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BOOKS IN CANADA

AN ETHNIC FEAST
With multiculturalism
in CanLit
... a question?

Comments from
Josef Skvorecky
Irving Layton
Robin Skelton
George Jonas
and others



BOOKS IN CANADA

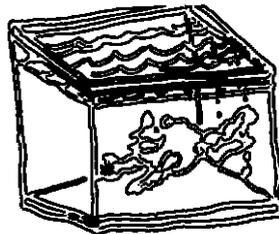
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Caroline Bayard teaches Romance languages at McMaster University. Cecile Cloutier teaches French at the U of T. Jock David is an editor of *Essays on Canadian Writing*. Sheree Haughian is a freelance journalist and unpublished novelist based in Orangeville, Ont. Douglas Hill is one of the judges for this year's Books in Canada Award for First Novels (see page 41). John Hofsess is a Hamilton, Ont. freelancer. Amilcare Iannucci teaches Italian at the U of T. Graham Jackson writes on the dance for *Toronto Life*. Poet George Jonas is the co-author of *By Persons Unknown* (Macmillan, 1977). Paul Kennedy is a freelance Wasp living in Toronto. Martin Knelman is Toronto's critic-at-large for the performing arts. Joy Kogawa is an Ottawa poet. Irving Layton is a Toronto recluse. Jocelyn Laurence is a student at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. Susan Leslie is a Vancouver freelancer and scriptwriter of educational films. Sandra Martin writes regularly for *Books in Canada* and other national magazines. Duncan McEwan is a researcher for CBC-TV's *Take Thirty*. Keith A. McLeod teaches in the U of T's Faculty of Education and is the editor of the magazine *Multiculturalism*. Eugene McNamara is a Windsor, Ont. poet. Duncan Meikle was billeted for two nights in a Salvation Army rest camp in Tanzania in 1964 and now lives in Maberly Ont., where he drives a school bus and is working on a biography of Frank Underhill. C. D. Minni is a Vancouver critic and short-story writer. Barbara Novak is a freelance writer and former assistant editor of *Fugue* magazine. W. H. Rockett heads the Communications department at Seneca College. Ronald Rompkey teaches English at the University of Saskatchewan. Robin Skelton is the editor of *The Malahat Review* and of Sono Nis Press. Josef Skvorecky is the author of *The Bass Sauvophone* (Anson-Cartwright Editions, 1977). Michael Smith is a short-story writer based in St. Marys, Ont. Nigel Spencer lives in Sherbrooke, Que., where he is currently investigating how Canada's history has been mythologized by her artists. Ron Waldie writes frequently on classroom materials for these pages. Ludwig Zeller is the editor of Oasis Publications and the author of *When the Animal Rises from the Deep the Head Explodes* (Mosaic Valley Editions, 1976).

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THE VERBAL MOSAIC

WE IN **THIS** country **are** embarked on an **extraordinary** experiment to see whether a democratic nation conceived in muddled and theoretical pluralism can long endure. Whatever happens between Quebec and the rest of us, our constitution — such as it **is** — will be modified beyond the dreams of our forefathers. Specifically, formal recognition will be given to the reality that Canada has been and continues to be a country of immigration — one of the last best hopes for free men and women. We hold out the promise of

participation without assimilation. In the **following** pages we examine some of the implications for our literature — such as it is — of this ideal of **multi-culturalism**. To lead off the section, freelancer A.F. Moritz asked several Canadian writers of different **cultural backgrounds** to comment on the statement and question: "Canada is not a melting pot; it is a cultural mosaic. How does this advance or retard the development of a Canadian literature?"

Here are their replies:

Let's have less ethnic pork and more ethnic print

By JOSEF SKVORECKY

IT'S A **nice slogan** — "Canada is not a melting pot, it is a cultural mosaic" — but does it hold water? Obviously, it **almost** anything, it hinges on definitions. Does "**culture**" imply language, in **this** case, a language other than English or French? And if it **does not**, how does the Canadian "**cultural mosaic**" differ from the American "melting pot"? Both here and in the U.S., **an interested person meets** NO trouble finding the **spectacle** of big-city girls of "**ethnic**" descent **twittering** perfect Canadian or American English and **romping around in** nonsensical **costumes** that nobody has **worn in Europe** for **close to a** century, while **their parents** gorge themselves on pork-mast and Pilsner, made in either **Milwaukee or Toronto**. For isn't **this what** comes to mind of the average non-"ethnic" Canadian whenever he thinks **about** the "cultural mosaic"? **Quite often** the **costumes** and the pork-mast have been paid for by monies whose source is one of the benevolent granting agencies, **governmental or** otherwise. Which is one of the **nice ways** the good **Canadians**, with the but of intentions, **foster** in the minds of the Anglo-Saxon hard cow, of **this country** the image of the "**ethnic**" as a sort of **rural** exotic, given N yelps and romps and yodels. I **and** most of my "**ethnic**" **friends** do not care for **this sort** of cultural mosaic. **My wife**, in the old Communist country, **used N** be an **export** article, romping in seven petticoats in the sophisticated capitals of **Western Europe** for hard currency cashed in by the **state**, and **so both** she and I hate it. The only **way I** could **become** interested would be if the **Toronto Caravan** [an **annual ethnic festival**] put **on an** African **show with the** black girls of **Mississauga** dancing in **their ethnic** costumes. **These**, as far as **I can** judge by the films **I have** seen, **never** include **anything to** cover the upper **part** of the female body. But **then**, blacks **are** native North **Americans**, not "**ethnics**."

To **me**, the **folklore** of old **Europe** is an **uninteresting** curiosity, important only N the scholar. **What** is important to the "**ethnic**" **people** is their **living** culture, and then? is **hardly** any without their languages. Some European nations, including my own, managed to survive only because their dedicated **writers** of the 19th century revived the **nearly** extinct **tongue**, and thus gave the almost fully **Germanized** people a national identity. Hence **the supreme importance** of literature for many of the **small** nations of the old con-

continent: hence the **reverence** in which they hold their writers.

Now, **the** granting **policies** of Canada, with all their excellence, **have** one curious gap. It doesn't seem **to** be particularly difficult for an "**ethnic**" club N get a grant and treat **their community** to the traditional pork-mast **feast, or** N the Oktoberfest beer-drinking **contest, folklorized** by the **above-mentioned girls**. For such **an occasion** these young **ladies** will strip **their usual** attire (**jeans and T-shirts**) and don the seven **petticoats** and the **unmatching** boots bought in one of the gay shops **on Yonge Street**, for "**ethnic**" ladies can usually stitch **together a dress** but they **rarely** manage to cobble **book**. But I have yet N find **an agency** that would not be restricted by regulations, **and** could therefore subsidize **a publishing house** that tries to keep alive **an "ethnic" literature** in Canada, **thus** helping to change the pot of pork into **a mosaic**. Pork is eaten, **whereas** books **are** sold: that **makes the** girl-watching, pork-eating, beer-drinker **a subject of cultural interest, while** the person who makes books is engaged in business, not in cultural activity — even if that "business" is a strictly non-profit **corporation** with a board of directors who **meticulously** check **the accounts** twice a year. **There** are only subsidies for publishers **who** produce books in **the two non-"ethnic" languages**. **Such books are** obviously **culture**, like mast pork. Consequently, **a dedicated "ethnic" businessman** dealing in **books** can survive **only** if he



Josef Skvorecky

fraudulently operates a doodles& group on the side and embezzles the grant money for his business ventures.

True, the great institution of the Canada Council gives grants to writers without asking about their ethnicity. But it is assumed that the final product will somehow turn out in English or French. Try to offer a typescript in an unintelligible, and (in Canada) therefore commercially unpublishable language to one of the big publishing firms, and see what happens! Only the small houses have-sometimes — trust enough to have the strange thing translated. It would obviously be somewhat easier to offer such works in printed form, but for that you need an "ethnic" publisher — unless you print and publish your opus yourself. Self-published books, however, notoriously make an even worse impression on editors than typescript%

And yet these scribblers in unintelligible tongues are the ones who bring freshness to the portraying of Canada and its native peoples, be they Indian, Eskimo, English, or French. They see the country as Tocqueville saw early America (which is not to say that all of them are Tocquevilles), or as that child in Andersen saw the naked king. They, with their fresh eyes and a language they can manage with excellence (for there are very few Conrads) are the ones who can contribute to the development of Canadian literature.

The only thing their children, born already on these shores, will have left of the old "ethnic" culture will be the romping around for fun to the sounds of badly played bagpipes. If there be writers among them, they will no longer have the fresh eye of the heavily accented, newly arrived immigrant. They will, for all I know, write books about frustrated ladies having love affairs with lesbian raccoons. In idiomatic Canadian, of course. No problems with grants or big publishers here. □

Josef Skvorecky is a Canadian of Czechoslovakian descent.



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Latin America had cultures before Columbus was conceived

By LUDWIG ZELLRR

AT PRESENT writers in languages other than the official ones in Canada are little heard of or ignored here. If a maturing process in the Canadian public is produced, these authors will be incorporated into its cultural inheritance and this will enable it to see that literature is not restricted to the English language or to Québécois literature. The Canadian public will acquire a more universal character, an autonomy that reaches beyond politics, ceasing to be the far-away colony of an empire. Alexandria and Byzantium became culturally wealthy in such a situation. If this phenomenon is produced, Canadian literature and Canadian literature will flourish and have a universal dimension that it now is lacking.

As to my own case, I would like Canadians to realize that there are 200 million other persons in this hemisphere that speak Spanish and 110 million that speak Portuguese. There is a distortion in the generally prevailing image of Latin America among us that must disappear. Latin America had extraordinary cultures before Columbus gave notice of its existence; universities functioned there when Canada was being "discovered." There are very valuable writers whose only shortcoming is that they have not yet been translated into English. □

Ludwig Zeller is a Canadian of Chilean descent.

Literature improves when writers know where they're from

By PIER GIORGIO DI CICCO

CANADIAN LITERATURE is defined by the "cultural mosaic." There are very few writers that don't draw from it directly or indirectly for their work. The tendency in recent years was to underplay one's cultural extraction as a writer. The whole anti-American feeling led to a pursuit of the "pure" Canadian, which of course didn't exist. The question of Canadian identity had to give way to



Pier Giorgio Di Cicco

multiculturalism; it just Nck a while because cultural pluralism is a much more sophisticated notion to define yourself by.

I came to Canada to escape the "melting pot" of the United States. In Toronto I was able to see myself as an Italian writing in an English medium. This was important to my process of being a writer. The fact that this makes me an Italo-Canadian writer is a convenience to others and not to me. I don't think any writer goes about thinking in terms of a national literature, unless he or she thinks in marketing terms, or is more interested in appraisals than in the act of writing. I do know that any literature improves when its writers accept what they are and where they come from. In Canada, that can't have much to do with keeping out foreign influencers. □

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco is a Canadian of Italian descent.

Leading with a 5,000-year-old chin

By IRVING LAYTON

FOR THE Jewish-Canadian writer, Canada is not a melting pot, nor is it a mosaic. Since he's a 5,000-year-old Canadian he possesses a distinctive personality and outlook that keeps him at variance with a Christianized culture that he finds, to his amused surprise, to be both parvenu and moribund at one and the same time. Luckily for him, there are two Canada, French and English. It is this wonderful fact that has allowed him to escape the stagnation of the one and the sterility of the other. Writers as talented and resourceful as Leonard Cohen, Mordecai Richler, Adele Wiseman, Hi Mandel, Irving Layton, A.M. Klein, Joe Rosenblatt, David Solway, Seymour Mayne, Miriam Waddington, and Phyllis Gcttlieb have made a contribution to this country that the Wasp literary establishment composed mainly of talentless mediocrities and pathetic stumblebums ensconced in sheltering homes miscalled universities (the Barbours, Tallmans, et al.) have shown themselves unwilling or unable to assess. Since sterility and gentility are two sides of the same quaint medal, one can confidently predict that the opposition between Jewish realism and Anglophone gentility, Jewish cosmopolitanism and Wasp nationalism (the latter, in essence, a cowardly flight from reality) will continue and even grow more intense with the decades.

I might add also that in his continuing opposition to the Wasp literary establishment, the Jewish-Canadian writer finds natural allies among other ethnic minorities that have escaped the paralyzing infection of gentility, notably among Poles, Ukrainians, and Italians. Names like Dudek, Wiebe, Gasparini, and Di Ciui come readily to mind.

CANUCKY SHMUCK

(For Douglas Barbour)

*Reviewing my Collected Poems
he allows his voice
to rise to a high
revealing falsetto*

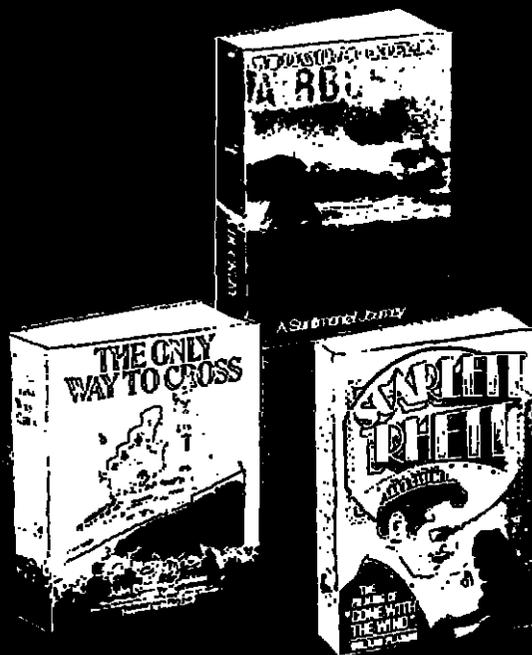
*'So much dung
to clear away
before reaching Layton's
impressive monument'*

*Canucky Shmuck:
doesn't he realize
he's the only shiptile
in this vast dominion
that a blowing prairie wind
shaped after many tries
into the likeness of a man?*

□

Irving Layton is a Canadian of Romanian-Jewish descent.

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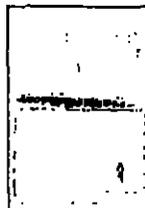
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To become Italian, go
to Rome not College Street

By **CECILE CLOUTIER**

TO ANSWER this question, I think one must put oneself in two different situations.

It seems self-evident that, from the point of view of an exile, it would be more pleasant to live in a cultural mosaic than in a melting pot. The new Canadian would doubtless identify more with himself as a single person and would continue to develop in a way, that is true to himself. He enriches literature by expressing himself in his native language. There would be fewer writers among first-generation immigrants if English were the language they chose. Those among them who write in English are already to some extent in a melting pot, and it should be remembered that there are few outstanding people in the history of literature who wrote in their second language.

From the point of view of the country, however, it's apparent that a mosaic could result in a weakened Canadian culture. Athens, Rome, and Paris were certainly unilingual and unicultural. If the culture of a country is sufficiently strong, incoming cultural groups are assimilated rather than juxtaposed in ghettos.

In short, countries offering a cultural mosaic probably advance literature from a universal perspective. But in Canada a mosaic could slow the development of our particular literature. As far as I'm concerned, if I wanted to immerse myself in Italian culture, I would prefer to go to Rome than to Toronto's College Street. □

Cécile Cloutier is a Canadian of Québécois descent. The above article has been translated from the French.

The hunger for hyphenated
Canadian content

By **JOY KOGAWA**

WHAT ADVANCES or retards development in much human endeavour is not so much the definition of the external situation as the presence or absence within the situation of passion, vision, courage, and commitment.



Joy Kogawa

Some people are of the opinion that Canada's greatest cultural danger is that it is becoming a melting pot of instant pre-packaged fluff pouring in from across the southern border or down from borderless multinational corporations. Others see our greatest problem as a lack of cohesion and communication among the separated parts of our cultural mosaic.

From the current vantage point of the federal government's multiculturalism directorate, ethnicity is to be encouraged and grants are up for grabs for conferences, festivals, publications, multicultural co-ordinating bodies, museums, and so forth. With or without all this hyped-up activity, there seems to be a lively market for hyphenated Canadian writing, which is feeding many who are hungry for hyphenated Canadian content.

It could be that much of this writing is of the quality of that pre-packaged fluff that enervates rather than energizes the consumer. It could also be said that our separation into ethnic groups narrows and drains our concerns away from the needs of the whole. To this extent the development of a unified Canadian literature is not being advanced by the concept of a cultural mosaic.

But opponents might argue that the nourishing of our separate traditions is one way of strengthening us to combat the malaise and apathy threatening us from within and without. They would add that with an increased strength and vitality comes the capacity not only to tolerate but also to welcome the differences and that all this is part of a process of cultivating the soil for the growth of Canadian writing.

Perhaps the very tensions that exist within our country are necessary ingredients for the creation of a great literature. If so, we have cause to celebrate this avenue of health from the midst of the evidence of much estrangement.

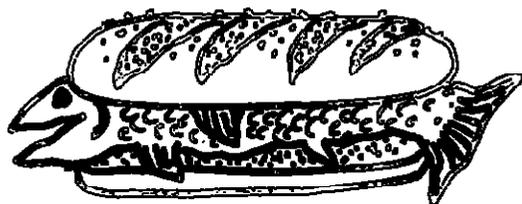
Joy Kogawa is a Canadian of Japanese descent.

Forget CanLit and concentrate on LitCan

By ROBIN SKELTON

THE WORDS "Canadian literature" could imply that books written in Canada have more in common than their authors' nationality, while the phrase "cultural mosaic" suggests otherwise. "Literature in Canada" is a less loaded expression; if we substitute LitCan for CanLit the question can be answered in positive terms. The variety of our cultural patterns, linguistic backgrounds and environments must result in an invigorating complexity that will spare us the domination of a central élite, which has devitalized much literature in other countries. Our strong diversity should protect us from being overridden by the culture of any one other country, for we can continue to derive inspiration from our origins and ancestries as well as from our local and regional loyalties. This should give us a literature unique in the Western world, one composed of many distinct literary traditions and each peculiar to Canada.

Canada is larger and more various in landscape than Europe, though less populous; let us create a literature as culturally, and even linguistically, diverse as that of Europe. The cultural centralism of empires and kingdoms that lingers on in nations used to



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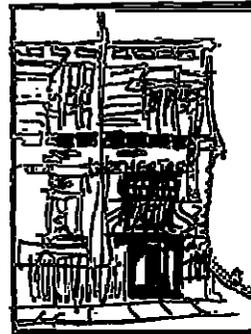
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believing that all roads lead to Rome (or London, or Paris, or Peking) is outmoded. Writers can keep in touch without settling together in one central metropolis, and publishers are no longer found in one ghetto. Our variety is one of our greatest strengths; it may cause slower progress than that possible to □ countries, but I believe that progress will be more sure, for there will be more growing points. Let us, therefore, forget CanLit and concentrate on LitCan. CanLit is a question; LitCan is an assertion. □

Robin Skelton is a Canadian of English descent.

The state has no place in the root-cellars of the nation

By **GEORGE JONAS**

I CAME TO Canada from Hungary, but I did not come here to be a Hungarian in Canada. When I stepped off the boat, nearly 22 years ago, the only question that interested me was where I was going, not where I was coming from. I knew where I was coming from too well.

This has nothing to do with denying one's heritage. People who try to do that (and there are some) exhibit, to my mind, the same pathology as people who try to do the opposite — which is the more fashionable thing nowadays. Doing the opposite is to wear one's roots on one's sleeve. The proper and natural place to have one's roots is where a man has them: underground.

