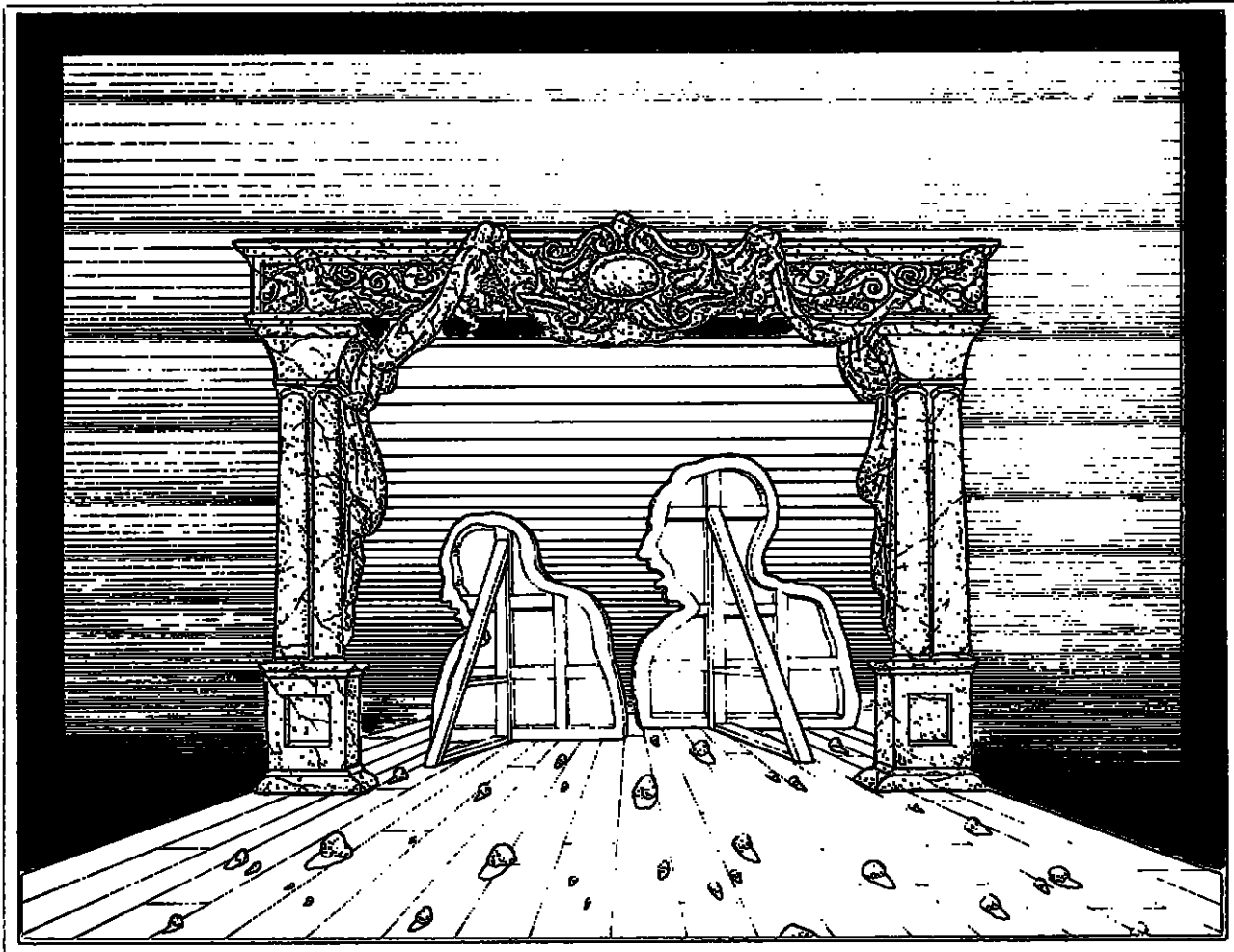


# BOOKS *etc.* CANADA

a national review of books

APRIL, 1977



## THE STATE OF PLAYS

Fighting arbitrary  
**CENSORSHIP**  
in Canada

The best  
**FIRST NOVELS**  
in 1976

Plus Laurence on Blais, Woodcock on the DCB,  
and Schroeder on Godfrey

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Artist David Annesley, 33, died in a tragic drowning accident in February while on holiday in Texas; his fine caricatures have often appeared in these pages and in those of *The New Yorker*, among many other magazines, and he will be missed not only for his talent but also for his glorious humanity. Bruce Bailey is a Montreal writer and broadcaster. Doris Cowan is the playwright-in-residence at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre this year. Howard Engel is a CBC-Radio producer, a harassed tribe these days. Forster Freed is the managing editor of *Canadian Theatre Review*. Peter Harcourt teaches film at York University. Tom Hendry is a Toronto playwright and director. Nick Hobart is the cartoon editor of *The Canadian Review*. John Hofsess is a Hamilton, Ont., freelancer and organizer of the Stand Up For John Damien Fund. Margaret Laurence is a novelist living near Lakefield, Ont., and was recently discovered by that area's Board of Education. Ernest E. Long was Secretary of the General Council of the United Church of Canada from 1954 to 1972. George Melnyk is the editor

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# REAPING THEIR PROMISE

We have two winners of our award for first novels — and the judges explain why

NOVELS ARE THE creative core of any country's literature. They tell us who we are. In that sense Canadians can no longer pretend to an identity problem. These days our creative core seems to be glowing with the intensity of a national nuclear reactor, radiating emotional heat and intellectual light across the land. It was not always so. Toronto poet and book editor Dennis Lee recalls that at the end of 1969 he consulted catalogues and directories to find out how many Canadian novels — of any sort — had been published that year. The grand total: a mere 25. When we announced the Books in Canada Award for First Novels last fall, we were aware that Canadian fiction is on a much healthier footing than it was when Lee made his count. But we didn't realize just how remarkable the transformation had been. We expected 15 titles, perhaps 20 at best, would qualify as first novels published in 1976. In the event we received nearly 40, and 15 of them were good enough to make our first short list.

With considerable difficulty, that list was whittled down to a more manageable nine. They were: *Eileen McCullough*, by Alice Boissoneau (Simon & Pierre); *The Falling World of Tristram Pocket*, by David Kellum (Tree Frog Press); *Middewatch* by Susan Kerlake (Oberon); *The Seventh Hexagram*, by Ian McLachlan (Macmillan); *Coming Through Slaughter*, by Michael Ondaatje (House of Anansi); *Small Ceremonies*, by Carol Shields (McGraw-Hill Ryerson); *The Descent of Andrew McPherson*, by Mary Soderstrom (McGraw-Hill Ryerson); *André Tom MacGregor*, by Betty Wilson (Macmillan); and *The True Story of Ida Johnson* by Sharon Riis (Women's Press).

Four outside judges graciously consented to sit on this year's panel: freelance critic Anne Montagnes; bookseller David Stimpson, manager of the U of T bookstore; poet and novelist David Helwig, who has been contributing a regular column on first novels to these pages; and Dennis Lee. Managing Editor Peter Such, who is also a poet and novelist, represented *Books in Canada* on the panel. At Lee's urging, his fellow judges carefully considered a possible conflict of interest on his part; he was consulting editor with Macmillan during the first 10 months of 1976. But when it was determined that he had no financial stake in either of the two Macmillan books on the final short list, it was agreed that his undoubtedly objective opinion was too valuable to lose.

The judges were unanimous in expressing high praise and admiration for all the novels on the list. It was felt that almost every one of them could have been a winner in another year. Their main difficulty was in deciding whether to award promise or accomplishment. Eventually, after recourse to a points system produced a tie, they voted to split the award this year. Thus we are pleased to announce that the winners of the Books in Canada Award for First

Novels in 1976 are *Coming Through Slaughter* and *The Seventh Hexagram*. Michael Ondaatje and Ian McLachlan will each be presented formally with cheques for \$500 at the Canadian Booksellers Association convention in Toronto in June.

We asked the judges to comment on the books under review and explain the reasoning behind their choices. Here are those comments:

**Anne Montagnes:** My choice, *The Seventh Hexagram*, amazes me — a thriller without artistic pretensions. Where it triumphs is in large humanity and intellectual resonance beyond its entertaining thrills. It totally lacks the hesitations, flashes of brilliance, and private beefs of a normal first novel. McLachlan turns concepts into characters, chiselling in telling idiosyncracies till they move in three dimensions.

If *The Seventh Hexagram* had stumbled anywhere I might have nominated *Eileen McCullough*. Alice Boissoneau too enlarges something universal in distant experience, only less accessibly.

I would have infinitely preferred to nominate *The True Story of Ida Johnson*, a superbly achieved experiment. *The Seventh Hexagram* is accomplished, written with the natural ease of British-educated people, while the narrow field of *True Story* makes it only spectacularly promising. Fifty years from now no one will be reading *The Seventh Hexagram*, but if Sharon Riis expands her horizon people will still be lapping up *True Story* as the first appearance of a brilliant, wise, sensitive talent.

**David Stimpson:** *Small Ceremonies* was over-praised by critics. It's well written and Carol Shields shows promise, but it was so safe. *Coming Through Slaughter* is difficult. It's a brilliant psychobiography of Buddy Bolden and I can't consider it a novel. *The Seventh Hexagram* is very professional. It would have been a better book if McLachlan had forgotten his academic background and used less Marxist/Maoist rhetoric. I suspect that he will be the most successful of the novelists under consideration. *Middewatch* was a delightful surprise, a haunting, beautifully written novel that could have been maudlin but wasn't. It was my nomination.

**David Helwig:** Each of the books on the short list gave me real pleasure. When I think back on them, they group themselves mostly in pairs. *Eileen McCullough* and *André Tom MacGregor* are documentary novels about potential victims, a Métis boy in the West and a poor working-class girl in the East. *The Seventh Hexagram* and *The Descent of Andrew McPherson* have less in common, but both are realistic novels with a sense of history. *Middewatch* and *The True Story of Ida Johnson* are fascinating freaks, stories that blend fantasy with solid detail and end by



Michael Ondaatje



Ian McLachlan

creating a reality of their own. Another highly intriguing and unusual novel that would come in the top half of my personal short list and will be reviewed next month is Keith Maillard's *Two Strand River*.

I have two second-place choices. Carol Shields' *Small Ceremonies* and David Kellum's *The Falling World of Tristram Pocket*. Carol Shields has managed to bring to Canada a kind of sophisticated, humane and charming novel that has not often been written here. David Kellum's historical fable is also outside our mainstream. It's an ambitious and powerful book.

My vote for winner goes to *Coming Through Slaughter* by Michael Ondaatje, the most fully achieved of the books. The only question that arises here is whether this is a novel, and if so, whether it is a first novel. I brooded over this and decided that *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. Ondaatje's previous partly prose book, probably isn't a novel and that *Coming Through Slaughter* probably is.

Peter Such: "You will find that you ask questions of yourself if you've gotten hold of a book with soul. Books without soul provide answers continually, and no questions. The surest clue is that they are dull. . . . So goes one of the many lessons to the hero of David Kellum's *The Falling World of Tristram Pocket*. A conservative book somewhat in the tradition of *Sartor Resartus*, but one you will likely finish and muse over. Not the prize-winner, though, for me.

All of these books are flawed, but most have souls. Strangely the exceptions are the most crafty: Sharon Riis' *True Story of Ida Johnson*, for instance, with its eerie echoes of middle 1960s Ohio State creative-writing classes. Sorry. I can't pretend the sophistication to tune in to the sensibility of heroines who chop up babies and leave them burning, even though I'm artfully manipulated to believe that maybe it ain't true. And the other "wild child" story, Susan Kerslake's pastoral, leaves me as cold and uncaring.

Eileen McCullough has guts and is real but should have been a short story. The *Descent of Andrew McPherson* has a self-conscious and amateur quality. *Small Ceremonies*, with its nice middle-class details, is unfortunately too aptly titled. And that leaves us with *The Seventh Hexagram*, a soul-book but falling between two stools, too consciously catering, as much English fiction these days, to the appetite for exotica from the last remaining outposts of Empire. I'd like to see what Ian does with his next book once he's dug in here.

Finally, the two I liked best: *André Torn MacGregor* by Betty Wilson, an honest attention-grabbing document of a young Métis making his way in Edmonton but suffering from a too-easy happy ending; and, my choice, *Coming Through Slaughter* by well-known poet Michael Ondaatje. Strangely, this Ceylonese-born writer's documentary novel of a New Orleans jazzman is the most Canadian of them all, in form, style, perception, sensibility: that ability to enter the raw material, like the Eskimo carver, and find the spirit

4 Books in Canada, April, 1977

that dwells in there, a reshaping of real lives and real myths into one's own blood and bone. He's done this before, of course, with *Billy The Kid*, in left-handed poems; but in this book Ondaatje has got, as they used to say of the best lip-men, that indefinable "it" where everything, like life, is process, coming into and out of the cars, the brains, and the balls in the tips of the fingers.

Dennis Lee: The quality of production of first novels, if this batch is any indication, is quite impressive. The books are generally a pleasure to handle and read.

I can't say the same for the editorial work on them. A first novel almost by definition is going to be unsatisfactory in some respects; publishers are taking on an author, in most cases, rather than publishing a book. But that means they should be prepared to spend an unusual amount of time and competence on a first-book author, 'both for the author's sake and for the sake of the reader who decides to take a chance with such a book. A good number of these books don't bear the marks of such painstaking. The Soderstrom, for instance, suffers from tinniness of ear on the author's part, which shouldn't have gotten past an editor. The same goes for the first half of the Boissoneau, which is often strong. The Riis has an immensely exciting beginning but the last third of it peters out in an inexcusable fashion. The end of the Kerslake is far too abrupt and tying-end+ together. . . .

It seems to me that *Coming Through Slaughter* is the only book among the nine — indeed, among the great majority of novels published anywhere in any span of time — to extend and revalue the matter of fiction. And it seems to me to achieve what it sketches out as its terrain with a sure-footedness and imaginative excellence that is only sporadically approached in the other books (vis-a-vis their terrain). This is not to say *Slaughter's* preoccupations are the only legitimate ones for a fiction-writer now, of course. But the books have to be judged in comparative terms: in terms of the importance of what each sets out to do, and in terms of how well each accomplishes its self-defined chore.

I think, that Ondaatje carries the "portrait of the artist" theme, which has energized much of the century's best fiction, into a domain that is still novel: that is, the artist as the man who has managed to escape art to manage authenticity, and finds that he can much it neither in art nor outside it. Without going into a lot of details, that seems to me to stay in much with the historic development of the form, and to extend it, in a way that corresponds with the lived necessities of our era. None of the other competing books manages that. The best of the others — to my mind, McLachlan's — is in no way a wrestle with the kind of book, that it is. (Except, perhaps, as a statement of the difficulty in accepting the myths that have normally charged such books; which is not, come to think of it, a small achievement; but Ondaatje's book is vastly more ambitious in this respect.) The only real competition in this area, the ambition of the book's self-defined task: comes for me from the Riis; but impressive as it is in voice, it is a far less achieved outing than *Slaughter*.

I also find Ondaatje's wrestle with the medium of telling a story — with document! random fact, and anecdote that preserves its own fortuitousness without flying off into centre-less happenstance, and an accumulation of viewpoint, mode, etc., — by far the most vital technically. Other writers are flirting with this, pushing their way gingerly into the territory; Ondaatje is there, and making things happen which are only opened up as speculative possibilities by other books — Shields, McLachlan, etc. Again, this is not to quarrel with the Grand Old Conventions of the traditional novel — as in Wilson, Soderstrom, and even (in a vintage way) Kellum. But those writers seem to me generally to handle their traditional, and hence ostensibly more reliable medium much more shakily than Ondaatje does his new, surprising, and uncharted medium. □

# WHO WAS NATHAN BANGS?

The DCB can't answer that question even if it doesn't always fulfil the fine art of biography

in form style perception sensibility: that ability to enter medium much more shakily than Ondaatje does his new.

by George Woodcock

**Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume IX, 1861-70**, general editor **Frances G. Halpenny**, U of T Press, 967 Pages. \$25 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 3320 2).

NOBODY NORMALLY reads a dictionary of biography, any more than he reads an encyclopedia; he refers to it, and, if there is nothing else around to fill in the time he may dip into it. But reading it from cover to cover the way one reads an ordinary book needs an unusual kind of mind, and I do not possess it, though I confess as a small boy to getting all the way from Aardvark to Ichthyosaurus in the old leather-backed *Chambers' Encyclopedia*. So, as a reviewer, I have been inclined to follow, though with somewhat more concentrated application, the process which the ordinary possessor of this new volume of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* would be likely to apply. I began by dipping deeply where my interests were greatest — lives of such people as Thomas Chandler **Haliburton**, **John Strachan**, **William Lyon Mackenzie**, **Lord Elgin**, "Bear" **Ellice**, **Wolfred Nelson**. And then I did a fairly thorough skim-through — it took me nearly a week — with enough attention to catch anything that seemed especially interesting or curious.

As I did all this I was aware of the importance of the special decade — 1861 to 1870 — that the volume represents, though one has to be cautious here, for two reasons. First, despite the liking of impressionistic historians like myself for using decades in an almost emblematic way ("The Thirties," "The Sixties"), it is rare that a period so short is really a phase in history with its proper birth, development, and end. Second, each dictionary volume refers only to the people who died in that period, not necessarily to those who flourished then. Thus in this volume we have **William Lyon Mackenzie**, whose heyday was long past by the time he died; yet there are others whose decade of destiny this indubitably was — such as **Amor de Cosmos** — but who died obscurely at a later time and so are not included.

Still, there is a special importance in Canadian history in the decade of **Confederation**, and one is aware of it skimming through this volume of short **Lives**, even though only one of the leading Fathers, **D'Arcy McGee**, is present (as is **Patrick James Whelan**, who was hanged for killing him and who uttered on the day of his sentencing, as **T. P. Slattery** reminds us, one of the most moving statements of the decade: "Now I am held to be a black assassin. And my blood runs cold. But I am innocent. I never took that man's blood"). Canada as we know it began to take shape then, and the fact is evident even in this collection of people who merely died during the period, for here we have all parts of present Canada, the last to be settled as well as the earliest.

Perhaps it is all most poignantly represented in **W. Kaye Lamb's** line piece on **Simon Fraser**, who comes in Canada

at the age of eight as a Loyalist child, settles with his mother in Quebec, joins the Northwest Company, pioneers settlement west of the Rockies by establishing the first fur-trading forts in **New Caledonia**, explores the Fraser River to the sea, is involved at **Fort William** in the great feud with **Lord Selkirk** and is arrested over it, serves on the government side during the rebellions of 1837-38 (whose participants are thick among the biographees in this volume) and dies in 1862 as an unprosperous landowner and mill-operator in Canada West. Even more characteristic of Canada at that time than **Fraser's** life was that his achievements were virtually ignored and unrewarded in his lifetime, for the present was then too urgent for people to spend much time remembering the past. Thus one of the most important of the explorers to chart the physical lines of Canadian union did not even have a marker on his grave until nearly 60 years after his death.

