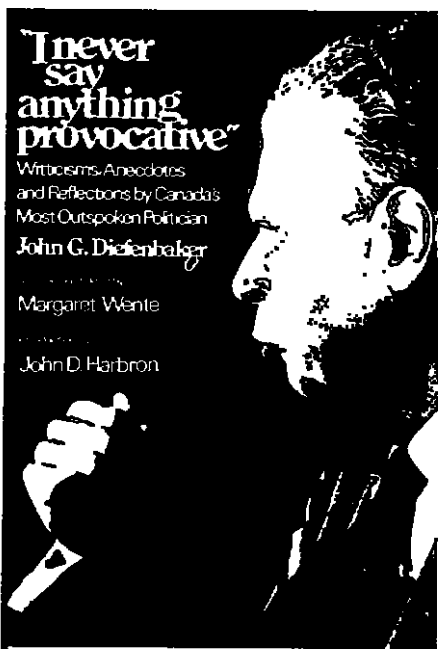
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And, as **Lombardo** proudly notes, the Royal Canadians have also had more than their share of **musician-admirers**, including one early fan named **Louis** Armstrong, who **first** heard the **band** in Chicago in 1927-Z. Armstrong **later** wrote: "Guy **Lombardo** inspired us so much with their 'sense of timing -their beautiful tones (the most essential thing in music), their beautiful way of phrasing — we stepped right into their footsteps **with our** big band at the **Savoy**. . . We phrased so much like 'em until the patrons of the **Savoy** . . . they all went for 'the sweetest music'."

Unlike the current fashion in confessional autobiographies, which leaves no pimple unsqueezed, **Lombardo's** memoir is quaintly reticent. Hi childhood, like so many Canadian childhoods, seems **unnaturally** happy. And to paraphrase **Tolstoi**, all happy childhoods are alike. What makes Guy go ricky-tick isn't answered here. His marriage is bliss; his career **unscuffed** patent leather. His only **vicé** appears to be boating, although his unswerving devotion to family and selfless generosity to talented **newcomers** do lose their novelty **with** repetition.

However, while Guy is no raconteur in the **class of** Arthur Rubenstein, he does tell a few choice anecdotes **from** the very early days in Cleveland, where he was first approached by **Jules** Stein, then a budding booking agent and **exophthalmologist with** bii plans for his embryonic MCA. There **are** some nifty Chicago gangster stories; and later, Guy recalls choice moments **with** a diffident Irving Berlin and the **Runyon-esque** Walter Donaldson, who **wrote** "Mammy," "My Blue Heaven," and "Yes Sir, That's My Baby."

But as a show-biz reminiscence, the namedropping is surprisingly lean. And **Lombardo**, even with the aid of a professional journalist, pointlessly **repeats** himself and reveals little of himself or his friends. To be sure, he's a nice Guy, even when he lapses into a bit of a harangue against the **younger generation** in his final chapter. And he's made a lot of people happy — as he reminds us more than once. That's not to be sneered at. As a book, **you** can't dance to it, but it makes a nice **souvenir**. □



## One man's joy in the big land

**Kurelek's** Canada, by William Kurelek, The Canadian **Heritage** Library, **Pagurian** Press, 127 pages, \$19.95 cloth.

By GARY **MICHAEL DAULT**

**WILL** SUCCESS **SPOIL** William Kurelek? Probably not. He possesses, after all, **two or** three fail-safe alignments **that** may be helping to preserve the qualities his admirers cherish: his eccentric graphic style, his childlike perceptions about the world through which he moves, and his monolithic religious **beliefs**.

On the other hand, **Kurelek** is perhaps **too much** with us these days. A **Prairie Boy's Winter** and **Kurelek's** autobiography, **Someone With Me**, both appeared in 1973. **Lumberjack**, perhaps his finest, most graceful **production** to date, a year later. This year, in what seems like quick succession (a little Kurelek **goes** a long way), we have had **The Passion of Christ. A Prairie Boy's Summer** (a definite **falling away from the** standards of the **Winter** volume), and now, the big Kurelek book, **Kurelek's Canada** — large format, big slick oily **pages**, thick black children's **book** typography **that** seems to assume **that Kurelek's** audience moves its lips as it reads, plentiful **colour** (though pot as well controlled **as** that in the **Winter, Summer**, and **Lumberjack** productions from **Tundra** Books), and a **\$20** price tag.

**Kurelek's Canada** is based on a series of paintings called **"The Happy Canadian"** that the artist exhibited last year at the **Isaacs** Gallery in Tomato. The paintings came first, Kurelek writes in a foreword, and the book **idea** followed: "The theme of the book is Joy. It is my view of joy, **both** remembered and observed. in **this my** native land."

The major difficulty **with Kurelek's Canada** is its lack of intimacy. Kurelek, as you would suppose an editor would understand, is just not elastic enough to **fill** up any format he is offered, Christmas book trade notwithstanding. Hi paintings and drawings are delicate. **They look much happier, more vignettelike**, in **Tundra's** stan-



ard eight-by-eight-inch layout than they do in Kurelek's *Canada* where, for some reason, they expand and contract any way the designer's whim blows. fmm little **8½-by-five-inch** plates lost in a **12-by-18-inch** double **spread of** white paper ("Pastoral Symphony," for example, on page 49). to tiny paintings like "Cowherd Enjoying Adventure **Thriller**" (page 25) which, while originally only nine-by-seven inches now is an unduly flabby-looking **8½-by-10¼** inches.

Kurelek's **prose**, moreover, is not nearly **strong enough** for emblazoning on the billboard **pages of the new book**. Always an amalgam of charming insight, desperate sincerity, and squeamish-making **naivety**, **his** writing will not take the kind of typographic woofers and tweeters **Pagurian** Press has hooked him up to. Take this for example (an accompaniment to the painting "Potato Planters Admiring Baby **Kildeers**"): "The farmers have paused to watch the **kildeers**, a ground-nest bird **I** also **knew out West**. Their pleasure in the birds is that **hug-**and-cuddle feeling one 'has toward nature's babies." This is the sort of thing of which perhaps only captions can be made. And discreetly.

**There are, however, many fine and curious** paintings in the book. And this is a genuine accomplishment, since Kurelek's painting is extremely uneven. His drawings are sometimes atrocious (see "I Saw Eternity the Other Night," page **122**), usually when he is being self-righteous. His paintings are at their least enjoyable when he is hard at work in his social-realist style (see the static "**Neighbourly** Visit," page 32). **Kurelek's real** delight is to **be** found in those pictures in which he gives full unselfconscious rein to his vision, in **those** closely observed, **pixilated** works in which the ordinary is so **hair-raisingly** interwoven with the bizarre that the effect is a compelling **eeriness** and, sometimes, a truly hallucinatory lucidity. More often than not (**it** is a rule of thumb that I have **found useful**) the best **Kureleks** are very formally structured, sparse, hieratic, sometimes symmetrical about the **centre** vertical. One of the best of these is the inspired "Midsummer Night Pixie Dance" (page 87). Another of his finest paintings is the strange "Quebec Farm Children in Nature Ecstasy" (page 65). Who but **Kurelek** would paint this **iconic** study of "nature in **paroxysm**," a leaden sky, trees bent against the wind, and three children on the lawn leaning into the rising gale,

their arms and legs akimbo, their **eyes** closed with the sensuous **pleasure** of it?