As a writer it has never made any difference to me whether Canada is a mosaic or a melting pot. In fact, of course, as is obvious to everyone except a few academics, both Canada and the United States are melting pots for some people and mosaics for others. One or two individuals stop being Ukrainians or whatever a few years after they land here; one or two remain Ukrainians for three generations. In between the two extremes the shadings are infinite. My blessings to them all.

The trouble begins when the state pushes its ugly nose into one more matter that shouldn't concern it, and decides to foster a conscious policy, such as multiculturalism. Maintaining my roots is my business, not the government's. If I want my child to speak the ancestral language I'll see to it that he does. It is my affair, not the Canadian taxpayer's. The stronger I feel about my roots the less I want them to become one more pretext for a new nest of officials or another con for a Canada Council grant.

But this is swimming upstream. □

George Jonas is a Canadian of Hungarian descent.



George Jonas

The pot thickens . . .

. . . and the mosaic cracks. The concept of multiculturalism must be communicated if it's to survive. What are the magazines doing?

by Amilcare Iannucci

Multi News, published by the Department of the Secretary of state.

Ethnic Kaleidoscope Canada, published monthly by the Department of Employment and Immigration (ISSN 0380 1934).

Communique: Canadian Studies, published by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. Vol. 3, No. 1 (October, 1976) is devoted to a bibliography of multicultural studies in Canada (ISSN 0318 1197).

Multiculturalism, published quarterly by the Guidance Centre of the U of T's Faculty of Education, in co-operation with the Multicultural Development Branch of Ontario's Ministry of Culture and Recreation (ISSN 0701 2586).

Jewish Dialog, published quarterly by ID Publishing Co.

Canadian Fiction Magazine, No. 20a (Spring, 1976), a special translation issue guest-edited by Charles Lillard (ISSN 0045 477X).

less multiculturalism is supported vigorously, it will soon dissolve in the melting pot, perhaps a generation late. On the other hand, multiculturalism as a policy risks ghettoing the various ethnic groups if it is unimplemented thoughtfully and conscientiously. The very image of the mosaic illustrates the danger. The cement between the fragments binds them together, but it also separates and isolates them. At present there is little communication within the mosaic, even between the small "ethnic" fragments and the large English and French blocks, because of a widespread belief that multiculturalism is for "ethnics" and not for the establishment.

Obviously dialogue is needed, but there are few vehicles for such interaction. The two bilingual government publications, *Multi News* and *Ethnic Kaleidoscope Canada*, are both limited in scope. Their chief function is to inform, and neither provides a real forum for dialogue.

The dearth of multicultural magazines

was noted in a recent issue of *Communique: Canadian Studies*, which was devoted to an intelligently arranged bibliography of multicultural studies in Canada. Short, informative notes precede categories such as immigration, multicultural policy, and ethnic-group theory. The section on periodical literature points out that only the *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* dedicates itself exclusively to multicultural studies. Since the compiling of this invaluable bibliography, an important new publication, *Multiculturalism*, has appeared on the scene. It is an academic journal directed toward those who have a professional interest in exploring the theoretical, educational, cultural, and political implications of multiculturalism. In addition to scholarly articles, it prints political speeches, reports on multicultural conferences, and publishes lists of resource materials relating to the study of multiculturalism. The journal makes a welcome and distinguished addition to the discipline, but dialogue should be

A STORY BY Walter Bauer called "Apple Orchard," published in the translation issue of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, dramatizes poignantly what multiculturalism is supposed to prevent. Joe Martin (Giuseppe Martine in Italian) owns an apple orchard outside Toronto that he has cultivated lovingly ever since he arrived in Canada 40 years ago. Now the developers are taking over and everyone except him has sold out. After resisting heroically, he finally succumbs to the combined pressure of his children and the real-estate agent. But the death of the trees means his death, for his identity is rooted in the land. Instead of signing the contract, he hangs himself from the boughs of *Il Re*, the king of his orchard.

The controlling metaphor of the story is that of brutal assimilation — the devouring of farmland to make room for urban sprawl, ethnic suicide through absorption. "But that's the American melting pot," you object, "not the Canadian mosaic, which preserves ethnic identities." However, un-



conducted at other levels as well. Academic discussion alone will not prevent Giuseppe Martine's human tragedy.

If only a handful of scholarly journals specialize in multiculturalism, even fewer literary ones do so. Ironically, a prerequisite for dialogue is monologue. Each ethnic group must look within itself, explore its past, understand its culture, and define its ethos before it can communicate its experience to other groups. The Jewish community has attained this stage. *Jewish Dialog* publishes fiction, poetry, essays, and even translations that bring to life the Jewish experience and open it to anyone willing to engage in dialogue.

The special translation issue of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, guest edited by Charles Lillard, has the merit of broadening the dialogue to include many of the major ethnic groups in Canada. The range of the volume is vast, moving from Cree legends to stories originally written in Latvian, Chinese, Arabic, Punjabi, Dutch, and so on. Although the quality of the stories is uneven, the collection as a whole manages to capture the vitality and variety of ethnic experience. What binds the stories together is an underlying thematic unity. They are all about Giuseppe Martine in that they all describe what it means to belong to a minority group in Canada. The anthology

opens a dialogue that is not conditioned by social, economic, political, or chauvinistic prejudices. We need more volumes like it. In this connection, it is encouraging to learn that, beginning on April 1, 1978, the "Multicultural Program" of the Secretary of State plans to promote multicultural Canadian literature by giving assistance to publishers on a project basis. With more vehicles to communicate multicultural reality, perhaps in the future there will be another way out besides death for Giuseppe Martine. □

Humpty Dumpchuk has a great fall

But in trying to come to grips with her Ukrainian heritage, Kostash puts all the pieces together again

by Paul Kennedy

All of *Baba's Children*, by Myrna Kostash, Hurtig, 413 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88830 144 8).

IN VEGREVILLE, ALTA., there is an enormous Ukrainian Easter egg. It's 26 Feet long, weighs 2½ tons, contains more than \$50,000 worth of aluminum, and symbolizes the sentimental nostalgia of Ukrainian Canadians. It might be called *Humpty Dumpchuk*. Myrna Kostash hates the Vegreville egg, or at least the Mother Goose mythology for which it stands. In *All of Baba's Children* she rejects most of this mythology, and attacks many of the time-worn truisms at the base of Canadian ethnic history. Nothing much remains at the end of the book of the romantic vision of happy Bohunk peasants, smilingly suffering a dearth of rain or a surplus of racism, so that their prosperous grandchildren might erect exorbitant Easter eggs in Alberta. The established myths have all fallen to the ground. Courtesy of Kostash, they have been smashed into tiny pieces.

-But Kostash also endeavours to "put *Dumpchuk* together again," through a personal declaration of peace with her newly reconstructed ethnic roots. Although she may ultimately be more convincing and more successful as a debunker of myths, she is definitely most appealing and most

interesting when she attempts a tentative reconciliation with her Ukrainian heritage. It's a love-hate relationship from the beginning. She hates the Ukrainian exclusion from the Canadian WASP establishment, although she loves the sense of "otherness" that evolves from this exclusion, and which therefore gives her freedom to criticize that establishment. She despises the romanticization of poverty popularized by her predecessors, although she gratefully enjoys the material benefits that result from her grandparents' impoverished struggles toward economic success. She laments the sycophantic and self-serving loyalism of the Ukrainian-Canadian elite, while she is willing to admit that such loyalism may periodically have preserved ethnic culture, by deflecting the jingoistic violence of a dominant Anglo-American society. She regrets the blatant religiosity and the reactionary politics of some of her ancestors, while she gloats over the secular radicalism and the left-wing agitation of others. It's obviously not a simple book.

At times, in fact, it can be confusing. When Kostash originally embarked upon the book, she hoped that it would combine the strengths of investigative journalism with the virtues of oral history. She abandoned a promising freelance career in Toronto, and rented a motel room in Two Hills, Alta., where she spent four months

interviewing the local Ukrainian community. The fragmentary results of these interviews are scattered throughout *All of Baba's Children*. It's something like a scrapbook.

Unfortunately (no racist slur intended), Ukrainian Canadians are far from uniformly articulate. Some conscientious editor should have eliminated many of the most irrelevant and imprecise quotations from this already overlong text. It is surely a complicated enough task to narrate, among other things, the story of three distinct generations of Ukrainian-Canadians; simultaneously to turn ethnic history on its head, to carry out a two-pronged attack against a docile Ukrainian elite and an aggressive WASP majority; and to criticize the hollow multicultural myth of the Canadian mosaic. There is little time left to sort out the vagaries of a series of confusing quotations, which evince little or no obvious connection to Kostash's arguments. Her book would be stronger without the interview scraps. Leave Barry Broadfoot to speak through the mouths of the masses. The voice of Myrna Kostash is plenty powerful on its own.

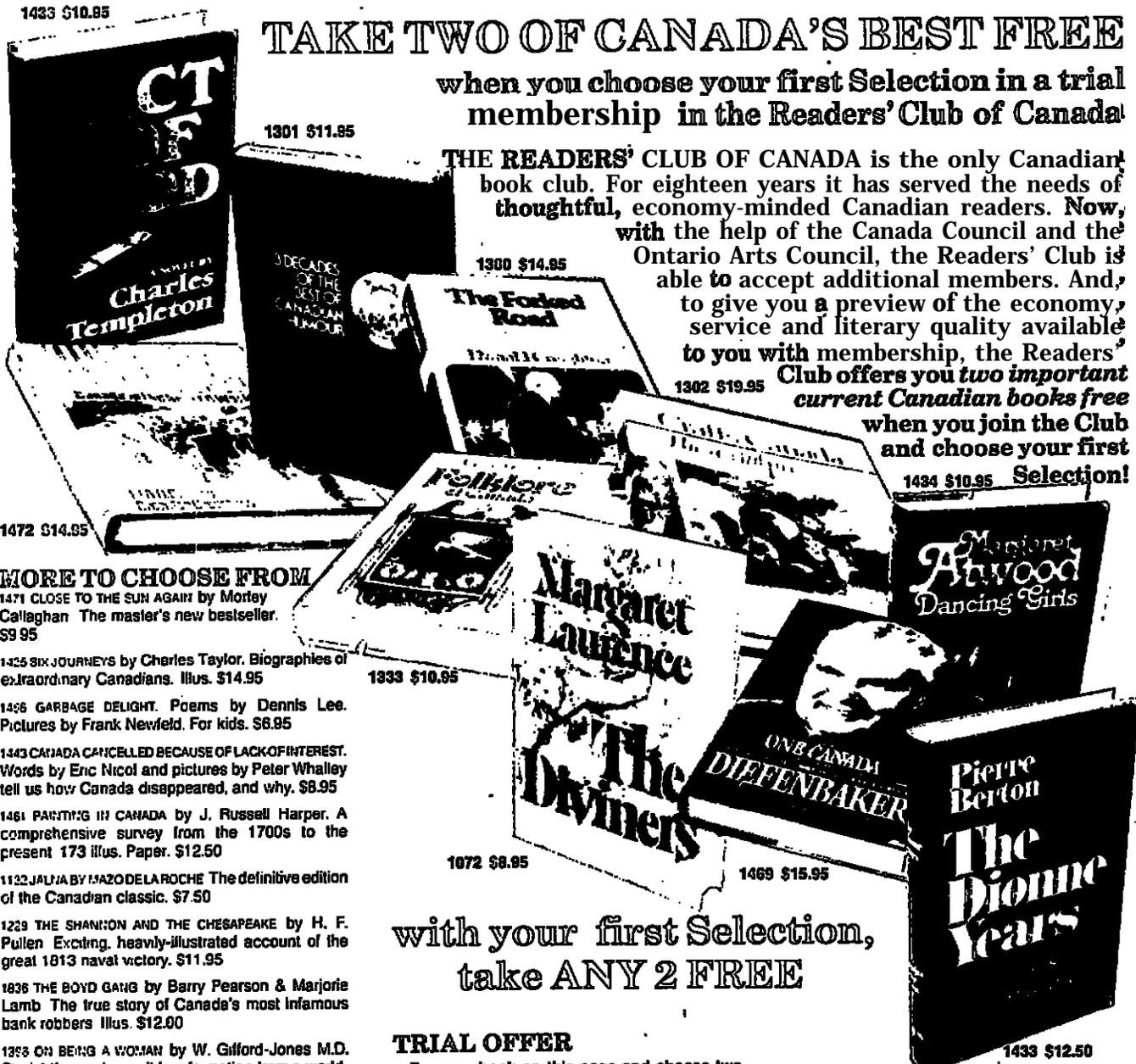
And it is never more powerful than when — as in the final few chapters — she speaks unabashedly in the first person. *All of Baba's Children* knocks *Humpty Dumpchuk* from the wall. Myrna Kostash puts everything back together again. The result is

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an achievement that is more intricate in intellectual design, more beautiful in emotional commitment, and much more impressive in overall effect than the giant Ukrainian egg in Vegreville. □

Nothing to lose but their chain saws

No Streets of Gold: A Social History of Ukrainians in Alberta. by Helen Potrebenco, New Star Books, 311 pages, 85.95 paper (ISBN 0 919888 69 0).

Greater Than Kings: Ukrainian Pioneer Settlement In Canada. by Zonia Keywan and Martin Coles, Harvest House, 163 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88772 177 2).

By KEITH A. McLEOD

IT WOULD BE difficult to estimate whether the Ukrainians or the Mennonites are the more prolific historians of their respective roles in the development of Canada. Both ethnic groups are primarily identified with

the first and second waves of immigration from Eastern Europe. Each group had to struggle for its distinct existence and recognition in Canada. The result of this struggle is demonstrated in the literature — in the perspective or interpretation as well as in the actual content.

The book by Helen Potrebenco attempts to give a Marxist interpretation of the history of the Ukrainian immigrants. I say "attempts," because I find the analysis rather blatant and more akin to propaganda. However, with that qualification in mind, it is interesting to read a volume that tries to diverge from the usual treadmill approach — that of self-glorification. But even Potrebenco's interpretation at times frustrates the reader because she is so intent on portraying the peasant-cum-working-class Ukrainians as the heroes and everyone else as the exploiters. Indeed, she never is able to give a satisfactory interpretation of the radical Anglo-Saxon Canadians who were leaders in the Winnipeg General Strike, the OBU, and other radical left-wing movements.

Another aspect of her study needs clarification. How is Western Canadian populism related to working-class politics and Marxist thought? This question is not considered in an analytical reflective manner. It is not enough to equate farmers with farm-labourers and see them all as being

exploited by the CPR or other agents.

The major responsibility of any writer is to see that she or he gets the "facts" straight. To say that J.S. Woodsworth was the only parliamentarian to oppose our participation in the First World War is to confuse the two world wars. The statement that in 1915 Sifton was knighted and moved to England needs qualification and explanation.

However, in spite of these drawbacks and others such as the glossing over of the religious disputes among the Ukrainians, the misspelling of Wilfrid Laurier's name, and other editorial errors, the book is a contribution to the literature on the Ukrainians and it at least attempts to provide an analytical interpretation. The book is readable and interesting even if the reader is interrupted by vignettes that are sometimes difficult to relate to the immediate content.

The second book (text by Zonia Keywan, photographs by Martin Coles) is an illustrated history of Ukrainian settlement in the Prairie provinces, (1891-1920). In this book the eye-witness accounts and vignettes are used well to add credibility and colour to the text. The volume provides a general knowledge of the social conditions of the Ukrainian immigrants — their reasons for emigrating, their reception, their settlement, their labour on the land and in the home, and their educational and religious life. How-

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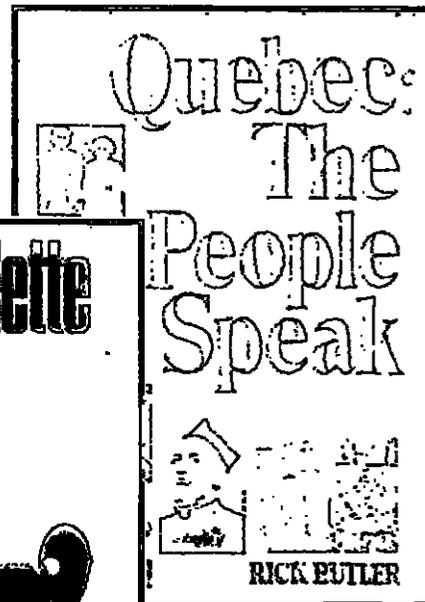
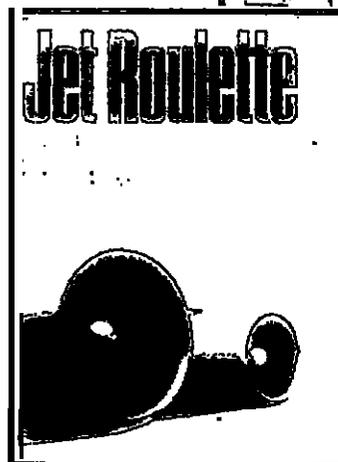
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ever, rather than try to cover the period since 1914 in one sketchy chapter. -the authors would have better saved their readers by con&ding *their volume with* 1914.

The text is readable and in most instances attempts to reflect the social and cultural issues of the early years. However, the claim that the furor over bilingual schools was greater in Alberta than in the other two Prairie provinces is not accurate; in fact, there was less controversy in Alberta than in Manitoba, and certainly much less than in Saskatchewan.

The photographs that have been reproduced to illustrate the book are excellent. "The family portrait on the dust jacket is an apt and arresting introduction to the book. This book will probably appeal to a large number of readers because of its simplicity, its directness, and the excellent illustrations. It should be used in many schools and I would recommend it for high-school libraries. □

Why the came, why they stayed

The Immigrants, by Gloria Montero, James Lorimer & Co., 222 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88862 146.9).

By C. D. MINNI

THIS IS A book in the oral tradition, a collection of incidents, anecdotes, conversations, and personal histories. It is arranged thematically to tell the collective story of Canada's immigrants. The contributors come from every corner of the world. They live in every province of Canada and range in age from four to 84, some are newcomers. Others are pioneers.

In a few lines or several pages, 400 of them relate their experiences as immigrants. A student, working illegally, has his hands crushed by a defective machine. Children, playing house, cast a coloured girl in the role of a domestic. A Japanese woman arrives in Canada as a picture bride. A Norwegian family is stranded in Victoria. A janitor is tired for trying to organize a union. An immigrant woman who speaks no English has a traumatic experience in a hospital delivery room. For many, the first years in Canada are a time of frustration, prejudice, and humiliation. Sometimes the frustration begins in the office of immigration with bad advice or incorrect information.

Why, then, did they come? Except for political refugees, most came for economic reasons; they were have-nots in their own countries. Frequently, Canada recruited them as cheap labour. The pioneers plowed the prairie, cut the forests, and spiked the railroad. Today's immigrants take the most

menial jobs as waiters, janitors, domestics, and garment-factory workers, or the hardest blue-collar jobs in construction, forestry, and mining. Even the few professionals among them must rewrite exams and re-graduate For diplomas. The stupidity of officials in placing them adds a ludicrous irony to some of the stories.. A Swiss microbiologist, confessing that she is interested in agriculture, is sent to work on an Ontario farm, picking tobacco.

Most stay, in spite of hardships, culture shock, changing seasons, unfamiliar food, and language problems. They stay for the material rewards Canada has to offer. They stay for their children. Some feel, however, that in the pursuit of dollars they have lost other values. Often parents become alienated from their children, who adapt more quickly, yet the children themselves feel that they are different from Canadian friends. The story of a Italian youth who can no longer talk to his "foreign" father is touching but not unusual. In an immigrant family the generation gap becomes a canyon through the phenomenon of culture clash.