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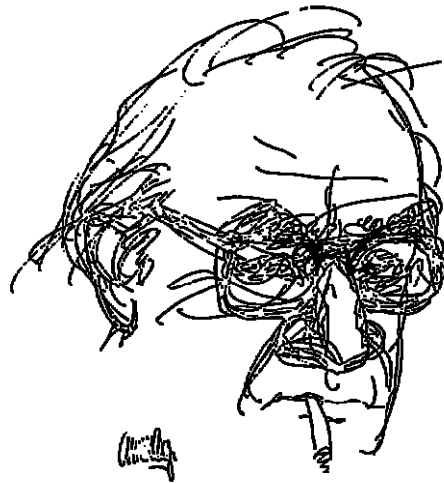
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George Woodcock

As I made my way through the *DCB* my ear responded to the strange thunder of the names, the grand biblical or classical appellations that the fathers of the men who died at this time had so often given their children: Philander Smith, the Methodist; Absalom Shade the merchant; Nathan Bangs the preacher, and, my favourites, George Jehoshaphat Mountain, the bishop who died with the word "Labrador" on his lips, and Melchior-Alphonse D'Irumberry de Salaberry, soldier son of the man who defeated the Americans at Châteauguay in the War of 1812.

But if my ear resonated to the names, my eye noted the claims that the name-holders had to fame and, immediately recognized how different, in the kind of people it will have to present, the *DCB* for 1961 to 1970 will be from the volume for a century before. The deaths of the 1860s include, to begin with, a veritable host of priests and preachers. Some of these persons, it is true, are included because they were teachers or even crypto-politicians rather than because of their religious vocations. Still, their presence in such large numbers indicates how vastly more important organized religion was in that time than it is in ours (even though Matthew Arnold was just then lamenting the ebbing of the Sea of Faith), and how in our century — and especially in Quebec, which provides so many statesman-priests for this volume of the *DCB* — social and even political power has shifted away from the churches.

In terms of politicians the two decades, a century apart, would be fairly well balanced; and in journalists too, for the power of the press in the formative decades that led up to Confederation was perhaps even greater than it is today, when other media have taken so much of its place. And there are, in the *DCB* for 1861-1870, a vast number of people known as "office-holders," a convenient way of describing those somewhat more interesting ancestors of our latter-day civil servants who owed their positions to patronage rather than to mere bureaucratic survival; career civil savants hardly existed in those less-governed days and one wonders if the World has really been improved by their presence.

Priesthood, politics, and patronage — all of them flourished then. But hardly poetry or its equivalents. As a writer looking for other members of my tribe, I could not help being impressed by the remarkably few authors or painters or musicians of any significance who died during the 1860s in Canada. There was of course D'Arcy McGee, but as a poet he was negligible, and one can say little better for Oliver Goldsmith the Younger. There was Julia Beckwith, who was the first Canadian-born author to publish a novel — St. Ursula's *Convent*, or *the Nun of Canada* — and a dreadful piece of shoddy romanticism awaits anyone who dares to read it. There was Samuel Strickland, the much

over-shadowed brother of Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Traill; and there was François-Xavier Garneau, who for all his weaknesses gave Quebec a sense of its own history and who provided separatism with its earliest intellectual foundation. But above them all, Thomas Chandler Haliburton stands out like a solitary if somewhat seedy giant, very well served in Fred Cogswell's excellent long biography, in which Haliburton's literary career is balanced against his public service. his idiosyncrasies are sympathetically noted, and his international reputation in the 19th century (greater than that of any Canadian writer since-according to Cogswell — with the possible exception of Leacock) is demonstrated, which will perhaps surprise those who are used to his being damned with hint praise in CanLit courses. No painter of real interest died in the 1860s, nor any good musician. though there were some interesting furniture makers.

Turning from the biographees, I must say something about the biographers. since I do not think the editors have been entirely wise in their choices. Among the 300 or so contributors to this volume of the DCB only two - A. G. Bailey and Fred Cogswell — have any standing in the literary world outside the academies. and even they are not professional men of letters. Even more disturbing, the vast majority of the contributors are not in fact biographers by vocation. but historians and archivists.

Yet biography is an art on its own, and an exacting one, with criteria that are quite distinct from those of history. The historian seeks to show what a man did in his context of time and place. The biographer seeks to show what a man was, and how thii led him to what he did. Unfortunately most of the contributors to this volume have been content to let themselves be governed by the historical rather than the biographical aim, and so we have a great many exact but arid accounts of men's (and all too rarely, women's) overt actions within a certain social and political context, and very little attempt to encounter their inner selves, or for that matter to describe their external looks.

Indeed, a subject in one of these biographical essays is allowed to speak for himself so seldom that when this happens, as in the case of Patrick James Whelan, or someone else is allowed to make a remark about a biographee, as when Dr. Cheadle said of John Boles Gaggin (an early British Colombian magistrate discussed by Domthy Blakey Smith) that " 'The Judge' turned out to be a whale for a drink." we are suddenly startled to be in the presence of a human being who was actually once alive, just as we are when William R. Sampson quotes Governor Simpson on the HBC man John Work — "A queer looking fellow. of Clownish Manners and address, indeed there is a good deal of simplicity approaching to idiocy in his appearance, he is nevertheless a Shrewd Sensible Man, and not deficient in firmness when necessary." But such moments are rare enough to be noticed, which they would not be if the DCB were written by real biographers.

Do not let that deter you from considering the DCB as a good compendium of facts; in almost every case the necessary details are there, and usually intelligently arranged, so that as a reference book on this level the dictionary cannot be faulted. But one always longs for something in a work of this kind that goes beyond the basic recounting of facts, and some of the pieces in the DCB are in fact long enough to give a scope for imaginative analysis that is not always exploited. If I have any advice for the editors in planning their future volumes it can be summed up in two maxims: all historians do not possess the biographical eye; all biographers are not to be found in universities or archives. One hopes that as the DCB moves on through later volumes towards the present age, more poets will be allowed to write about poets and even about politicians. I would like to see Al Purdy casting a shrewd eye on Sir John A. Macdonald. □

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# OUR OLD ENEMY

by Ian Young

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A FEW YEARS ago, the Metro Toronto Morality Squad put a "umber of Toronto booksellers out of business by a campaign of systematic harassment. Large quantities of stock were periodically confiscated, resulting in substantial losses in revenue. Clerks were repeatedly arrested and led from stores in handcuffs, eventually making it impossible for the store owners to obtain staff. As a result, the stores were forced either to close (and several did) or to stock only those titles approved by the police.

It is significant that no conviction in a court of law was ever needed to make the bookstores toe the line. Irving Layton taking the witness box to testify on the merits of the confiscated books' was, ultimately, irrelevant, for what destroyed the stores' independence was not convictions or legal penalties but police harassment, with all its attendant costs.

In Toronto, as in most of Canada, no bookstore can operate without approval and permission of the police: regardless of whether any of its books might legally be deemed "obscene." This will remain the case as long as any obscenity law remains on the books, giving police the authority to harass any bookshop — or publisher — they cam to. The "handcuff cases" have not bee" repeated. Bookdealers, apparently, still know their place in Tomnto the Good. But there have been more recent instances of press censorship in this country, cases no less arbitrary or vindictive that have involved federal, provincial, and local authorities.

One of the most shocking displays of government vengeance against the supposedly free press, and one that went virtually unreported, was the case of Jacques Pelletier. Pelletier was the author and publisher of a French-language booklet highly critical of the former Liberal government in Quebec. Them was nothing seditious or libellous about the text; it merely expressed a radical and scornful attitude toward Premier Bourassa and his colleagues.

As a result, M. Pelletier was arrested and sentenced by a court in Hull to two months in prison for "failing to register copyright": he had neglected to send the requisite two copies of his publication to the National Library in Ottawa.

"I'm going to give you two months to think about this," said the judge. M. Pelletier drew the not unreasonable conclusion that the court was hying to dissuade him from publishing his longer book on the government's performance during the October Crisis. (He is not dissuaded; the book is to be published by a Montreal house later this year. And fortunately for both author and publisher, the members of Bourassa's cabinet are now seeking employment and are no longer in a position to chastise him.)

Of course, it is nudity and sexual activity, no matter how tastefully or sensibly rendered, that most often upset the authorities. The recent prosecution of the Macmillan com-



The forces of censors hip  
are rallying again. But  
where is the opposition'?

pany For distributing copies of the illustrated sex education book *Show Me* revealed Canadian attitudes at their most prudish and Philistine. To the publishers' credit, they refused to knuckle under, fought the ease in the courts, and won. Luckily, they had the finances to fight. Smaller enterprises, like the Canadian "gay liberation journal" *The Body Politic*, do not.

In the summer of 1975, *The Body Politic's* offices in Toronto were visited by a representative of the city's morality squad; the staffers were told that if they did not withdraw their current issue from sale, it would be confiscated from the bookstores and newsstands as "obscene." The ostensible reason was a few panels of a reprinted comic strip, "Harold Hedd," that showed two men making love, a strip already available in other, imported comics. As *The Body Politic* editorialized in its next issue:

*There was a gnawing feeling of cowardice and capitulation to unofficial censorship; but, simultaneously, there were anxieties over both personal well-being and imminent threat of disruption of the work of the paper if a lengthy and costly court case were commenced. After calculating the dangers that non-compliance seemed to entail, our room for manoeuvre was about as wide as a cell in the Don Jail.*

Criminal charges would almost certainly have been laid against everyone on the *Body Politic* collective.

When the BP workers pressed for clarification of what the police deem obscene, "criteria were vague, save . . . for [the act of] fellatio. . . . 'You can't show it, you can't write about it, you can't describe it.'" So Harold Hedd and his friends were forced out of the bookstores and off the newsstands, without any court judgement on their alleged obscenity.

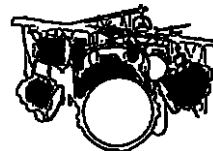
Gay publications have always been singled out for special scrutiny by Canadian authorities. Issues of a number of

One of the most shocking displays of government vengeance against the supposedly free press, and one that went virtually unreported, was the case of Jacques Pelletier.

glossy, commercial U.S. magazines aimed at gay men have been stopped at the border by Customs, though an equivalent acreage of male flesh is often shown in such regularly available periodicals as *After Dark* and *Viva*, which are, at least officially, not aimed at gays.

As the Pelletier case shows, it is not always sex that stimulates the Canadian censorious reflex. Eleanor Jacobson's book *Bended Elbow* is a controversial polemic on the situation of Indians and the relationship between

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Indians and non-Indians in Kenora, Ont. When a Halifax book distributor from the H. H. Marshall company routinely ordered 200 copies of *Bended Elbow*, he was approached by Mr. George McCurdy, director of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, and advised to "observe the spirit of the law" by withdrawing all copies from sale.

So we have in Nova Scotia the Orwellian spectacle of a book being effectively banned by the Human Rights Commission! The censor (official title: Human Rights Commissioner) has been unavailable for comment.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission also reacted to *Bended Elbow* and even more discreetly, to judge from one incident. Toronto's business newspaper, *The Financial Post*, commissioned a freelance writer to review the book, a man who had published several previous pieces in the paper and who was being considered for additional feature assignments. Shortly after the review appeared, offering some favourable as well as unfavourable remarks, the editor of *The Financial Post* was honoured by a visit from Tom Symons, chairman of the Human Rights Commission. Mr. Symons expressed the opinion that this was not the sort of piece that should be appearing in *The Post*, and furthermore that this was not the sort of writer that should be employed by *The Post*. *The Financial Post* has neither published nor requested any work from the writer since.

One wonders how many similar incidents have occurred and how much time is spent by commission officials interfering with the sale of books and preventing our-of-favour writers from obtaining work.

Ontario is also currently burdened with a crusading Attorney-General, Roy McMurtry. His latest campaign, conducted between prosecuting brawling hockey players and inveighing against the evils of body rub, has been directed at a number of magazines. He began with *Playboy*, *Hustler*, and the other "men's" mags that feature a mixture of pmse and naked women. The main result of this has been the installation on magazine racks all over the province of little arborite shields, to protect the public's gaze from the offensive lower halves of these publications. (Often as not, the bottoms hidden are those of *Maclean's* and *Better Homes and Gardens*.)

But McMurtry's most recent victim is the U.S. magazine *High Times*, which reports on drug usage (marijuana, cocaine, and such). McMurtry wants the magazine banned, has ordered an "investigation" of it and dispatched the Ontario Provincial Police to seize copies from distributors. At the same time, Customs and Excise prevented copies from coming into Canada, claiming the magazine "counselled drug use" and was therefore "immoral."

The magazine's editor, David Fenton, argues that *High*

## EMILY CARR



*Neighbours in Victoria thought her eccentric, tenants thought her a mean landlady, critics patronized her, but her paintings of West Coast Indian life and rain forests—the best of them done in her sixties, after a long personal struggle—are major landmarks in Canadian art.*

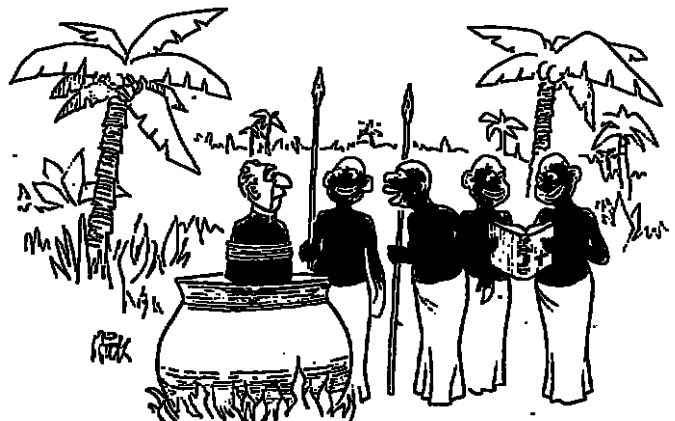
The life of Emily Carr is described in Charles Taylor's new book, *SIX JOURNEYS: A CANADIAN PATTERN*, along with the lives of Brig & James Sutherland Brown, Bishop William White, diplomat Herbert Norman, and writers James Houston and Scott Symons.

*SIX JOURNEYS* gives us biographies of six Canadians who went against the grain of their society and found their sustaining vision in other cultures. Through the experience of these six, Taylor traces the outlines of a Canadian pattern of living, relevant to all of us.

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SIX JOURNEYS:  
A CANADIAN PATTERN

Books in Canada, April, 1977



"We like that bit about man not living  
by bread alone."

**Times does not encourage drug use:**

We reflect it and report it; we feel this is the only place where young people can get accurate information about drugs. They can't get it at school. All they get there is scare stories.

The magazine has never been prosecuted in the U.S., where an official of the Drug Enforcement Agency has described it as "accurate and petty objective... Their statistics are certainly accurate because most of them come from us."

Nevertheless, the Conservative government seems determined to suppress *High Times* in Ontario. "There's no doubt that a number of people have been offended by this publication," says McMurtry, to justify his clampdown. Think about that one! The campaign against *High Times* was begun by MPP Mel Swart of the NDP, a party that from time to time poses as an upholder of freedom of the press. Mr. Swart has called for a government screening agency to supervise all publications.

I have had my own run-ins with Customs and Excise over the quantity of books, newspapers, and magazines the Post Office delivers to my door, including many items with such suspicious names as *Anarchy*, *Fag Rag*, *Revolt*, and *The League of Canadian Poets Newsletter*. A few months ago, my home was visited by RCMP officers who confiscated several books, including one by Nietzsche and one on the Bloomsbury Group, both purchased in Montreal. A talk with one of the higher-placed Customs officials in Toronto impressed on me that it is my duty as a citizen to take in his department every package delivered to my door from outside Canada (packages that presumably have already passed through Customs) and to ask "whether there is duty to be paid." In other words, I must ask them to scrutinize my mail. If I do not do this, I was warned, I can be convicted of smuggling. I continue to sneak my mail onto my shelves like a common criminal; so far no charges have been laid, though I've noticed more packages have been arriving empty lately.

The other and perhaps more serious problem is the almost total apathy on the part of writers, publishers, and booksellers, their collective silence in the face of arbitrary and punitive measures against the press.

There are two problems here, and I'm not sure which one outrages me more. One is the gradually growing press censorship by various branches of government, including the misuse of relatively obscure and innocuous laws to prosecute and intimidate political dissenters. The other and perhaps more serious problem is the almost total apathy on the part of writers, publishers, and booksellers, their collective silence in the face of arbitrary and punitive measures against the press.

Among the Public in general, there is plenty of support for censorship—most recently from the pressure group led by Archbishop Pocock — but where, outside the small Canadian Civil Liberties Association, is the opposition? Particularly, when will Canadian writers and publishers and their professional association speak up as loudly for freedom as they do for their Canada Council grants, their public lending tight, their Canadian content quotas, and other monetarily self-serving matters?

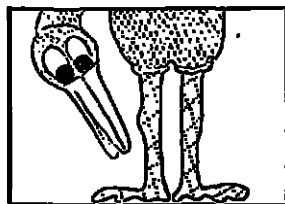
Perhaps it is time for an organization solely to defend freedom of speech, freedom to read, freedom of the press. It might make a difference in the direction of legislation and law enforcement in this country in the immediate future — especially if it had strong support from writers, newspaper and magazine people, booksellers, and publishers.

But I can't help wondering if "more than a handful really give a damn."



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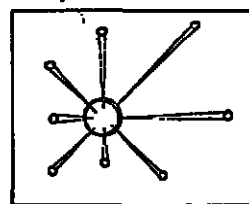
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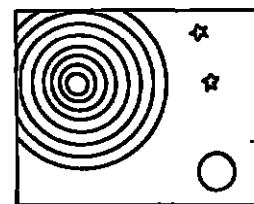


**Toko**



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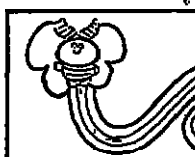
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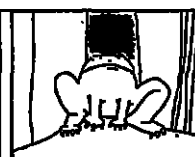
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 (New York Times Best Illustrated Book 1974)

# FREQUENT HIRSCHS

Some reflections on TV drama after the third year of the CBC renaissance

by Peter Harcourt

Periodical literature is a huge open mouth which has to be fed — a vessel of immense capacity which has to be filled. It is like a regular train which starts at an advertised hour, but which is free to start only if every seat be occupied. The seats are many, the train is ponderously long, and hence the manufacture of dummies for the seasons when there are not passengers enough.

WHAT HENRY JAMES said about journalism in 1891 is even more true of television in 1977. Television is also a huge mouth that has to be fed. The screen must never be empty, the image rarely quiet. A constant agitation is required lest the viewer switch off or, even worse, switch over.