William **Kurelek** is a most remarkable man. A sort of Canadian Adam, trudging fmm sea to sea, charting, naming, accepting and **rejecting**, he **melodramatizes the** everyday, tames the magical. His religion is too public, **too strident** for comfort; and yet it is, in its **very accessibility**, moving. I-iii delineated relationships with his friends are cloying, airless. Hi **camaraderie** too hearty to hide his shyness. **There is**, in a sense, no living with him.

But he does indeed have vision and it is unlike that of anyone else. **Kurelek's Canada is not**, I think, the happiest vehicle for conveying Kurelek's aesthetic and philosophical **being**. But it does preserve some of his best **paintings**. And it is a **coast-to-coast tour** you won't forget. □

## Far too much reification going drounc

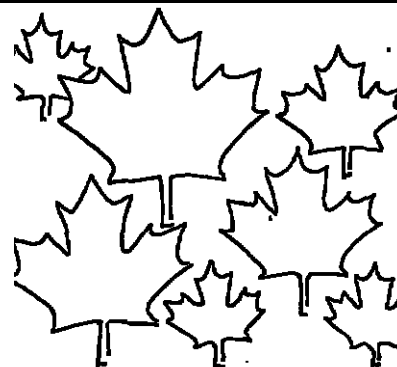
**The Disposal of Liberty and Other, Industrial Wastes.** by Edgar **Z. Friedenberg**, Doubleday, 1% pages, **\$8.95 cloth.**

**Power, Influence and Authority,** by David J. Bell, **Oxford University Press**, 131 pages, \$7.95 cloth and \$2.25 paper.

**The Dilemmas of Modern Man, the Winnipeg Centennial Symposium** (60 Osborne St., Winnipeg), 192 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By J. A. S. EVANS

**IT IS** a catchy title: *The Disposal of Liberty and Other Industrial Wastes*. So catchy, in fact, that **Friedenberg** must be congratulated for having attached a book to it with some success. **The** reader is best to take the title literally, however, for **Friedenberg** is in **earnest** about it. Individual liberty is incompatible with **post-industrial-revolution** society. Somewhere toward **the end of the book**, **Friedenberg** delves into the great scrap-heap of information he stores in his mind and draws out an intriguing nipppet. Some years ago, a **group** of California investors were reported to have tried to buy outright a **whole East African country**, which they wanted to use **as a big-game resort**. The deal fell through. But what a possi-



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bility for a poor, **modern state** - particularly one that is **bankrupt**, as Italy now is and Britain soon will be! "A plan emerges," writes Friedenberg.

The major operator of "theme" amusement parks in the United States, at the moment is Six Flags, Inc. I believe the company started in Texas, which **really** has been **under six** flags in the past, and it went on **from** there. Friedenberg conjures up a vision of Italy solving her financial problems by leasing herself out to Six Flags. It is all delightful, if a trifle zany. But what Friedenberg means by this parable is that a giant, multinational corporation could take over a whole nation, **particularly** when the **country** is poor and the multinational is **well-financed**. And that is not quite so zany an idea **after all**.

Friedenberg is an American who joined the Education faculty of Dalhousie University a few years ago. His **perception** of the world is that of an American liberal, who, unlike the Canadian variety, is always a member of the loyal opposition. Perspicacious and dogmatic, he can reduce society to simplistic terms, and he can make some telling **points**. **For instance**, Friedenberg on the marijuana problem is **dis-**

**armingly straightforward**. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics in the U.S. was established in 1930. "As a **public problem**," writes Friedenberg, "narcotics was nowhere in 1930." But, once established, **the federal** bureau undertook to justify its existence. It publicized the narcotics problem, and soon the bureau had plenty of work to keep it occupied. **Friedenberg's** conclusion is that the drug **problem** was created, **or** reified, to **use** a word that is better, if more obscure, by the **federal** bureau.

Some drugs may be harmful, to be sure. Just before I wrote this review, I caught a New York Times dispatch that **reported** that smoking marijuana could suppress the male sex hormone, testosterone, **in** men to **the** extent that they could **become impotent**. **The doctors in St. Louis and Los Angeles**, who **demonstrated this**, seemed to think it a bad thing — as would, I think, most males. Not so **Friedenberg**. He argues that the question of what harmful substances we allow and those we **ban** is a social, not a medical one. We do allow **caffeine** and alcohol, both of which can cause harm. Yet we ban cannabis. Islamic countries, on the other hand, **tolerate** cannabis and **ban** alcohol. "Push-

**ing drugs in 1975,"** writes Friedenberg, "is rather like teaching blacks to read in **1855**: in slave-holding jurisdictions, definitely illegal **and** strongly condemned."

Friedenberg has made a debating point, but it is a point that will be no help to a **social** worker who must deal with **the** victims of drug pushers. One might equally well argue that drunkenness in the cities of England some two centuries ago was created by the Methodists. Drunkenness was never a "public problem" until someone **discovered** it, and **undertook** to deal **with** it. Nor, for that matter, is any problem. If Friedenberg could borrow a time-machine and go back to the world of ancient Rome, where he might try to get the opinion of the man on the street about the slavery problem, he would find it hard to discover anyone who had **ever heard of it**. Yet slavery was a **problem**; it was simply that it **had never been** reified as a public one. In the same way; hunger did not **exist** as a "public problem" in the Middle Ages, and people then co-existed quite well **with plagues**, **all** things considered.

So it is partly true, but meaningless, for Friedenberg to claim that mental

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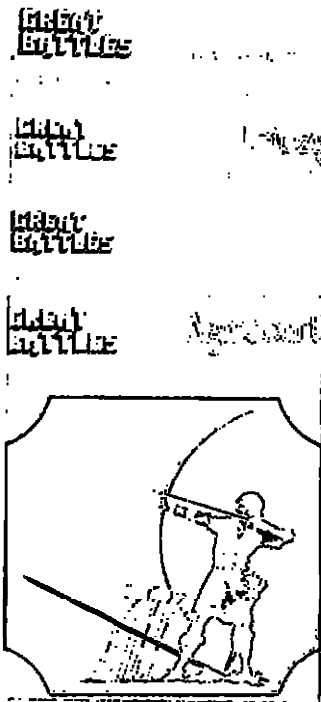
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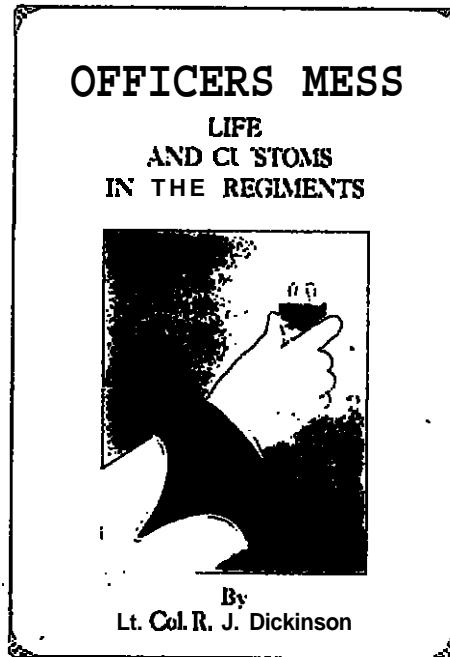
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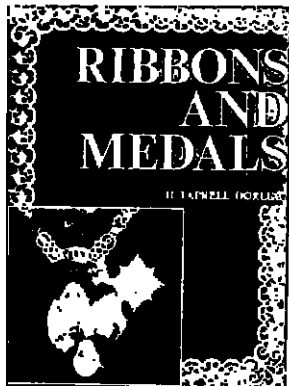