Readers who were born in Canada will find this book valuable in that it provides insights into what immigrants think of themselves, how they view their adopted country, and how they judge other Canadians. Their opinion of Canadians varies and is not always flattering, but their evaluation of Canada as a "good" country is consistent. The conversations and personal histories reveal that some of the most partisan Canadians are immigrants.

Some immigrant readers may find Montero's book painful. It will remind them of frustrations in their own lives. Others will enjoy it as nostalgia. "The early experiences you have as an immigrant," says a housewife, "are like experiences in the war. They are not all pleasant while you go through them, but afterwards you wouldn't change a thing. What's more, they give you a kind of strength." □



The trials of Arnt and Ebe

Stump Ranch Chronicles and Other Narratives, edited by Rolf Knight, New Star Books. 144 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919888.74 7) and \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 919888 73 9).

By JACK DAVID

LIKE THE NOVELS of Robert J. C. Stead, Frederick Philip Grove, and Martha Ostenso, this book focuses on homesteading in the Canadian West. Rolf Knight has interviewed two immigrants, Arnt Arntzen and Ebe Koeppen, and also reprinted selected diary entries from 1928-32 by Koeppen. Arntzen from Norway and Koeppen from Germany recall their wayward voyages to the new land, and the harsh early years of clearing the land and trying to make a go of it. Both men were forced to take occasional jobs as loggers or miners in the hope of becoming self-sufficient at some time in the future.

Stump Ranch Chronicles is in the *People's History* series published by New Star Books, and the cover blurb asserts that "their very human stories are part of an authentic Canadian social history rarely found in 'official' accounts." This comment is more valid in terms of Koeppen's diary entries than in the distant, time-d&totted remembrances (recorded in 1972 and 1974); the diary sparkles with memorable phrases (translated from the German by Knight) and day-to-day realism. January in the Peace River District is "bitter cold. . . . At home everything is frozen. Like crystal balls — potatoes, bread, even raisins. We hack at the meat with an axe, it splinters like glass."

Koeppen also ponders more philosophical questions, such as how to exist against "the smothering of all wishes." He sees himself having sacrificed all culture for freedom, and deeply regrets the trade-off.

Arnt Arntzen's story shows what a man can do when confronted with a succession of job failures that are not his fault. His catalogue of ups and downs reads like a capsule history of the West itself — farming, fishing, logging, shipping, all the industry indigenous to British Columbia and Alberta is a means to survive. But underlying his account and Koeppen's as well — runs the tale of failed economic policies, greedy capitalists, and, later on, irresponsible government interference. These men, true individualists and settlers, worked against heart-breaking odds to raise cattle or oats, and then got less for their product than it cost them to produce it. And still they endured — moving from place to place, job to job, never hoping to strike it rich, but merely to be able to plan a few years ahead, and raise a family. □

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Refuse from a teeming shore

The Immigrant, by Gabriel Szohner,
Intermedia, 194 Pages. \$5.95 paper (ISBN
88956 057 9).

By MICHAEL SMITH

IT'S NOT LONG after the Hungarian Revolution when 20-year-old Geza Tihanyi comes to Canada and finds a job in a sawmill in interior British Columbia. During the revolt he has killed several times, mostly Russian soldiers, but also his loutish foster father. By chance, he takes up with two of his buddies from the old country, Zigi and Alec, and together they resume hostilities in a series of b&mom bouts. Geza scorns the older refugees who immigrated before the revolution, and have settled timidly into middle-class existence.

Geza looks back to his dreadful past whenever he needs to excuse his actions in this first novel by Gabriel Szohner. Since he's an immigrant, we know—as the cliché goes—that he'll have to build a new life from the wreckage. Frequently he looks up toward the mountains, which serve both as a symbol of redemption and, to his mind, a pile of corpses. ("Good people wind up there one way or another. That's heaven.") By the end of the book he decides it's time he got his values straightened out, but usually he appears so morally vacant that we can't be sure he'll make it.

After a dance-hall battle with local toughs, for instance, Geza docks the police and lets Zigi and Alec serve time without him— even though Alec is punished for something Geza did. When the two get back hum jail, he doesn't bother to ask them how it was. For a time he has an affair with a 15-year-old girl, who takes him to meet his parents. Geza's own family were killed in an air raid during the Second World War, but when he learns that his girlfriend's father flew bombers over Europe, he says that it "did not disturb me now." He's only upset because the man isn't interested in Geza's love for his daughter.

Evidently Geza is able to revise his standards to meet the occasion. When he meets with a decent young couple he starts an affair with the wife, and soon gets her pregnant. "My heart would break, to kill a little soul, my own flesh and blood," he says of the prospect of abortion. But when Kitty, the wife, says she'll get one, he comments: "It shocked me that she would make such a decision, but it was also a relief." He concedes that she must have felt some anguish, "because even I did when I took time to think about it."

Such shallowness is bound to keep Gaa an outsider as well as a foreigner. Perhaps he's in danger of becoming like Ladder,

Flea, and Alphonse, three grotesques who pass his way. or floakam iii Bernice, a gigantic hooker, and her husband, Charlie. As it turns out — incredibly — he escapes completely intact. After Kitty's husband swears revenge, he's conveniently run over by a train. Janet, the teenaged girl, suddenly moves to England. Zigi, back from jail, takes Kitty off Geza's hands. Kitty is the only character who's altered by all this mess — though her decline from wholesome wife to blowzy whore seems rather improbable.

Despite these defects, *The Immigrant* reads well — partly because of its simple, direct format, and partly because of its believable portrayal of Geza as an immature young man. Since Szohner is a young Hungarian immigrant himself, it's likely that he writes from experience. Still, it's difficult to put credit in the cover blurb's claim that the novel "reveals as much about the Canadian reality" as it does Gem's exploits. Unless — as Alec keeps harping to anybody who'll listen — we really are a nation of cheats and bigots. Sometimes, I admit, I wonder. □

Dim sum also rises

Kap-Sung Ferris, by Frances Duncan,
Burns & MacEachern, 126 pages, \$4.95
paper (ISBN 0 88768 074 7).

By JOCELYN LAURENCE

AT THE TENDER age of 12, Kim Ferris experiences that most middle-class of maladies, so identity crisis. Is she really Canadian and accepted as such by her adoptive family and predominantly Wasp peers, or is she in fact Korean, belonging in a country that she can barely remember?

Her attempts to solve this problem are the focus of Frances Duncan's book *Kap-Sung Ferris*. Placed alongside are the struggles of Kim's bat friend, Michelle Macdonald, to come to terms with being the only child of a divorced lawyer-mother.

Ms. Duncan is dealing with a real situation for an increasing number of children. Kim has been brought up in Canada. Essentially the Canadian culture is her culture, but because of her physical appearance she is singled out as being different. It shocks her to discover that she is sometimes seen as neither Canadian nor Korean, but simply as Oriental. Predictably her efforts to recapture a Korean culture, which was never truly hers, are disastrous.

Unfortunately this soul-searching process is undermined by some of the other ingredients in the book. *Kap-Sung Ferris* is a book for the liberal middle class. Only someone with that background, like Michelle, could be in the position where she secretly yearns for a doll but is afraid to ask in case she would be told by her mother that it would be role stereotyping. And only a reader with a similar sort of experience

could appreciate the humour of Michelle's mother going to a meeting on the legal significance of leg-shaving.

By making Kim adopted, Ms. Duncan avoids (perhaps wisely) the whole cultural schizophrenia that results from children not only looking different but also having's home life that is radically different from their peers. If Kim's friends had to eat *dim sum* when they came over for supper instead of hamburgers, the situation would have been further polarised. As it is, Kim has a nice soft white pillow to fall back on when things get too tough.

By the end of the book, of course, most things are happily resolved. Michelle gets her doll but decides she didn't really want it, and goes back to calling her mother Mom and not Kate. Kim has become satisfactorily re-integrated into her family and society, singing "O Canada" more lustily than anyone else.

In many ways this is an extremely Canadian book. To think about "not belonging" seems to be the prerogative of the middle class; N think of it additionally in national terms is typically Canadian.

In the grand finale of the book, the children rally round the Canadian flag in a touching display of multicultural nationalism. While flags and the like are undoubtedly useful as symbols, Ms. Duncan allows chauvinistic emotion to get the

better of her. Integration is inevitable. It not only must but also will occur as a natural process. We don't really need maple syrup to glue us all together. □

Prejudice and those love-hear relationships

Look Again: The Process of Prejudice and Discrimination, by Tom Morton, John McBride, and others, CommCept Publishing, 90 pages, \$4.00 paper (ISBN 0 88829 020 9).

By DUNCAN MEIKLE

RACIAL PREJUDICE is a pblem in Canada and ignoring it will only make things worse. Books such as this one, by showing how our point of view may be incomplete — and harmful — are a part of the solution. The authors present some 30 situations, many of them Canadian, ranging from sex stereotyping and body language to personal accounts of Auschwitz and descriptions of role-playing exercises that have been used in the classroom (such as "blue eyes —

brown eyes"). Many of the "case-studies" are illustrated and most are followed by a list of questions for discussion.

The material presented will appeal to the middle-class liberal who feels that the main pblem is the attitudes of white people. But the usefulness of the book is limited. Some of the cases need more detail or more thought to drive the point home or to make the exercise work. There are no suggestions for further reading and few ideas for positive action beyond discussion. There is nothing on black racism, or religious prejudice. Material that is quoted is not set off by indentations, quotation marks, or a different typeface. The cartoons are done in a style that might be called Contemporary Grotesque. There are too many typos; for "hear" read "hate" on page 84 and the last half of Paragraph B on page 87 will be found (following Parágraph C and the cartoon) on the next page.

Although the tone of the book suggests that it is for students at the junior-high level, the concepts and much of the vocabulary are really suitable for more advanced students (who would tend, I suspect, to resist having their opinions tampered with). Thus I would recommend this book to those who want a lot of ideas on handling questions of prejudice but who will not depend on thii book alone. A revised edition would be welcome. □

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What price salvation now?

The Blood and Fire in Canada: A History of the Salvation Army in the Dominion 1852-1976, by R.G. Mcyles. Peter Martin Associates. 312 pages, \$15.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88778 169 1) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88778 170 5).

By DUNCAN MEIELE

WISECRACKS ABOUT tambourines and saving fallen women ("can you save me two for tomorrow night?") do not alter the fact that the Salvation Army has been exceptionally effective in organizing help for the unfortunate. With a membership of about one half

CAPTION

Quay to the door

AS A CHILD of six or seven, poring over a grubby, handed-down volume of the 1922 *Book of Knowledge* (Maple Leaf edition). I ran across the plans for building a pole-powered houseboat. Evidently all it took was teenage ingenuity and 50 or so 1922 dollars. I dreamed of that houseboat for the next 20 years, my imagination drifting across sweet summa ponds, through weeping-willow portals, and down the winding courses of grassy-banked, trout-filled rivers. Living in London in the early 1960s, I was sea-green with envy when a friend rented one of the Thames-barge houseboats moored on the Chelsea Reach. But after a dinner-parry in the head-bumping, foul-smelling, queasy quarters for which he was paying umpteen guineas a week. I was sea-green with nausea and cured of all aquatic longings.

Ferenc Maté now has brought them flooding back with his *Waterhouses: The Romantic Alternative*, Albatross Publishing House (Box 69310, Vancouver), unpaginated, \$4.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920256 01 5). It contains 124 colour photographs of the exteriors and interiors of houseboats and "waterhouses" in San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver, London, Amsterdam, and rural backwaters. They range from listing shacks to floating palace. Most were built by their owners. Maté himself has built two in Vancouver. The second, a 470-square-foot structure, was completed in three months (with a week cut for marriage) for less than \$3,000 using scrap material. That was six years ago. A few of the photographs are merely picture-postcard pretty. The colour reproduction is sometimes muddy. And Maté's easy-going, anecdotal text tends to grow soggy with lyrical cliché. But those are minor imperfections, no more important than an occasional plunge off the gang-plank. What counts is that, in its attempt to capture the magic of living on water, the book floats.

— DOUGLAS MARSHALL

of one per cent of the population, the "Sally Ann" has made its contribution through Grace hospitals, missing-persons bureaus, hostels, old folks' homes, fresh-air camps, employment and parole agencies, furniture and clothing depots, foreign missions, and, during wartime, canteens and hospitality rooms.

Professor Mcyles emphasizes the early years of the Army's development and its social-outreach program. With many anecdotes and a smoothly flowing narrative, he describes its methods and how the general public reacted, the hardships and setbacks, the successes and the occasional failure in various parts of Canada. Although the story is told from the Army's point of view, the author does not hide the less favourable parts. He appears ambivalent about some of the methods used to attract attention and converts and he suggests that the Army's policies were at times self-serving. He is critical of the failure of the Army periodical *War Cry* to comment on the political and economic aspects of the Depression. He is unintentionally ironic when he describes the "lasting value" of some projects: "Many

rescue homes and barracks still in use to-day were begun or built during the jubilee year [1894]." Then are many references to developments in England and the rest of the world, and some longer descriptions of events in Canada, to put the history of the Army into a larger context. A useful glossary of Army terms and the doctrines and charter of the Army are included in appendices, and there are notes, bibliography, suggestions for further reading and an index.

The author, whose major work is a bibliography of Canadian literature, has done a lot of work and has produced a readable narrative. But historians will have some complaints. The tone is often tinged with boosterism. At one point the Army's dealings with immigrants received such "unfavorable publicity" that the Army "never recovered"; this is later described as a "minor" disappointment. Another example is the description of mission work in East Africa (which includes Uganda); there is not a hint of danger of bloodshed. The author has a tendency to use statistics in isolation; perspective could have been



added through reference to general trends, total population, growth rates of other churches, and so forth. Primary sources are referred to in the notes only rarely, and sometimes no location is given. No mention is made of the papers of T.B. Coombs, one of the early Commanders of the Army, although these papers were used by Arnold Brown in his history of the Army ("What Hath God Wrought?", Toronto, 1952). There is a heavy dependence on Army publications and little evidence of research behind these sources. And just what does one make of the bibliographic reference: "All Canadian newspapers, for the entire period of this history, are invaluable sources of commentary on the Army." The "history" part of the book stops in 1945; thereafter the author gives brief descriptions of a variety of work done by the Army, including rescue stations after the Halifax explosion of 1917, then abruptly changes both tone and subject matter to a discussion of theology, evangelism, and the role of the Army in the modern world.

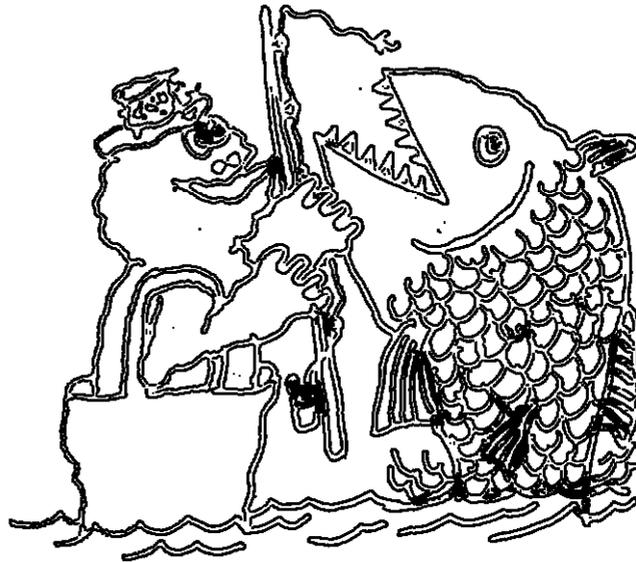
It is possible that the author did not really intend to write a history of the Salvation Army. The last two chapters, in which he argues that the Army has become almost an established church, complete with moribund hierarchy and a respectable middle-class membership, appear to be a plea for rejuvenation and a return to the exciting days when the Army had a tradition of "audacity and extreme altruism." If this was his intention, he has presented his case fairly; there is enough in the book to satisfy those who want to criticize the Army, those who want to defend it, and those who want to return to an older style. What is needed is a more thorough analysis of such questions as the reasons why the Army succeeded, and why it has changed, if indeed it has. Still, the book does have something of value for welfare workers, religious leaders, political reformers, teachers and others, inside the Army and out, who are involved in the business of helping people. □

Rheuminations on leaving home

Tales from Pigeon Inlet, by Ted Russell, edited by Elizabeth (Russell) Miller, Breakwater Books, 179 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 919948 50 2).

By RONALD ROMPKY

SOON AFTER Newfoundland entered Confederation in 1949, one of the first Canadian influences to make its presence felt in the new province was CBC-Radii, introducing a parade of mainland personalities that included Nathan Cohen, Wayne and Shuster, the Happy Gang, and Foster Hewitt. While all of these became familiar to their respective audiences, one program that



sticks in the mind to this day was a locally produced afternoon show called *The CBC Fishermen's Broadcast*. Roused by a few stirring bars of "Life on the Ocean Wave," the listener could catch news and interviews about world markets and government schemes or follow the latest prices for lobster, mackerel, salmon, cod, and so on. Then, after a rheumy blast of a fog horn, he would hear the current notices to mariners, advising fishermen about whether the light had gone out on Brunet Island or which particular channel buoys had shifted out of position. It was all pretty pedestrian stuff until, finally, Ted Russell would come on to read from his *Chronicles of Uncle Mose*, the series of vignettes and facetiae celebrating traditional outport life. *The Chronicles* remained a popular feature from 1954 to 1963.

Those were the days when the Smallwood administration was busy dragging Newfoundland "kicking and screaming" into the 20th century with its great program of economic development, designed to supplant the fishery, and its policy of resettlement, aimed at wiping out numerous old communities by encouraging the inhabitants to move to "growth centres." All this Russell knew at first hand. After joining Smallwood in the fight for Confederation, he had passed the first two years after 1949 in cabinet before resigning over what the editor of *Tales from Pigeon Inlet* mysteriously calls "certain economic policies."

Russell's broadcasts, some of which have been selected to fill the present volume, epitomize the changing way of life in the outports. They are not tendentious. Russell never capitalizes on the chance to attack the government directly, but rather makes a powerful statement about the virtues of outport life by cresting the private world of Pigeon Inlet and relating its day-to-day activities from the point of view of the shrewd, celibate Uncle Mose. CBC devotees will recall how Mose takes up the philosophical, economic, and social concerns of the day with such worthies as

Grampa Wolcott (the community sage), Aunt Sophy (the predatory widow), Skipper Joe Irwin (president of the Fishermen's Local), Jethro Noddy (owner of the billy goat King David), and Josh Grimes (the Hartley's Harbour sleeveen). Together the crowd from Pigeon Inlet match wits with lawyers and bargain with avaricious merchants, sort out mainland tourists and bring the pretentious down to earth. Nothing very offensive there. Yet one statement at the beginning of the book betrays the subtle polemic behind the humour, the implied argument for maintaining the positive values and the sense of community being eroded by television, centralization, and industry. "Above all," says Mose, "we're interested in the one big question: 'What's wrong with a place like Pigeon Inlet when people can't make a decent living there?'"