In this way, television is the enemy of contemplation. It is the enemy of thought. In its commitment to entertainment-to-distracting viewers effortlessly by presenting them with endless variations on familiar themes — its function is always to reassure. Archie Bunker may be bigoted, the police shows violent, the national news depressing; but that doesn't trouble us. The fact that these shows appear at the same time each week on the expected channel creates within the viewer a feeling of security. The world may be troubled but it is not random. Somewhere there is a force lending order to our universe.

But this mode of thinking is too Olympian to be helpful. If we climb down from the heights of sociological speculation, we might be amazed to find that some people are actually trying to do something with this most discouraging of popular media — discouraging because so unalterable in its basic anodynous thrust. Yet as part of our world, television has more than one function to perform in that world. Anaesthetizing in the long term though the fact of television may be, in the short term individual acts of television practice can still startle us or distress us — if we choose to see them that way.

In these ways CBC-TV is important — or should be important. As our  
12 Books in Canada, April, 1977

national network, it has the power to reach out across the many solitudes of Canada and to show us to one another, in our similarities and differences. It has the power. But does it have the courage? Is it prepared to stand up against the American-dominated interests of Big Business to take the necessary risks — and after that, to be proud of them, to make sure that we know about them?

Three years ago, John Hirsch was brought in to the CBC to revitalize television drama; and whatever we think about individual programs, I think we must agree that he has certainly done that. Whether our interests lie with sitcoms such as *King of Kensington* or with such high-brow specials as *Baptizing* or *The First Night of Pygmalion*, we have to admit that this kind of programming, with the present degree of regularity, did not exist in Canada before Hirsch arrived on the scene. But how innovative has CBGTV drama been? Whom has it reached? What risks has it run?

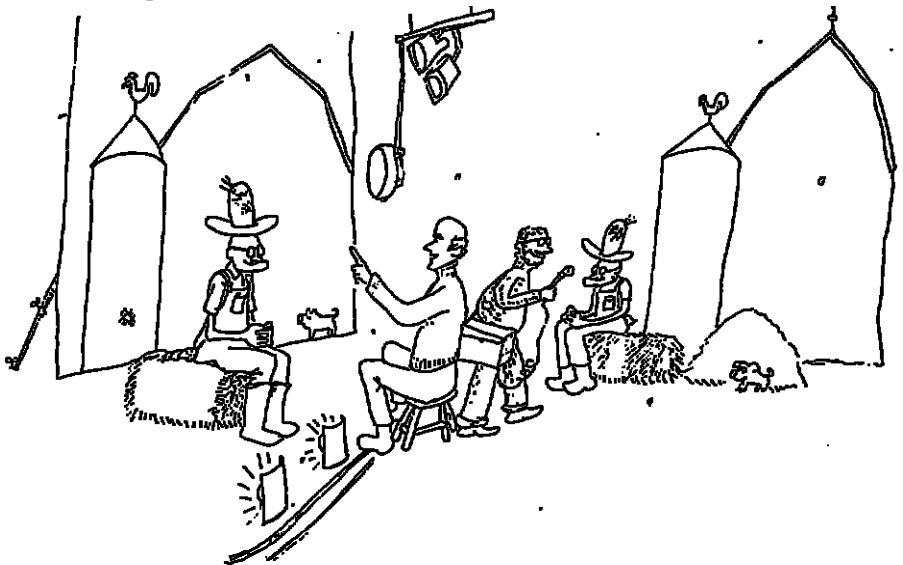
On the popular level, a sitcom is, by definition, the most conventional of television experiences: in format, it is

the most predictable; inaction, it is most perennially the same. People who watch sitcoms partake in a sort of litany, a shared rehearsal of familiar characters in familiar situations.

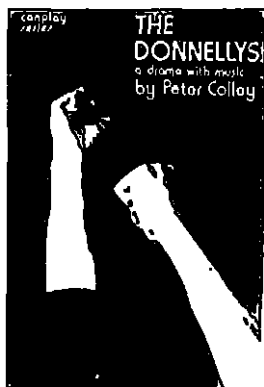
*King of Kensington* is no exception. But it's valuable. I believe, because it places its conventionalized characters within the Toronto setting, allowing it to comment indirectly on some of the situations that Canadians encounter day by day — situations you won't find presented in *Happy Days* or *Mary Tyler Moore*. And sometimes, even such a conventional show has taken a few risks.

I remember a program last season about a young man who strays into King's ebullient household and wants to kill himself. Of course, the blowy low-of-life that the whole family projects overcame the young man's gloom and restored his faith in life. But this particular show, broadcast on Christmas day, recognized that for many people, living alone or estranged from their families, Christmas is the most desperately lonely moment of the year.

Another popular series that the Hirsch team has initiated is the Sunday night



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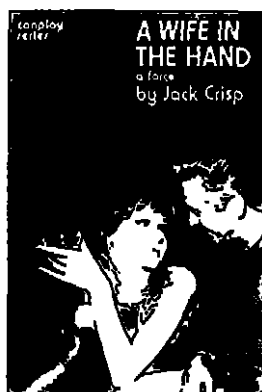


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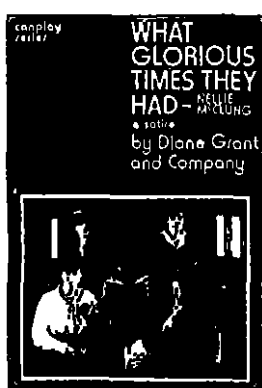


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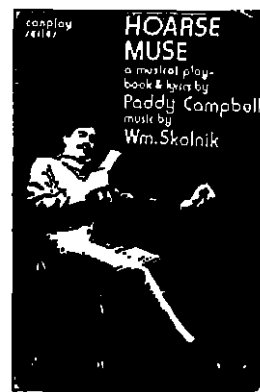


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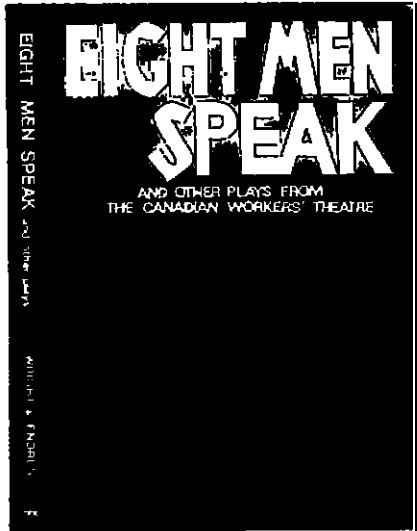
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police series called *Side Street*. Less violent than *Kojak*, more sympathetic than even *The Streets of San Francisco*, this series has repeatedly offered us programs of distinction. Like the classic gangster film of yesteryear, police shows are important because they allow a dramatization of the tensions and anonymity of big-city life. These CBC shows have been exceptional in that they have consistently challenged our ideas about the assumed boundaries between right and wrong.

For example: last year in "Line of Duty," a show written by *Lyal Brown* and directed by *Peter Carter*, the wife of a prominent NDP candidate wrongly accuses Sergeant Olsen of violence against her, simply because she cannot confide her personal difficulties to her husband. Lies compound lies, involving other people. In this way, the show acknowledges the repressed hypocrisies upon which, so often, middle-class respectability is based.

During the past three years, CBC-TV drama has offered us shows involving various degrees of seriousness, all of which have tried to investigate the actual world we live in. Here *To Stay*, the recently completed ethnic series, attempted to give us some sense of the various sub-cultures which make up our nation; and *For The Record*, a series of "docudramas" just finishing its second season, has consistently investigated moral and political problems that are part of our lives.

*For The Record* has drawn upon the writing talents of *Michael Mercer*, *Rudy Wiebe*, *Don Bailey*, and *Ralph Thomas*; and it has given work to distinguished directors from both Quebec and English Canada — to *Francis Mankiewicz*, *Peter Pearson*, *Gilles Carle*, *Donald Haldane*, and *Claude Jutra*. Were there space to do so, I think I could argue that such programs as "What We Have Here is a People Problem," "The Insurance Man from Ingersoll," "A Thousand Moons," and "Dream Speaker" are as distinguished as anything we can see on North American television. But how many people have seen these shows? How many Canadians actually take pride in this achievement?

If fewer do than ought to, I think it is partly the fault of inadequate publicity. But it is also partly the fault of television itself. While the experience of television basically exists to drug us, the best of CBC drama asks us for a degree of increased attention which most of us in North America aren't accustomed to give to that little coloured monster, the television screen.

Last season, *Allan King* directed *Six War Years*, a program drawn from *Barry Broadfoot's* oral history of the Second World War. Close-ups of faces in colour speaking directly to us were superimposed over black-and-white

newsreel footage, and a handful of actors played out a variety of parts. In this way, *King* managed to produce what we could call a piece of epic television — one of the most original hours I have ever seen on TV.

But how can such a program find its audience within the one-shot programming policy of North American television? Innovation requires time for assimilation. Viewers have to adjust their attitudes. Like so much television, *Six War Years* simply came and went. Distinguished though many of the programs are, CBC drama will have to re-think both its publicity and programming policies if these shows are to be as effective as I think they could be.

In a country more supportive of its own achievement, I could be more critical of some of these programs. But over all, I think the achievement is enormous and scarcely recognized as such. Yet if we care about our country and about its culture, it seems to me that we have to care about the CBC. □

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## Barn, Bolts, and Tremblay

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**The Farm Show.** by *Theatre Passe Muraille*, *Coach House Press*, 107 pages. \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88910 188 4).  
**Buffalo Jump.** *Red Emma* and *Gabe*, by *Carol Bolt*; *Playwrights Co-op*. 184 pages, \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 919834 06 x).  
**Bonjour, la, bonjour,** by *Michel Tremblay*, *Talonbooks*, 63 pages, \$3.50 paper (ISBN 0 88922 091 3).

By DORIS COWAN

FIRST, *The Farm Show*. This famous Theatre Passe Muraille production began in 1972 near Clinton, Ont. A group of actors spent the summer there investigating the life of a small farming community; the idea, in director *Paul Thompson's* words, was "to make a play of what we could see and learn." The result was an evening of scenes, satires, songs, and monologues, taken directly from life and staged with a brilliant and joyful inventiveness. The stories are true; the characters are real; not even the names have been changed. The show was first performed in a barn for an audience of its subjects. The actor-authors were understandably nervous; did people really want to see themselves literally made into theatre? As it turned out, in this case they did. They were delighted, and with good reason: the play presents an entertaining, moving, and very sympathetic picture of their lives.

There are only six odors, but we hear an entire community speaking: we see it working, joking, arguing, gossiping — in the fields, the kitchen, the garden, at a township council meeting, an auction barn, the

church. a dance. (Theatre Passe Muraille likes to translate its name as Theatre Without Walls.) A relaxed intimacy is established at the very beginning, the actors speak directly to the audience as often as they do to each other, and the action slows down only for the longer solo pieces. These offer some of the company's best work (at least of the kind that the printed word can convey). For example, there is Amos's portrait of Jean Lobb, taking the entire audience into her confidence as she shows her daughter's wedding picture (in a photograph album lent to the production by the real Jean Lobb). Or there is David Fox as Les Jarvis, taking us on a tour of his "duck pond": "Well, I call it my duck pond: they call it my sanctuary." The text was prepared for publication by Ted Johns, one of the founding members of the *Farm Show*, though not, in the beginning, one of the actors; these were, besides the two mentioned above, Anne Anglin, Miles potter, Fina MacDonnell, and Al Jones.

Theatre Passe Muraille also had a hand in the creation of *Buffalo Jump*, by Carol Bolt. The author worked with the improvisations of a company of actors to dramatize the story of the On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot of 1935. The collaborative method, with its mixture of styles and points of view, here works less well. It all seems high-minded, well-intentioned, and murky. The events and issues are presented in a way that is mechanically logical but does not finally make emotional or dramatic sense. The other two plays published here, *Gabe* and *Red Emma*, are much better examples of what Carol Bolt can do.

She is prolific: 13 plays completed and produced since 1970. Most of them are built around historical characters — some well known, like Riel and Dumont, others obscure or perhaps once-famous, like Tom Longboat. Her best quality is her curiosity; it is a bright light on our history. She has found stories that fascinate her; that she thinks need telling, and her excitement and interest are contagious. This is the great virtue of her plays, but it brings its own problems. Her writing is forthright and colourful, but the tone is always cool; it is without deep feeling or conviction. Her characters express their feelings and beliefs bluntly, incisively, but too often it seems they do so only to make an effective exit or set up a joke. Darker emotions, as of anguish or doubt, are referred to but rarely expressed directly. She seems to avoid them. In consequence there is an unfinished feeling about her work, as if she had stopped before completing her thought.

In *Red Emma* this is a serious problem. If you are writing a play about Emma Goldman it is necessary to decide how you feel about anarchy as a political philosophy, not so as to convert us to your way of thinking, but simply to be clear. Bolt seems at first to sympathize with her anarchists' ideals and beliefs, though she romanticizes them. Then at the end of the play she abruptly withdrew her support, pointedly calling her young Emma "pure and line and gullible." It's not enough to object that this is simply one character speaking to another, it is also the playwright speaking to her audience, and the implicit message is too ambiguous to be a satisfying resolution to the arguments raised by the play; it seems indecisive rather than open-ended. Does she

mean to suggest that anarchy is hopeless and silly but very beautiful? Or that it is beautiful and noble and only thought hopeless by silly people?

There are similar problems with *Gabe*, the bat play of the three. Here we begin to get a sense that all this matters to her, tither than just being of anecdotal interest, but it is not sustained. Her tendency to leave her characters in the lurch is still there, and it's a pity. Her writing is witty, speedy, and charming, but without completeness of thought it cannot be memorable.

The third item on my list is *Bonjour, la, bonjour* by the Quebec playwright, Michel Tremblay. He is one of the best we have: he consistently creates vivid characters and instantly recognizable situations. But this is far from being an example of his best work. It is the story of a serious love affair between Serge and Nicole, who are brother and sister, but the relationship never seems real. The emotional focus of the play is in the strong, unexpressed love between Serge and his father. The affair with the sister seems arbitrarily chosen to represent all that a son can't speak of to his father, the secrets he can never bring himself to mention although he longs to have them known and accepted. This difficult relationship does create a few moments of genuine theatrical electricity: the father is a true and touching characterization. But dramatically the sister-lover is hardly there at all and Serge himself is evasively written, as if he were too touchy a subject to be treated with the rough clear-sighted affection Tremblay lavishes on his other characters. Altogether a shadowy, unsatisfactory piece of work, and worth taking note of only because it is Tremblay.

□

## Sweat shirts and mini-skirts

**Eight Men Speak and Other Plays**, edited by Richard Wright and Robin Endres, New Hogtown Press, 147 pages, \$4.50 paper (ISBN 0 919940 04 8).

**Women Write for Theatre: Volume 1**, 105 pages, \$3 paper (ISBN 0 88754 054 6) and **Volume III**, 101 pages, \$3 paper (ISBN 0 88754 050 3), edited by Madeline Thompson, Playwrights Co-op.

By JON REDFERN

THE FIRST of these three volumes is a raucous book noisy with shouts of protest and curses against capitalism, a collection of nine agitprop plays from the Canadian Workers' Theatre of the 1930s. They share a radical political end and a host of blatant titles like *Unity*, *Scientific Socialism*, *Eight Men Speak*, and for all their energy seem, now, rather quaint and distant. Yet they were once damned as contraband and have inspired editor Robin Endres to feel they can still arouse a few latent leftists.

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*Unity*, for instance: cartoon-like workers shout down dirty rich-boss-pigs with propaganda recitations about capitalist exploitation. Ryan then joins Frank Love, among others, to pool reform sentiments in *Eight Men Speak*: here everything turns toward a mock trial to lambaste the government and its anti-worker tactics. Tim Bock's near murder in the Kingston Pen pushes the plot forward, hot it is the mixing and mismatching of styles that now intrigues: realistic garden scenes with chatty ladies contrast to short sloganeering episodes and choral chants. The police banned the first Toronto performances of this play in 1933, put on by the Progressive Arts Club at the old Standard Theatre on Spadina Avenue. No theatre dared present the hot facts that Ryan and his buddies tried to make public.

On the other hand, there's poet Dorothy Livesay's quiet *Joe Derry*, a pantomime in seven scenes for child actors. The verse has the gentle charm of a jingle:

*Speed-up, speed-up, the cry grew wilder  
As gold "boom" days got fewer and fewer:  
The bosses threw out half their men  
and the rest worked twice as hard again.*

Prison reform, police skulduggery, walk-outs, evictions: the stuff of these skits hit hard and was never smooth or pretty. To excite the crowd to make social changes was the goal, even to elicit outrage or riot. These plays were performed on the picket lines and if they aren't literary jewels neither are they all lumpy proletarian snivels. Livesay's piece has a delicacy, like an iron butterfly. Actors in the mobile troupes that played these pieces had to shout the lines above the crowd, so writers wrote their words sparse and tough. After all, this kind of play is only a step up from soapbox ranting, its language and sentiment not far from evangelical oratory. Adorned with the hallmarks of Russian and American agitprop drama (slogans, mess choruses, short scenes, cardboard characters, litanies on bourgeois decadence), these plays show, nevertheless, a vital energy that editor Endres argues gave Canada its first consciously political and deliberately popular folk theatre.

In fact, Endres' level-headed introduction stresses two things: that these plays aren't just for the archive but can be seen as constantly pertinent works as long as capitalist social problems exist; and that as a part of an artistic movement that attracted artists and writers of calibre sincerely interested in improving society through a political manipulation and creation of drama. The get-up-and-tight optimism of these works is naive, true enough. But their writers had a mission that imbued the simple prose with stamina and a hit of glory. The brevity of these rabble-rousing skits is admirable if not always eloquent.

What is admirable about the plays in the two volumes of *Women Write for Theatre* is their shortness. All of them may have been written by women, but not all of them are writers. It is a relief they are short, despite some passion and a little polish. Editor Madeline Thompson concedes, warily, that a women's playwrighting competition was a kind of blind talent hunt. Volume I certainly has its quarry of such stumbling apprentices as Maimie Hamer and Helen Lustig, two ladies with redoubtable tiny talents. In *A* 16 Books in Canada, April, 1977

*Living Thing*, a title aptly mis-naming the play, Maimie and Helen try to portray middle-aged Jewish suburban angst with four women sitting and staring at a plant on a kitchen table. But it ends up maudlin; it shows none of the compassion or beauty, say, of Fredelle Maynard's portraits of Jewish life.