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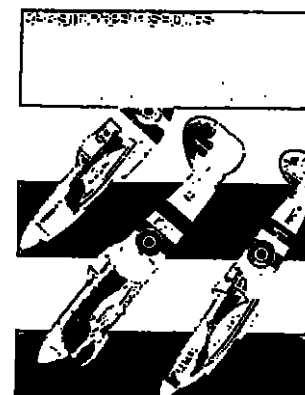
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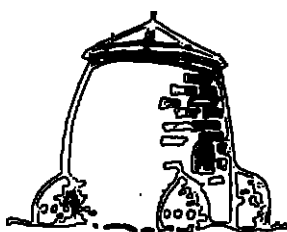
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illness is a reified problem, and it is positively harmful, I believe, for an **educationalist** to suggest, as **Friedenberg** does, that children's learning disabilities are reified, even if he **can throw up a reference to R. D. Laing** to support him. For the past two years. I have been following closely **the work** of the Vancouver Association for **Children with Learning Disabilities**, and have encountered some of **the desperate** parents of such children who are often the victims of **educationalists** as much as they are **the victims of society**. If Johnny cannot read because **he** is dyslexic, or **hyperactive**, it does no good to send mother to a psychiatrist, no matter what R. D. Laing's views may be on the politics of the family! But one must be fair, and if **at times** I thought **Friedenberg's** arguments **wrong-headed**, elsewhere he is shrewd and **telling**. Who else has compared the WASP rebels of the Students for Democratic Action in the **1960s** with the used-up aristocrats of **Spengler's Decline Of the West?**

Watergate appears in *The Disposal of Liberty*, as it does in every book-an American writes on society nowadays, although **Friedenberg** has little to say about its significance that has not been already said. Watergate appears too in Daniel J. Bell's *Power, Influence and Authority*, a **slim** volume on the nature and exercise of power. The last few pages consist of a critique of the **behaviourist** theories of B.F. Skinner, and they are quite the best part of the book. The **approach** is too unhistorical for my taste, but within its limits this is a good book, and will no doubt sell well to university undergraduates in political science.

The final book, *The Dilemmas of Modern Man* is the result of a symposium arranged in 1974 to mark Winnipeg's centennial by the Great-West Life Assurance Co. Great-West Life **brought** together a small slice of the intelligentsia **from** the North Atlantic Triangle, and set them to **discussing** modern problems such as genetics, aging, education, communications, and so on. Among **them** was *Future Shock* author Alvin **Toffler**, who has either had no new ideas since *Future Shock* or, if he has, is not revealing them to a Winnipeg audience. We have only a **report** of his speech **here**. But the other participants provided typescripts of their speeches, and some of the sessions must have been excellent indeed. I particularly recommend the session on genetics; and the session on communications, with Jeanne **Sauvé**,

Pierre Juneau, and Davidson **Dunton** **was** a good **exposition** of where we stand in Canada. I confess I opened this book expecting the worst, and was pleasantly surprised. I do not know that the volume is worth the \$9.95 it costs, but if someone gives it to you as a gift, dear reader, take it. □

## Lowering the boom

**History and Myth: Arthur Lower and the Making of Canadian Nationalism, edited by Welf H. Heick, University of British Columbia Press, 339 pages, \$16.95 cloth.**

By **NEVILLE THOMPSON**

**FOR THIS** collection of essays **Welf Heick** has, to adopt **Lytton St&hey's** famous metaphor, **rowed** out over that great ocean of material and lowered down into it, here and **there**, a little bucket, bringing up to the light of day some characteristic specimen **from those** fat depths, to be examined **with a careful** curiosity. The extent of the ocean can be gauged **from** the bibliography at the end of this volume: a dozen books, 300 essays, and more **than** 100 reviews. If not as great as that commanded by Arthur Lower's teacher at Harvard and near contemporary, Admiral Samuel Eliot **Morison**, it is, as such things are measured, as large as that inland sea on whose shore he now makes his home.

**Lower** has done pioneering research on Canadian history and contributed much to the development of **patterns** by which it is understood. Some of this scholarship is reflected in **these** essays; but for the most part he is **here** addressing his fellow citizens on matters of **topical** concern: **excoriating them** for their **Phillistine indifference to culture**; **warning** them of **threats** to civil **liberties**; **pleading for a better understanding and tolerance** of French Canada; and **above** all urging the development of a complete Canadian identity. As an intellectual trained in **the** high-minded atmosphere of Harvard, he expresses some unease **that** his stream of observations on current affairs may have detracted **from** his research, **making** him "a mere publicist, a kind of magnified journalist, a propagandist." But as a **professional** writer of history he is **pre-**



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pared to submit these publications for judgment along with his other work. He need have no fear of the verdict; he has captured exactly the tone of public discourse without- **sacrificing** the high standards of evidence and **reasoning** expected of academic writers. These essays **are** a wonderful guide to what **one** rational, if not cool, intelligence has thought of **our** public affairs for the last half century.

**Welf Heick** has arranged the essays by topic, but this is less satisfactory than it seems. On immigration, for example, there is only one piece, "The Case Against Immigration," dating from **1930**; on education two, from 1943 and 1953. Such fragmentary evidence does **not** permit the reader to trace the development of Lower's thought on any topic, **though** the overall impression is certainly clear enough after reading the whole collection. It would have been better **simply to arrange the essays in chronological order, especially** since many of them encompass more **than a narrow** reading of the titles would suggest, or at least to **group** them under **more** general headings. Lower **has** always seen Canadian history in a **broad** context, maintaining that both English- and **French-Canadian** cultures have a common **mediaeval** origin, stressing the importance of the reformation **and** counter-reformation for the different religious traditions **in this country** and the importance of the **17th-century** political struggle in England for **20th-century** liberties. Admirable as it is, however, **this** historical background, repeated in several essays, could have been edited down to advantage in this **collection**.

Arthur Lower's main public concern, reflected in the subtitle of the volume, has been the attenuated nature of the Canadian identity, **particularly** before the Second World War. Like most liberals of his generation, he has **perceived** the problem as being more the colonial mentality towards Britain than the threat from the United States. One of the best essays, and also one of the shortest, is "Bonnie Charlie's Gone Awa'" (1939), in which he reports R. B. Bennett's departure **from** Halifax for an English country house and a seat in the House of **Lords**: "The chariot of **fire** was to swoop down and snatch Elijah up into heaven **from** their very midst." With some bitterness he commented that Bennett was leaving because "Tory **Loyalism** is still only **col-**

**onialism** and cannot reconcile itself to finding its **centre** here. Canada is only a stopping place, and when Canadians 'make good' why **(after** a colonial way of thinking) should they not go back to the land of heart's desire?"