Elsewhere, Mose puts his finger on the central problem: the dilemma of being a Newfoundlander with a strong sense of home yet denied the opportunity to make a living. "I don't suppose there is or ever was a race of people who spend so much time away from home as we Newfoundlanders," he muses. "A man can only have his home in one place at one time, whereas his means of makin' a livin' is wherever he can find it. There are millions of people in the world who are lucky enough to have their homes and their jobs in the same place." *Tales from Pigeon Inlet* is a record of what makes home important. The humour seems droll now. We hear, for example, of what happens when a football floats ashore in a community ignorant of the game, why an inhabitant wants to have his child christened Pism Civ (Psalm CIV), and how a magistrate tries a man for stealing two fishing holes drilled through the ice. What made such incidents successful in the beginning was Russell's rendering of them for a radio audience. What will interest the reader, particularly one aware of welfare and unemployment statistics, will be the strange sense of a robust and integrated world gone forever. □

In flight from slicker cities

In *Lower Town*, by Norman Levine, photographs by Johanne McDuff. Commoners' Publishing, 64 pages. \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 88970 026 5).

Touches of Fantasy on Montreal Streets / Les rues de Montréal facades et fantaisie, photographs by Edith Mather, test by René Chicoine, translated from the French by René Chicoine and Sheila Burke. Tundra Books, 96 pages. \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 888776 038 4).

Winnipeg: An Illustrated History, by Alan Artibise. James Lorimer & Co. in association with National Museums of Canada. 224 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88862 150 7) and 58.95 paper (ISBN 0 88862 151 5).

The Yonge Street Story, 1793-1860, by F. R. Berchem, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 192 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 07082567 x).

By BARBARA NOVAK

A SAD REALITY of 20th-century North American "progress" is that it leaves little room for a living history. We are in touch with our past only through our libraries and museums. Landmarks, entire communities disappear from our culture without a trace. As Glenn Cheriton writes in his introduction to *In Lower Town*: "If future cities cannot preserve healthy communities in their cure, urban man will have no future. If renewal does not preserve human relationships we are hiding our messy problems behind clean facades. If we cannot listen and learn from other languages, cultures and communities, will we not repeat their failures and isolate ourselves from their successes?"

Nostalgic attempts to preserve the memory of a community such as *Lower Town* in Ottawa will appeal most directly to those people who have actually been a part of it. Such efforts are like private jokes: "Well, you really had to be there..." But for those who have, the effect, no doubt, is profound.

Norman Levine's autobiographical short story, here published for the fourth time, appears in primer-size type, which suits its simple style and structure. The story revolves around the narrator's memories of growing up in the European immigrant community, his determination to escape, to assimilate with the Anglo-Saxon community, and his subsequent sense of loss: "Now that most of the Fruit and rag pedlars are dead and *Lower Town* has changed — I find I am unable to stay away from it. It's become like a magnet. Whenever I can, I return."

The story's carefully balanced structure is complemented with the selection of photographs, many of which are the work of

Johanne McDuff. The contrast between her photographs and those published from the National Archives of Canada is poignant evidence that *Lower Town* has indeed lost much "fits former colour."

Touches of Fantasy on Montreal Streets was also motivated by a desire to preserve a part of our heritage. Our "progress" has involved the demolition of much of our living history, but there is also another, more subtle effect of "progress" — that is, the "invisible effect." Even when these century-old buildings are left standing, how many of us have the time to see their intricate beauty? When we're not in cars lighting traffic, we're speeding underneath them in a subway train, or perhaps jogging by in an effort to keep fit. By isolating various architectural elements of these treasures with a camera, René Chicoine is not only preserving an aspect of our heritage, but helping us to appreciate it while it is still in our midst.

In striking black-and-white, high-contrast photographs, the staircases, balconies, turrets, brackets, doorways, finials, gargoyles, and weather vanes that adorn *Montreal* buildings appear as pure design — decoration — the way in which they were originally intended. It's a beautiful book, and the text is wisely limited to only a few brief explanatory notes.

The first in a projected series of 22 histories of Canadian cities, *Winnipeg: An Illustrated History* is well organized, interesting, and carefully produced: The photographs, which span a century, are outstanding. Many were taken by L.B. Foote, who, from 1883 until 1950, had an uncanny ability to be in the right place at the right time with the right equipment, documenting nearly 70 years of *Winnipeg's* history.

The chapters are divided into distinct areas of study: Economic Growth and Ethnic Relationships; The Urban Landscape: The Urban Community; Social and Political Life (with slight variations in each

chapter). Alan Artibise presents us with the evolution of a city — paying particular attention to its social evolution and *Winnipeg's* history of discrimination against European immigrants and their slow, painful assimilation into community life.

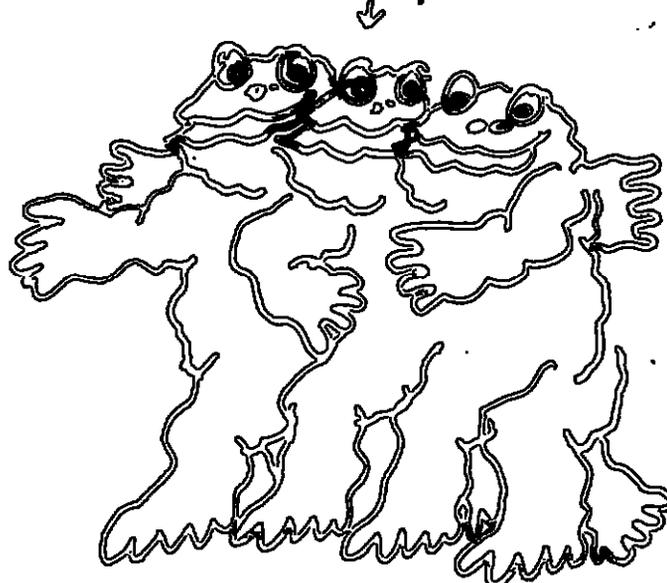
It's a substantial, well-written account with one serious "mission: there is no mention of the victims of one of *Winnipeg's* musts — discrimination problems — the native people. Until Table VIII (*Ethnic Origins of Winnipeg's Population, 1881-1971*) in the last 20 pages of the book, there is no reference to Indians or Eskimos, who, in 1970, comprised two per cent of the city's total population.

Blinkered vision such as this will only cause the reader to question the thoroughness of the book — indeed, of the whole series, which is to be under the general editorship of Artibise. One can only hope that with the next history, which is to be about *Calgary*, the approach is less selective.

I've always preferred stories to historical accounts and was disappointed that *The Yonge Street Story 1793-1860* was not, in fact, a story. Its subtitle, "An Account from Letters, Diaries and Newspapers," is more to the point, and a more confusing, less organized account would be difficult to achieve. The book is cluttered with more extraneous details than a Victorian drawing room.

There are, however, certain redeeming features. It is well-documented and well-indexed, so that the excerpts and anecdotes that the reader may try in vain to link together in any meaningful fashion can be referred to us isolated gems. The illustrations are a nice touch: delicate, beautifully executed line drawings by the author. Copied from original sketches and photographs, they serve to unite the design of the book. F.R. Berchem has a wealth of potentially good material; what he needs is a ruthless editor. □

siamese frog triplets



The 'crisis' was always with us

Divided We Stand, edited by Gary Geddes, Peter Martin Associates, 216 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88778 175 6).

Canada Without Quebec, by John Harbron, Musson (General Publishing), 164 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 7737 1016 7).

By NIGEL SPENCER

WHICH COUNTRY has used martial law — or an equivalent — against its own citizens for civil purposes on an average of once every 15 to 20 years since the country has existed? Which country manages to unleash a grave confrontation between major ethnic groups every time the underlying question of class conflict threatens to come out in the open? Which country is blessed with "thinkers" and politicians anxious to obliterate its real past, its real identity, by pretending they don't exist and crusading for new ones?

Canada, of course. But let's not be too cute about it. The point is that nearly all of us know the answers . . . when the questions are asked. But how often are they? Obviously, 99 per cent of our professional "thinkers" and almost as many of our

certified "artists" aren't about to commit a sort of suicide and deny their reason for being by doggedly and consistently informing the mass of Canadians and serving them as a national "memory bank." The October "Crisis" is beyond the memory of our teenagers already: what about 1837-9? 1870? 1885? 1914? 1919? The 1930s? 1940? And so on. (If you don't know, look 'em up — and more — in your military manual.)

Every time a crisis we've carefully been ignoring comes to a head, we get caught with our pants down and act like offended virgins. (Don't throw out the thought with the imagery, please.)

It's happened again, of course — Nov. 15, 1976, the day the world (uh, Canada) ended. A year later, Gary Geddes (who is capable of better things) has edited what one could almost call an "instant book" on the subject by many of Canada's best-known writers, thinkers, and talkers (living, dead, and in between). One mustn't be too hard on Geddes and his colleagues. At least they're trying: trying to understand and explain "what just happened" in Quebec and how it might reflect something normal and not too horrendous; trying to explain that non-French Canada might even survive, as it did before the CPR and John A. Macdonald.

Unfortunately, they don't get much further than the "innocent onlookers" of 1970 or 1963. The book has both the advantages and drawbacks of an "instant." That is, the most substantial pieces were

already available (especially those from Quebec) and the "occasional" quickies are embarrassingly revealing of their authors. Gabrielle Roy, for instance, admits her bankruptcy and says nothing. Margaret Laurence, on the other hand, shows hers by drivelling on about her identity crisis: all she has to say to the Québécois is, "Listen. Just listen"; Saskatchewan is Quebec. Margaret Atwood hits a new low, too, with her mawkishly infantile "Two-Headed Poems" (warmed over from a back issue of *This Magazine*), and Al Purdy fares little better with his poem. Why are all these people so sentimental and condescending? The cry is like that of a kid afraid its teenage brother's growing up too fast. Robin Skelton doesn't mind a bit. For him, Canada (that is, British Columbia) is a great place to write.

Some of the "thinkers" have a similar problem to Margaret Laurence. The cerebral fallacy of John Trent, Naim Kattan, and Eric Kierans is that of accepting the traditional, abstract equations (and rhetoric) of the status quo, and trying in vain to make reality fit them.

Not accidentally, it seems, some of the most honest and down-to-earth ideas come from the Maritimes. The creative-contemplative pieces by Alden Nowlan, Donald Silver Cameron, and Reshard Gool are a refreshing relief from the growing gloom that gathers as one wades through this morass of confessions. Get this: "Regional disparity is not a problem: it's a policy."

CHECKLIST 1978

- **Pat & Hugh Armstrong**
THE DOUBLE GHETTO: Women and Their Work in Canada \$5.95 April
 - **Ivan Avakumovic**
SOCIALISM IN CANADA: A Study of the CCF and NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics (by the author of THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN CANADA) \$6.95 January
 - **Paul Cappon, ed.**
IN OUR OWN HOUSE: Social Perspectives on Canadian Literature (contributors include Patricia Marchak, James Steele, and Robin Matthews) \$5.95 April
 - **David & Part, eds**
PLAYBACK: Canadian Selections (Atwood, Laurence, Eayrs, Fetherling, Woodcock, Broadfoot, Callwood, and 33 others are featured in this lively collection of topical articles) \$5.95 March
 - **Leo Driedger, ed.**
THE CANADIAN ETHNIC MOSAIC: A Quest for Identity (contributors include W. Isajiw, R. Breton, Anthony Richmond, and James Frideres) \$8.95 April
 - **John Hutcheson**
DOMINANCE & DEPENDENCY: Liberalism & National Policy in the North Atlantic Triangle \$5.95 February
 - **Henry Milner**
POLITICS IN THE NEW QUEBEC (by the author of THE DECOLONISATION OF QUEBEC) \$6.95 March
 - **John Thompson**
THE HARVESTS OF WAR: The Prairie West, 1914-1918 (the sixth volume in the Canadian Social History Series, general editor — Michael Cross) \$6.95 March
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Regional disparity is the whole point of Confederation. . . . We're only remote if the centre of the universe is in Ontario": or this, "The normal case is . . . that the poor provinces wish to separate from the rich, and that the rich want to hold on because . . . exploitation . . . within one's Frontiers is infinitely easier than exploitation . . . beyond them." Cameron, like Gool and Nowlan, has a deft and engaging way of intercutting contemporary observations with concrete snippets of history. Not much *identity* crisis in the Maritimes . . . or in Quebec. So, what and where is the real crisis?

To give the West its due, Len Peterson manages to be as creative and interesting as his Maritime counterparts, while suggesting from *lived experience* that Canada as a whole does have a culture, but you have to penetrate the working class to find it. Herschel Hardin does the best job of analyzing Canada's real history and identifying the Canadian "character":

If Canadians had an identity, then Riel and Mackenzie would be heroes, writes the poet, the idea not entering his head that they are heroes and that Canada does have identity, but that the colonial habit will not admit it.

When the rebellions failed, all this indigenous self-perception - and it was just beginning - came to an end. Not the granting of self-government, nor the National Economic Policy, nor Lauder's pan-Canadianism, nor Mackenzie King's weaning of Canada from the wrinkled British imperial mother, nor French-Canadian attempts to encourage in other Canadians an equal commitment to a native outlook, nor all of the exegeses of scholars and speeches of politicians . . . has freed the Canadian identity (as distinct from the French-Canadian identity alone) from its borrowed, frustrating, wrong-headed perspectives.

In other words, identity is our daily reality, and our élites are busy beating the "national" drum so hard we can't hear the sounds in the street. Or, as Bruce Hutchison puts it, Canada is a modern-day "Wild

West" that the *carpetbaggers* tell us is both "democratic" and "noble." Hutchison, like so many others, shows evidence of a deep and frightening split - the very problem cited by Hardin. While his thoughts are rational, developed, and well-supported, he has a deep-seated terror of actually following through. As a result, his emotions win out with an hysterical, panic-stricken scream to "save" everything he has just debunked.

This is a weakness shared in a different form by John Harbron, whose book *Canada Without Quebec* tries to deal with the same problems in a more technocratic way. The two premises of the book are themselves an education: (a) the history of Canada, and especially Quebec, is essentially parallel to that of many Latin American countries and should be seen in the context of the *whole hemisphere* (this is something our South American neighbours have always understood, which is why the Canadian attitude that "our world" ends at the Rio Grande has puzzled and infuriated them); and (b) Quebec can and might separate, both parties might survive, and both might benefit from a brush with reality.

This is all explained in a way that is comprehensible to the layman and most refreshing, to boot. What gets more and more unsettling as the comparisons fly by is Harbron's own (unadmitted) political stance, which tends to play havoc with his scientific method. For example, his early exposé tends (by implication) to indict capitalism as the source of Canada's and Quebec's problems, and he goes on to qualify Quebec as a Third World nation in many respects.

As soon as he evokes the logical response to this situation, his anti-Marxist hysteria takes over and (dis)colours the rest of the book rather badly. Comparisons now are made fragmentarily and at random: Lévesque and Parizeau may be "Kerenskys," radical syndicalism may lead to "Péronism." What we are faced with is a bombardment of terror-tactics by Harbron, which leads him into the contradictory

position of advocating the adoption of some methods used in South Africa and Brazil, or an alliance between the PQ and English Canada to reverse the historical process he has previously outlined! An interesting book to begin, and then put aside. □

Forward from 'God's Country'

Canadian Film Reader, edited by Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson, Peter Martin Associates, 405 pages, \$15 cloth (ISBN 0 88778 158 6) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88778 159 4).

By MARTIN KNELMAN

With me, the making of pictures in Canada first appealed as a business, then it became a hobby, now I might fairly say it is a religion. I welcome the opportunity of addressing myself to the Canadian Clubs, believing that I find here perfect understanding from a movement founded for the purpose of quickening a Canadian national consciousness - the spirit which now finds expression not only in new and distinctive note in Canadian literature, but in a demand for Canadian-made motion pictures, as real and free and wholesome as is Canadian life at its best.

IF THAT SOUNDS like a speech made the week before last - by one of our instant tycoons or cultural bureaucrats, guess again. Actually, the quotation is from a speech made in 1923 by a legendary character named Ernest Shipman, who single-handedly created a mini-boom of Canadian 'movies' that ended in a spectacular bust. The speech is quoted in the excerpt from Peter Morris's manuscript, *Embattled Shadows, A History of the Canadian Cinema 1895-1939*, which is included in the new anthology *Canadian Film Reader*, edited by Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson.

Shipman was a flamboyant conman from Hull who used the nationalist fervour of his day to coax money out of investors. The big hit of his career was an epic called *Back to God's Country* (1919), which was made partly in Calgary (the headquarters of Shipman's operation) and partly on location in the Lesser Slave Lake area, when temperatures dropped to -60 degrees F. The star of the movie was Shipman's wife, Nell, who also wrote the script, freely adapted from a story called "Wapi the Walrus," from *Good Housekeeping*. The story features a romantic triangle, played out on dogsled and whaling schooner, and in the big scene, Nell makes her escape from the villain (disguised as a Mountie, natch) by diving into a pool nude.

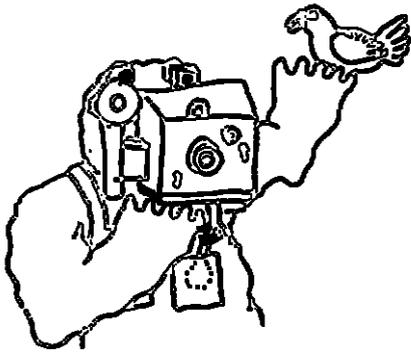
Morris isn't sure whether Shipman was a genius or a rogue, but one thing is definite:

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you can't blame Shipman for the popular notion that Canadian movies have always been boring. Luckily, his movies failed to be "as wholesome as is Canadian life at its best." Morris's sketch of Shipman is one of the highlights of this anthology, and we can look forward to reading the rest of the story when his book is published.

As for this volume as a whole, it is, as anthologies tend to be, wildly uneven. The editors have imposed order of a kind by dividing the selections into several sections, including one on the National Film Board, another on feature film-making, and another on experimental film-making. They've achieved a cross-section of articles touching most of the obvious bases: Grierson, *Challenge for Change*. Allan King. *Mon Oncle Antoine*, Joyce Wieland, and so on. The contributors are a mixture of journalists and academics, and since the book is intended for use in college courses, it is not surprising that it is weighted on the academic side. This is a discreet way of noting that some of the pieces in this volume are pretty tough slogging — such as an interminable survey by Robert Fothergill, who wins the prize for unreadably high-toned prose, and several selections by Bruce Elder, who comes second. (If anything could be less appealing to me than a second viewing of Michael Snow's famous experimental film *Wavelength*, I think it would have to be a second reading of Bruce Elder's analysis of *Wavelength*.)

Yet there are also enough good essays, previously unavailable in permanent form, to make this book valuable to anyone more than casually interested in Canadian films. Peter Harcourt has some intelligent observations on the NFB's Unit B documentaries of the 1950s and on the male world of Don Shebib's movies. Ronald Blumer and Susan Schouten contribute an entertaining commentary on the style of Donald Brittain and his extraordinary feature documentaries. There's an extremely sensitive, intelligent account of Pierre Perrault's films by the French critic Louis Marcorelles, who made Perrault an important figure in France. I was grateful, too, for the chance to read Joan Fox's perceptive "The Facts of Life, Toronto Style," about Don Owen's Nobody

Waved Goodbye, which I somehow missed when it was published in *The Canadian Forum* in 1965, but which I suspect seems even more impressive now than it did then. And I was amused by the comments on *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, by one Daniel Golden, whose name is unfamiliar to me. (It's an annoying flaw in this book that we aren't told anything about the contributors.)