*Dinner Party* is Vie Sarossy's failed attempt to write absurdist comedy. But she does squeak out an endearing loony named Mama Griselda who fusses constantly about her dinner guests. Margaret Penman's *Wheelchair* exploits the violence of an old crippled woman harassed by two youths. Penman has created them es doll-witted, perhaps as a conscious display of autobiographical revelation. Her action is confused and her dialogue unplayable. Luckily, Volume III has the quiet loveliness of Aviva Revel's *Dispossessed*. Here is a sounder portrait of psychic despair and violence. A Family of three share a mutual loneliness. Ravel has reason and compassion and not just an overweening urge to write. Her characters are poignant, her prose exact and her experiments with litany-like verse enchant, even if they go on too long. She's not unlike Beverly Simons, which leads one to believe that the remaining volumes in this series may have future talents. □

Campbell's Hoarse *Muse*, Jack H. Crisp's *A Wife in the Hand*, Peter Colley's *The Donnellys*, Diane Grant's *What Glorious Times They Had* — Nellie McClung, and Beth McMaster's two children's plays. *Put*



*on the Spot* and *When Everybody Cares*, are diverse in theme yet united by their playwrights' concern for entertainment unsullied by complex ideas. They are not plays for those (including myself) who love theatre as an art of revelation or an art that worships human capacities. Nor will those who work in theatre to expand its spatial, temporal, or spiritual limitations find much substance here for their experiments. With the exception of *A Wife in the Hand*, they are simple, sometimes comic, and in the case of *The Donnellys* quite tragic portrayals of Canadian folk heroes. The children's plays are charming Fantasies with clear moral lessons. To include the vacuous copy of a Neil Simon-type farce, *A Wife in the Hand*, is a pity, but note misjudgement that warrants saying the whole volume has taken "popular" to read crass or dull-witted.

Peter Colley's *The Donnellys* and Diane Grant's *What Glorious Times...* are the most theatrically sophisticated in taking contentious themes and giving them imaginative and practical stage treatments. Colley uses a collage technique to capture the confusion, misinformation, conflict, and tragedy surrounding the story of the notorious Donnellys. In a way, his play is more honestly ambiguous about the Donnellys' terrorizing Biddulph Township than is the better-known *Donnellys Trilogy* by James Reaney. But Colley creates sympathy for the Donnellys in a vulgar manner through gory descriptions of their murder at the hands of vigilantes. Grant uses the same technique less successfully. As an agitprop drama, the theme of *What Glorious Times...* is not butchered but bluntly advanced. The problem is that the play has too many disjoint themes — including women's struggle for suffrage, the temperance movement, chauvinist men, honest men, chauvinist and dishonest government leaders — to come to any climax. As a result, it hurries too quickly to its concluding exposure of government corruption.

Although most of these plays contain songs (and some have musical scores avail-

## Six to make a revolution

Popular Performance Plays of Canada, Volume I (The Donnellys, by Peter Colley; What Glorious Times They Had — Nellie McClung, by Diane Grant; A Wife in the Hand, by Jack Crisp; Hoarse Muse, by Paddy Campbell; and Put on the Spot and When Everybody Cares, both by Beth McMaster), general editor Marian Wilson. Simon & Pierre, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88924 044 2), Individual plays each \$4.95 paper.

By BOYD NEIL

THIS COLLECTION has a provocative title. "Popular" is a distracting and evasive notion that often smacks of pretentiousness. It is nebulous enough to suggest either schlock violence and horror movies or a volume of theatre classics that have edified people through many decades. Regardless, it does allude to an assessment of a nation's cultural taste; that is, how many people have read the book or seen the production. Although Simon & Pierre's advertising makes the prosaic mistake of quoting production attendance figures in defence of their "popularity," general editor Marian Wilson's selection of plays for the volume suggests a keen sense of the son of plays that theatre-arts students, amateur-acting companies, and low-budget summer-stock theatres can use to attract hard audiences.

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able separately through the publisher) only Paddy Campbell's *Horse Muse* with music by William Slonick could legitimately be called a musical. Combined with various fantasies of shit-disturbing Western journalist Bob Edwards, the songs create a merry, irreverent, nether-world atmosphere. In tone, they are consistent with Edward's apparent attitudes and sense of humour.

Children's plays would not be as popular with their audience without the opportunity that songs give the kids to join in the action, side with the good guys, and influence the bad. Beth McMaster ensures many kinds of active participation in both of her children's "morality" plays. In *Put on the Spot* such lofty subjects as urban development and the complexity of telling the truth are made appealing for young theatre fans. And music and song are central to resolving the racial conflict involving a beeping robot and strolling musician in *When Everybody Cares*.

The volume should be praised, however, not on the precarious merits of individual plays but because they are presented in a form geared toward their performance on stage. At the end of each play are suggestions for light or sound cues, reprints of the original production set design (if available), costume requirements, and a scene-by-scene prop breakdown. In addition, production photos are interspersed throughout the scripts to suggest the approach to staging taken in the original production. These practical details allow inexperienced direc-

tors and actors to concentrate more on the play's themes.

Theatre professionals may resent this pragmatic and limiting definition of an art that is, at its core, interpretative. Their offended sense of creativity may be salved, however, when it is realized that this volume's performance-oriented approach to drama might help to close the gap in Canadian educational institutions (including university-level drama programs) between Canadian plays taught in dramatic literature and the Neil Simon Broadway musicals that command our auditoriums. When students are confronted with Canadian plays both in their classrooms and on the stages at home-and-school nights, then professional theatres may see a new breed of educated young people in their audiences for bold and exciting Canadian theatre experiments.

This is not an argument for a lowest-common-denominator approach to theatre repertoire and performance style. There is no guarantee that Canadian plays "on the boards" in high schools will lead to massive audiences for such plays as Factory Lab's *The Revolutionary Project*. But, without the opportunity to see and read Canadian theatre and drama of various calibres and styles in schools, there can be no independent and considered popular judgement of their worth. *Popular Performance Plays of Canada, Volume 1* may help prove to some that much of Canadian theatre is certainly as stage-worthy as the imported popular entertainments. □

## Full Marx and Fuehrer credits

*On the Job*, by David Fennario, Talonbooks, 110 pages. 8.50 paper (ISBN 0 88922 102 2).

*The Execution*, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated from the French by David Lobdell, Talonbooks, 103 pages. \$3.50 paper (ISBN 0 88922 103 0).

By TOM HENDRY

**TWO VIEWS** — Left and Right — of The System. As things stand, say both playwrights, we are all losers. In Fennario's view it is The System itself, in this case the employee-employer relationship under capitalism, that inevitably corrupts by creating a way of life wherein even Good Guys tend to act like Bad Guys when The System requires them to, whether they want to or not. Marie-Claire Blais, however, suggests that a cynical and corrupt individual who has correctly analyzed how a system works — here the relationships between pupils at boarding school — is able to manipulate it in such a way that all those around him come to share his guilt and corruption, whether they know it or not.

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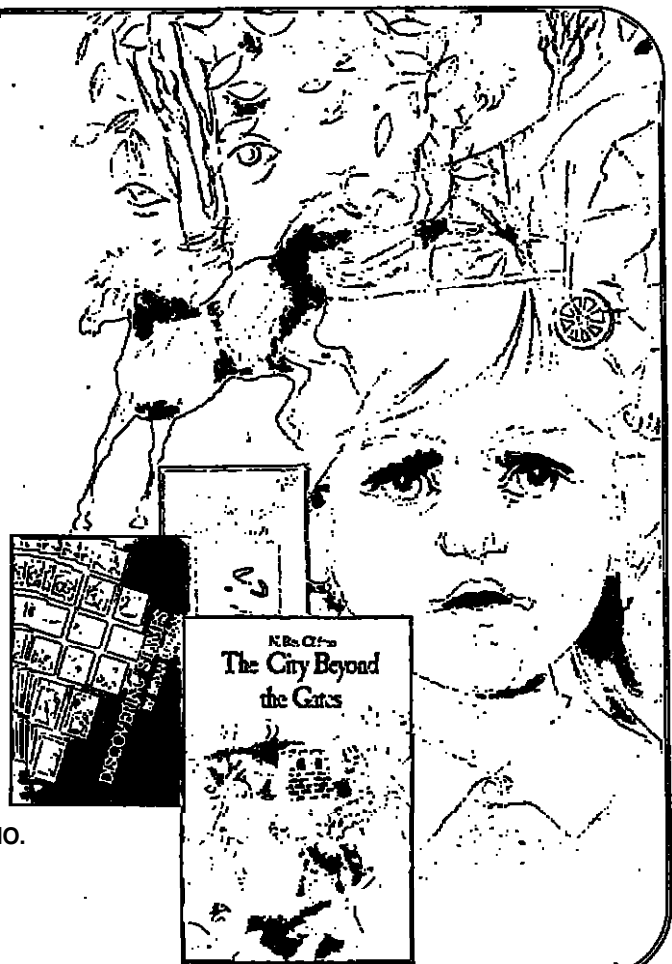
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Both views are simplistic and Procrustean; in both the situation is grimly made to fit the thesis: under the surface roar of the dialogue one hears distinctly the sound of dramaturgical gears grinding as art meets the needs of social analysis.

Both plays remind the reader of other plays: in Fennario's case the whole *Waiting for Lefty* school of quasi-agitprop; in the case of Marie-Claire Blais, superficially *Rope* and the others coming out of the Leopold-Loeb case, more deeply much of the work of Anouilh and the Fascist-leaning Giraudoux. In language, the two couldn't be more different: Fennario's dialogue is rough, sweaty, prickly, entirely realistic, given the dress-factory shipping room which is Fennario's microcosm for society; the language of David Lobbell's translation of *The Execution* is pure, dry, artificial, lifeless.

Fennario's play succeeds in spite of the load of ideology it carries; Marie-Claire Blais' play fails despite a far more defensible intellectual spine. Fennario's characters keep putting down the placards they carry — *Downtrodden Older Worker*, *Radicalized Younger Worker*, *Corrupt Union Boss*, *Greedy Manager* — in order to go to the bathroom, swear, boast of sexual conquests, sing songs, get drunk and do most of the other things human beings do. There is a great ring of truth about the easy, casual racism of the English-speaking workers, the almost-hysterical caution of the French-speaking foreman who has made it part way up a ladder that a whole system was designed to keep him off, the boozing machismo of working men who know they are not masters of their fates or captains of their souls. You have the feeling that these guys would probably reject Fennario's explanation of what's wrong, and that he's an honest enough writer to allow his people to live in *ev'e* these of their own terms.

The characters of *The Execution* in comparison are pale, lifeless, almost indistinguishable from each other. The protagonist Louis Kent, a spouter of Nietzschean precepts, remains as a character relentlessly true to his motto: "Accept nothing, assume nothing, take nothing in, give nothing out in return. A" icy indifference to all." The inner turmoil and hysteria of the mask-faced Dictator he represents is nowhere to be seen: his is a case study with the inconvenient details left out. To an audience raised on Hider's *Table Talk* and with a awareness of the tidy less-than-ordinariness of the Eichmanns of this world, is it possible to portray a Paranoid Born Persuader without showing the bottomless, chaotic banality underlying the icy outward certainty of the totalitarian? As for those who go along with Louis Kent's machinations as accomplices in murder — ah, if only collaborators in murder turned out regularly to be as guilt-ridden as those that this play trots out for our disbelieving inspection. Alas, it is at the heart of the Fuehrerprinzip that the accomplice is absolved of guilt by the very nature of the relationship. The idea that guilt or remorse play any part in the process is sheer sentimentality.

*Ev'e* so, I find Blair' view the more acceptable of the two: evil people make soy system behave evilly and will have the same

effect on non-systems. But as a playwright, Fennario could convince me — dramatically — that the earth is Rat and riding on the back of a dress-rack. Let's hope his characters continue to double-cross him so creatively. □

## Too many chicks in the Co-op

A **Directory of Canadian Plays and Playwrights**. Playwrights Co-op. 111 pages, paper, one copy free on request, additional copies \$1 each.

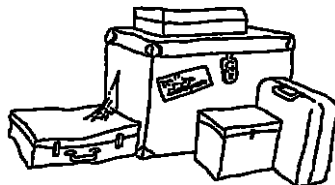
*The Injured*, by Tom Grainger, Playwrights Co-op. 62 pages, \$3 paper (ISBN 0 919834 46 9).

*Turkish Delight*, by Steve Petch, Playwrights Co-op. 56 pages, \$3 paper (ISBN 0 919834 41 8).

By RICHARD PLANT

THE PLAYWRIGHTS CO-OP *Directory* is more than just a" advertising catalogue for its publisher. Listing, with brief descriptive notes, more than 300 titles — plays, anthologies, and reference works, either published or distributed by the Co-op — the *Directory* fittingly marks the fifth anniversary of the Founding of this Toronto-based organization in 1972. It provides an invaluable summing-up of the Co-op's work and implicitly reflects something of the past five years of English-Canadian theatrical activity. Before 1972, few of the titles and a" equally small number of the 120-odd playwrights and editors represented in the *Directory* had made *ev'e* the slightest impact on our theatre scene. It is in part through the work of the Co-op that many are now well known. As the *Directory's* introductory note says, the Co-op's "contribution to our cultural life has been significant. Over 60,000 plays have been sold .. 35 Co-op titles have been republished by other presses, and numerous productions have resulted from the Co-op's work."

The Co-op program includes organizing speaking tours for playwrights, maintaining collections of plays in Co-op reading rooms across Canada, and generally serving as an



information centre for Canadian theatre activity. The Co-op also distributes plays and theatre-related books from 19 other Canadian presses. But the Co-op's most obvious role is as a vehicle through which Canadian plays, with at least one performance can be made available in an inexpensive format to interested readers, especially theatre personnel, in hopes of future production. The two plays reviewed here offer a fair sampling of those generally printed by the Co-op.

*The Injured*, by Tom Grainger, an Englishman who came here in 1956, won the 1974 Clifford E. Lee award in Alberta. It is a plain tale well told of Sarah and Jud Slater, a couple in their 50s who live in London, England, pictured in the play as an impoverished rural area, dark and repressive. Pamela Rogers, a young schoolteacher from south England, enters their home as a lodger, and gradually, to her horror, discovers the Slaters' sordid past, previously hidden from everyone. At the age of 14, Sarah and Jud, step-sister and brother, scandalously became the parents of a baby girl. After two years in jail for the crime, Jud was forced to marry Sarah, and together they were to care for the girl. But an existence of hatred and guilty servitude between Sarah and Jud resulted in his killing the child, a crime for which his best friend was hanged. The information proves fatal for Miss Rogers, who is murdered by Sarah. And the play ends with the complex bond between Jud and Sarah becoming stronger as they lie on a bed gazing "unblinkingly straight ahead," yet holding hands after coldly, madly deciding to throw the body into the same ravine that Jud threw their child.

Although not really new (in fact, a bit clichéd) in exploring the effects of a repressive social and moral environment on character, the play is carefully constructed — more so than many of the Co-op scripts. The gothic horror of the tale, the atmosphere of increasing suspense as we begin to realize what may happen to Miss Rogers, and the revelation of a fascinating but awful bond between the Slaters, make the play worth reading and performing.

The same cannot be said for Steve Petch's *Turkish Delight*, a bizarre play set in Istanbul in the 1890s. The playwright deals with the relationship among a mother and her daughter who have just arrived in Istanbul, and a Turkish man, whom the mother once knew, or may have — the intentional ambiguity is frustrating rather than engaging. As the mother discovers she cannot make meaningful contact with the man, the daughter grows increasingly fascinated by the new, exotic life she finds in Istanbul. Certainly there are many intriguing themes hinted at in the play, but it is so loosely constructed and vague, that it fails to give them a satisfying expression.

Obviously Petch's play needs further work, not uncommon among Co-op scripts. Since the Co-op sees its primary responsibility as one of getting scripts into circulation so they can be performed, many plays appear to be published with the acknowledgement that they are unfinished, and with the implication that further performance will shape them into successful works. But because few theatres have the time or

## DRAMA

resources to develop new plays — in fact, some are not even interested in doing so — many Co-op scripts will never see further performance because they are unfinished. The problem goes deeper than that. For the most part, a theatre's work is not that of the playwright. While theatres must spend their time and resources giving living expression to dramatic incident and idea, a playwright has a responsibility to shape incident and idea to a point where it can be given living expression.

In short, the Co-op's responsibility is broader than simply making unfinished scripts available. Canadian theatre is not in its infancy and it is time we realized that Canadian playwrights can be expected to write with maturity and craftsmanship. Through a stronger exercise of their critical reading and dramaturgical powers, the Co-op can help playwrights fulfil their craft. And in so doing, the Co-op would meet its responsibility not only to developing playwrights, but to those Canadians interested in theatre and drama who, incidentally, bought a good proportion of the 60,000 scripts the *Directory* mentions. □

## Don, Ted, and dear old Jane

**Canada on Stage 1975:** Canadian Theatre Review Yearbook, general editor Don Rubin. CTR Publications. 379 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0380 9455).

**My Sister's Keeper.** by Ted Allan, Uof T Press, 77 pages, \$3.95 cloth (ISBN 0 6020 2208 1).

**Our Own Particular Jane.** by Joan Mason Hurley, A Room of One's Own Press, 45 pages, \$2.95 paper (ISBN 0 91998003).

By BRUCE BAILEY

AND NOW hold onto your seats, because our next act is a trio of books that all have something to do with theatre. One is *about*, one is, and one *almost* is.

The first of these, *Canada on Stage 1975*, is an attractively designed improvement over the 1974 volume in a projected series of annuals. Accompanied by an ample selection of production photos, the book is an impressive attempt to catalogue the activities and membership of nearly 100 professional theatre companies during the course of the year. On the whole, then, this listing is a creditable public-relations vehicle which will eventually be useful to critics seeking to trace long-term trends.

As the curtain rises on *Canada on Stage*, the prologue is delivered by general editor Don Rubin, who has the sense not to open dressed in a beaver costume and waving a flag. He readily admits that 1975 was a 20 Books In Canada, April, 1977

period of "artistic drift" and it was not the year of the Great Canadian Theatrical Breakthrough. The editor's avoidance here of a saccharine encomium to the state of the art goes a long way toward saving this production from sinking to the level of a high-school skit night or yearbook.

The only really objectionable thing about the introduction is that it treats Urjo Karede as if he were a critic — when in my opinion he was actually working as a reviewer for the Toronto *Star*. It ought to be noted that critics and reviewers normally ladle out their praise and blame from two different kettles of alphabet soup. A reviewer is a morning-after arbiter of ephemeral public taste; a critic, on the other hand, ordinarily applies the benefits of elapsed time and a sound historical perspective to the elucidation of a work of art. Karede's elevation without impressive critical credentials to the post of the Stratford Festival's Literary Adviser in 1975 perhaps says more about the condition of criticism here than Rubin's observation that the *Star* had not replaced their lost "critic" as late as the spring of 1976.