In a charming introduction to this volume, Lower repeats the observation he made on television a few years ago, **that** he was "called of God **m be an** historian": "There has not been a time in my life, from earliest childhood on, when I have **not** been attracted by the 'mystic quality that hangs over time past." Historians have good **reason** to be thankful for **Lower's** enthusiasm and energy. But so does the reading public, for **50 years of** exhortation and warning **from** one of the most lively, articulate, and civic-minded of our intellectuals. □

## Square Peg, round holes

**Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914**, by Alan Artibise, McGill-Queen's University Press, 400 Pages, \$18 cloth.

By **GEORGE MELNYK**

**EVERY CITY** needs a **sympathetic** biographer and Winnipeg has found one in historian Alan Artibise. His book **examines** the social stew that has made Winnipeg one of the most **interesting** ethnic non-melting pots **in** Canada.

Artibise focuses on the city's **ethnic-based** class structure as a **product** of meteoric development at the **turn** of the century. His view is **coloured** by a mixture of liberal angst and a social democrat's concern **for** peaceful co-existence between classes. Western novelists **such** as John **Marlyn** and Adele **Wiseman** have already effectively portrayed this social structure in fiction. Dr. Artibise adds the statistics and the historical research. In the right-hand corner, he places the wealthy Anglo-Saxon commercial elite, **re-**siding comfortably in **the South End**. In **the** left-hand corner, he puts the ethnic immigrant masses of the North End slums.

In **this** polarized reality, issues of health, housing, public **transport**, and utilities were inevitably resolved in the interests of the reigning WASP establishment and to the detriment of social progress. In fact, Artibise tells us the

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capitalist city fathers created municipally owned institutions (since they **ran** the **municipality**) to foster **growth** and thereby their **profits**. **Growth** resulted in **disease, overcrowding**, and suffering, as well as wealth.

But in the final analysis, the **immigrant** West that made Winnipeg what it is to this day was not the product of a small urban commercial elite. They were only successful **parasites**. The **power rested with** the railway and the railway came **from** the East. **Artibise** relates dramatically how the steel **divided** the city into ghettos, encouraged speculation and **exploitation**, and through its **trainloads** of immigrants created the city's **working** class.

The book is **dominated** by the tension between the machinations of the elite and the suffering of the immigrants — so much so that there is little **consideration** for the **rest** of the city. Winnipeg's crucial relationship to its vast agrarian **Western** hinterland is mentioned but not explored, nor is its equally **important** relationship to the East. As for the **social** tug-of-war between the immigrant and the elite, **Artibise** graciously **declares** a tie. Many will disagree. □

This little piggy...

**The Kitchener Market Fight, by Jack Pasternak, Samuel Stevens Hakkert & Company, illustrated, 236 pages, \$9.95 cloth.**

By **FRED ARMSTRONG**

**THE GROWING** interest in **preserving** the urban atmosphere often concerns a demand for the preservation of historical buildings. Developers, long used to being received with open arms, now frequently **find** that they have to muster their forces to **gain** the lands, **zoning** requirements, and special **conditions** that they **demand** for their project.

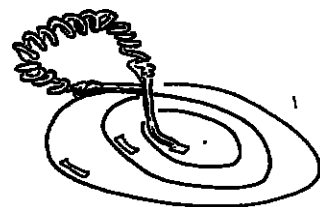
Some of the most lively disagreements of this **type** have **centred around** the **removal** of old municipal buildings and the transfer of city property into private hands. **Certainly, promises** to build something big, new, **attractive**, and revenue-producing have tended to overwhelm many members of city councils. There is **still** a tendency to see any redevelopment as the solution to the city's **problems**, without adequately considering questions of additional services versus new assessment, the

long-term effects of **the** loss of public land, or the **cost** of moving the city **offices** to new, possibly rented **quarters**. Councils frequently treat opposition **groups** with suspicion, some **surprise**, and sometimes 'a good deal of invective.

The engagement over the **preservation** of the old city hall has been a particularly frequent phenomenon in southern Ontario. At **Toronto, Woodstock, and Stratford** the preservationists won. At **Brantford** and **Kitchener** they lost. Up to now these skirmishes have lacked their **chronicler**. Now, in *The Kitchener Market Fight*, **Jack Pasternak** gives us the **first** such tale in a clear, well-researched book. His story provides a balanced picture of the events, one that does **not hesitate** to point out the weaknesses on **the conservationist** side. Also, and these points **are** all **too** frequently overlooked, he provides **the** reader with a good historical outline of the development of Kitchener and its market, includes diagrams of the properties under discussion and explains the intricacies of the workings of the Ontario Municipal Board and the **appeal-court system**.

Although **Pasternak** states that "it is unlikely this little **slice** of local history Will **provide** either a useful guide for future urban **struggles** or a basis for **new theories** of civic **involvement**," his opus clearly shows the difficulties faced by citizen groups. His examination of the manner in which the city council, 'municipal officials, planning groups, the **downtown** merchant community, and the media, led by the **Kitchener Record**, combined with **the** developers, will give food for thought to anyone **interested** in the **process** of municipal government. He also brings in some **colourful** characters, particularly Kitchener Planning **Director Thompson**, whose **statements** provide the best quotes since Alderman **Lampert** of Toronto.

**Pasternak** can be congratulated and his book can be highly recommended. The only regret is that, as the fight **took** place three years ago, **and** the new market has now been open for some time, more could not be said about the **accuracy** of the prognostications by both sides. Possibly it is **too** soon for such comments. □





# Calluses and therapy

Years of **Hard Labour**, by **Morden Lazarus**, Ontario Federation of **Labour** (15 Gervais Dr., Toronto), **115 pages**, \$1.50 paper.

Democracy and the **Work Place**, by **Harold B. Wilson**, Black **Rose Books**, 267 pages, \$10.95 cloth and \$3.95 paper.

By **TERRENCE Li. WHITE**

**STRIKES AND THE** seemingly endless chaos in Canadian **labour** relations **are** causing more and more people to **reflect**: "How in the hell did we get into this mess?." For most Canadians, the answer lies in catching **up with** what has been happening in the **labour** movements and on the shop floors.

Years **of Hard Labour** provides an excellent elementary overview of trade-union development in Canada from the early 1800s to the present day. Morden Lazarus's style makes for an interesting and informative **coverage** of the major events. His use of **biograph-**

ical vignettes of key **characters** is a constant reminder of the human side of the **struggles**.

For the problem of the shop floor, industrial democracy is muted by many students of work as **the** appropriate therapy. Most Canadians will **recognize industrial** democracy as being some sort of scheme having to do with work that is being tried **out** in parts of **Europe**. Few will be certain as to its **exact nature**, but most will agree that it won't work in Canada.

It is in this **context** that Harold B. Wilson of the **Letter Carriers' Union** has written his *Democracy and the Work Place*. What he attempts to do is outline a practical plan for experimenting with industrial democracy. He suggests that Canada's Crown corporations and the agencies under current **NDP provincial** governments should serve as the **host-organizations**.