Canadian Film Reader doesn't provide a comprehensive guide to Canadian films with a consistent point of view, but then, it wasn't supposed to. Anthologies are by their nature patchworks of compromise. If you didn't know anything about Canadian movies, you might get a lot of false impressions reading this one—such as the notion that Jack Darcus was one of our most important directors. Borrowing from the vocabulary of Ernest Shipman, you could say that at its worst, *Canadian Film Reader* is "as wholesome as is Canadian life at its best." Fortunately, like Shipman himself, the book frequently manages to break through the deadly language of official speeches and get past the boring part of our movie heritage. □

Super eight-year-old

This Is Where We Came In: The Career and Character of Canadian Film, by Martin Knelman, McClelland & Stewart, 176 pages, 56.95 paper (ISBN 0 57104533 6).

By **W.H. ROCKETT**

MARTIN KNELMAN'S "father of us all." John Grierson, once wrote: "Everything is beautiful when it's in the tight order." That is, a superb operating principle for film-makers, film critics, and critics of film criticism. Unfortunately, everyone engaged in all three of those processes at one time or another mucks "things up — or worse, appears to have done so.

I find it distressing to admit that *This Is Where We Came In* suffers from apparent disorder.

I find this distressing because Martin Knelman is a favourite film critic. He is perceptive and intelligent, recognizes the primary influence of the industrial side of the movies (it is indeed *show business*), and he usually writes clearly and cleanly. Moreover, he begins his book where it should begin: with the very early years of film-making, when everyone was starting even and the Hollywood hegemony had not yet been established. He doesn't dwell on what went wrong, but he does prod the

continued on page 24

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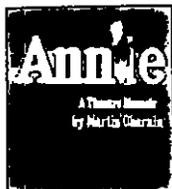
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reader to look at *Dreamland*, Donald Brittain's excellent documentary that does offer answers. He sensibly moves on to John Grierson, founder of our National Film Board and "one of the last great colonizers in our history." His chapter on Grierson and his emphasis on the influence of the "me" and his creation on even the narrative drama or feature film in Canada make for full marks in Knelman's few. But then the hard part begins.

Knelman attempts a transition to the present through a rather thin chapter on two men and their respective bureaucracies. The "children of Grierson," as Knelman calls them, are Sydney Newman and Michael Spencer. Their bureaucracies are, respectively, the NFB and the Canadian Film Development Corporation. Of course, bureaucracies do not work: they merely function. A good deal of the masochistic joy derived from observing film in Canada today tests in the bumping and fumbling of the NFB and CFDC, and Knelman outlines several instances. But both this chapter and the following one (largely on Quebec documentarists and Allan King) fail to explain effectively the transition from the creative treatment of fact to the factual treatment of fiction.

If there is a large and worthy question to be researched and answered by a film historian, that is one. Knelman's title made me think he was going to essay it, but he did not. However, I was prepared to push on

with the book since Knelman is a critic, not an historian. One wouldn't want a *Survival* for celluloid, since Atwood's critical text on Canadian literature has done more to limit the high-school graduate's range of interpretation than any other comparable book. Moreover, *Survival* (as Knelman himself notes) has had a full-cut effect: every art form from painting (poor Tom Thomson) to film has found its *Survival*-schooled critics. What one could hope for is entertainment through what Knelman has to say in print about individual films and film-makers.

This is more or less what the last two thirds of the book has to offer. Knelman gives Jutra and Cede each a chapter, rightly recognising them as among the best (if English Canada be permitted to share them with Quebec). He looks at the Quebec political film, CFDC schlock, and, in "Looking For the Way Out," Don Shebib's work as well as virtually every other worthy English Canadian film. He indicates an understanding in passing of the regionalism of the country, a regionalism reflected in such films as *The Rowdy Man* and *Why Shoot the Teacher*, while noting their shared sense of catastrophe shared, and the "kind of noble stubbornness" that marks the slightly goofy characters in our films, be they Newfoundlanders or Prairie-men. His chapter-long case studies of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Shadow of the Hawk* are excellent epiphanies: they il-

luminate what is tight and what is wrong about how we make films in this country.

But it is his final chapter, "Notes Toward a Screen Mythology," that leaves one with the feeling that the book is really unfinished. These are short reviews of a number of more recent films, and one gets the impression that Knelman was taken by surprise. J.A. Martin, *Photographer. Outrageous!*, *One Man*, and *Who Has Seen the Wind* are films, as Knelman says in his final paragraph, "that audiences really enjoy. We go to see these films, not as a patriotic duty, but because we want to see them. After decades of deprivation, is it possible that the dream of a movie mythology of our own has finally come to pass?"



Bowl of chocolate truffles

What has happened is that Knelman's subject, in every popular medium, has refused to pause—long enough for any meaningful generalizations and conclusions to be drawn. Film-making is still in a process of becoming, in this country especially so. The literary critic—even of Canadian literature—has at least several hundred years' worth of work to do. The film ethic has roughly 50 years to look at, and the rate of production has been uneven, to say the least.

It is evident that the often-noted influence of film on prose is not always a sound one. I believe much of the book is meant to work through a montage effect: the juxtaposition of two shots or scenes create a third and dynamic image greater than the effect of the two taken separately. For some reason, few writers have managed to achieve in prose what Eisenstein and Vertov managed on film, and Knelman is not to be numbered among the successful.

The unfinished feeling of Knelman's book is probably unavoidable. The mistake he made was in presenting it (through his subtitle, "The Career and Character of Canadian film") as such. If, as I suspect, the last two thirds of the book offer a complex montage of impressions and images designed to generate a sense of the character of our national film, it doesn't work. It merely seems episodic and meandering. On the other hand, if one views the work as an olio of film notes and criticism, then it is worth reading and compares well with Fulford's collection of *Saturday Night reviews* (Marshall Delaney at the Movies).

In the end, one would think that would be quite enough for author, reviewer, and reader. After all, of how much interest are the memoirs of an eight-year-old? And that is roughly the intellectual and psychological age of Canadian film. □

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Slow, slow, hype-hype, slow

Dance Today in Canada. by Andrew Oxenham with Michael Crabb, Simon & Pierre. 228 pages. 534.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88924 059 0).

Kain & Augustyn, a photographic study by Christopher Darling, text by John Fraser, introduction by Rudolf Nureyev, Macmillan. 160 pages, \$25 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1622 x) and \$10 paper (ISBN 0 7705 1612 2).

By GRAHAM JACKSON

A DANCE BOOK, be it historical, critical, philosophical, technical or impressionistic, should at least serve the art that is its subject. Too often, however, the art is merely an excuse for the book, for some writer or photographer to demonstrate his or her cosmopolitanism, his or her ability to rhapsodize. Of the two recently published books dealing with the Canadian dance scene, only one makes an hottest effort to serve its subject.

Dance Today in Canada sounded like a wonderful idea: a photographic survey of the splendid variety of dance in this country, backed up by an historical overview of Canadian dance that would take us from 1737, when Louis Renault opened a ballet studio (probably the first) in Montreal, to today's fostering by Lawrence and Miriam Adams of experimental and avant-garde dance at their studio (or atelier), 15 Dance Lab. The text would not only back up the photos, it would also give them an added dimension by showing what groundwork made all the current wealth of dance activity possible. Unfortunately, good intentions are just not good enough and blame for the book's failure to be what it might have been lies on the shoulders of general editor Marian Wilson.

The text by Michael Crabb, a capable historian, is too short, barely skimming the surface of many aspects of Canadian dance and its development; he should have had a whole book, not 30,000 words, to tell his story. As it stands, Crabb's overview reads like a gourmet's shopping list — teasing, but unsatisfying in itself. Andrew Oxenham's photographs are sometimes stunning (the one of Jerilyn Dana and Sonia Vartanian of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in George Balanchine's *Serenade* is a jewel), but mostly they're not selective — Wilson's fault, again — or eloquent enough in terms of what they show about a particular group's dance character.

Despite these criticisms, *Dance Today in Canada* is a useful book, if not the seminal book it should have been. Although neater and more polished in appearance, *Kain &*

Augustyn (that's Karen and Frank, in case you've been living in Fiji), cannot even lay claim to being useful. Christopher Darling, the photographic genius responsible for the book, describes it as his personal tribute to two friends, but it's a tribute that borders on media hype.

The hype starts in the introduction, with Nureyev patting himself on the back for having recognized Kain's and Augustyn's talents early on; descends inexorably into the stylishly affected prose of John Fraser's text (which, among its many inanities, includes a trite anecdote about Betty Oliphant's concern for the young Kain's crooked teeth); and finishes on the back cover in a succinct flourish with a quote by the late Sol Hurok: "They're stars, you know. They're real stars." This hype only taints Darling's own tribute to the dancers, the photographs. Independent of the premise they're illustrating—that is, Kain and Augustyn are great—they are among the best dance photos I've seen.

The truth about the glamour of the Kain-Augustyn partnership is that it's more myth than legend: that a press and public hungry for glamour have exaggerated its merits out of all proportion; that both dancers are almost always better alone or with other partners than they are with each other. What Darling, Fraser, Nureyev, and Macmillan accomplish with such a book as *Kain & Augustyn* is simply to reinforce a lie, to blur reality. If they were truly serving their subject, they would help us to understand Kain's and Augustyn's unique contributions to the National Ballet of Canada, to the development of a ballet audience in this country, and most of all to the art of dance.

Even seen as a personal indulgence, though, the book makes clear that the collaborators collectively have none of Théophile Gautier's, Cyril Beaumont's, or Edwin Denby's gift of rhapsody. *Kain & Augustyn* is mass-market stuff that avoids saying anything interesting or important about its subject in favour of a cheap and easy canonization. □



For readers who spent the long dark hours of winter curled around the prose of J. R. R. Tolkien's *THE SILMARILLION*, it may be time to leave the ancient world of Middle-Earth and catch up on modern times by way of Stephen Roman's *THE RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY*. Roman, bat-known as head man of Denison Mines has been paired with renowned Marxist theoretician Eugen Loeb to produce a controversial and sometimes startling work that proposes an 'alternate' solution to today's painful economic problems. Doubtless there will be more talk about this book than almost anything due this Spring.

Or take a closer look at the man who's running the U.S. as he is analyzed by five noted psychohistorians (*the new wave* in interpretative history) in *JIMMY CARTER AND AMERICAN FANTASY*. The conclusion these men reach: "—for reasons rooted both in his own personality and in the powerful emotional demands of American fantasy (Carter) is very likely to lead us into a new war by 1979."

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Finally, let yourself go with *RIPPING YARNS*, the latest of the greats from members of Monty Python's Flying Circus. Enjoy John Bauer's charming illustrations in *IN THE TROLL WOOD* (the beauty of this book is its attraction for both adults and children); and for the World War II buff, Brian Johnson's gripping account of scientific warfare *THE SECRET WAR*, based on the BBC TV series, is a must.

Great expectations from Methuen Publications. Ask your local bookseller about these new books and more for Spring '78.

Teach skills, not attitudes

A 'traditional' reviewer questions whether today's textbooks are tools or propaganda

by Ron Waldie

THIS IS OUR third look at new Canadian text and classroom resource books in the past 12 months — a fact that attests to the impressive array of such materials now being produced. As well as providing educators with new materials, textbooks also provide us with a useful gauge for assessing ourselves as a society. That's because they reflect so accurately the cultural, sociological, and pedagogical concerns of the age. For this (increasingly traditional) reviewer, many aspects of these reflections are deeply disturbing.

We are living in an age in which a major pedagogical goal seems to be to make the learning process as easy as possible, to have students feel good about things rather than to make them think or write carefully about them. Learning is *not* easy. It's hard work for most students and damn hard work for a few. That is the fundamental precondition of learning any new skill, be it making clay pots, riding a bicycle, or reading and writing. Textbook materials designed to make the skill as clear and as challenging and as interesting as possible are an invaluable asset to any learning process. Unfortunately, we are producing an increasing number of books that do not focus on skills at all; they focus on attitude. Nowhere is this clearer than in the attempt to atone for past sins of omission regarding Canadian studies. There is an effort on the part of some editors to inculcate in students from a very young age, an attitude, a pose to Canadian realities. Giving students the right attitude about the currently popular issues and concerns rather than giving them the rational and critical skills to cope with such issues as racism, French-English relations, and poverty is ultimately as futile and dangerous as completely ignoring the issues.

To demonstrate the point, I am isolating the first two volumes of a new four-volume Elements reading series being published by Peter Martin Associates. Entitled "Earth" and "Air" ("Fire" and "Water" will follow), they are directed primarily toward the non-reader of junior high-school age. Editor Peter Carver says the series has been assembled to "demonstrate the vitality of

our national experience, its diversity and essential unity." Immediately, we sense the confusion.

The Elements series uses the four elements as very general organizing principles for an eclectic selection of journalistic articles, folk songs, and poems about various aspects of Canadian life. Many of the selections are verbatim transcripts from the "spoke" language. The spoken language undoubtedly has an immediacy and a colloquial earthiness which make it much easier to read than formal written prose. When it is removed from context, edited, and frozen into a static medium, however, the spoken language all too often becomes trivial. Both these books suffer from an insufferable amount of trivia. They contain virtually no solid information and provide no way of measuring a non-reader's progress in acquiring basic reading skills.

The most disturbing aspect about the series, however, is not that it is a failure as a reading supplement for the junior high-school student. It is the attitudinal approach it takes to every currently popular Canadian concern. Racism, identity, Naive peoples, sexuality are all carefully trundled out for consideration. Either by inference or direct statement, the books encourage students to

take an attitude towards these issues that reflects a dated, urban, liberal, value system. That is called propaganda and it is both unethical and dangerous.

I expect the publisher and editor will indignantly respond to this charge and I welcome it. The air needs to be cleared. Meanwhile, here is a partial checklist of recent educational texts (owing to postal disruptions, not all texts promised by publishers arrived in time for inclusion in the list):

ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Language on Paper, by P. G. Penner and R. E. McConnell. Macmillan. 182 pages, \$6.25 paps. A companion volume to *Learning Language* (listed in our September checklist), this book focuses on the written form of English. Emphasis is on spelling, punctuation, and writing systems. It included an illustrated section on the history of printing.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

"Air" and "Earth", edited by Peter Carver, Peter Martin Associates, 120 pages, 128 pages, each \$4.95 paper. See above.

The Time of Your Life, edited by James Henderson, Macmillan, 239 pages, 83.95 paper. A collection of stories by such authors as Frank O'Connor, William Saroyan, and W. O. Mitchell, all of which are written from the point of view of young people and which should evoke a personal response from students. Includes biographical notes, questions, a glossary of terms, and a bibliography.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Mix 'n Match I: Ideas for Canadian Literary Studies, edited by Gail Donald, Delores Broten, and Peter Birdsall, Can-Lit, 53 pages, \$4 paper. A resource book of ideas and approaches to presenting literature, mainly Canadian, to high-school students. It provides basic, practical ideas that may prove useful to teachers who have difficulty expanding a set curriculum into a more exciting classroom presentation.

Resource Services for Canadian Schools, edited by Frederick Branscombe and Harvey Newsome, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 152 pages, 84.95 paper. Prepared by the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada and by the Canadian School Library Association, this book is designed to be a "definitive



reference for teachers and specialists concerned with learning materials both at the school and district levels, and for principals (sic) and others in educational administration."

Canadiana Scrapbook. a 12-booklet set edited by Donald M. Santon, Prentice Hall, 48 pages each. \$41 a set. This relit designed to provide an archival approach to Canadian social and cultural history. The emphasis is on genuine facsimile reproductions of photographs, sketches, and other memorabilia to give the junior high-school student a strong visual involvement with significant events in Canadian history. A teacher's guide is also provided. To be released in April.

Media Materials: A Can-Lit Collection, edited by Gail Donald. Can-Lit. 40 pages, \$2.50 paper. A practical and efficient addition to the ever-increasing supply of resource material manuals for Canadian teachers. It is designed to provide a representative sample of film, audio-tape, record, and video-tape resources available in Canada on Canadian materials. It also provides prices for materials listed.

HISTORY

Canada's Century. by Al Evans and Larry Martinello, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 480 pages, \$9.20 cloth. A new text on contemporary Canada designed for general level students in Grades 7 and 8. This book will focus on the crucial issues affecting Canadian society today. It has been prepared to conform to Ontario's new intermediate-history curriculum guidelines and will be released in June.

Who examines the examiners?

IF teaching is important... The Evaluation of Instruction in Higher Education, general editor Christopher K. Knapper, Canadian Association of University Teachers monograph series, Clarke Irwin, 230 pages. \$5.95 paper USBN 0 7720 1035 8).

By SUSAN LESLIE

IN HIS INTRODUCTION TO *If reaching is important...*, editor Christopher Knapper expresses the hope that this will be a "good, homey" treatment of the evaluation of university instruction. Well, a topic that lends itself less to homeyness I can scarce imagine. Nevertheless, Knapper and his fellow contributors come remarkably close in their discussion of the purposes, techniques, and future of evaluation in post-secondary education.

If teaching is important.. is the second in a monograph series published by the Canadian Association of University Teachers. While the series is designed mainly for the association's members, the editors would also like to attract a general

readership. Certainly, the public at large should be concerned with the effectiveness of university teaching: we pay for it, we're subjected to it, and we rely on well-trained engineers, doctors, scholars, and scientists to keep things running smoothly. However, *If teaching is important* is likely to appeal only to those unfortunates who face imminent evaluation of their classroom practices.

Evaluation is a tedious business. It is not fun to read about it, and it is not fun to undergo it. Yet, as the authors repeatedly remind us, how else can professors find out if they are doing their job? Teaching is, after all, the only compulsory activity in a professor's contract. There are research responsibilities, and a generalized expectation that academics will contribute to the life of the community. But education remains their main task. Publications, research, committee membership, community service — these are relatively easy to assess and are all too often the aspects of a professor's work that are considered when tenure and promotions are discussed. Teaching skills are ignored, because no one really knows how to evaluate them.

In the past 15 years, most evaluation of teachers has relied on student questionnaires, and the results of these are doubtful. In the most technical and practical paper in the book, Gilles Nadeau, an editor of the

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Canadian Journal of Education. lists 34 criticisms and only 11 advantages of student questionnaires. Chief among the latter appears to be that they are quick and easy to administer.

Students are, of course, the immediate consumers of classes (or "instructional episodes," as one contributor so quaintly describes them), and certainly their opinions on how well they are being taught should count for something. But when students fill out evaluations, are they rating professors on their sense of humour, on the kindness of their grading methods, or on the length of the reading lists? The authors conclude that student evaluations are so unreliable a device that there should be a moratorium on them. Meanwhile other techniques could be developed.

The other techniques suggested — videotapes, self-assessment, records of student achievements in later courses, consistent files on professors' teaching methods — imply a major commitment to the idea of evaluation. In fact, a Manitoba commission on higher education recommended that three per cent of the annual operating budget of universities be devoted to a program of instructional development. Such a program would comprise evaluation, rewards for effective teaching, and assistance for ineffective teaching. This sort of financial commitment on the part of university ad-

ministrators seems unlikely. However, the authors of *If teaching is important* assert that unless universities are willing to reward good teachers (and that means cash) and to offer practical help to the poor ones, the quality of instruction will continue to be a neglected area.