As Rubin admits, the rest of the book is missing information on a number of professional theatres through failure of these groups to respond to requests for information. As Rubin does not admit, however, the book has a number of other flaws — the least of which are errors in the indexing of some names. The yearbook is a somewhat awkward compendium of material from two different policy-making years, since the main theatre season usually runs from the fall to the spring. Moreover, some confusion arises from the editors' decision to list productions by place of performance — when some of the groups were not indigenous to the regions where they rented theatre space.

Ted (*Lies My Father Told Me*) Allan was not among the writers whose work was covered in the 1975 yearbook, but his play *My Sister's Keeper* is probably worthy of productions in addition to those already mounted in 1969 and 1974. This two-character drama succeeds in spite of Allan's unabashed intention (announced in a rather supercilious preface) to convince us of the shaky abstraction that "it is the absence of love which leads to madness."

The play's Canadian lecturer and his "crazy" sister are interesting enough and their interaction is theatrical enough to offset Allan's preachiness and his shameless flirtation with the shop-worn question of what constitutes sane behaviour. The well-drawn characters expose their incestuous feelings, grapple with the problems of emotional blackmail, love-on-demand, and the crippling fear of being clone, and yet they do so in a scenario relieved by genuine comedy (such as their parody of people whose mental choo-choos have detailed). All this leads to an ending that could be understood in the way that Allan openly intended, but the playwright wisely leaves room for sympathy with the "normal" lecturer who is full of words but no music.

Joan Mason Hurley's *Our Own Particular Jane* is less the "piece of theatre" that it purports to be and more of an "entertainment." Hurley herself admits that this is not a play, but the use of the term "a piece of

theatre" has the inappropriate connotation that the production will somehow engage our visual sense. Hurley's rendering of Jane Austen's biography through excerpts from her letters and novels is winsome enough, but the physical presence of the seated actors who are supposed to read out this materiel might seem extraneous or even annoying. Thus, the CBC-Radio production of this "entertainment" probably worked better than its first reading at the Jane Austen Bicentenary Commemoration.

Novel-dialogue is not the same as play-dialogue, and so as Hurley weaves Austen's life around enactments of scenes from her fiction, the verbal exchanges sometimes seem rather awkward for oral presentation. Of course, the production might be saved by great acting — just as Alec Guinness rescued his own *Yahoo*, "an entertainment based on the life and writings of Jonathan Swift." But on the whole, Hurley has captured much of the comic sense and sensibility in Jane Austen (one of the four greatest English humourists, according to J. B. Priestley), finally bringing the drama to rest on one of Austen's last and most moving letters. □

## Alarums and excursions

**The Crime of Louis Riel.** by John Coulter, Playwrights Co-op. 72 pages, \$3.50 paper (ISBN 0 919834 44 2).

**Gabriel Dumont and the North West Rebellion.** by George Woodcock, Playwrights Co-op. 35 pages, \$2.50 paper (ISBN 0 919834 45 0).

**1837.** by Rick Salutin and Theatre Passe Muraille, James Lorimer & Co., 264 pages, \$14 cloth (ISBN 0 88862 118 3) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88862 119 1).

By ROSS STUART

THE REBELLIONS of Louis Riel and William Lyon MacKenzie are the subjects of three recently published Canadian plays. Playwrights Co-op has brought out two more versions of the saga of the Prairie madman/prophet — John Coulter's third Riel play, *the Crime of Louis Riel*, and George Woodcock's *Gabriel Dumont and the North West Rebellion*; and James Lorimer & Co. has produced a valuable edition of *1837* by Rick Salutin and Theatre Passe Muraille. These works have little in common except their central act of insurrection. George Woodcock, prolific author and editor of *Canadian Literature*, has written a radio play: Irish-Canadian John Coulter a standard episodic drama; and Toronto's *1837* company a collective creation.

Of the three, Coulter's play is the most disappointing, because it is the skeletal remains of his masterpiece *Louis Riel* stripped to satisfy practical limitations. The

playwright has carved *The Crime of Louis Rid* from his epic drama as he had earlier created *The Trial of Louis Rid* by extract- in; and augmenting the courtroom scenes. *The Crime of Louis Riel* requires 12 actors instead of 25 and is shorter and less technically demanding to comply with the needs of our "far-from-affluent local theatres." Unfortunately the goal of theatrical accessibility has led Coulter to tamper shamelessly with history, thereby weakening characters, trivializing causes, and confusing events.

To make things worse, Coulter sacrifices *Louis Rid's* subtlety and power to stress a modern parallel. The playwright clearly articulates his intent in a prologue spoken by "one of the company": "We present Riel as standing for men of whatever colour or whatever country who are driven to reject, rebel, take arms and fight against what they regard as government by an encroaching alien power... The struggle you are about to see taking place in Riel's remote corner of the North-West, is being bitterly waged today — passionate struggles of subject peoples which are profoundly changing our world."

After thus reducing Riel and his rebellion to symbols, Coulter proceeds to combine two revolts and 15 years into one vague upheaval apparently caused only by Riel's paranoid premonition that a party of surveyors is "the vanguard of the invasion." Almost immediately he begins denouncing governments, the Hudson's Bay Company,

and even the church for "violations of the rights and dignities of free men." though the audience has witnessed little evidence of tyranny. In the original play, Coulter shows a reasonable man driven to extremity by betrayal and oppressive circumstances. After his stable and perhaps legal Red River government was treacherously destroyed, he himself lived in exile until recalled by his people to lend one final attempt to check the encroaching white man's civilization. Compressing these events forces Coulter to transform Riel too quickly into an hysterical megalomaniac without clearly demonstrating his humanity, reasonableness, and justification.

The rebellion of 1885 is minor history; it is Riel's complex, perplexing character that is continues to intrigue. Coulter has forgotten the man he knew so well in his attempt to make the character a symbol of the revolutionary.

Riel's uncle and chief military officer, Gabriel Dumont, is mentioned only once in *The Crime of Louis Rid*. George Woodcock attempts to counter such neglect by describing the events of 1885 from Dumont's point of view, ostensibly as Dumont relates them in exile to an American commander in Montana. The action occurs primarily as flashbacks linked by Dumont's commentary. However, the title and intent notwithstanding, this play is also about Louis Riel. Gabriel Dumont is either not sufficiently developed or is simply a less complex person. Described by Riel as "a

man of action." Dumont is a practical person and practical people do not make compelling dramatic heroes. Although Riel is central, his character is even less effective than in Coulter's play because, distanced by flashback and seen through Dumont's eyes, he appears so preoccupied with his place in history that he becomes the sole cause of the military defeat. He refuses to let Dumont "fight like an Indian" in a guerilla war because he is waiting for a sign from God. Perhaps *Gabriel Dumont and the North West Rebellion* worked as radio; however the printed text alone does little to show this

Like John Coulter, Rick Salutin has dramatized history to make a very contemporary comment using a simple production style. A rehearsal log shows how 1837 evolved as a collective creation among six actors, director Paul Thompson, a designer, and Salutin, "the writer on-but not of — 1837." Salutin and his collaborators wanted to destroy "the myth about 1837" that the rebellion was primarily to achieve responsible government: "the goal of the revolt — independence — has still to be won in our own time." Salutin's leftist nationalistic bias helps charge his writing in the play and in an accompanying historical survey with appropriate rebellious fervour. Although the play is not as polished or well written as those of Woodcock and Coulter, it does capture the life and flavour of its time better and succeeds both as history and theatre. □

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# Author! Author! Author!!!

**Robertson Davies**, by Patricia Morley, 75 pages, \$5.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 5874 0) and \$3.25 paper (ISBN 0 7715 5864 3); **James Reaney**, by J. Stewart Reaney, 107 pages, \$5.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 5875 9) and \$3.25 paper (ISBN 0 7717 5865 1); **Gratien Gélinas**, by Renate Usmiani, 88 pages, \$5.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 5877 5) and \$3.25 paper (ISBN 0 7715 5867 8), all in the Profiles in Canadian Drama series. Gage Publishing.

By FORSTER FREED

IT'S NOT OFTEN that one comes across a set of books as sorely needed (and as long overdue) as this recently initiated series. Profiler in Canadian Drama. Under the general editorship of Geraldine Anthony, a professor of Canadian Drama at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, these profiles are an attempt to provide background material for the study of Canadian drama in secondary and post-secondary schools. It's an important venture, because

with the struggle for Canadian content in our theatres far from won, it's absolutely essential that future audiences become acquainted with Canadian plays and playwrights.

The Gage series attempts to do precisely that—and in the most straightforward way possible. Each volume in the series introduces one playwright, providing a biographical and critical essay as well as a useful (though not exhaustive) bibliography for further reading. The books — sensible in format and length—are reasonably priced. And with volumes dealing with Robertson Davies, Gratien Gélinas and James Reaney already in print (and with the prospect of future studies devoted to George Ryga, John Herbert and Michel Tremblay among others), it's clear that this venture is one with tremendous potential for developing a knowledgeable and receptive theatre-going public.

The problem is that the quality of these first three studies is highly uneven — so much so that one questions the classroom value of two of the three volumes. Particularly disappointing is Patricia Morley's study of Robertson Davies. Morley seems to be in awe of Davies and as a result she never actually grapples with the key critical questions raised by Davies' dramatic output. What is missing from this volume is the sort of probing analysis that would, for example, deal with the implications of writing dramatic (as opposed to prose) satire: Davies' fascination with heredity;

and perhaps most important, the formal considerations that have (on the whole) made Davies a far more effective novelist than playwright. Unfortunately, Morley seems unwilling to examine any of these areas in depth, remaining content to touch on them briefly without really pursuing the implications of Davies' approach to drama. In the place of analysis and critical questioning, her study offers excessively long plot and character outlines — and not even particularly well-written plot and character outlines. Robertson Davies deserves better treatment than he is afforded in this volume.

One also suspects that James Reaney could have been better served. While avoiding the vacuousness of the Davies volume, author J. Stewart Reaney (the playwright's son) does manage to find a number of pitfalls all his own. At the outset he warns us that he intends to examine his father's plays with the same kind of "free-wheeling study" that Reaney himself would feel comfortable with. The result is a highly idiosyncratic book, crammed with helpful and at times brilliant observations and insights into Reaney's plays, but insights that are so scattered throughout the book that one is hard pressed to find (let alone absorb) them. Above all, this study of Reaney fails to really tell a coherent "story," because it never provides a convincing context (social, literary, theatrical, or even biographical) in which to consider Reaney's plays. As a result no clear picture of Reaney — as a man or as an artist — seems to emerge. It's possible that J. Stewart is too close to his father and to the plays adequately to present them to a general audience. But whatever the problem, one remains skeptical whether this is the best way to introduce students to the difficult (but thoroughly worthwhile) theatrical world of James Reaney.

Fortunately the third of these volumes, Renate Usmiani's study of Gratien Gélinas, is excellent. Usmiani provides detailed analyses of the plays as well as a context in which to consider Gélinas' writing. Hers is the only one of these three volumes to consider with sufficient detail the theatrical and social contexts of the scripts discussed. Eschewing a strictly literary approach (which is particularly burdensome in the Reaney volume), Usmiani examines drama as it should be examined — treating each script as a potential vehicle for staged presentation. Nor does she ever allow us to lose sight of the other contexts (social, economic, and political) from which Gélinas' plays evolve. And while one can quibble with specific conclusions (I find her political and aesthetic judgments overly conservative) the real point of Usmiani's success is that the reader is shown the process by which she reaches them. The result is a volume that will make an excellent complement for in-class (or out-of-class) study of Gélinas, as well as a worthwhile introduction to the study of drama as an imaginative form.

The lessons to be learned are simple. Drama cannot be considered in a vacuum. It cannot be understood apart from the theatre, nor can it be studied apart from society at large. Editor Anthony and future contributors to the series could do worse than to learn from Ms. Usmiani's example. □

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# Fitzhenry & Whiteside

# Great expectorations unfulfilled

by John Hofsess

The Invettttiott of the World. by Jack Hodgins, Macmillan, 284 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1516 5).

LIKE THE MANY people who still profess to have faith in God but rarely go to church, I believe that a good novel is one of the finer pleasures in life but when it comes to actual daily practice my preference is clearly for non-fiction. Already this year I found three books — Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*, Christopher Isherwood's *Christopher and His Kind*, and Charles Reich's *The Sorcerer of Bolinas Reef* — that produced in me a state of elated stimulation and a distinct sense of connection to other human beings. They are the sort of books that I would gladly buy and press into the hands of anyone who would read them. There isn't, however, a single recent novel I can recall that produced a comparable exhilaration.

What makes these three books special, despite considerable variation in literary merit (Reich has much improved over the exuberant claptrap of his best seller, *The Greening of America*, but he'll never possess Isherwood's stone-cutter's eye for subtle detail or Rich's arresting powers of thought) is that they tell us a great deal that is valuable — and painfully true — about their authors' lives, my life, maybe your life, and the pathetic ways we have of oppressing ourselves and one another.

I have generally found that the more complex a novel is, in prose style and narrative structure, the less an author has to say — or can say. I have a wholshelf full of modern novels that I am saving for that far future time when, crippled by arthritis and confined to a wheelchair, I am finally tendered as lifeless as they are, and when I may enjoy explaining to my nurses how this pun on page 375 of *Finnegans Wake* relates to another on page 23. Maybe I'll enjoy resounding tinkles like that when I can't enjoy anything else. But tight now, while I still have some hope left that wiser ways of living may be found, I want to read authors who haven't taken leave of their sentences.

The common keynote of the books mentioned is their moral courage and blazing honesty — enough to light up any dark mom. Unsurprisingly, these same authors, in personal interviews as in their books, speak with the natural

eloquence of candour — while many writers of modern fiction, in their books, play dodgy hypocritical games with the public and press. No writer who thinks it is more important to develop technical skills than it is to develop as a wiser, more decent, human being has any tight to complain as more and more readers turn to non-fiction for the light.

For these and other reasons, Jack Hodgins' tint book, *Spit Delaney's Island*, a collection of 10 short stories set on Vancouver Island, and Margaret Gibson Gilboord's *The Butterfly Ward*, six short stories dealing with various cases of "madness" in women, struck me as being the most memorable fiction published in Canada last year. Whether Hodgins' eccentric islanders or Gilboord's desperate characters are based on real people or not, the effect of reading their fiction is to stretch one's awareness and sympathies for people who are in similar circumstances to those so movingly described in the stories. In short, their fiction — whatever its aesthetic or purely literary pleasures while we read it — ends in redirecting us back to everyday life with, possibly, a subtle sharpening of perception.

The chief difference between *Spit Delaney's Island* and Hodgins' new work, *The Invention of the World*, an "epic" novel that he has worked on for the past three years, is the difference between the living and the dead. Much of it is beautifully written and perfectly formed. The problem is, like a stillborn child, it doesn't breathe. It is one of those huge, ambitious, eccentric novels like Paul Goodman's *The Empire City*, William Gaddis's *J.R.*, or John Barth's *Giles' Goat Boy*, among others, that occasionally find patient readers who will give them their due: a stoical respect, rather than passionate liking.

*The Invention of the World* opens... in the present, on Vancouver Island. At the outset the style is vigorous:

Becker, the first time you see him, is at the mainland terminus waving your car down the ramp onto the government ferry and singing to your headlights and to the salt air and to the long line of traffic behind you that he'd rather be a sparrow than a snail. Yes he would if he could, he loudly sings, he surely would. In his orange life-jacket and fluorescent gloves, he waves his arms to direct traffic down that ramp the way someone else might conduct a great important — a round little man

with a sloppy wool cap riding his head and huge bushy beard in all of his face except the long turned-down weather-reddened nose. He'd rather be a forest, he sings, than a street. Follow him home.

After introducing us to **Strabo Becker**, and telling us that he keeps "scrapbooks and shoeboxes of newspaper clippings . . . old photographs and . . . crates of cassette tapes. . . dozens of notebooks" dealing with the history of the Revelations Colony of Truth, founded by a legendary leader from Ireland named Donal Keneally, a religious commune with a long history of scandal in the vicinity of Nanaimo, the narrative shifts and the character is dropped from view for nearly 100 pages.

The novel starts again — on a July day, in a town based on Nanaimo, with a brawl in the beer parlour of the Coal-Tyee Hotel. The characters we now meet—Maggie Kyle, the central woman in the book, Wade Powers, whom she eventually marries, Cora Mattson, her friend ("a short thick chain-smoking little lady. . . with dyed-red hair, putty-coloured face and a half-a-dozen chins,") and other local "bush people" who, as one character puts it, are "embarrassed by anything that resembles civilization" — are the main reason why the novel steadily loses energy. They simply don't have any loves, struggles, ideas, failures, or triumphs (at least as they are drawn) that can sustain such long attention. It is possible that if Hodgins were writing about such characters in a short story, and forced to compress all that he knows about them in a few pages, they would seem insightfully depicted. But here they are allowed to run on and on — in a story unrelieved by irony, wit, or sophisticated judgement of any sort. These sublunary lives have only a tangential connection to the Donal Keneally legends that otherwise make up the book. There is nothing careless about the writing, or the structure; it's just that much of it lacks a compelling reason for being.

Becker returns in a long chapter called "The Eden Swindle" that is not only the highlight of the novel but also such a magnificent piece of writing that it elevates Hodgins to a position close to the top ranks of contemporary Canadian writers. It is a tall Irish tale about how Donal Keneally was sired by a bull-god "from the sky" and a simple virgin who

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apparently thought she was following in a more famous Virgin's footsteps:

And such a child, she thought. Or was it a child at all? Blood-smear'd imm the birth-struggle, he sat up like a little old man, with a face that was purple with rage, and glared at her out of eyes that had clearly taken in all he could see of the world and had already decided to condemn it. He opened his toothless mouth to protest, or cry out his victory. This is all impossible, said the old woman to herself, but as her whole lifetime had been a series of impossibilities imm the beginning, she merely stooped to pick him up and hold him to the dry warmth of her withered dugs. That was when she noticed he had on him the enormous scrotum of an adult bull. "God save us all!" she gasped, and nearly dropped him. For she couldn't help but think that the kindest thing might be to bash his brains out now against the ancient stones. And years later, when she was being buried alive in a bog by that same child grown to man, she would curse herself for not following the impulse.

Like many myths and fairy-tales (to say nothing about the pornographic fantasies of Sacher-Masoch and de

Sade), this wonderfully inventive episode in Hodgins' novel reveals more about human behaviour than all those droning pages of meticulous naturalism that he — and others — have written about inglorious mutes who cannot speak for themselves. I can barely remember what happened to Maggie and her kind or what tortuously circuitous route they took to get nowhere, but I will long remember the "outrageous" story of Donal Keneally and how he split himself into two, the good twin and the bad, confusing everyone; and how he could spoil a woman forever after just one night of love, leaving her discontent to couple with any mere mortal thereafter; and many other details, and delicious twists, all of it delivered in prose that bursts into song on the page.