To a limited degree, he is successful in wiring into place some of the bones he foresees as necessary for an experimental skeleton of industrial **democracy**. It **serves** as a good introductory statement for those not familiar with the issues. But **its** weakness is that its socialist slant may tom off those who most need to be swayed. □

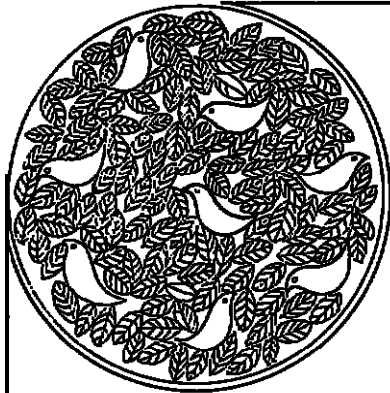
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By **FORSTER FREED**

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To a great extent, this theatrical **activity** has taken two forms. On the one hand, there have been the numerous large-scale **efforts** to impose a Canadian **theatre** upon a largely unsuspecting public. Such efforts, besides **draining** the public purse of millions of **dol-**



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lars, have managed to produce the kinds of cultural monsters of which Charlottetown's Confederation Centre, the Newfoundland Arts and Culture Centre, and Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre are but a few examples.

In contrast, there has been a phenomenal growth of smaller professional theatres in every part of this country. (Vancouver's Tamahnous, Edmonton's Theatre Three, Saskatoon's Twenty-fifth Street House, Toronto's Passe Muraille, and Newfoundland's Mummer's Troupe — to name but a handful.) Unlike pmjeck such as the St. Lawrence Centre, with its emphasis on cultural trappings (a sparkling new building complete with drinking lounge), these smaller theatres have eschewed formality, focussing instead on the bedrock concerns that are central to a lively theatre. And they have accomplished these goals with operating budgets that have been invariably small, and, on more than one occasion, non-existent. It is these alternative theatres that are making the major contribution to Canada's theatrical development.

Interestingly, these same patterns are currently manifesting themselves in the

area of play publication. As a case in point, one notes *A Collection of Canadian Plays*, the first four volumes, of which are now available from Simon and Pierre in the Bastet Books series. These books (Volumes I, II, and III containing adult plays, with Volume IV made up of plays for children) are to play publication what the St. Lawrence Centre is to live theatre. Packaged in unwieldy 8½-inch by 11-inch volumes, the *Collection* imposes itself for all the wrong reasons. Filled with countless line-drawings, illustrations, maps, photographs, and other assorted "extras" (most of which add little to one's enjoyment or perception of the plays) the collection is much ado about very little. In fact, the elaborate packaging merely emphasizes the undistinguished calibre of most of the scripts.

In this regard, one notes that most of the playwrights represented in the collection spent a good portion of their apprenticeships at the CBC. The extent to which this fact has influenced the quality of the writing is clearly a matter for conjecture, but to some degree most of the plays reflect their mass-media background. (Indeed, a large number of the plays were originally television scripts that were subsequently reworked for the stage.) The plays tend to exalt the craft of playwrighting at the expense of the writing art that lies at the heart of any good play. On the whole, this results in well-constructed plays with little or no dramatic substance.

The exceptions are few and far between but Merrill Denison's *Marsh Hay* is clearly the most intriguing. The play, which Denison (who died this past spring) wrote in 1923, has yet to receive a professional production in Canada. Yet at the time of its original publication, it was a breakthrough for Canadian drama. Set in a backwoods area of Ontario, and dealing with the spiritual paralysis that inflicts its rural characters, the play turned Canadian dramatists away from pale Shakespearean imitations. Hence, the play's lack of stylistic innovation is far less important than the fact that *Marsh Hay* led our drama toward a long-overdue exploration of Canada's land and people. And while it is hardly a masterpiece, the play's truths are as valid now as they were when Denison first wrote it.

In a similar vein, the efforts of William Fruet and Michael Cook warrant consideration. Fruet's play, *Wedding in White* (source of the award-winning film) works in an area similar to *Marsh Hay*, for it is an equally realistic ex-

amination of rural Canada. More complex than either Fruet or Denison's offerings is Cook's *Colour the Flesh, the Colour of Dust*. 'Set in 18th-century Newfoundland, Cook's play owes a considerable debt (perhaps too great a debt) to the plays of Brecht and of John Arden. This does not diminish the extent of Cook's achievement. That he is, in fact, the finest writer represented by the collection is revealed by even small snippets of *Colour's* dialogue — a delicate blending of realistic prose with poetic fancy. Like Denison and Fmet, he lifts his writing above mere cleverness while pushing the play's insights beyond the empty glibness that characterizes so many of the plays in these volumes. As a result, *Colour the Flesh, Marsh Hay, and Wedding in White* are the most formidable scripts in the Baster collection. Regardless of their ultimate value in distant times and places, these three plays manage to speak to this place and this time with honesty, intelligence, and considerable skill.

Beyond these three plays, *A Collection of Canadian Plays* is chiefly interesting for its omissions. With the exception of Cook's play and the two experimental pieces by Sheldon Rosen, these volumes do not even begin to reflect the current theatrical scene in English-speaking Canada. Had these volumes been devoted to older and neglected scripts of historical value (*à la Marsh Hay*) or to the works of promising but little-known writers (*à la Rosen*), one could understand the omission of plays by Ryga and Reaney, French and Freeman, Herbert and Hardin, Bolt and Simons — as well as a number of our experimental theatre's collective creations. But when one considers the plays that have formed the bulk of the collection, it becomes clear that these volumes seriously misrepresent Canadian theatre.

While the causes of these omissions are a matter for speculation, it seems hard to believe that the series' editor is so completely unaware of recent developments in Canadian theatre as to have willingly chosen to ignore them. Perhaps a more likely explanation is that our major playwrights (most of whom are published in the more modest editions put out by Talonbooks, New Press, *Canadian Theatre Review*, and Playwrights Co-Op) were reluctant to have themselves immortalized in this kind of package. One would certainly like to believe that our better writers were blessed with that kind of balance and good sense. Then again, one woo-

## Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel

by Ben-Zion Shek

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ders, after **Baster's** money had been relegated to **paper, packaging, and illustrations**, how much was actually left to pay the playwrights.

And although many find it distasteful to mix **aesthetics** with economics, it is **ludicrous** to ignore the financial facts of life that threaten both theatre and publishing in this country. Surely the main goal of play publication in Canada must be to get good scripts into the hands of potential audiences (particularly young audiences) as **inexpensively as is feasible**. One would like to think that its **secondary goal** is to turn over most of the profits (if there are any) to the struggling playwright. It is impossible to believe that *A Collection of Canadian Plays* is equipped to accomplish either goal. Combined with the **unrepresentative** (and generally low-quality) nature of the collection itself, this makes these volumes a dubious venture.