Evaluation, they stress, must be regarded as "a means to improvement," not a weapon for dismissal. Yet despite the prospect of more money for better teaching, faculty members are unlikely to welcome improvement through evaluation. University teachers have traditionally been spared the inspections inflicted on their less-esteemed public-school colleagues. But if indeed teaching is important as the main business of university professors, then we



ought to find out just how well it is being done. To this purpose *If teaching is important* . . . is a useful and readable guide to the problems of evaluation. □

Second-rate crit of first-rate lit

Margaret Laurence: The Writer and Her Critics, edited by William New. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 224 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 07 082521 1) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0.07 082520 3).

By DOUGLAS HILL

THE INADEQUACIES of this collection raise disturbing, sadly familiar questions about the state of literary criticism in Canada. Although the intentions of the volume — part of the ongoing Critical Views on Canadian Writers series — are admirable, the results are not. The unprofessional standards and slipshod editorial supervision on display here will do little to change Canada's image — one that Canadians seem content to inflict, with much hand-tinting, on themselves — as a second-rate literary culture.

The trouble begins with William New's introduction, which both suggests and re-

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flects the limitations of what follows. As criticism, it's at best workmanlike; its comprehensiveness is superficial rather than deep. It summarizes, by paraphrase and quotation, the book's contents. But it doesn't really explore the theoretical -as opposed to the literal — boundaries of Laurence's impact; nor does it point out the directions that criticism might take in order to examine her work fully.

The longer articles reprinted are uneven in quality. Sandra Djwa's piece on Laurence and Sinclair Ross makes a useful connection, but is cluttered and unfocused. The team effort of Denyse Forman and Uma Parameswaren is disorganized and lacks a strong thesis. The appraisals of *The Stone Angel* (by New) and of *The Fire-Dwellers* (by Alan Bevan) are sound if unchallenging interpretations, but since they are properly introductions, to the McClelland & Stewart New Canadian Library editions of those novels, why reprint them here?

Henry Kreisel's two pieces on the short stories, which combined and expanded would make a fine article, not only describe and interpret, they attempt to define and classify, to work from the particular to the general. The same is true for George Bowering's quirky neo-Laurentian analysis of *A Jest of God*. And there is Margaret Laurence herself: in her three statements (less effectively in the interview with Bernice Lever than New prints), she offers carefully shaped, unportentious thoughts on several aspects of her work.

The rest is chiefly reviews, 22 in all. They range from positive to negative, bold to cautious; they give globs of plot summary and some snappy prose, but not much in the way of developed insights. Do we really gain anything from reading a 1964 notice by Granville Hicks, in *Saturday Review*, titled "Neighbour to the North Makes News"? I don't think so. What we could certainly "see" is a comprehensive survey that assesses conclusions about the critical reception of Laurence's works here and abroad. It ought to be possible: Laurence sketches the outlines herself, in the interview, in a paragraph.

Similarly, good criticism could be built upon a few of the specific issues the reviewers take note of. There are no concerted studies, for example (at least this volume doesn't make them available), of Laurence's prose style, of her imagery, of her narrative structure(s). Each of these matters deserves attention, and the scope of that attention ought to include patterns in the work as a whole. The absence of such criticism here is, I assume, not the editor's fault; he can hardly collect what hasn't been written. (This could explain, I suppose, why there are only three short pieces on *The Diviners*, surely a glaring disproportion for a writer who claims to have both fulfilled and exhausted her energies as a novelist with that book)

What William New and the series editor can be held accountable for is a number of doubtful decisions and omissions. For one thing, the book's format is physically

cramping; the three sections of the volume are not clearly separated visually; there are no running titles for guidance in flipping back and forth through the book; there is no chronology of Laurence's career and only the most perfunctory bibliography. In addition, several of the pieces could have been tidied up to remove repetitious or outdated information: fidelity to text need not embrace printing the 1964 prices of Laurence's books. Finally, I observed (and it was not a scrupulous search) 18 editorial or typographical errors. Such irresponsibility is inexcusable at any time; in an academic book about literature it's shocking and insulting.

A volume of this sort should meet criteria of convenience, relevance, range, and excellence. On all but the first of these counts, Margaret Laurence fails to measure up. Undergraduates looking to snatch a phrase or an insight may want to browse through it; the serious reader of Laurence, the one who wishes to extend his engagement with her work to include a serious selection of the critical thinking it has inspired, should not bother with it. □

Johnny Canuck comes marching home to CanLit

The New Hero: Essays in Comparative Quebec/Canadian Literature, by Ronald Sutherland. Macmillan, 118 pages. 95.95 paper (ISBN 0 7705 1613 0).

By JOHN HOFSESS

IN THIS SLIM supplementary volume (five essays running to 96 pages, the rest is bibliography and index) to his major literary study, *Second Image* (1971), Ronald Sutherland continues to argue (persuasively) that English-Canadian and Québécois literatures have much more in common, sociologically and mythically, than currently fashionable thought would have one believe; and (not so persuasively) that in both cultures since 1970, a radical shift has occurred in the characters of literary heroes, signifying an end to the "loser" or "victim" syndrome. "The ultra-positive character of American myths, the 'American Dream' if you wish, has led to bitter disillusionment," Sutherland contends. "In the long run, having expected less and received perhaps more than they expected, contemporary Canadians may be psychologically better off than Americans, and it could be an awareness of this state that is being reflected in the most recent Canadian fiction."

With books of this sort one has to be patient with the grand sweep of generalizations that reveal more about an author's

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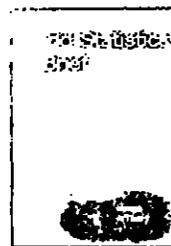


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to speak
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before.
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I don't feel
like that
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personal beliefs than they do about the world outside. Sutherland's prose is easy to read but difficult to make sense from: first because of the structure, the two-step run-around (one step forward, consisting of a bold or provocative assertion, one step back while the statement is qualified by a maybe, perhaps, or could-be); and second because of such high-level abstractions as "psychologically better off," whatever than means. It seems to be a notion based on the tritest of pop-psychology theories, that feeling bad is bad and disillusionment a state to be avoided.

Even when one drops the comparison with American culture as too vast and vague, there are problems with Sutherland's "new hero" thesis. Has he spotted a definite trend or simply rounded up a few exceptions to the rule? If his "new hero" is not to be found in some of the best of "most recent Canadian fiction" (such as Timothy Findley's *The Wars* — the finest Canadian novel in years) or in best-selling works of fiction (such as Atwood's *Dancing Girls*), what sense does it make to build a thematic theory on books that don't penetrate the lives of many people?

Sutherland makes his case that there has been a significant shift in consciousness by examining the early and recent work of three writers — Sinclair Ross, Adele Wiseman, and André Langevin. In each case he finds that the protagonists in the later novels (*Sawbones Memorial*, *Crackpot*, and *Une Chaine dans le parc*) have managed to escape the guilt-ridden, bone crushing fate of many old-Canadian heroes in the Calvinist-Jansenist tradition.

A look at black fiction since the 1960s, and feminist literature of the 1970s, shows that once any group becomes aware of its oppression, it begins to alter (both in life and literature) its standard roles, and seek a more positive fulfilment. In view of such spectacular examples of social and literary change, it hardly seems remarkable that here and there on the Canadian literary scene a few writers are developing a new sensibility and more "positive" values. Sutherland has nothing to say about Margaret Gibson, Jack Hodgins, Timothy Findley, David Fennario, among many other young Canadian writers who have done distinguished and innovative work in recent years; he has nothing to say about science-fiction writer Judith Merrill who has been turning out stories with "new heroines" for more than 25 years now. It is a crucial failure for a work of thematic criticism not to have a vast range; one cannot establish a sociology of literature based on so few examples as *The New Hero* discusses, and failing that objective, the rewards of reading it are meagre.

Atwood's *Survival* (the most important "consciousness-raising" event in Canadian culture in the past 10 years) had omissions and logical loopholes; but the difference is, it made its case, with a high flame of polemical energy. After reading *The New Hero* the only lasting impression is the need for a new sort of criticism. □

Two pairs looking for a full house

The Best of Greg Clark and Jimmie Frise, Collins, 216 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 216683 6).

Chiclet Gomez, by Dorothy O'Connell, Deneau & Greenberg, 150 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88879 001 5).

By SHEREE HAUGHIAN

AT A TIME when so many writers feel it is their destiny to pound out stinging, stunning articulations on national questions of ugliness, evil, and falsehood, it is titillating to come across a couple of books that have no more intellectual weight than the froth in a bottle of cream soda. *The Best of Greg Clark and Jimmie Frise* and *Chiclet Gomez* are tributes to the topsy-turvy comedy teams of bygone days, broad humour that has a special corner in nostalgia's hall of fame.

Frise illustrated Clark's stories for the *Star Weekly* in the 1930s when newspaper subscribers must have found little to laugh about on the front pages. The predicaments the two men regularly seemed to encounter resurrect a lifestyle that has long vanished from our perspective, indeed had probably gone to the grave even before Clark and Frise got together.

Many of the pair's choicest scrapes involve stag weekends away from the city to return to the simple rhythms of nature and primitive humanity. Rural Ontario just ain't what it used to be. The rustics are as skilled in the art of deception as any city swindler. The fish never bite; Clark and Frise always do.

Another recurring design in these old excerpts is that the companions never manage to profit from their mistakes. Aside from the narrator's occasional I-told-you-so tone and the perpetual wince that Frise has sketched on his chubby face, the pair emerge from every calamity with their ignorance nicely intact.

This guise of perennial stupidity was, no doubt, a source of great delight to the duped masses of the Depression years — a tasty bit of ham on wry sandwiched between the soup lines and dust bowls. But the pattern is altogether too repetitious and trite to function well in a modern anthology. People who plan to enjoy this book are advised to confine their reading to Saturday nights after the hockey game.

Chiclet Gomez and her sidekick, Tillie, contemporary heroines of mirth and muddle, are dizzy dames with a difference — they happen to live in a public-housing project for the under-privileged. Middle-

aged, middle-class notions of going back to the good earth for leisure's sake are therefore replaced with monthly wrestles over the rent and how to pay it. The two women lay bare a government system that slaps you in the loony bin when your fridge needs fixing and threatens to send out the Children's Aid when your kid breaks his leg.

But this too-obvious social commentary gets consumed in a chain of antics that resemble the TV serial corn dished out in the 1950s. Chiclet organizes fat farms, creates new toilet designs, and films "meaningful" documentaries with all the entrepreneurial zest of a good-natured housewife whose hubby is a little tight with the pin money. It is easy to forget that any money she may make will have to go towards checking another invasion of impetigo or scurvy.

The Best of Greg Clark and Jimmie Frise and *Chiclet Gomez* are not the type of collections I would confess to liking before a group of erudite friends. Their humour just isn't subtle enough to seduce agile wits. But as Jimmie Frise once remarked, "it's a heck of a life trying to make people laugh." So it is. And perhaps simple confections such as these should not go entirely unsampled. Take 10 lashes for unworldly indulgence and nibble on. □

Fancy free and fancy foiled

The Unwanted Adventure of Harold Greenhouse, by M. G. Wilkins, illustrated by Roy Condy, Scholastic-TAB, 72 pages, \$1.45 paper.

Captives of Cauldron Dave, by Dorothy M. Powell, Scholastic-TAB, 153 pages, \$1.15 paper.

A Year for Growing, by Karleen Bradford, Scholastic-TAB, 137 pages, \$1.15 paper.

By DUNCAN McEWAN

A GOOD CHILDREN'S book should be as enjoyable to adults as it is to children. Good books are the food of fantasy and learning. However the writer of a children's book needs to write for himself and his own remembered fantasies as much as for the children. In two of the three books under review, the authors have allowed imagination and discovery to succumb to educational purpose, with a flat result.

The book that succeeds is *The Unwanted Adventure of Harold Greenhouse*, an adventure story for five- to 10-year-olds. The hero, Harold Greenhouse, is wise beyond his years, for Harold loves to read books. Armed only with an extensive vocabulary, he falls victim to a case of mistaken identity and is snatched by kidnappers (one tall and

dumb. the other short). These villains believe they have on their hands the only son and heir of baffled millionaire J. Duckworth Street U. to whom they have just delivered a less-than-literate ransom note. Bibliophile Harold quickly frees himself from his bonds (having read books on escape artists and rope tricks) and proceeds to demonstrate once again that literature can triumph.

The writing is witty, precise, and interesting. Harold discovers that money can make a difference. "I give a feeling of independence and maturity," he muses, after escaping from the miscreants without a penny. The author maintains a strong educational emphasis without letting this cloud the need for adventure and humour. The production of the book enhances its charm, with colourful and entertaining drawings and large type. My only fear is that children who read the book may not remain convinced for long that people who read books as religiously as Harold are quite so persistently right.

If a story involving four purebred Great Danes, victims of unfortunate circumstance who end up trapped in a cave on Vancouver Island appeals, then *Captives of Cauldron Cave* may be the book for you. It was not the book for me. The disappearance of the dogs leaves 16-year-old Robyn Redding fraught with anxiety. As the tale proceeds, we grow to feel an anxiety of our own. Ours.

however, is concerned more with where the overly innocent plot will take us next than with the fate of the dogs, whom we rightly assume will be saved in the nick of time. The author follows the path of so many animal stories, wooing us with anthropomorphism when we would prefer to be wooed by more substantial treatment of the plot and characters.

A Year for Growing might well have been another animal story. Fortunately, there is much more emphasis on the development of the principal characters. Robbie Wicks has left his home in Montreal to spend a year with his grandfather in Owen Sound. Robbie does not look forward to his year away, and neither do we, as it becomes apparent that his disdain for the country shields a painful adolescent anxiety. His grandfather is ill-prepared for Robbie's petulance and frustration. Through a shared interest in nature, the author brings the two toward a slow understanding, at the same time illustrating the difficulties of adolescence and the antagonisms between town and country. She writes with real affection for that other Canada — the country outside the urban sprawl — and successfully brings life to her descriptions of nature. But as in *Cauldron Cave*, our sympathy is sometimes lost by the depth of her realism, as imagination is once again sacrificed to didacticism. □

Gathering for gathering's sake

Personal Fictions: Stories by Munro, Wkbe, Thomas, and Blaise, selected by Michael Ondaatje, Oxford University Press, 230 pages, \$4.50 paper (ISBN 0 19 540277 4).

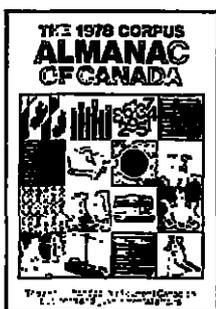
Here and Now, edited by Clarke Blaise and John Metcalf. Oberon, 213 pages, \$15 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 210 5) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 211 3).

By EUGENE McNAMARA

I ENJOY reading short stories and I sometimes write them. I think of my interest in short fiction as a harmless eccentricity. But despite my long-term passionate affair with the short story, I am often irritated by anthologies. At the back of my mind there is always a nagging doubt about the *raison d'être* of the collection, and I am afraid that it is on this crabby, picky note that I begin.

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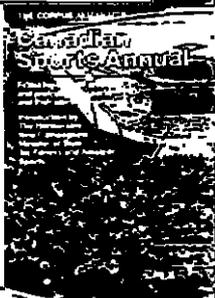
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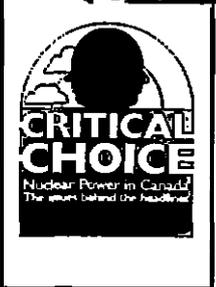
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Metcalf book. Ondaatje includes none of his own work, while Metcalf and Blaise each include one of their own stories. This is fair, I think, because if we accept their judgement on the other stories, why not on their own work? But I think Ondaatje's reticence places him in sterling company. Walt Whitman visited hundreds of wounded, helpless men during the American Civil War, bringing them oranges and Bibles, but never, never a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. It is not recorded that he even read any of his poems to them. Imagine a poet visiting a helpless audience and resisting the impulse. Ondaatje has no preface. He just lets the stories stand on their own. Ondaatje's choicer are mostly sound. But again, what is the excuse for this book? All of the stories are taken from previously published anthologies by the four writers. The books are probably still in print. If this present anthology were made up of stories hidden in this or that magazine, then I would have no gripe. Perhaps there is something to be gained by an interfacing of the writers.

If so, the point is easily missed. Two men and two women? But the men are es different from each other es the women are alike. Blaise presents an intensely sophisticated investigation of the modern displaced human being in a disintegrating world. Wiebe's forte is the Canadian West end its bloody, painful history. Munro and Thomas seem more interested in the relationships between men and women. In their stories,



the relationships are seldom serene, often tense, and usually seen as manipulative. It is the men in their stories that generally do the manipulating. One exception to this, is Thomas's "Aquarius." A man, momentarily separated from his wife in an aquarium, sees his whole life reflected metaphorically in the tanked fish and the full weight of his wife's gradual destruction of him is realized in a stunning coalescing of words and action.

In Thomas's story "Material," the ex-wife of a writer discovers in one of his stories that they share a common horde of memory. He has used it, and it has become material. At the same time, the woman discovers that her present husband has made equally careful use of the materials of his life. She hasn't. She has been "at the

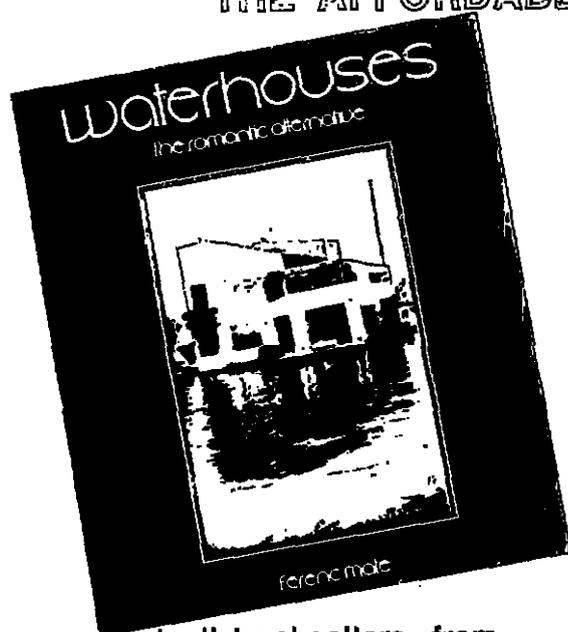
mercy" of others. These are my favourite stories from this collection. They are also brief excerpted statements by the authors on their own writing placed at the back of the book.

Finally, one is left with the feeling of one thematic thread running through many of the stories (with the exception of Wiebe's). There are sensibilities tuned to high frequencies of awareness, taut nerves, power games, resentment, and bitchiness on the part of both sexes.

The same might be added of *Here and Now*, which posits that Canadian fiction writers need foreign models. Many of the stories in this collection are set in foreign places. "For Love of Eleanor" and "A Monday Dream at Alameda Park," both by Leon Rooke, are set in a Malcolm Lowry Mexico, complete with expatriates who perceive the scene during classic hangovers. They feel dread. There is a lot of angst. Mavis Gallant's "An Autobiography" is set in a New Yorker Switzerland. Ray Smith's "Were there Flowers in the Hair of the Girl Who Danced on His Grave in the Morning?" is set in the no-country of surrealism. Alice Munro's "Dance of the Happy Shades" is set in the country of coming of awareness. Russell Banks's "The Defenceman" is the most "Canadian" story of the lot and I liked "Gentle as the Flowers Make the Stones" by John Metcalf — though, again, I could see no specific reason for its inclusion. □

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Tolling la belle province

Bitter Breed, by Albert Laberge, translated from the French by Conrad Dion, Harvest House. 128 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88772 205 9) and \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 88772 166 4).