After such a performance, one wants to grasp this young writer by the hand and exclaim, "Well done!" As for the rest-I can only hope that, when the fog lifts, Hodgins finds his way back to more life-enhancing fiction. □

perused the book over several weeks, a little at a time, and I've decided that Godfrey has in some ways done a remarkable job. Virtually every one of the book's 65 pages of admonishments, suggestions, pointers, and counter-questions contains passages of extremely fine lyric quality, adroit and often neatly timed shifts from oracular ambiguity to snappy vernacular, arresting little historic firecrackers and a generous if uneven sprinkling of humour. There is more grace in walking than in driving a Tilden limousine." the oracle admonishes in B22, PI (Form/Beauty). "Try Wayman at work." And in #3, CHUN (Hard Birth) it leans amiably over the counter and suggests; "Ask old Angus for his jack-all. Make it up with him, even if he will shoot the shit about you in the Legion tonight. Get the load home and into the barn before rain. Winter feed. Winter calving."

Purists may cry "foul" but I think that's unnecessarily conservative. There's no reason why good advice must always be uttered in a sepulchral voice, however common the convention. If the spirit is tight and the intention clear, then where (in I Ching parlance) lies the blame? The most effective translations (as every translator knows) are often the least literal.

There is, however, one ingredient in I Ching Kanada that, despite all of the above, goes some distance toward souring the book for me. I'm referring to the substantial amount of bare-faced propaganda that suffuses the text and which I suppose makes sense given Godfrey's intense nationalistic persuasion. But it strikes me nevertheless as not entirely cricket. In a curious example of mote versus beam in the eye, Godfrey alleges a "powerful and unbended moralism that arouses some suspicions" in the Wilhelm/Baynes translation, yet that translation has nothing whatsoever on Godfrey's in that department. Consider this excerpt from I Ching Kanada #43, KUAI (Break Through):

Look, is Matheson still somewhat of your friend? You still don't have to kiss ass in New York with him do you? But you may have to hang in there. . . .

Or this excerpt from #50, TING (The Cauldron):

Hugh Faulkner. We put you there for a purpose. You broke things open, spilled fat on the people. Weak character and honoured place, meagre knowledge and big promises, a big job to do and neither clout nor skill nor anger. Didn't we expect disaster. Go and eat rabbit stew for awhile.

If Godfrey had intended I Ching Kanada to be used simply as a secondary or supplementary reference to the I Ching proper, or as a novelty, one might take such attempts to proselytize, however insistent, in stride. But Godfrey clearly means this book to be a fully

## Chinging the Western ranges

I Ching Kanada, by Dave Godfrey, Press Porcépic, 144 pages. \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88878 024 9) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88878 025 7).

By ANDREAS SCHROEDER

YOU HAVE A problem: a question it, need of an answer, an enigma in need of clarification. You decide to consult the oracle, and so you compose your mind, divide your yarrow stalks and open the I Ching, book of ancient Chinese wisdom. The arrangement of the yarrow stalks indicates #41, SUN (Giving Away); you torn to that hexagram and read:

Giliip away. Begin even with two small bowls. Red River cereal. Country music can replace opera. Better Stompin' Tom ii he is loved than Southam's imitations. Which Sod needs opera?

Had the yarrow stalks indicated #2, K'UN (The Receptive), you would have read:

Leave bluejeans for the city people who dream of country. Wear Eaton's greens if that is the way of the people, today's homespun. Curl as they curl. Be discreet even with your discretion. Independence is not the only virtue. The musk-ox circle on their journeyings. The exploration is never over.

In short, you haven't been looking at the ancient I Ching in the familiar Wilhelm/Baynes translation at all; you've consulted I Ching Kanada by Dave Godfrey, published by Press 24 Books in Canada, April, 1977

Porcépic in Erin, Ont. I Ching Kanada is not, Godfrey hastens to point out, a literal translation of the Chinese text. It is rather a "transformation" of its meaning, a shaping of it to fit our own myth and experience and social ways. An attempt, in other words, to transfer the genetic code of the old I Ching into the cells of a 20th-century Canadian organism—that is, us.

Well, and why not? Frankly, the idea in itself strikes me as extremely intriguing, albeit fraught with a certain amount of peril; the "modernizing," "updating," or "transforming" of revered texts is almost invariably, achieved at the expense of much of that indefinable magic that keeps such texts alive through generations and centuries. In addition, most revered texts have been written by not one but many philosophers, prophets, or visionaries, most of whom dedicated their entire lives to the work. Among other things, such a process tends to erase, or at least obscure, unduly pointed and individual biases from the texts. Godfrey's "transformation," needless to say, hasn't had the benefit of such a slow and thoughtful multi-levelled growth; it is the work of a single imaginative and enterprising 38-year-old Canadian; best known as an accomplished writer and as an ardent nationalist.

The I Ching, in whatever form, is of course not intended primarily to be read but to be used, which theoretically makes a "book review" of I Ching Kanada impossible. Nevertheless, I



fledged substitute, which we should use because it relates more directly and correctly to our particular experience than any other translation. I'm willing to agree that it does, at least to the extent that he has taken our crofter traditions, our landscape, and our customs into extensive account. But I'm not willing to go so far as to accept that Godfrey's revolutionary vision is every Canadian's vision, or even the vision of enough Canadians to make such pamphleteering anything but a personal soap-box pitch. For the record I sympathize considerably with Godfrey's convictions: I agree that we're selling out wholesale to Coca Cola and The American Dream, and I agree that it's a damn shame. But the *I Ching* was never intended to be used on the political hustings, and for my money the use of its translation for the purposes of partisan politics is going a bit too far. Next thing we know, René Lévesque will be retranslating the Bible with particular emphasis on Exodus (Let My People Got and "The Parting of the St. Lawrence." Chapter 14, verse 21. □

## More perils of Pauline

**Dürer's Angel**, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated from the French by David Lobdell, Talonbooks, 105 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88922 111 1).

By MARGARET LAURENCE

THIS NOVEL is the third in a trilogy, of which the first two were *The Manuscripts of Pauline Archange* and *Vivre! Vivre!*, a fact that is regrettably not mentioned by the publisher either on the back cover or inside the book. Just as some reviewers honestly "declare interest" (for example, "Although these poems were written by my auntie Mabel, nonetheless ..." and so on), I feel in like manner that I probably ought to declare inadequacy, for I have not read the two previous novels in this set. However, each novel, published separately, ought to stand alone. For the most this novel does so, although of course many extra dimensions would be added if the reader could experience the three together, preferably in one collected volume, and I can only hope that a publisher will make this possible at some point.

"I had wanted for so long to tell the story of my life that I actually believed at times that it was in my power to do so... ." This opening sentence strikes right away the novel's prevailing tone of undeceived and ironic vision. The three

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books have been called **autobiographical**, but I am not sure that this is an important consideration. The **writer herself**, in the opening line, bears out my own feeling that there may well be no such thing as autobiographical fiction or even straight autobiography. Both these forms are fiction in the truest sense, since both, like any other form of fiction represent highly selected aspects and events of life seen and interpreted through one pair of eyes, the writer's. By her very style and selectivity and by her observations on a person (a **character**) writing about "her" life, **Marie-Claire Blais** is implicitly exploring the nature of fiction itself.

Pauline, the **narrator**, is shown at various stages of her childhood, **adolescence**, and **young womanhood**, and the time structure of the book is relatively fluid, generally carrying the narrative forward in a chronological way and yet often moving from present to past deftly. We are shown the smothering and protective family — Grandmother **Josette** the matriarch, the unhappy aunts: the frail uncle **Sebastien** who dies in young manhood, and Pauline's work-obsessed father who consistently fails to understand his daughter's passion for literature and music, and who, even when she has left school and is earning a living, threatens to take away the **typewriter** on which she is beginning to pour out her own writing.

The convent school is **pictured vividly** and frighteningly, with its oppressive sense of the nearness of eternal punishment that may possibly be incurred by the slightest disobedience of the rules. Pauline's work at a **mental hospital**, too, is painted in **sombre colours** and yet throughout the book there is a kind of dark and painful poetry in the writing itself, a sensibility so precise and humane that it transforms suffering into **tragedy**.

It would be a mistake, however, to view this **novel** as one of **unrelieved** doom and gloom. It is not that at all. There is in fact a good deal of **ironic humour** here, sometimes rendered with **tenderness**, as in the scenes with the little monk, **Father Plumeau**, whose touchingly innocentsoul is "as light as a butterfly." At other times, Blais exhibits a sharp eye and pen in the perception and portrayal of phoniness. Pauline's self-dramatizing and patronizing friend, **Romaine**, with her ideal marriage and perfect (although frequently yowling) child, performs a mime dance with her husband **Louis**, a sensual dance which she sees as totally spiritual. "Oh my darling, don't you understand that your sex is a sacred thing to me," she says, as she reproaches him for dancing in black tights without his athletic support. To which **Louis** responds "with a feeble grimace. . . ." I don't know why some reviewers

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accuse Blais of not having a sense of humour. **She never plays it for slapstick**, to be sure. Hers is a light touch but an incisive one.

Only with the fairly lengthy episode that deals with the strange affair of the doctor **Germaine Leonard** with one of her male colleagues does the tone of the novel seem unsure. Possibly this is one part of the novel that needs the support of the other two books in the trilogy. It seems slightly out of context and focus here, and the narrative voice changes and becomes less that of Pauline than of some external narrator, since we are given scenes between **Germaine** and her lover that the **Pauline-narrator** (at least within the scope of this book) could not, I think, have reconstructed.

**Dürer's** "Melancholia" (very effectively used on the cover of this book) provides both the title and the main theme of the novel, since Pauline, whose surname is **Archange**, sees in the print a connection with her own dilemma as an artist who knows early her vocation and who has not yet found the strength to break away from her depressing surroundings — "the sullen, unruly angel, lost in contemplation."

**Marie-Claire Blais** is a writer of very considerable accomplishment, and as usual she is able, to convey in this novel a great deal in impressively few words. □

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## Moonshine sketches

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Everybody Gets Something Here, by **Ken Mitchell**, Macmillan, 160 pages, \$9.95, cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1492 2).

By **ARAMINTA WORDSWORTH**

**KEN MITCHELL's** previous book, *The Meadowlark Connection*, had the air of a home-produced affair about it; it came from a small press and was stapled together. For this book he's moved up to Macmillan's, and since it's a collection of short stories, a form of writing not usually associated with best sellers, one hopes this means more books on the way. The present collection is certainly a pleasure, and produced in one notable case — "The Great Electrical Revolution" — laughter until I cried: And a talent to evoke such mirth is rare enough these days.

The stories also have a wholeness and coherence lacking in the usual run of slim-volume collections. **Margaret Laurence** in *A Bird in the House* used

the short-story form to present scenes from a novel, a **pointillist technique** that effectively built up character and incident piecemeal. Set in **Manawaka**, the whole was given some unity by the girl narrator. Several stories in Mitchell's collection overlap in time, place and characters. The settings are **Meadowlark**, his imaginary Saskatchewan town, nearby **Moose Jaw**, and the surrounding area, with a few forays further afield.

In *The Meadowlark Connection*, Mitchell demonstrated his talent for black comedy. The hem, **Ashenden**, a Mountie, was so enamoured of his horse that he cleaned her private parts with a toothbrush — when he wasn't imagining that the whole town was about to be taken over by the combined Quebec, Russian, and Chinese secret services. This is middle Canada, the land of endless prairies, of farmers in small isolated settlements, where the gas-guzzling automobile is king and a man who gets drunk as often as possible. Even in the more urban tales, such as the voyage of a Toronto family to Mexico, the car is literally *deus ex machina*, mviding the final twist to the plot. In the title story, another automobile odyssey, two youths in a battered Chev are glimpsed travelling eastward to the bright city lights of Toronto, condescending in their Vancouver superiority toward the yokels they meet on the way. Our perception of how they will thrive in Toronto, of morning houses on **Spadina** and seedy bars on **King**, heightens the irony of their limited success.

The people who hold the centre of each story are, of necessity, freaks, larger than life. B's a gallery of portraits from the *Reader's Digest* "Most Unforgettable Character I've Met" series, or exercises in 17th-century character writing. Characters such as **Allie**, the **Duddy Kravitz** of **Moose Jaw**. Instead of selling used streetcar transfers, **Allie** matches dimes with drunks outside the liquor store and by high school he is running a bubble-gum franchise. Or the **Irish** grandfather who came out to settle the **Prairies** and after one look at the open emptiness discovered he had agoraphobia: "Miles and miles of nothing but miles and miles."

Mitchell plainly has a talent for observing the instinctive and the bizarre, the everyday and the extraordinary. In "In Old Mexico" the harassed Toronto husband watches his mother-in-law dying of a heart attack. "She took off in a couple of pirouettes like some nutty ballet dancer, then flopped over the desert, her heel beating a kind of two-four rhythm." Almost simultaneously, he notices a dent in the car which he itemizes as "at least thirty-nine fifty at Fender King."

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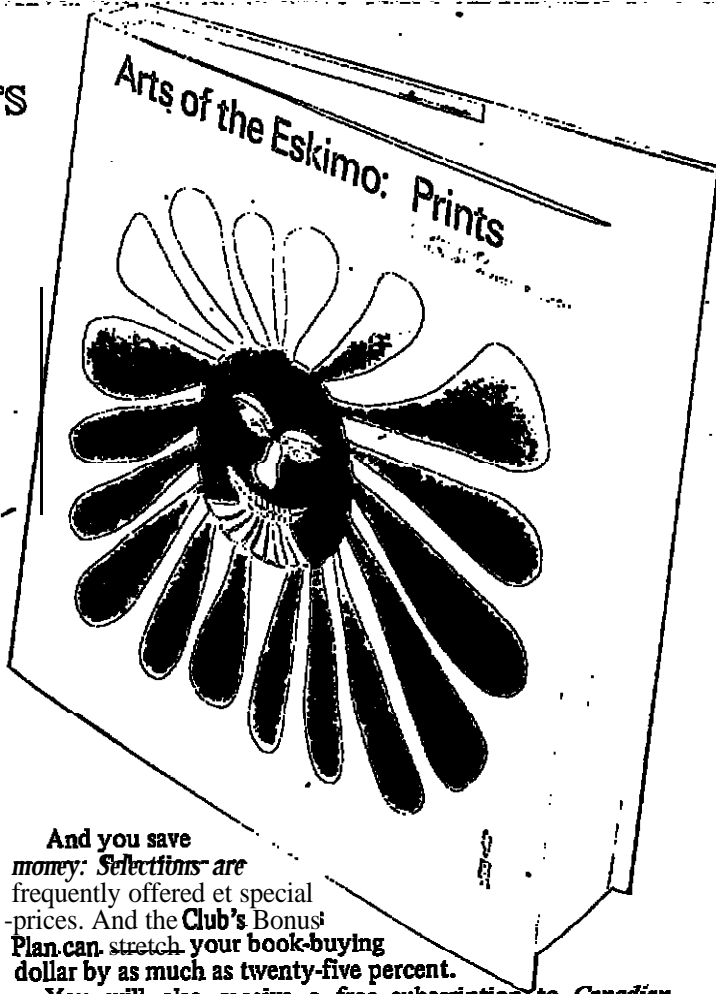
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The children throw themselves into preparations for the wedding, pressure **builds up** — with the expected fatal consequences — and the wedding guests stay for the funeral. And after it all, the woman observes with **resignation**: "We put the wedding cake in the freezer till Wendy gets married. **Bucky** would **have wanted** that, I think. But I'll **tell you something — we're not going** to have it at seeding time." As ye sow, so shall ye reap. □

## Brothers under the din

Family Quarrel, by Reuben Slonim. Clarke Irwin, 190 pages, \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7720 1092 7).

By ERNEST E. LONG

**COURAGEOUSLY**, Rabbi Slonim calls his new book on Jewish-United Church relations *Family Quarrel*. The title sets **the tone of the book and its approach** to the differences, so **intense and bitter** during the past few years between members of the United Church of Canada and members of the Jewish community. The book reminds one of a Roman Catholic saying: "We are all spiritually Semites." In **Judeo-Christian history and tradition, we hold much of our faith in common, share two thirds of the Bible and are inspired by the same individual and prophetic insights.** While we interpret some words differently, this simply means that we have work to do in clarifying our own **and one another's positions concerning our common spiritual heritage and the distinctive contributions that each can make.**

Rabbi Slonim renders a great service by his candid appraisal of the Jewish community itself, with its inner divisions, religious decline, danger of assimilation, and the inadequacy of its synagogues and schools to nurture spirituality adequate for life on this continent today and to produce creative loyalty to Jewish life and the Jewish community. In all honesty, a Christian would have to say that many churches are likewise failing to produce a vigorous and joyful faith in **God and His purposes and in securing transforming commitment to Jesus as Lord.**

Rabbi Slonim stresses rightly the necessity for a deeper understanding by **non-Jews** of the constant struggles and indescribable agonies of the Jewish people, **not only through the centuries of persecution in every country of "Christian" Europe, but especially during the past generation when the whole world was shaken by the unspeakable events in mid-Europe, the slaughter of six million**

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Jews and the destruction of their communities. Canadian Jews are particularly sensitive about the Holocaust and its permanent legacy of anguish and **sorrow** in every Jew. Non-Jews are told, **with reason, that they cannot understand the Jew unless they understand the Holocaust.** In the past **15 years** I have talked to many Jews about this, caught something of **their traumatic** experience and have known feelings of compassion and guilt. Yet **I know that I can never enterfully into the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, any more than my brief visits to Soweto can immerse one sufficiently in the tragedy of Black Africa to share fully in the suffering, rejection, and despair of the black people.**

It is equally true, and Slonim hints at this, that the Jewish community can never quite understand the nuances of **the United Church.** Like the Jewish community, it is not a monolithic structure. **It is democratic.** Like Canada, more and more it is losing its nationally **centred** power structure to a new regionalism. The United Church concept of liberty **baffles** Jews. Liberty of speech extends to pulpit and editorial desk. Dr. **Forrest** is both **editor and publisher, and to restrain his freedom would cut at the heart of the United Church. This freedom is a help as well as an obstacle to Jewish-United Church relations, for it must respect the integrity of other religions too.** Never in its history has **the United Church** promoted a proselytizing mission to the Jews.