It should be added, by way of conclusion, that Volume IV, devoted to children's plays, is a **far more representative collection** than any of the other volumes. It is also the only volume where the illustrations make any kind of **aesthetic sense**. Both factors can probably be attributed to the role played here by Susan Rubes, artistic director of Toronto Young People's Theatre, who acted as associate editor for the volume. Yet the volume is made all the more disturbing by having been given this **unofficial stamp of approval**. Not claiming to be an expert in children's literature, I was unsettled (and ultimately repelled) by the wide-eyed, open-mouthed quality of most of the scripts. (Carol Bolt's *Cyclone Jack*, Ron Cameron's adaptation of James Reaney's *One Man Masque*, and — for all its other shortcomings — Alan Egetton Ball's *Professor Fuddle's Fantastic Fairytale Machine* are excepted from this indictment.) There is something predictable and condescending in the way most of these plays (humourless and passionless in the extreme) address their young audiences. Is this really the kind of **pap kids** enjoy? Or is this the very thing that helps produce wide-eyed, open-mouthed adult audiences who respond to the TV dramas anthologized in the first three volumes of the series? One wonders. □



# SOFT & RECYCLED

Better. never than late?

By **PAUL STUEWE**

ANY **COMPARISON** of our publishing industry with its foreign competitors would have to **remark** upon the inordinately long intervals between the **hardcover** and paperback editions of **Canadian** books. Although the **usual reasons** advanced for the **small number** of indigenous paperbacks — the expense of large press runs combined with **American** control of book distribution — do account for the paucity of mass-market titles, they still don't explain why we have to wait so long for softcover releases of even the most esoteric books.

Josef Skvorecky's *All the Bright Young Men and Women: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema*, for example, was published as an **\$8.95 hardcover** by Peter **Martin Associates** in 1971. It received almost unanimously **favourable** reviews, and as a somewhat impoverished **cinemaddict**, I made a mental note to buy it when it eventually appeared in **Paperback**. And waited. And waited. And . . .

Now in 1975 the **\$5.95 paperback** version **arrives** with a coveting letter from Peter Martin in which he states that he has been "Frankly disappointed at the Canadian response" to the book. Well, as we used to say in grade school, "I'll give **ya** three guesses, **first** two don't count." **Skvorecky's** book is an engaging, knowledgeable and generously **illustrated** account of an **important segment of film history**; but **PMA's** inability to provide a timely softcover edition has almost **certainly** reduced its potential audience, and one can only hope that readers will not penalize **Skvorecky** for his publisher's deficiencies.

Ronald Sutherland's *Snow Lark* (New Press, **\$3.50**), similarly, is a belated 1975 paperback release of a **book that came out in hardcover** in 1971. Since it is a **rather laboured** and thesis-ridden attempt at a "two cultures" novel, one cannot be quite as upset by the hiatus between editions; but it still

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seems clear that New Press has squandered whatever impetus was provided by reviews of the hardcover version, and has been less than alert to its responsibilities to both Sutherland and his prospective readers.

A notable exception to this absurd (both morally and commercially) state affairs is the University of Toronto Press's *The Social History of Canada and Literature of Canada: Poetry and Prose in Reprint series*, which are issued in simultaneous hardcover and paperback editions that free us from the sometimes agonizing decision as to whether to shell out now or wait untold years for the latter. These are also attractive and will-bound books with uniformly excellent introductions for the non-specialist reader, and it would be a shame if their academic origins restricted them to university bookstores.

Recent releases under The Social History of Canada imprint include two rather Formidably titled opuses on *Social Planning for Canada* (\$6.50) and the *Report on Social Security for Canada 1943* (\$5.50), both of which turn out to be quite readable. Leonare Marsh's *Report* is a landmark in the creation of a national social-welfare policy, while the League for Social Reconstruction's *Social Planning for Canada* (published in 1935) is probably the best introduction to the thought of such influential members as F. R. Scott, Eugene Forsey, and Frank Underhill. (Editor's note: Both these book were reviewed at greater length in our September, 1975, issue.)

Two volumes of fiction have been classified, I think justly, as "Social History" rather than "Literature." Douglas Durkin's *The Magpie* (\$5.50), published in 1923, and Jules-Paul Tardivel's *For My Country* (\$5.50), published in 1895, are awkwardly written but nonetheless fascinating period pieces of some contemporary interest. *The Magpie* is "a novel of post-war disillusionment" that, if one substitutes "Trudeau" for "war," speaks to our sense of the ineptitude of political leaden in general; while *For My Country's* uncritical advocacy of religious fanaticism and nationalistic fervour supplies some insight into the current resurgence of racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups who are not quite ready for the global village.

The Literature of Canada series continues with Laurie Conan's *Angéline de Montbrun* (\$4.50) and W. E. Collin's *The White Savannahs* (\$5.95). The

Conan book (published in 1882) is perhaps the first psychological novel to be written in Canada, and the vivid desperation of its heroine's interior life ("How many extinguished ardors there am in my &ad heart!") is strikingly similar to that of the protagonist of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. *The White Savannahs* is a pioneering work of literary criticism (published in 1936), a collection of humane, intelligent, and thoroughly enjoyable essays on nine Canadian poets that has much to teach critics of both the academic and journalistic persuasions. If you've ever despaired of reading Archibald Lampman and E. J. Pratt with some degree of pleasure, Collin is the man for you.

While the U of T Press has taken the lead in providing us with "quality" paperbacks, PaperJacks has certainly taken over the mass-market field. And when it concentrates on publishing good books at reasonable price, this success is certainly deserved. Barry Broadfoot's *Ten Lost Years* (\$4.95) should be sufficiently well-known so that all I have to say is it's in paperback, it's fantastic, so buy it already; Clark Blaise's *Tribal Justice* (\$1.95) didn't quite reach the same best-seller list, but its breathing of new life into traditional fictional techniques is an equally noteworthy accomplishment. Blaise is an extremely subtle writer who probes everyday life until it yields its substrata of chaotic passions and prejudices, and he is also an impeccable prose stylist in a discipline littered with writers who seem content to remain diamonds in the rough.

Since I've tended to concentrate upon PaperJacks' successes in previous columns, perhaps it's time to mention that it has also published its share of potboilers. Gerald Lampert's *Tangle Me No More* (\$1.75) contains laudatory back-cover quotes from Austin Clarke and John Robert Colombo, but the tenor of the book is better indicated by the adjoining description of the protagonist as being drawn "onto love's baited hooks"; I let bim wriggle for about 50 pages and then gave up. Two new efforts in the thriller sweepstakes are equally lame: Paul Gottlieb's Agency (\$1.95) attempts to be flip and Flops, while David Helwig's *Message from a Spy* (\$1.95) is as ponderous and unconvincing a book as I've ever waded through. As Samuel Morris said when he returned to earth and observed Canadian writers trading in their table hockey sets for CIA and SMERSH manuals: "What hath Rohmer wrought?" □

# LETTERSTO THE EDITOR

## HIS BEAMS BEMOCKED . . .

Sir:

Reading Leonard Gasparini's review of Seymour Mayne's most recent book, *Name*, (August issue) I can't decide whether it's written by an ideologue of the extreme Right or the extreme Left. On the one hand he thrusts Mayne into an ominously hyphenated Klein-Layton conspiratorial axis that makes us appear the authors of the Protocols of Zion; on the other, he lays down rules for the evaluation and writing of poems which recalled to my mind Stalin's directive to Soviet composers to write only those tunes that every droshtky driver could whistle. One of the sacred, newt-be-violated canons of communism is that all art should be immediately intelligible to the unwashed but hallowed masses.