The Princes, by Jacques Benoit, translated from the French by David Lobdell, Oberon Press. 123 pages, 59.95 cloth (ISBN 887.50 242 3) and 54.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 342 1).

By CAROLINE BAYARD

IT SEEMS THAT Canada has never been so motivated to read about Quebec as in this past year. But it is unlikely that either one of these novels will do much to dissipate the misconceptions or the archetypal clichés that English Canadians have nurtured about Quebec for so long. If anything, in fact, both Laberge's *Bitter Bread* and Benoit's *The Princes* would appear subtly to reinforce these clichés. Let me hasten to add that this is not the fault of the translators — for each, in his own territory, has accomplished a remarkable feat.

Bitter Bread and *The Princes* are told in very different modes. The first contains most of the elements usually associated with naturalism; the second is more akin to surrealism or to the sort of "realismo magico" for which some Latin American writers developed a fondness in the 1950s and 1960s.

Nearly 60 years elapsed between these two novels: *Bitter Bread* first appeared in Quebec in 1911 under the title *La Scoutine*; *The Princes* appeared as *Les Princes* in 1973. Laberge's novel must have seemed an almost obscene oddity in pre-First World War Quebec: a fictional world where the main character is nicknamed after her smell; where there is no mention of saints and martyrs; and where the focus on place is continually narrowed down to objects, senses, and physical perceptions.

While French literary tradition abounds in such materialistic visions, Quebec at the turn of the century and even much later had not been prone to embark on such experiments. The result, in Laberge's case, is mildly disappointing. It is interesting as a document of the times about rural Quebec, its institutions, its social fabric, its village transactions and prejudices. It is limited and limiting because none of its characters ever quite comes to life: the characters remain more like grimacing puppets than creatures made of flesh. True to naturalist esthetics, what matters here is not the complex world of psychological motivations between characters but the physical surroundings, the material conditions that shape their

lives, determine their existences, and make them the way they are. The roughness and the toughness of most of this novel's characters is thus linked to the very bread they eat; it is the texture and the taste of this bitter bread that in turn shapes their lives and emotions.

Laberge was gifted with a rare sense of observation and a remarkable eye for detail. Various smells and tastes are particularly well recorded throughout *Bitter Bread*. The author does not recoil from the most repulsive realities and at one point describes a goitre "swinging on her chest like the clapper of a bell." Some sections have historical interest, particularly the election-day chapter where the English (the bleus) beat up the French (the rouges), drive them from the polling station, and win the election. But on the whole this 1977 translation may confirm Anglo perceptions of Quebec as a province of the dark ages, sunk deep into a rural provincialism all of its own.

In contrast *The Princes* is set in a world of fantasy where men eat dogs and dogs eat men and in which no direct references to Quebec, Canada, or any other country can be found. Benoit's novel however has a

first impressions

by David Helwig

A discrete yarn of the lumpenbourgeoisie; a rain forest saga, and a high-seas epic

I Do Remember the Fall, by M. T. Kelly, Simon & Pierre, 176 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88924 064 7).

High Water Chants, by Trevor Ferguson, Macmillan, 268 pages, 59.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1568 1).

The Black Cockade, by Victor Suthren, Collins, 246 pages, 510.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 222012 1).

FIRST NOVELS are expected to be odd mixtures of strength and weakness like a half-trained young athlete with a couple of stunning moves. One expects hints of craft and imagination that may come to some splendid fruition or may disappear into the dread night of anonymity. New novels by Trevor Ferguson and M. T. Kelly fit themselves pretty well to that sort of expectation.

Kelly's *I Do Remember the Fall* is a novel about what might be called the lumpenbourgeoisie, young half-educated men and women who are never really short of money but are generally short of practically everything else, especially any sense that their lives have a shape or direction. Kelly's hero, Randy Gogarty, has spent a while in a large magazine-publishing empire:

captivating intensity and a fierceness that is similar to Marie-Claire Blais' best works. The density of Bicus' myth-ill visions is present here but with the difference that the reader cannot identify the locus of this mythology. Benoit's world, filled with paranoid men and dogs, does not fit any preconceived pattern, does not evoke any ready-made universe. In this sense it reminds one of Borgès' peculiar twists.

In its own way *The Princes* perpetuates a few more Anglo myths about Quebec. Maybe the darkness of its colour tones or the fearful complicity of the deals made by dogs against men and by men against dogs should be held responsible for this. It still echoes distant and sombre ages, a country that no one will elucidate or even come close to, thus reinforcing the belief that, if indeed *The Princes* is a metaphor for Quebec, that province cannot be deciphered but only shared.

It is likely that *The Princes* will survive the effects of time better than *Bitter Bread*. Tales and fantasies have a perverse resilience of their own, one not shared by naturalistic or sometimes even realistic works of art. Even so, each is worth a careful reading and an attentive ear.

They'd had a training program and I had been training longer than I should have been. It was no fault of mine, really, getting stuck. A mild recession had made openings rarer than usual that year. Well, I hacked it for four months but after that it was Valium and beer at noon.

When we meet him, he is on his way to a newspaper job in Elk Brain, Sask. He arrives in late summer, and the book follows him through the next few months.

Gogarty as narrator is not an especially attractive figure. He isn't as funny as he thinks he is, and his mild depression is too often punctuated only by insights that are crudely formed. He gets involved in a strike at the newspaper, but the events seem curiously pointless. We don't understand the other characters because Randy doesn't.

Still, Kelly has some good moves. In particular, Randy's affair with Laurie, a girl from another town who finally comes to live with him, is stunningly poignant. It is moving to see a real love growing out of the soil of tedium and vulgarity. The book's climax, a pointless ear ride on the winter prairie to see some caged buffalo, is haunting.

The book's greatest strength is probably the fact that it is exploring territory at once familiar and unknown. It creates with some

authority the lives of the sort of young people who can be found in any small-town bar. The sense of emptiness and shallowness alleviated only by jokes without wit and acts without conviction is truthful, if not much fun.

Trevor Ferguson's *High Water Chants*, on the other hand, is a book that reaches for epic grandeur. It deals with a few characters on Skincuttle Island, a fictional place off the northern coast of British Columbia. Henry Scowcroft, cripple, bootlegger, historian; a runaway doctor, David Marfield; Billy Peel, a young end rebellious Indian chief; Morgan Duff, surveyor, fanatic killer; Thomas Duff the hermit — these are the sorts of characters that Ferguson deals with. The action of the novel takes place during a couple of days when all these characters are found pursuing each other in the rain forest of the island's interior. Though the tone here is serious, there are moments when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It* seem not far away. If other words, the novel sometimes threatens to tumble off its stilts of portentousness into inadvertent comedy.

The landscape is evoked brilliantly and in great detail, and this detail has the effect of tying the fantastic action to the real world. The struggle between me" of extraordinary strength and a dangerous environment is always gripping, and Morgan Duff is a compelling human fury, an embodiment of the relentless hatred at the core of the modern technological world.

The book's story is simple, and it is times unnecessarily obscure. The buried secret is single and not that surprising. Only if a story with more end stranger buried secrets would so much indirection be justifiable.

The beginning and ending of the book only half held my concentration, but the long middle section carried conviction. I would say of this book what I said a few months ago of Susan Kerslake's *Middlewatch* — that only complete conviction on the part of the author can make this sort of strange, exotic work come alive in the reader's imagination. Much of *High Water Chants* is marked by such conviction.

If each of these books, it could be argued that the author has perhaps not yet perfectly found the centre of his own imaginative energy. But in both it's clear that the energy is there. And that's what counts.

* * *

PRIVATEERS. Topgallants. Six-pounders. Grapeshot in the rigging. Errol Flynn. Remember those movies? I do. Saturday afternoons at the Brock Theatre in Niagara-on-the-Lake, alternating with Randolph Scott westerns and the Bowery Boys. Lovely escapist fantasies.

The Black Cockade, a first novel by Victor Suthren, is a perfect vehicle for a reincarnated Errol Flynn. The publishers advertise it as "the first in a new series of sea novels" in the great Hornblower tradition." It introduces a new Canadian hero, Paul Gallant, an Acadian who is strong, attractive, and daring. We meet him in temporary command of the frigate *Echo* on a voyage to the French fortress at Louisbourg.

When Louisbourg is attacked by British colonists from New England, Gallant is sent to France with a dispatch asking for help to break the siege. The British leery of his attempt and order a squadron to stop him in the Mediterranean.

The novel is published by Collins, who last year brought out Joseph Suessmuth's *Lockwood*, the story of a daring racing driver, which was filled with dramatized expertise about automobiles. *The Black Cockade* is very much a horse from the same

stable, for its author is a military historian with actual sailing experience, and the action sections are fascinating. Suthren understands how sailing ships work, and the imaginative battle tactics of Gallant and his sidekick Bessac are both marvellous and credible.

The book has a love interest, of course, but the author cares more about boats than he does about women. The *Echo* has at least as much personality as Abigail, an English slave girl given to Gallant by the Dey of Algiers, though she hangs around long enough to be rescued just before the climax. But that may be part of the form, for the men who read this sort of book prefer. I suspect, that the dream girls remain suitably vague so as not to recall too vividly the aging mate who is only a few feet away grumpily basting the Christmas turkey.

In terms of its narrative energy, its historic sense, its love of boats, the book is good escapist adventure. If the series goes on, I hope Gallant will develop a few more idiosyncrasies. Not weaknesses, perish the thought, but just a few eccentricities to give him texture.

Will the series go on? I wish it well, but I have a sense that this sort of thing may be out of date. Does anyone under 60 read the Hornblower books now? Or have they vanished into the literary genealogy of their famous descendant, Star Trek?

Or maybe the whole form is due for a resurrection. □

soft and recycled

by Paul Stuewe

Judging paperbacks? A blurb from a top hand is worth two from the bush

AS THE HARRIED proprietor of a busy second-hand bookstore, I'm constantly sorting through large quantities of paperback books and deciding which ones I will either purchase or accept in trade. If book or author are known to me, there is of course no problem; but if this is not the case, a quick scan of the reviewer's blurbs on the jacket usually yields enough information for an educated guess. Since one of the purposes of this column is to act as a consumer's guide for paperback buyers, allow me to share with you the results of several years of accumulated eyestrain and muscle fatigue as applied to a selection of recent softcover releases.

The first tipoff that you may be fingering a lemon is the absence of any blurb at all or (subtle, this) a blurb that does not refer to the book at hand. If there are no blurbs, three possibilities suggest themselves: (a) the book is a classic on the order of *War and Peace*, and critical comment would be superfluous; (b) the book is a paperback original — check the copyright information

on the back of the title page — and there aren't yet any reviews to be blurb-ed; or (c) the book is such a turkey that even those familiar flacks who can usually come up with a good word for anything couldn't stomach it, and you'll do well to follow their example. The great majority of blurb-less paperback reprints, not surprisingly, fell into this last category; and when they are as inept as Robert A. Smith's *The Kramer Project* (PaperJacks, \$1.95) or as pedestrian as Bruce West's *The Men Who Flew Churchill* (Totem, \$1.95), one's faith in the average reviewer's perspicacity is temporarily restored.

The case of the blurb that does not refer to the book upon which it is printed, or what we might dub "the indefinite blurb," can be much more complex: on the back of the paperback edition of Jane Rule's *Desert of the Heart* (Talonbooks, \$2.95), for example, we find a laudatory quote taken from Margaret Laurence's review of Rule's *Theme for Diverse Instruments*; and although Laurence does say that Rule's

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"work compares very well with the best fiction being written anywhere," it would surely have been less confusing to excerpt from a favourable review of *Desert of the Heart*. Unless, that is, Talonbooks couldn't find one: this was Rule's first novel, and it is certainly more promising than accomplished. The lesson for the prospective purchaser, in any event, is that the indefinite blurb is an occasion for further thought rather than automatic acceptance.

Moving to what becomes by process of elimination "the definite blurb," one must first consider its whos and wheres. The jacket of George Ryga's Hungry Hills (Talonbooks, \$2.95) features quotations taken from *Skylark* and *The Georgia Straight*, and since I'd never heard of the first and don't particularly trust the literary taste of the second, I began reading it with less than whetted appetite. Which was just as well, since I found it a smoothly written but ultimately somewhat tedious slab of Prairies social realism that never threatened to engage either intellect or imagination. I should emphasize here that I'm not trying to denigrate smaller or less-prestigious review publications — obviously the validity of a review does not depend upon where it appeared — but rather suggesting that anyone engaged in mass-market paperback publishing will utilize the most commercially advantageous reviews at their disposal; and if they can only come up with blurbs drawn from the minor leagues of the media, the chances are that the book in

question will not appeal to a wide audience. It's merely a rule of thumb, like most rules, and certainly no substitute for a detailed individual perusal.

But even a raft of rave reviews from major magazines and newspapers doesn't guarantee a good read. One point to remember here is that when you see, "Riveting, Spectacular, A Masterpiece!!" — *The Daily Bugle*, "this is shorthand for, "Someone who writes for *The Daily Bugle* Eked it"; and that someone may be the foremost authority in the field, or it may equally well be an apprentice newspaperperson slapping together enough copy to fill up the book-review page. Magazine reviewers usually have more time to reach their judgements and are less inclined to resort to adjectival overkill, but you still have to remember that you're getting an individual opinion rather than a collective one. Thus when Farley Mowat's *The Snow Walker* (Seal, \$1.95) includes a blurb taken from a *Books in Canada* review to the effect that the book is, "Excellent. . . These are stories that have a deep emotional content," you aren't being informed that at least one other *Books in Canada* reviewer — me — would have phrased this as, "Pretty good. . . These are stories that have some affecting emotional content."

One other tip I'd like to pass along concerns a particular type of expression often indulged in by the more insecure members of the reviewing fraternity. The trigger word is "should," and it occurs

most often in the form, "This book is —, as all good books should be." Compressed here is the syllogism, "Good books are —, this book is —, therefore this is a good book." What has been left out is the grounds for accepting the proposition that all good books have at least one significant characteristic in common; and it has been left out for the very good reason that few thinking souls would assent to it.

The problems of such gratuitous and absolute statements become clearer when we consider a few examples. The *Books in Canada* quote used for Mowat's *The Snow Walker* adds that its stories are "spiritually moving in the way that good fiction should be." Now I'm as much in favour of spiritual movement as the next person, but a lot of what I consider to be good fiction impresses me for dramatic or sociological or technical reasons that have nothing to do with spiritual movement, and I suspect that the writer was simply looking for a classier way to say "emotionally affecting." Or take another example from the blurb used for John Buell's competent but otherwise unexceptional adventure yarn *Playground* (Ballantine, \$1.75): "A good novel should tell a story so convincingly that the reader finds himself 'living' the lives of its characters" (*Pittsburgh Press*). Here the assumptions — that novels tell stories, that readers should identify with characters — have been under attack since at least the advent of Joyce, Woolf, and Dos Passos (to mention only a few experimenters), and as a conse-

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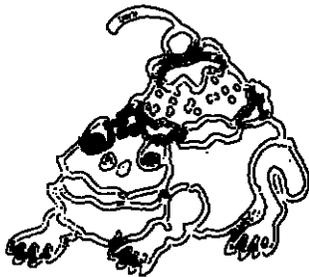
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quence the statement is interesting only as an example of cultural retardation.

The point I'm trying to make here was succinctly expressed by Thomas Babington Macaulay in a review of Robert Southey's *Sir Thomas More*: "It has never occurred to him [Southey] that there is a difference between assertion and demonstration. .. It has never occurred to him that a man ought to be able to give some better account of the way in which he has arrived at his opinions than merely that it is his will and pleasure to hold them." Bitter medicine, perhaps, for an age when the capacity for having opinions is often confused with the right to inflict them upon other people; but for those



Frog ala mede

of us tired of ceaseless bombardment by mindless sentiment, a bit more demonstration and a bit less assertion on the part of blurb-conveyers would be most welcome. □

the browser

by Morris Wolfe

What's in a name? More than is dreamt of in your philosophy, Hortense

"WHO WOULD have thought ancient Chinese wisdom could be applied to a Canadian lottery?" Who indeed. The question is asked by author Jasper Milvain in his introduction to *How to Win Canada's Lotteries* (95 pages, Virgo Press, Box 114, Station F, Toronto, \$1.95). Milvain provides us with not one, two, three or four — but five — systems for winning: numerology, astrology, dream interpretation, synchronicity, and the I Ching. You can take your choice or better still use a combination of all five systems. Milvain says he actually knows someone who won \$90.

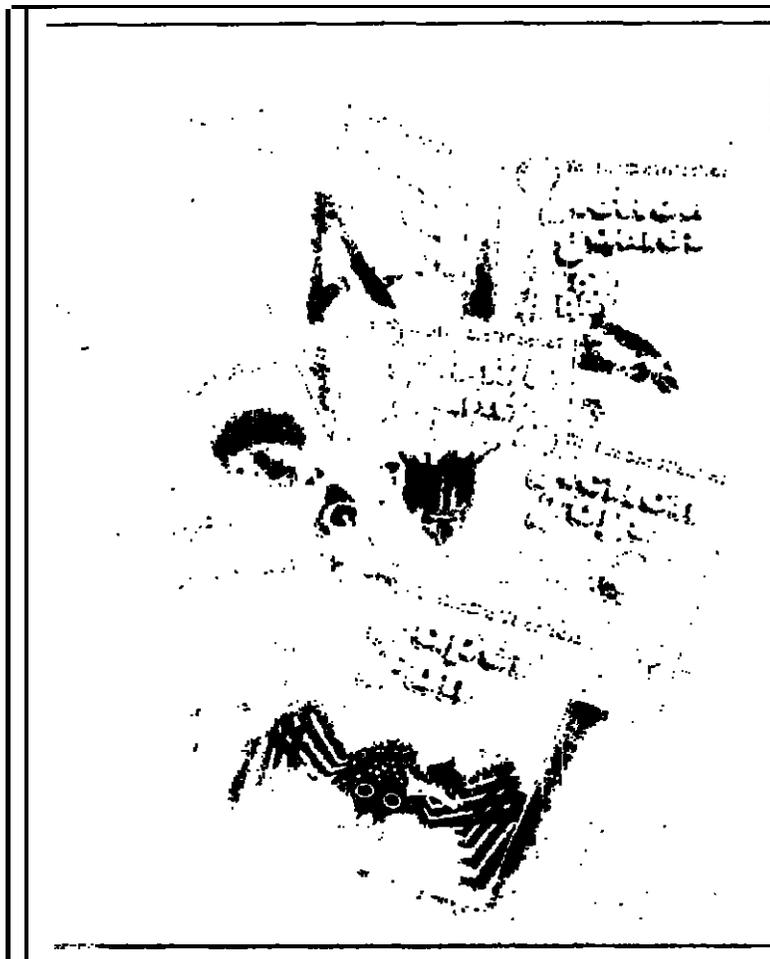
* * *

ONE OF Jasper Milvain's systems, numerology, is explained at book length in *Your Destiny is in Your Name* by Ann Forhmzway (310 pages, PaperJacks, \$1.95). Forhmzway tells us the numerological equivalent of 8,000 tint names and explains the forces and vibrations associated with each.

In addition to the numbers one to tie, there are three master numbers — 11, 22 and 33 — which are given only to extremely "old" and "advanced" souls. These people "have had every experience there is to be had and they come back by choice, out of love for mankind." I, for example, am an advanced soul. (Morris is an 11.) My only real problem, according to Forhmzway, is that I'm not sufficiently tolerant "of those that are still on their way up the ladder." But as Milvain puts it in dealing with my astrological sign, that's not surprising in one "many times much more aware than any of the people around him".