**While Dr. Slonim speaks of the "dubious claims of objectivity"** made by both the *Canadian Jewish News* and the *United Church Observer*, there is a lengthy description of editorials and articles concerning the Jews and the Arabs carried in the last decade of the *Observer*, which are called "woefully biased." It notes the increasing number of **pro-Arab pieces since the mid-1960s,** when **Forrest** visited the Middle East. On-the-spot observations increased his sympathy **for the Arab refugees.** Slonim

is fair to Forrest and **credits him with an honest conviction that the plight of the Arab refugees was not widely known, especially in comparison with the publicity given on this continent to the courageous venture of the Jews in Israel, and to the growing strength and confidence in Zionism.** It is **unfortunate** that for the past decade Dr. Forrest has been the **whipping-boy** for the animosity and even hatred of many Canadian Jews toward the United Church, **because in attempting to redress this imbalance he gave greater heed to the Palestinian Arabs and so helped to fuel the fires that have swirled so angrily about both Forrest and the United Church of Canada.**

Another **point** the Jewish community cannot quite grasp is that the *Observer* neither makes nor necessarily **enunciates** the official stands of the **Church.** Its statements and actions **are carefully** formulated and put into effect by the responsible **governing** body, the **General Council** or its Executive. In his chapter "The Accused," Dr. Slonim quotes several of these statements concerning Israel and the Arabs. He does justice to the consistent position of the United Church, "that it seeks the **welfare and security of the State of Israel** and at the same time a solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees, condemning acts of injustice on both sides." Repeatedly **the General Council** urged, **through the Canadian Government, the United Nations and other agencies "that the State of Israel should be recognized by the Arab nations and be permitted to live in peace, secure from threats or acts of force."** As one who helped to draft most of the official statements between 1955 and 1972, I **can** vouch for their integrity and sincerity as the mind of the Church. Because attention was **focussed** so intensely on the *Observer*, **very few of the Jewish community became aware of the basic convictions and stands of the United Church.** The "Record of Proceedings" of the General Council did not provide the kind of news copy to be found in the journalistic style of the *Observer*.

*Family Quarrel* is a compendium of **information about the Jewish people and the interplay between Jewish beliefs and aspirations and contemporary political philosophies.** Slonim compresses **a century of history into a sentence when he asks, "Who made Zionists out of Jews?" and answers, "The liberals."** He may be **right** in blaming the **frustrations of latter-day Jews on false hopes amused by 19th-century liberalism.** He is **wrong** in implying that United Church liberalism **stalled at the beginning of that movement—certainly not the Church that has produced Roberts, Bland, Woodsworth, Thomas, and Mutchmor.** Of course there are "stand-pat" middle-of-the-made in both communities. And Slonim is right that the

family quarrel will continue until they stop hurling harsh words at each other and learn to communicate in terms of respect and with real expectation of reconciliation.

Does Slonim see any hope of such family wholeness? Yes. He wisely follows Martin Buber's lead — that Judaism and Christianity are not mutually hostile but mutually challenging. He pleads for deeper scholarship, hand in hand with good will, @only by professors but by everyone. He concludes by saying: "Reason says we must get together. To ignore reason would mean that we are either perplexed or hypocritical. In each instance, that would defeat everything we stand for as Christians and Jews." That is a fitting conclusion to this intriguing, honest, and forceful book.

Thank you, Reuben Slonim. □

#### IN BRIEF

**The Main**, by Trevanian, Longman (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 309 pages. \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 15 155549 4). This is the best mystery novel to appear in a very long time. The core of the story is the search, by a Montreal police lieutenant named Claude LaPointe, for the killer of a young Italian hustler who has been found dead in an alley off the Main — Boulevard St.

Laurent. A relatively routine case. But the Main is LaPointe's life, in every sense of the word. He's an extremely lonely widower with a heart condition that might knock him off at any moment. It's his street: and each one of the hoods, derelicts, and down-and-outers he encounters in the course of his investigation subtly affects the freezing personality at the very center of his being, in ways he is hardly conscious of. The detective and not his case is what really matters here; and Trevanian has crafted his story so well that, at the end, the killer's confession not only explains the mystery but brilliantly illuminates, for both LaPointe and the reader, the book's fundamental psychology. A recent silly article in the *Globe and Mail* declared Trevanian to be Mordecai Richler, but that was soon followed by a letter to the editor offering evidence that it's unlikely the author is a Montreal native. Indeed, there is nothing in the novel that could not have been noted by an alert visitor (probably an Englishman who stayed in the city about six or seven years ago). Although good, the street-life scenes do not convincingly reflect any gut-level, lived experience. Iris the superb, touchingly human, creation of Claude LaPointe that gives *The Main* its tremendous authority. The author's identity is beside the point. His book cannot be recommended too highly.

PHIL SURGUY

## Scalped tomato

**Ghwt Fox**, by James Houston: McClelland & Stewart, 302 pages. \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0 77 10 42 40 x).

By **DERRICK MURDOCH**

**THE FATE OF** the comely adolescent captured by fearsome marauders provides the stock from which many a headily sexual sado-masochistic fantasy has been brewed. It's worked well from the tale of Joseph in bondage to Potiphar in Genesis 39 right through to James Hadley Chase's 1939 best-selling oddity, *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, and beyond.

Colouring the adolescent white and the marauders black, yellow, or red, of course, creates the essence for one of the most enduring and cherished of racial-hatred myths.

In *Ghost Fox*, the saga of Sarah Wells, a 17-year-old New England redhead, captured by Abnaki Indians in 1755 and marched to the Canadian forests around the northern end of Lake

# Grassy Narrows

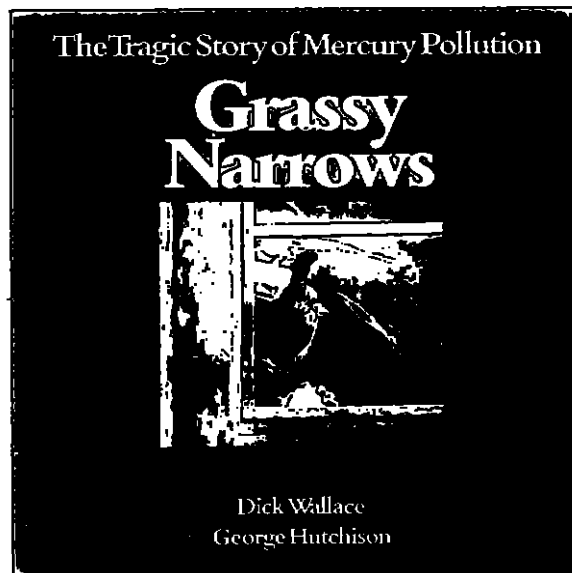
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Foreword by Philippe Cousteau

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Champlain, James Houston seems at first to be offering **the** works. There's burning, flogging, **strangulation, shooting, drowning, testicle-searing and other less light-hearted torture. Come to think of it, there's** bondage and leather gear, too.

But brace yourself; **there's** no rape, nor is young Sarah a cowering virgin at **the** time of her abduction. Her **father's** lusty young **Scottish** bondsman might, indeed, have done more **to** avert **their** capture in the hayloft had his **movements** been less restricted by his **enthusiastically** dropped breeches. Later in **the** story it **entertains** her **to** revenge herself on a lecherous **Scottish** **major** by indulging him considerably beyond **the** bounds of his aging **masculinity**; she's a fun-loving girl. What **20th-century** jargon would describe as a meaningful **relationship**, however, has eluded her **until Taliwan**, son of the old woman **to** whom she has been given as a slave, **starts** groping her one night.

The message of the **story** is, in **fact**, that once the initial **terror at her capture**, and the well-founded fear of possible **execution on arrival at the Abnaki** village, have **abated** she discovers life with the tribe, even as a slave, makes **much more sense**, and is a good deal less arduous, than existence had been **on the** farm with her ill-tempered **toss-pot** of a **father** and her **downtrodden, hysterical** mother.

Nonetheless, despite all **this** and her growing acceptance by her **captors**, she rather incomprehensibly bolts with a fellow-slave, **a once-handsome German** woman **from** Pennsylvania. Recaptured, she is **promptly** lost on a drunken bet to another Abnaki chief, **reunited** with her smooth-skinned **lover Taliwan**, **officially adopted** as a member of the **tribe and**, in due course, captured by a **scoundrelly British** lieutenant who sells her back **to the** sanctimonious elders of her New England community. However, the briefest **taste** of her old life is enough to tell her where her **heart** belongs.

To quote James Houston in one of his **more florid** moments, "as **the big Rhode** Island rooster ruffled his bronzed neck **feathers** as he crowed **to** the pale new dawn," Sarah renews her life as **Tsibai Wagwise**, the Ghost Fox, mate of Taliwan.

Houston **provides** a troop of fully **multi-lingual** characters for his **hot-blooded** melodrama; New **Englanders**, British and French soldiers (the fall of Quebec, remember, is only a **few years** away), waning Abnaki and Mohawk **tribesmen, trappers, renegades and even** a hairy, brutal, and sexually insatiable half-caste French corporal.

If I have been **tempted to take** Sarah's adventures with something less **than** total seriousness it is because I suspect **the author of having much the same**

attitude. As chock-a-block with solid information on the people and the period **of the French and Indian Wars as, in The White Dawn**, he showed himself to be **on the North**, his real purpose seems **to** be **to** convey his sense of the tragic harm done to North **American** native existence and culture by **the Euro-**pean invaders.

But **to get** his point home, he's chosen to embed it in a highly scented soap. □

## When the Boyds were on the wing

The Boyd Gang, by Marjorie Lamb and Barry Pearson, Peter Martin Associates, 256 pages, \$12 cloth (ISBN 0 88778 145 4).

By PHIL SURGUY

THE **BOYD GANG** (Edwin Boyd, **Lennie** Jackson, Steven **Suchan** and Willie Jackson — no kin to Lennie) only worked twice as a **complete unit**: two Tom to bank robberies in November, 1951, after Boyd and the **Jacksons** had escaped **from** the Don Jail, where they had been incarcerated **as** a result of **separate robbery careers. Suchan had**



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originally been part of Lennie's gang. The second robbery, at the Leaside branch of the Royal Bank, was then the largest in Toronto's history, and the gang quickly became central figures in an orgy of sensational newspaper and radio stories that spread from Toronto all across the country. (I was nine at the time and can still vividly remember screaming **BOYD GANG** headlines in the Vancouver papers and hysterical bulletins on the radio. At one point it was rumoured the gang was coming to the Coast, and the media made it clear to everyone that no woman, child, or bank in Western Canada could now be considered safe. The local headline writers were not to have another such feast until Errol Flynn put our town on the map by dying there.)

Suchan's father stole Boyd's share of the Leaside haul and went to Florida with it. To offset this loss, on Jan. 25, 1952, Boyd and Suchan held up a third bank. Then, on March 4, with a gang hired for the day, Boyd robbed yet another one: and with that his cameras a gang leader was over. Two days later Suchan, who was with Lennie Jackson in a car, shot and fatally wounded a Toronto detective, Sergeant Edward Tong. And, by the end of the month, after some solid and often inspired police work, all of the gang were in jail: Willie had been inside since shortly after the Leaside job; Boyd, who had always seen himself "going out" like Jimmy Cagney in *White Heat*, was taken without violence, but with maximum newspaper coverage, in Toronto; and Suchan and Lennie were captured after separate shoot-outs in Montreal. The media carnival seemed over. But, six months later, the gang escaped from the Don Jail again. They were free for only eight days, though — hardly lime in order more printer's ink. Edwin and Willie served long prison sentences. Stew and Lennie were hanged for Sergeant Tong's murder.

Lamb and Pearson freely admit they are neither journalists nor prose writers. *The Boyd Gang* is the product of their research for a movie script; and, as far as it goes, it is a decent, fairly competent accumulation of facts. But it's unfortunate their subject could not have been dealt with in a more enterprising manner. An imaginative and unscrupulously curious reporter might have, with the same sources and material, produced a major piece of Canadian social history.

The authors are indeed critical of the frequently disgusting newspaper and radio coverage of the Boyd Gang; but at the same time they tend to treat the lurid headlines as a measure of the importance of their story, rather than as an essential part of the phenomenon they are writing about. The various gang members, the reporters and editors who wrote about them, the cops who hunted them, the public who read about them



and the politicians who wormed their way into the act all seemed to be playing out a script Ben Hecht had tossed off many years earlier. The whole nation, in an embarrassingly Canadian way, seemed to be relishing every moment of its big chance to live-in the 1950s — its own little version of the Dillinger days and Hollywood's Chicago.

There were probably hundreds of men in Canada like Edwin Boyd — men whose youth had been spent in aimless drifting and petty crime during the Depression, enduring a largely tedious war in England, and desperately scrambling for a place on the post-war gravy train. Yet Lamb and Pearson appear not to appreciate or think important the social and personal forces that shaped Edwin Boyd. Even though they extensively interviewed him last year

## interview

by George Melnyk

### The ghosts that haunt the poetic lays of Andrew Suknaski, Westerner

AFTER HIS appearance in *Storm Warning I*, Andrew Suknaski's fans eagerly awaited his first major collection. With that collection, *Wood Mountain Poems* (Macmillan, 1976), Suknaski emerged as one of the stronger Prairie voices in



Andrew Suknaski

and corresponded with his ex-wife, Doreen (whose role in the story assumed its own Hollywood dimensions), there is no evidence that they learned very much from these people. Maybe they were too polite to pry. Early in the book they relate how Doreen confronted Edwin with her suspicion that he was a bank member. He admitted he was. Then: "To Boyd's relief, Doreen was neither angry nor shocked. She knew that they needed the money. She knew that Ed would have a hard time finding any job that would pay as well."

Is that all that was to it?

Maybe it was.

Edwin Boyd and his wife seemed to believe that, from the proceeds of spectacular crimes, and in spite of the fact that every cop in the country was ready to shoot him on sight, they could live an average Canadian life. The meanings and implications of this phenomenon are the real guts of the Boyd Gang story. The authors hardly touch it, however; and, at the end, after 254 pages, they and their readers are no closer to understanding Edwin Boyd, the man who summed up his brief robbery career for them by saying: "I enjoyed every minute of it . . . I enjoyed the feeling of success and achievement." □

Canada. His poetry is deeply rooted in locale — Wood Mountain, Sask. — and is sustained by a historical sensibility touching on the natives and landscape of the Prairies. To find out more about Suknaski's poetics and development, *Books in Canada* asked George Melnyk, editor of Edmonton's *NeWest Review*, to visit Wood Mountain and talk with Suknaski.

**BiC:** How does the creative process operate for you?

**Andrew Suknaski:** Earle Birney, in a book called *The Creative Writer*, talked about the poet as an exorcist. The poet's life is one long exorcism of the experiences he has known, the different things that haunt him from time to time. He told me once in Vancouver how one of his poems came about. He was travelling in northern India and saw two men leading a Himalayan bear that they were trying to teach how to dance. Birney took this as a metaphor for the human condition. The scene haunted him. He knew there April, 1977. *Books in Canada* 31



was a potential poem here but the experience came to life only a few weeks later when he saw a stuffed bear airing in front of a museum with a wizened old man sitting in its shade. It started with the first sighting but this second thing set up a ripple in the subconscious and that's when the poem began. That is the way some poems come to be for me. It is a memory that has been sparked by something. Out of that connection comes a poem. The stuff I do now is a more academic thing. To gain strength and vision, I have to become classical, do some digging, some research. I've digressed from the previous way of creating a poem into a documentary thing. I rake particular things I've been fascinated by such as the image of Geedo and Baba and use them in a context of an old newspaper story I've dug up or a rare book. To that story I add a lyrical statement.

**BiC:** What experiences are haunting you now?

**Suknaski:** I'm writing a new book titled *The Ghosts Call You Poor*. The ghosts that haunt me now are those that can become metaphors for the Western experience — Dumont, Louis Rie, Wandering Spirit, the woman who survived the Duck Lake massacre. I'm obsessed with those things because they are part of what is going to tell me what I am as a Westerner. My hope is that somehow I can draw on the energy of those voices that will then speak in the poems. The title of the book comes from a Chinese saying and I've included some poems about coolies and the poorer people who were exploited, who paid one hell of a price for things to develop the way they are.

**BiC:** This social and historical direction, these other voices that you describe as being part of your poetry suggest that you as a poet are not on isolated individual but part of a collective process. Is this so?

**Suknaski:** Yes. I'm engaged in a search for something to belong to, some kind of community. something to really fix myself in terms of roots.

**BiC:** Are you more comfortable with the word "story-telling" than with "poetry" when you talk about your creativity, your art?

**Suknaski:** For me to talk about poetry or art reminds me of such nebulous, intangible things I once used to write about in term papers at university. That is no longer my life. I want to talk about the people and the substance, the stuff of their lives. I'm fascinated by the statement made by Ezra Pound, who said: "A good story-teller will always have an audience." That's some consolation to a writer. If I can tell a story in a poem and make it work, I find that a consolation because right now there is so much writing and experimentation going on that it becomes a difficult space to inhabit. I say to myself, the best place to begin is with the people and their stories. Some people criticize this by saying I'm only a regional writer writing about the West. that I'm only a documentary

writer. But I think the people I write about are just as real and have similar problems as people who live in other places. There is a basic humanity about the characters in my poems that shines through.

**BiC:** Why are you upset when you are referred to as a documentary writer by some critics?

**Suknaski:** I feel I've been reduced to a crime reporter by that kind of comment. Yes, I take things from newspapers or history books, actual happenings and things said and I put them into a poem, which has a different organic structure from that of a basic news story. The poet transmogrifies that raw data with his lyrical images or with a statement at the end of the poem. If my poems are no different from a news story (and I believe they are, in order to keep on writing), I might as well become a newspaper writer, a crime reporter. □

## the browser

by Morris Wolfe

### A dream of ants 70 feet tall and an ACUTE case of Falstaffian temerity

CHILDREN can teach one another a great deal about the thoughts and feelings that children have. It's enormously reassuring to know that other kids also have weird fantasies, sexual and otherwise. *Making Waves* (edited by Anne Millyard and Rick Wiiks, Books by Kids, 76 pages, \$3.95) is a collection of stories, poems and illustrations by children for children. Although it's designed (quite handsomely) for kids between the ages of five and seven, I liked it too. My favourite story is by David Atlas: "One day my mother went to a party. And this lady drank sixteen bottles of wine. When she was going home she crashed into a truck and died. Nobody knew about her dying. And when my mother left she saw the dead lady. The next day we had a funeral for the lady. A few weeks after the lady died my grandfather died. We had to have a funeral for my grandfather. Then my fish died. We flushed it down the toilet." I also liked John Langford's story. It's about a dream that included a guy who wears a bikini, a one-inch woman with feet that are six feet long and a 70-foot-tall ant.