Your reviewer finds Mayne's subtleties and nuances offensive as some kind of obscure sign language but twists himself into an Italian pretzel to find compliments on the same page for kitchen-sink kitsch, a whole green garbage bag of it smelting of crushed poetic entrails. A sign of the times? I think so. This is the great age for the fabricated poem that any semi-literate or university-trained jack can put his hand to, with no one to back it off at his wrist for him. However, I don't want to launch into my familiar diatribe against the poor state of book reviewing in this country, one that has been brought about as much by ignorance as by cowardice and fad-following. But any reviewer who can praise lifeless lipstick-fakes but not deeply moving because deeply human poems such as "Chaim," "Rivkeh," "For A.M. Klein (1909-1972)," "David," "Steve," "Hannah," has convinced one person, at any rate, that poetry is something he should leave severely alone. Instead of absurdly muttering in print about "Zionistic sensibilities" when he means or ought to mean Mayne's Jewish gifts for empathy and compassion he might consider taking up basket-weaving or breeding white mice for our laboratories.

Gasparini pounces on some admittedly flabby lined — what poet doesn't have some to haunt him? — but shies away from lines such as:

*of double voices speaking, gasping  
apostrophizing from the round zero of the  
mouth  
rings to the empty ear's circle  
and woven labyrinthine laurels  
over the vacuous glycerine of the sunken  
eye*

— "For A. M. Klein (1909-1972)"

*Your stone was at the cemetery's edge,  
the last line of the draining trench*

— "Steve"

*The crown of your head  
is a bean shave —  
and you, shaggy and stocky  
Upon the bloated stalk  
of your body  
grow again  
my luckless friend*

— "Chaim"

There are very few poets in Canada today who can write with the craft, energy and humaneness that distinguishes Seymour Mayne's best work from that of the long list of hapless also-rans

growing each day longer with every Canada Council grant. When one of them does appear, it infuriates me to see him dismissed by someone who plainly hasn't the faintest notion of what he is talking about.

Irving Layton  
Winters College  
York University  
Toronto

### ... THE SULTRY MAYNE

Sir:

Please add my protest with those people who would care to attack that vicious sniping "review" in your August issue by one Len Gasparini of a book of poetry by Seymour Mayne.

What I'd like to know from that throat slasher, your humanitarian reviewer, "Why keep cutting when you're past the jugular? Why take over three paragraphs to cut up another poet? Why review the bloody book at all?"

Is it some thrill that the reviewer seeks by removing somebody's head? Is that constructive criticism?

I'm tired of literary adolescents masturbating their *medulla oblongatas*.

There should be some law for such assassinations.

If Seymour Mayne puts the boot into your reviewer, I'll be there to applaud.

Joe Rosenblatt  
Toronto

### SOME ACADEMIC QUESTIONS

Sir:

No conscientious poo-pooher would wish to add significantly to the difficulties of "Why Academic is Pejorative," an unfortunate little non-review of a belated non-publication (September issue).

If a review is to be published under a headline and subhead it ought at least to address itself to that topic. I read Professor Friedenber's review <sup>in</sup> *mi* *ce*, thinking I must have missed something the first time mood. But although I did find a number of interesting and amusing comments, and one reference to the pejorative tone of the adjective "academic," there was nothing specific about the effect of university on the creative process. Professor Friedenber himself moves the question back one stage when he asks: "How does the nature of the university influence its effect on the creative process?" Then he suggests the questions which the York book ought to have asked. But he doesn't try to answer them.

Your headline is a useful starting point for an article, one which Professor Friedenber is qualified to write, although preferably at greater length in *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*. It would also go better if he were to remember that he is in Canada, not in the U.S. I am not saying that Canadian academic scientists do not seek special relationships with the military enterprise, but fortunately in this country we are short both of military and of military enterprise. It would also be better if he did not gallop round and mood the subject like Indians round and mood a wagon train. (Professor Friedenber is not the only one who can close with a third-rate possibly racist pun from south of the border.)

Jeffrey Holmes  
Halifax

### ONE MIND NOT NUMBED

sir .

It is unfortunate for both women and the book industry that Morris Wolfe's article on women's

presses (May issue), which had such a promising start, only ended in proving once again the1 because of the nature of what is written by feminists, men should not be their reviewers.

Of course he has every right to comment on the political style of Rite MacNeil — that is the prerogative of a reviewer. But to diimirr it as "mind-numbing" dismisses also all those women who finally have found in her songs an alternative to the pap about boyfriends and high-school dates usually pot out by the male-dominated music industry. How could a man be expected to bring an objective mind to the lyrics be quoted? They most be mighty threatening because they are the experience of North American wives..

I hope he will take the time to listen to Rita. Her performance, where she combines the lyrics be disliked with her incredibly powerful voice, is anything but mind-numbing.

Kathryn Woodward  
Toronto

### FLAGS AND FAILINGS

Sir:

At the risk of inciting your editorial wrath, I feel compelled to reopen a correspondence you have arbitrarily deemed closed.

In your March issue I complained that the excellent caricature of Sc John A. Macdonald by MartinVaughn-James (February issue) incorporated asym bolic anachronism: the new Canadian flag. I suggested the flag in Macdonald's eyes should have been the old Canadian ensign "now used by the Province of Ontario." Chris Redmond of Waterloo, Ont., then wrote (June issue) to point out that the official Ontario flag has the Ontario coat of arms in its fly — not the Canadian coat of arms, as I implied.

I stand corrected and humbled by Mr. Redmond's superior heraldic knowledge. However, I can't let Vaughn-James' October cover (again excellent) pass by without some comment. He again emblazons the helmet of his dead Dieppe hero with the new Canadian flag — some 20 years before the devil existed. Granted, artists may take certain liberties, but if Vaughn-James persists in playing fast and loose with history he will create confusions that future researchers will take years to untangle.

Incidentally, I believe the correct name of the other first-rate illustrator in that issue is Jon (not John) McKee. And finally, you erred in placing Golden Dog Press in Toronto; the correct address is 15 Ossington Ave., Ottawa.

Patrick Oliver  
Toronto

*Editor's note: Our apologies to Jon McKee and to Golden Dog Press. However, we must insist that the flag correspondence is once again closed.*

### THE 'MORE' IS IMPORTANT

Sir:

In the Angst issue of *Books in Canada* there is a smell but important error in your printing of my review *Canadian Indians and La Law*. I criticized Smith's inclusion of the complete text of all three major versions of the Indian Act and wanted to say that an avoidance of this repetition would have left room for other important documents, not "other more important documents." At the present time then is probably no legislation affecting the lives of Canadian Indians more important than the Indian Act.

Ruth Brouwer  
Willowdale, Ont.

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## FROM OBERON

Sir:

I agree with Linda Sandler that, since the early 1960s, West Coast poets and critics have provided a sane, open-door alternative to the fables of identity told by writers in Ontario and Quebec during the same period (Periodically Speaking, September issue).

But two points can be made in qualification of her, review article.

Firstly, for whatever reason, Ms. Sandler has assumed that the lovely and feminine Quebec poet Michèle Lalonde is — a man!