\* \* \*

**Stompin' Tom:** *Story and Song* (Crown-Vetco Publications, 216 pages, \$14.99) looks and feels as if it were produced in the U.S.S.R. by one of the printers who specialize in producing cheap English-language editions of Lenin's works. It has a dreadful

introduction by Stompin' Tom Connors' best friend Steve Foote and even crummier drawings by the same man. And yet, as a long-time fan of country singer Stompin' Tom, I'm glad to have this collection of 125 of his songs. It means I can entertain my family and friends with choruses of:

*You might think it's goofie,  
But the man in the moon is a Newfie,  
And he's sailing on to glory,  
Away in the golden dorey.*

Or:

*Good-bye, rubberhead, so long, boob;  
Go and blow your inner tube;  
I got a brand new sugar cube,  
So good-bye, rubberhead, so long, boob.*

\* \* \*

YET ONE MORE document dealing with the quality of Canadian education has now appeared. The Association of Canadian University Teachers (ACUTE) has issued a Report on Undergraduate Studies in English in Canadian Universities to add to the Norman, Russell, Traub, King, and God knows who else reports all published in 1976. Based on what I've seen of those other reports, I'm awarding the authors of this report, F. E. L. Priestley and H. I. Kerpneck, my 1976 prize for Most Readable Report on a Continuing Subject. Few people involved in the teaching of English escape whipping in this document. University English departments are much less certain about

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what they're doing and why than they've ever been; the result is that more and more of their energy goes into teaching "gimmick" courses such as Children's Literature and Popular Music, while courses on Milton and other major figures are dropped. Although the best students in English are as good as they've ever been, students who used to get high Bs now are getting no better than a low C or D — that is, the gap between the average and the brilliant student has widened greatly in the past decade. Faculties of Education aren't nearly rigorous enough in their selection of candidates for teacher training. The emphasis of university administrators on publishing as the prime criterion for promotion means that a great deal of trivia gets into print. According to Priestley and Kerpeck "a rough and perhaps optimistic estimate would be that ten percent of publication is scholarship."

\* \* \*

I'VE READ *Hamlet* a dozen or more times. I've trught it two or three limes. I'm familiar with four film versions of the play and I've seen it on TV at least twice. I've read quite a bit of the major criticism of the play. At the risk of sounding arrogant, I believe I know a little about *Hamlet*. Enough to feel confident saying that when a new scholarly book about the play appears and I can't make head or tail of it, there's something wrong with it rather than with me. That's how I feel about P. J. Aldus's *Mousetrap: Structure and Meaning in Hamlet* (U of T Press, 235 pages, \$15). It's the worst piece of scholarshit I've seen in some time. "Any new study of *Hamlet* intimates a Falstaffian temerity," says Aldus in his preface. He follows those words with an example of Falstaffian gobbledegook: "What perhaps contributes to the continuing, even increasing, belief in a Hamlet enigma is general acceptance of the play as a literal action within its fiction, an image in a fictional mirror which reflects life directly." Got it? We're then given an example of an Aldusian Falstaffian tautology: "Commentaries on tragedy which proceed from the same postulates tend to agree as to the meaning of facts, but those which work from differing premises are unlikely to do so, excepting as there may be partial identity or overlapping of governing assumptions." No one can quarrel with that. Certainly not me. A blurb at the front of this hook suggests that although readers may not accept everything that Aldus has to say about "for example, Ophelia's crown of flowers ... they will hardly be able to ignore it." I hope the blurb-writer won't be upset, but I gave up reading *Mousetrap* long before I got to Ophelia's flowers. Aldus's prose ought to give ACUTE anxiety. □

## Letters to the Editor

### VOLPE BARKS AGAIN

Sir:

John Hofsess's article in the February issue purports to tell us what 14 top Canadian writers are doing in 1977. What I'd like to know is what people like Morris Wolfe are doing on that list. I don't want to appear to be picking on Wolfe. Based on what I've read of his he seems to be a pleasant enough chap. But surely pleasantness isn't a sufficient criterion for one to be included on a list of leading authors. I think this is just one more example of *Books in Canada*'s questionable editorial judgement.

Mavis Volpe  
Malignant Cove, N.S.

### ANOTHER CLACHAN SLEEPS

Sir:

Have you been swamped with stories of one-wok publishing houses? Here is another one. The experience of Gordon Donaldson and the Clachan Press (February) almost duplicates that of Chalk Talk Publishing Company, Inc. of Brandon, Man.

Chalk Talk was started with high hopes of doing something worthwhile about providing school reading materials that would appeal to and be relevant for Western Canadian students, especially underprivileged ones. Two teachers and a newspaper editor thought that the enclosed book on an almost legendary event in this town and province would provide a push for further publication.

Funds were almost non-existent, consisting of a loan from a credit union and \$500 worth of services of a lawyer for incorporation. A teachers' organization provided the latter.

What was lacking were facilities, money, and expertise. I was a surprise to find that booksellers took 40% of the selling price of a book. Even the proofreading was not all that would be desired as members were ignorant of the extent to which the printer could be trusted in layout.

Since the topic of the book was one that had never been done and was about a teachers' "strike" the, is still discussed today, that has left animosities even in families, and that had a distinct effect on the organization of teachers and their right to bargain collectively, it was felt that there would be a demand for the true story, at least among teachers. How wrong an idea that was!

Two thousand copies were primed. About 1,500 languish in borer still. However, 500 copies provided money and incentive to try again with some booklets written by a teacher in Northwestern Ontario who was coping with many native children, trying to teach them to read in English. Teachers here used the books far "reluctant" readers and found that their interest was stimulated. Three of the little books were primed but the sales lagged.

The proliferation of these small publishing companies seems to show that the big houses are not really meeting all the needs of the teaching and reading public.

Margaret Mann  
Brander, Man.

### MARCHAND, MES ENFANTS

Sir:

Mr. Hofsess's review of *Just Looking, Thank You* (January) made me wonder if he has some personal grudge against Philip Marchand, for I have never seen such gratuitously irresponsible journalism. Indeed Mr. Hofsess seems guilty himself of many of the journalistic crimes on the

endless list, hurled at Marchand's book. "Smart-ass rubbish" comes first to mind, but let me be more specific than Mr. Hofsess.

Regarding Mr. Hofsess's charge that Marchand's "main appeal is to those readers who don't know what he's talking about": I came across Marchand's "Mating Dances Beneath the Basketball Hoop" ("Mating Dances of the 1970s Teen-Agers") in *Saturday Night* while living in New York, and felt it reflected very accurately the general high-school dating experience of college students I was teaching in up-state New York. In fact, I liked the article so much and the student response was so positive that it was included in a textbook-reader I was putting together for Little Brown, published last year. I now teach in a community college in Toronto, have had students from the very high school the story refers to, and they confirmed that Marchand's article was "just the way it is."

And regarding "Send o Psychiatrists to Leo." Mr. Hofsess is, I think, wrong again. Going to a gay bar surely does qualify as a "public declaration of homosexuality," and is therefore as much an act of "coming out" as any other.

But, really, nowhere does Marchand contend that his articles are offered as the "quintessential truth" about gay or any other lifestyle. He simply gives us his impressions — very nicely I think — and there is no journalistic or artistic crime in that. This first book of Marchand's deserves week points, but these are far outweighed by the positive. It was unfair of Hofsess to take a few personal jabs at Marchand and then we over-simplified story lines with no analysis to demonstrate anything (or even anything) he charges Marchand with.

On only one point do I agree with Mr. Hofsess: the book's jacket copy is bad. But why waste several paragraphs criticizing the jacket copy when he knows, as we all do, that book covers are the product of editors and designers, never the author?

And, finally, because I am a friend of Philip

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Marchand's, I know that he did not come to Canada "to avoid the draft" as Hofsess states, but came as a beginning university student in the mid-1960s. And although he is an American citizen and not "Canada's own" (if that matters), his parents are French-Canadian in origin. Where is Mr. Hofsess's "well-researched journalism"?

Judy Blankenship McClard  
Toronto

## CanWit No.22

PERUSAL OF AN atlas confirms that this country is blessed with some extraordinary place names. Three that amused us were: Climax, Sask.; Dismal Cove, N.S.; and Bolsover, Ont. We then fell to wondering what the civic motto of Climax would be. "The Place Where People Like To Come"? Contestants are invited to provide appropriate mottoes for any real place in Canada. The winner will receive \$25. Address:

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34 Books In Canada, April, 1977

CanWit No. 22. Books in Canada. 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. The deadline is April 29.

### RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 20

OUR CLERIH EW contest brought a n abundance of free-form verse, including multiple entries from several high-school classrooms. Although many contestants couldn't resist the urge to rhyme "Lévesque" with "Quebec," the bulk of the clerihews were both imaginative and delightful. The judges, after much debate, decided to award first prize to Eswyn Lyster of Qualicum Beach, B.C. She receives \$25 for these nicely wrought lines:

*Mackenzie King  
Seeking ways to have a fling  
Found my idea of tedium:  
A happy medium.*

*Gordon Sinclair  
Has been so long on the air  
He's convinced that he's witty.  
Pity.*

#### Honourable mentions:

*Jack McClelland  
Knows all is well and  
Good.  
He has Margaret Atwood.*  
— Hope Wener, Montreal

*Barbara Frum,  
Bright but financially dumb.  
Her salary never alters  
Like Barbara Walters'.*  
— Joseph Black, London, Ont.

*Flora MacDonald  
Is as different from Ronald  
As a political deed done  
From a sesame-seed bun.*  
— Elsie Mole, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

*Stanley Knowles  
Who tops Winnipeg's polls  
Almost always mentions  
Pensions.*  
— Renie Grosser, Ottawa

*William Lyon Mackenzie King  
Was terribly troubled by just one thing:  
In penning a dedication in his log,  
Should he honour his mother or his dog?*  
— Michael Darling, Montreal

*Hugh Hood  
Writes only when he's feeling good  
But Arthur Hailey  
Writes daily.*  
— Philip Walsh, Ottawa

*Pierre Trudeau  
Will never know  
I see him nightly,  
Nude and sprightly.*  
— D. O'Connell, Ottawa

*Barry Lord  
Is out of his gourd.  
He wants Canadian oil  
To stay on Canadian soil.*

— Chris Faiers, Toronto

*Pierre Berton  
Is completely certain  
To brew a new hassle  
With petitions to send Coles to Newcastle.*

— Derrick Murdoch, Toronto

*Ed Broadbent  
Has given up smiling for Lent.  
And Easter. And Whir Sunday.  
And Tuesday through Monday.*

— Donald C. Mason, Mississauga, Ont.

## Books received

THE FOLLOWING Canadian books have been received by Books in Canada in recent weeks. Inclusion in this list does not preclude a review or 'notice in a future issue:

- The Children of Aotearoa: A History of the Maori People to 1660. Vol. 1 and II. by Bruce Trigger. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Ghost House. by Lois Simois. Thunder Creek Publishing Co-operative.
- Moving in from Paradise. by Mick Burns. Thunder Creek Publishing Co-operative.
- Movies & Mythologies. by Peter Hazcourt. CBC.
- Improving Human Settlements, edited by H. Peter Oberlander. U of B.C. Press.
- A Man of Our Times. by Rolf Knight & Masa Koizumi. New Star Books.
- The Caribbean Connection. by Robert Chodos. James Lorimer.
- Things Which Are Done In Secret. by Marlene Dixon. Black Rose.
- Norland Echoes. by Charles Sangster, edited by Frank M. Tierney. Turnstone.
- Twentieth Century Essays on Confederation Literature. edited by Lorraine McMullen. Turnstone.
- The Real Cost of the B.C. Milk Board. by Herbert G. Brubel and Richard W. Schwandt. Fraser Institute.
- The Man Who Flew Churchill. by Bruce West. Totem Books.
- 30 (some odd) poems. by George Miller. Three Trees Press.
- To Feed the Sun. by Brian Pundy. Three Trees Press.
- Mankind's Future in the Pacific. edited by R. F. Seegal. U. of B.C. Press.
- Multiple Choice: New and Selected Poems. 1961-1976. by Harry Howarth. Mosaic Press/Valley Editions.
- Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish. by Keith Richardson. Mosaic Press/Valley Editions.
- Toronto Short Stories. edited by Morris Wolfe and Douglas Daymond. Doubleday.
- 3 Plays. by Tom Cone. Fulp.
- A Selected Bibliography of Musical Canadiana. by I. N. L. Bradley. GLC Publishers.
- Ballad of a Stonepicker. by George Ryga. Talonbooks.
- The Road to Arginus. by David Solway. New Delta.
- Sparks. by Michael Harris. New Delta.
- Left Hand Mad. by Richard Sommer. New Delta.
- Milarepa. by Richard Sommer. New Delta.
- The Spark Plug Thief. by Marc Plourde. New Delta.
- Black and White the Horses. by David S. West. Newpointment.
- Seems Valuable. by Ed Upwards. Turnstone Press.
- Neither Am I. by John Cook. Newpointment.
- Selected Poems of Bluebell S. Phillips. Vesta.
- The Peter Stories. by Gindy's Hindmarch. Coach House.
- The martyrology, books 3 & 4. by bp nichol. Coach House.
- The Prime Minister in Canadian Government and Politics. by R. M. Punnett. Macmillan.
- Identities: The Impact of Ethnicity on Canadian Society. edited by Wacziarg Hajiw. PMA.
- Dene Nation: The Colony Within. edited by Mel Watkins. U of T Press.
- Animals, Man and Change. by Hugh R. MacCrimmon. M&S.
- bill jubebe. by bob cobbing. Coach House.
- th wind up tongue. by bill biscuit. Newpointment.
- First Scratches. No Blood, Eye Down. by Fred Gaysck. Fiddichcad.
- Homecomings: Narrative Poems. by M. Travis Lane. Fiddichcad.
- The Viking Process. by Norman Hartley. Totem Books.
- Gerhard: A Love Story. by Betty Kennedy. Totem Books.
- Moratorium. by McCullum. McCullum. and Olthuis. Anglican Book Centre.

# McGraw-Hill Ryerson for spring '77

## ARE YOU PAVING TOO MUCH TAX?

by *Wayne Beach and Lyle R. Hapburn*

The authors, both Toronto lawyers, explain how you can plan your financial affairs and take advantage of your rights under Canadian tax law. "There are few individuals who will not benefit from a reading of this book, timely and readable." *Hamilton Spectator*. Available \$5.95 paperback

## SAILING CRAFT IN CANADA:

A Guide for Buyers and Owners

by *Cliff Newman*

All informative and practical guide to all the sailing craft manufactured in Canada, from the tiny dinghy to large ocean-going sailing yachts. Over 200 illustrations. April \$5.95 paperback

## LEGENDS OF MY PEOPLE

THE GREAT OJIBWAY

Written and illustrated by *Norval Morrisseau*

Now available in paperback. Here are the beliefs, tales and legends up to the present day of the great Ojibway nation of Lake Nipigon and the Thunder Bay District, simply expressed by Morrisseau, a self-taught Ojibway Indian who has received wide acclaim as the leading artist of his people. b/w drawings. March \$4.95 paperback

## TENNIS: Playing a Winning Game with Don Platt

by *Don Platt*

Written for beginner as well as experienced player, this will make the game uncomplicated and fun. The visual illustrations take you step-by-step through the basics of a winning game. It's direct, entertaining and invaluable. Over 100 photos. March \$7.95 paperback

## ANOTHER WINTER. ANOTHER SPRING:

A Love Remembered

by *Louise de Kiriline Lawrence*

A true story of two doomed lovers unfolds in the chaos of Russia during the Revolution. This love story of tragic beauty, reviewed by *Publishers Weekly* as "a deeply moving memoir", is written by Burroughs Medal winner Louise de Kiriline Lawrence who now lives in Rutherglen, Ontario. Available \$8.95

## POLITICS: CANADA, 4/e

edited by *Paul W. Fox*

Unique and freshly up-to-date, this is an essential introduction to Canadian politics that will challenge, entertain and, above all, inform with the scope and vigor of its debates and the comprehensiveness of its treatment of issues. July \$12.95

## BIROS IN PERIL:

A guide to the endangered species in Canada and North America

by *John P. S. Mackenzie*

illustrated by *Terence Shortt*

An engrossing documentation of the fight to save 20 species now facing extinction, dramatically illustrated by Terence Shortt, one of the world's great bird artists. 20 colour plates. 30 b/w drawings. May 414.95

## A VOICE FROM AFAR:

The History of Canadian Telecommunications.

by *Robert Collins*

Handsomely illustrated throughout, this readable and fast-paced account of Canadian telecommunications from 1846 up to the present era, concentrates on the personalities and human stories that played such vital roles in uniting this vast country. May 414.35

## MACKENZIE KING: His Life and World

(Prime Ministers of Canada Series)

general editor *W. Kaya Lamb*

by *J. I. Granatstein*

The second volume of this series is a comprehensive and fast-paced narrative of the Rime Minister who led Canada through the most difficult years of the first half of this century into a position of internal strength and international autonomy. 20 colour pictures and 100 b/w. June 414.35

## THE OUTDOORSMAN'S GUIDE TO WILDERNESS CAMPING IN CANADA:

A complete manual for the adventurous camper, including plans for tent making and instructions on snow camping.

by *Douglas Durst*

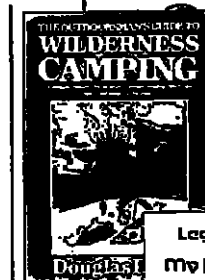
Increasing popularity in a unique style of camping makes this an invaluable guide on how to travel with the minimum amount of gear to achieve the maximum harmony with nature. b/w photographs and drawings. April \$4.95 paperback

## A COMPLETE GUIDE TO FAMILY FUN IN TORONTO

by *Sheila Kennedy and Susan Seidman*

This thoroughly and exhaustively tested guide includes 18 tours of Toronto, highlighted in b/w photos, maps and drawings, and a handy index. Certain to have an enduring and constantly referred to volume for tourists as well as Torontonians. April \$4.95 paperback

\*prices and dates subject to change



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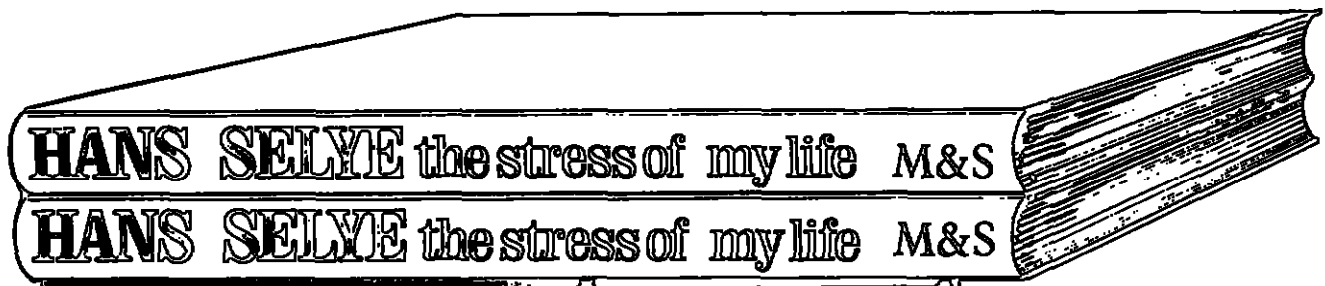
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