Secondly, her praise of *Open Letter* presents some unexplained paradoxes. The transformation of *Tish* into the *Open Letter* (it "took a Canadian turning" and moved to enemy territory in Ontario) was accomplished "without renouncing its origins." ye, includes a splendid article by identity-critic Margaret Atwood. Hard to believe that the radical purity of West Coast aesthetics has no, been somewhat contaminated. Again, although *Open Letter* is the work of a closed "revolutionary sect in exile," it is "an open forum . . . as close to the Roman forum as the printed book can get." I, is evident to anyone who has followed the eastern migration of members of the West Coast group — those "unknown and wildly eccentric poets" — that they have fallen in good measure for the charms and pre-occupations of the East (that "Canadian turning"). The evolution of the West Coast group,

should be carefully documented rather than flatly denied. as in this article.

Barbara Belyea  
Department of Comparative Literature  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton

# CanWit No.5

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

SO WENT James McIntyre's magnificent apostrophe to the 7,000-pound Ingersoll, Ontario, cheese churned out for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. We don't write good bad poetry like that any more; today's non-versifiers tend to be wrapped up in bawdy language or metaphysical coocepts. We need a return to McIntyre's verbal cheddar realism. The usual prize (see below) is offered for the best bed poem (maximum length, eight lines) on any one of the following subjects: CBC-TV's *Viewpoint*; *Toronto's CN Tower*; the Bricklin car; the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Bill C-58; or the Reid Pulp and Paper Company of Dryden, Ont., makers of line mercury-laced river systems. Address entries to CanWit No. 5, *Books in Canada*, 501 Yonge Street, Suite 23, Toronto M4Y 1Y4. The deadline is Nov. 28.

## RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 3

READERS WERE asked to provide a concluding paragraph for a forthcoming first novel that opens as follows:

*It was raining in Samia but they were in Toronto a, the time. Roger stood on the balcony, gazing out across the harbour at the turd-brown swell of the lake. It reminded him of bad harvests and the murmur of Gregorian chants. Beside him, Sylvia shivered. "I have something to tell you." she said.*

The winner is Prances Rukavina of Carleton Place, Ont., who receives a copy of the award-winning art book *John Fillion* by Dorothy Cameron and Rohn Reeves (Martlet Press, \$19.50) for this haunting climax:

*"You shouldn't have told me," Roger muttered as he watched Sylvia fall as though in slow motion. She bit the water with a splat. Roger remembered the depth of his uncle's privy and the echo of the night train. Suddenly Roger realized that although they were in Toronto, they could*

have ken in Samia all the time. He jumped.

## Honourable mentions:

*It was raining in Toronto but they were in Samia at the time. Roger stood on the balcony, gazing out across the harbour a, the turd-brown swell of the lake. I, reminded him of bad harvests and the murmur of Gregorian chants. Beside him, Sylvia shivered. "There's something I've been meaning to tell you." she said.*

(Yvonne W. Hornby, Toronto)

*"Darling Roger- it's so good to be home again -and together — but I have a suggestion." Sylvia pressed enticingly against Roger and her eyes sparkled softly. "You know how you want me to cut down on expenses by letting the cook go? Well, I could never learn to cook properly in a million years so why don't you learn bow to be a better lover and we could fire the chauffeur!"*

(Mrs. Florence Fleury, Brampton, Ont.)

*"Dr. Morgentaler has agreed" to do the abortion." Roger, turning slowly, stared at her balefully. Averting her eyes, she continued. "I'm to climb in a laundry bag outside the prison at 11:30 tomorrow night." His view returned to the turbid waters. He shrugged. "Extremism in search of the best is novice." he muttered. And the rain clouds from Samia appeared on the horizon.*

(Sylvia Angst, Toronto)

*As they sat on the brink in the shadow of the International Bridge, sun shining brilliantly, water rippling gently, Toronto and its noisy harbour seemed eons away. Sylvia, snuggling close to Roger, quipped teasingly, with the cunning, little-girl way of hers, "You never asked me what I had to tell you." He embraced her tenderly, oblivious of the over-head traffic, and said. "If it's important, I can always guess."*

(I. A. I. Bel, Winnipeg)

*Hadn't he been waiting for this moment? Hadn't he been watching for it, a, a fame, watches darkening clouds? Silent during the drive, he had been lulled by the window wipers' steady beat. Somehow it had seemed such an ordinary day but somehow he knew it wasn't. "Roger," Sylvia spoke softly, almost to herself, "I talked to Sam last night. It was his voice. I know he isn't dead."*

(Eve Lynn, Port Elgin, Ont.,)

*The snow was falling steadily. Sylvia stood on the turd-brown bank, brushing greyish flakes from her stiff lashes. The lake-surface had a mottled look, oily patches of pool encircling jagged slabs of ice. Roger lay face-up between two slabs. Never again would he see the sun, nor reap the harvest. Sylvia watched the brown cords ballooning and deflating. "I told you so," she said. when the last dull bubble surfaced from the descending body.*

(Linda Sandler, Toronto)

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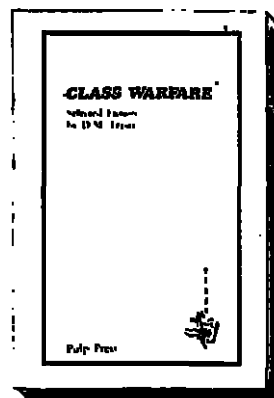
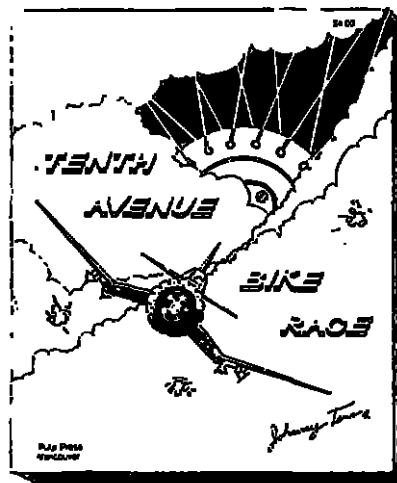
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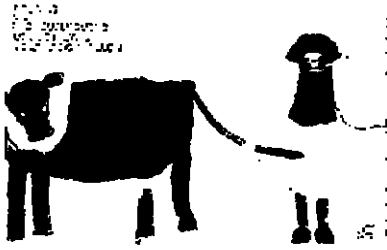
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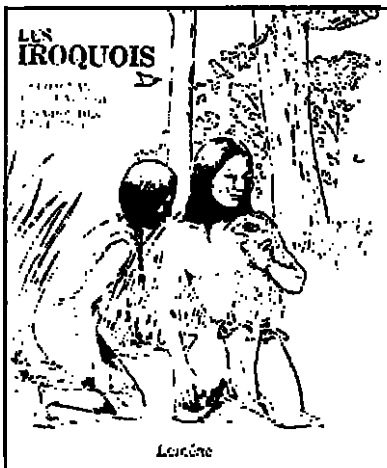
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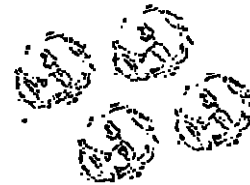
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