* * *

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have a weak name such as Alphonse and would like to be a Brad. Changing Your Name In Canada by Constance Mungall (131 pages, International Self-Counsel Press, \$3.50) may be just the book for you. Mungall's book tells you how to go about such things with a minimum of trouble and expense. It also points out some of the many absurdities involved if, say, you're a woman and want to make the change of name strictly legal. Many provinces — Alberta and Ontario, for example — won't permit you to do it: they require all family members to have the same surname. Manitoba and Nova Scotia allow you to change your name but only with the consent of your husband.

* * *

PROGRESS BOOKS was recently embarrassed when NC Press published Tii Bock's autobiography; the NC book included material Progress Books had suppressed. Nor Progress is making up a bit of lost ground by reprinting All My Life, the autobiography of A.E. Smith (269 pages, \$5.50). The book originally appeared in 1949. Smith, a United Church minister, organized and led the Canadian Labour Defense League during the Depression when the influence of the Communist Party of Canada was at its peak. Earlier Smith had participated in the Winnipeg General Strike and had been a member of the Manitoba legislature. Added to this edition is an appendix that includes major documents of the period not otherwise available — portions of the transcript of A. E. Smith's 1934 trial for sedition, for instance. An index has also been added to the new edition. Fascinating reading.

* * *

Canadian Libraries in their Changing Environment, edited by Loraine Spencer Garry and Carl Garry, (593 pages, Centre for Continuing Education, York University, \$8) is a collection of essays that provide an overview of the history and politics of the Canadian library system. The essay that interested me most is by Frances Halpenny, Dean of the Faculty of Library Science at the University of Toronto. Halpenny's "Libraries and the Canadian Book Trade" assumes that the Canadian librarians who will read the essay know little or nothing about Canadian books. I'm not criticizing the assumption: Halpenny undoubtedly knows whom she's addressing. It's just depressing that in 1978 Canadian librarians (particularly school librarians, it seems to me) remain so ignorant of the books of their own country.

* * *

TIDBITS: The Canadian Metric Conversion Handbook (98 pages, Hurtig, \$1.45) has, I'm told, been selling extremely well. Perhaps because there's nothing else on the market. I find the book extremely difficult to get around in. The table of contents is confusing—I don't know how or where to find things — and when I do, I have trouble reading the tables. . . . Too many of us left liberals, Red Tories, and the like have for

too long assumed that it's somehow beneath us to know very much about business. That attitude has been an albatross around the neck of much of the cultural-nationalist movement of the period. A useful introductory guide to finding one's way in the world of Canadian business is Manuel Gordon's Researching Canadian Corporations (80 pages, New Hogtown Press, 12 Hart House Ct. Toronto, \$2.50). Although the booklet is frankly aimed at those "who find themselves victims of some

corporation's malice or indifference and went to do something about it," I think almost anyone would find it helpful.... Confirm or deny: that the real reason for Malcolm Ross's 100 major Canadian novels survey is that McClelland & Stewart has found it necessary to cut back drastically on its New Canadian Library editions. The general editor of the New Canadian Library is, of course, none other than Malcolm Ross. □

interview

by Sandra Martin

Why a subsidized publishing industry reminds Val Clery of rats in the granary

THIRTEEN YEARS ago Val Clery came to Canada from Ireland via London to take a job as a documentary and feature producer with CBC-Radio in Toronto. Among other programs, he produced *Speaking of Books* and an early version of *As It Happens* in which he invented the "phone-out" concept of live new interviews. He left the CBC in 1970 and the following year helped to found *Books in Canada*, where he served as our first editor. Clery is a widely respected literary critic and magazine journalist. We asked freelance writer Sandra Martin to ask him about the state of literary affairs in his adopted country:

Books in Canada: *Why did you come to Canada in 1965?*

Clery: I'd been working for about six years producing material for the CBC from their London bureau and I decided to become an honest Canadian.

BiC: *What kind of cultural life, particularly in the realm of books and magazines, was there in Canada at that time?*

Clery: I thought the cultural life was pretty lively and I liked the way Canadians behaved in relation to each other. It's only

since I arrived in Canada that we have had this upsurge in Canadian nationalism. There has always been a certain amount of it, but it has really developed in the last 10 years. I must say I can't find myself in sympathy with a lot of preoccupations of Canadians at the moment.

BiC: *Why is that?*

Clery: I come from a country that's had more than its share of nationalism, and a country where writers have made their way and established their literary culture in a foreign language and through foreign publishers. I find it a little difficult to accept that you absolutely need a national publishing industry or to speak a certain language to have a culture. That puts me out of step with a lot of what's going on here.

BiC: *But, surely, one of the problems Canadians have is that their language is not unique, that they can so easily be absorbed by the American fact?*

Clery: I don't agree. one of Canada's problems is its cultural mosaic. The Americans have a much more lively and varied literary culture because they have absorbed many different peoples in their society. I think when you are working in a language other than your own, you get a hybrid vigour. In other words people have to try harder in their writing. They use words in a different way, they bring in their cultural background, and so English takes on a different tone. I think that's why, for example, the Irish dominated English writing for a great number of years. The same could happen in Canada.

BiC: *The most likely place must be Quebec?*

Clery: Quebec writers, if or when they are obliged to write in English, will probably be the ultimate Canadian voice. And, if there were more Italian Canadians or Ukrainian Canadians working in English it would add a very interesting new energy to the literature. Look at the American booklists. Some of the leading figures are people to whom



Val Clery

English is a new and adopted language. Losing your language has certain advantages.

BiC: *Where do you think literature is going in this country?*

Clery: I think it could do with a transfusion of ethnic writers working in English to get some new viewpoints. There are one or two examples of people who are outside the culture who have turned out to be very good writers. Clark Blaise (A North American Education, Tribal Justice) is one and Jan Drabek (Whatever Happened to Wenceslas?) is another one.

BiC: *Do you agree with government support to writers?*

Clery: Grants and subsidies make it possible for a great many people to write and publish books, but there's a sort of Gresham's Law in publishing that when you have a lot of bad it tends to lessen the impact of the really good. There's a quotation I like from Chelshov: "It's as sensible for the state to subsidize artists as for farmers to breed rats for their granaries." I have profited from the state handing out grants, but I think determined writers will write anyway. Writers are individuals and they are probably better off struggling. After all, most authors choose to write and they enjoy what they do, which is not the lot of the majority of human beings. I think you have to pay the price for doing what you like.

BiC: *What about your writing? Are you paying a price or doing what you like?*

Clery: I think if I had the talent for selling insurance I would have done much better, but I wouldn't like selling insurance and I do like writing.

BiC: *What are you working on now?*

Clery: I have finished an illustrated book on windows that should be out this spring. It looks at windows in a metaphorical sense, how windows — and I'm not using this word deliberately — reflect various human preoccupations and characteristics.

BiC: *Are Canadian windows different from any other kind?*

Clery: Oh, no, windows are international, thank God.

BiC: *There's no nationalism in windows?*

Clery: No, except you need double windows in this country.

BiC: *What else are you doing?*

Clery: I'm writing another illustrated book called *Doors* and I'm compiling, with the help of an Explorations Grant, an anthology of Canadian non-fiction that I hope will be out in the fall. It will be largely magazine feature journalism and some newspaper articles since the war, arranged chronologically. I'm hoping it will give a picture of Canada in this period as well as being an anthology of intellectually good pieces. There have been a number of fiction anthologies and I think it's time we had a showcase for people who don't write

fiction. I dislike the class distinction between fiction writers and journalists because I think you can be creative in both fields.

BiC: *What have you noticed about magazine journalism in this country?*

Clery: The new journalism of the United States, the kind of writing that was fostered by *Rolling Stone*, *New York* magazine, and *Esquire*, and although *lb9* deny it, possibly *The New Yorker*, hasn't really taken root here, although a number of people have adopted some of its methods. Another difference and one I think gave rise to the new journalism in the United States is that Americans seem very absorbed by themselves, very interested in looking at the fabric of their society. There are Canadian nostalgia writers like Barry Broadfoot who are concerned with looking at our past, but not many people are looking at what's actually happening now, examining the real mood of the country. I can't remember many pieces that do that and certainly no books.

BiC: *Why is that?*

Clery: I don't know. It may be the current sense of nationalism causes Canadians to be very subjective about their approach to their society. It may even derive from the fact that writers are helped a lot here. Maybe if *lb9* were more independent they would be more critical. I'm not suggesting that the state is buying writers out, but I have found being outspoken is not much appreciated in this country.

BiC: *Do you think our literary community is incestuous?*

Clery: We have a sort of garrison literature. People have been to university together and they see each other every day of their lives and that closeness tends to subdue any great criticism. There's a literary phase called *log rolling*.

BiC: *What does that mean?*

Clery: It refers to a group of literary people praising and supporting each other. It happens in book reviewing and in authors writing and talking about each other. I'd like to see a little more bloodshed in the literary field in Canada.

BiC: *Do you think of us as a nation of writers or are we a nation of bank clerks?*

Clery: I don't think of it as a nation anyway. There is a certain percentage of writers in any society. I'm not too gone, as I said before, on nationality. I happen to be a Canadian now because I am here. I don't consider nationality any more important than changing your address. Nationality for writers is like rats in the granary. □



Letters to the Editor

SNIPING AT WOODCOCK

Sir:

May a protester be heard — on the question of George Woodcock's contribution to *Canadian Letters* through *Canadian Literature*? May it be said that his "valedictory" in the January, 1978, issue is the usual mixture of self-congratulation and mangling of facts that some of us are entirely used to from George Woodcock.

I am one of those who remembers — when internationalism was in — George Woodcock writing that since the war Canada's critical excellence was largely attributable to its immigrants, among whom he humbly listed himself. Not very much later when an insistence grew that we respect Canadian talent, Woodcock ceased to be an immigrant and began insisting upon his native birth.

I remember also the days of beginning *Canadian Literature* at UBC. The fact is that a group of determined Canadians and the wealth of the Koerner Foundation had rather more to do with the success of *Canadian Literature* than George Woodcock did. And the great flowering of literary activity did not so much correspond to the precious, bland, and castrated writing in *Canadian Literature* as it corresponded to the creation of the Canada Council and the liberation of many writers into the lime that would allow them the possibility of creating serious work.

Will no one report George Woodcock aright?

He is — as he tells us all tirelessly — a philosophical anarchist. In that guise he wrote editorials attacking people working on what has been called the "national question," always aligning himself with the cultural imperialists. In that guise he never solicited material from a serious segment of the Canadian literary spectrum. In that guise he ran an unbalanced pen-club that has never let the leaders on the national question write about literature and the national question, that has never let the leaders of class analysis and literature, patronage and literature, anti-imperialism and literature, ever have house room. The latest arrived anarchist, washed up on Canada's shores a week ago and utterly ignorant of Canada, has always been George Woodcock's latest feature writer.

The great joke about George Woodcock is that he has never understood Canadian literature. And he still says (though very carefully now) that Canadian literature cannot be evaluated for excellence because it will be found universally lacking! What, no Keats? No George Orwell? Tut tut.

Canadian Literature has conveyed the false impression to some generations of students that literary criticism is the tunnel-visioned, bland, "apolitical," anarchist-oriented stuff George Woodcock let by. That has not been a contribution but a distinct obstruction to the development of criticism in Canada.

Many of us had hoped for better with George Woodcock leaving. But if Woodcock thoroughly approves of Bill New as editor, then New must be bad.

Robin Mathews
Ottawa

George Woodcock replies: As always, Robin Mathews is unable to distinguish xenophobia from nationalism and literature from politics. His

It must be spring!

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letter is the combination of bigotry, half-truth, invention, and innuendo one is by now accustomed to receiving from his typewriter.

I am not concerned with what Mathews thinks of me personally; I have never admired him. And when he says "George Woodcock . . . has never understood Canadian literature," I am ready to leave the verdict to readers who compare what I have written on the subject with what Mathews has written.

To come to more specific points, I am still an internationalist and an anarchist. I think anyone who is not an internationalist in the modern world, whatever else he may be, is suicidally motivated. But that is perfectly compatible with being a Canadian patriot concerned to establish in this country a real working federation that will be more in keeping with the modern world than the outdated nation-state, and it is equally compatible with resisting the domination of alien cultural and political influences. A dialogue does not mean one person shouting the other down.

I have never classed myself as an immigrant. Mathews is "inking" of an essay I wrote in 1963 — "Away from Lost Worlds" — which was eventually reprinted in *Odysseus Ever Returning*. In that I referred to the importance of immigrant novelists like Brian Moore and Malcolm Lowry, and went on to say that criticism had become more mature partly "through the appearance of a number of critics trained in the more rigorous standards of the English literary world." It was here that I brought myself in, not calling myself an "immigrant," which I was not. I have never claimed to be other than a returning Canadian who happened to start his literary life in London.

With regard to the circumstances of *Canadian Literature's* foundation, I mention in my article the group who initiated the idea of the magazine and invited me to edit it. They were not all — as Mathews suggested — "dedicated Canadians." One of the most active, Neal Harlow, then UBC librarian, was (Tut tut!) an American! As for the *Koerner Foundation*, it granted a small subsidy of \$2,000 annually for the first three or four years only; we were grateful, but it was not "wealth." But apart from these points, the "success" of any magazine rests ultimately not on those who invent the idea in general terms, or those who provide modest subsidies, but on whoever puts the magazine together, who keeps it going, in other words, the editor. Mathews' group of "dedicated Canadians" would soon have shown their discontent if I had not produced the kind of magazine they envisaged; they never did.

To talk of "precious, bland and castrated writing" is to insult about 700 writers (some "pen-club"!) including to name only a few — Dorothy Livesay, Early Birney, Al Purdy, A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott, Irving Layton, Mordecai Richler, Alden Nowlan, etc., etc. who contributed to *Canadian Literature* under my editorship. Some précieux! Some castrati! And, despite Mathews' wild statement that "the latest newly arrived anarchist has always been George Woodcock's latest feature writer," among all those 700 writers there is in fact a quite small minority of immigrants and only three, apart from myself, whom I know to be anarchists.

As for the "national question," it is untrue to say that I have written editorials attacking people working on that question; I did write editorials protesting against xenophobic attacks by certain self-styled nationalists on immigrant writers of integrity and worth. As for the "cultural imp&d-irts" with whom I am supposed to align myself, Mathews has made this accusation before, but he has never named any individuals; there are none to name, except in his imagination.

However, this practice of making wild accusations without supporting facts is typical of his

letter. Who are the leaders "on the national question" who have never been allowed to write? I have in fact published the invited work of a wide spectrum of literary nationalists of various shades: they include Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Dennis Lee, Dave Godfrey, James Lorimer, Hugh McLennan, etc., etc. And who are the other "leaders" whom Mathews mentions end whom I am supposed never to have given "house mom"? I am unaware of having heard my battering on the editorial door by such rejected "leaders," or of having been offered work by them — unless their name is Legion and Legion means Robin Mathews! Mathews did indeed submit to me about 15 years ago a polemical piece on cultural politics which I rejected partly because it did not hew much relation to literature and partly because I did not think it very well written: Mathews then sent me one of his charmingly insulting letters (some day he should print a form and ewe himself the trouble of typing!). On one occasion after that I invited him to submit articles. He chose not to do so. And perhaps here is a grain of mustard seed.

Finally, it would be difficult with nearly 700 contributors to maintain a "tunnel" vision, and it would be equally difficult to anarchistically orient a magazine in which only four of the hundreds of people involved are anarchists. May I suggest the "tunnel vision" runs in another direction — that of those "leaders" who think of literature only in terms of their personal politics?

CRI DE COEUR

sii

, am unhappy about your magazine.

I am a failed novelist and poet, driven to drink, mentally unstable, and a thoroughly rotten type. This in itself brines me no bitterness. Many soldiers must fall in the course of a battle and it has been my fate to be one of them. If I fail, others carry on and if the literature of Canada survives, if the civilized freedoms of the West survive, then it is all right with me.

But when reading your magazine I begin to doubt myself, all these fashionable phrases, all this undue emphasis on makeshift style, all these petty themes on petty tyrants — is this what my sacrifice was worth? It is always inadvisable for a young man to become a poet. I ignored advice and with no talent hoped to conquer the world. I would not be filled with sorrow if the genius of others had made good in my stead.

It is no fault to be provincial. Polish literature between the wars was provincial yet excellent. Most of the Russians were provincial. It is no fault to be narrow-minded. The French have produced great art in spite of this. The Germans have shown that even stupidity can be overcome.

What is worth denouncing is the tendency to make do with the second-rate. If we call cowards heroes — how do we then welcome home the heroes? If every creative artist has talent and every eccentric fraud is a genius what do we do when we meet the real thing? If the literary world is filled with intrigue, how do we recognize the legitimate clash of ideologies and philosophies?

I would not mind being a nobody in a great age. I do mind being a nobody in an age of nobodies.

J. Henricksen
Vancouver

WIEBE DISSERVED

Sir:

On page 6 of the January *Books in Canada*, you quote George Woodcock to the effect that "Few fiction writers make good or even willing critics, although they are happy discussing the problems

of their own writing" — and then, as if to prove Woodcock's point, you print a review of Rudy Wiebe's *Scorched-Wood People* by, of all people, Robert Kroetsch. Kroetsch tells us that it's a "fine" novel, and then proceeds to tie it apart, apparently on the grounds that Wiebe doesn't write the kind of novels that Kroetsch himself writes.

There are reviews and there are reviews: asking Robert Kroetsch to review Rudy Wiebe is like asking Leonard Cohen to review Lucy Maud Montgomery. I know you have no aspiration to produce the *Times Literary Supplement* of Canada: but do you have to act like the *Binghampton Courier-Express*?

Susan Jackel
Edmonton

Editor's note: On the contrary, Ms. Jackel, we are the TLS of Canada.

SERIES DEFENDED

Sir:

I wish to counteract a rather misleading book review presented in your November, 1977, issue. The reviewer, after some comments about previous series, suggests that the Canada's Illustrated Heritage series has the same faults. It hasn't.

I am a high-school librarian and have all of the series in use. The first, Canadian Centennial Library, had poor binding, poor use of illustration, and tried to cover too much in each title. The second, Canadian Natural Science Library, had better integration of pictures and text, but the text was too general for scientific use and too scientific for general use, and now, says Goldilocks, they've got it just right.

The Canada's Illustrated Heritage series has good binding, an uncluttered layout, a decent indexing. By having one good writer recreate the atmosphere of a decade, the reader is informed through interesting reading of the life and times of our ancestors. The reviewer is specifically mistaken when he suggests that the series deals only with the élite. In all, so far published, all classes have had their daily routine depicted. These volumes are far from the "scrapbook" effect of the first series, and your reviewer fails to recognize the improvements that have taken place.

Maybe he should read them (again?).

R. Rennie
Librarian
Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute
Wipeg

READERS IGNORED

sir,

Phil Surguy's piece on the Florence Agreement in your January issue is the clearest piece I have read on this whole confusing matter.

It illustrates yet again a basic problem in the book world in Canada. Government policy, in this area as in so many others, is apparently directed towards protecting certain people from the consequences of their own follies. And this, as Herbert Spencer said 87 years ago, is the way to fill the world with fools. The Secretary of State "consulted" with all members of the book trade over the Florence Agreement. And they, quite naturally, will do all they can to protect their interests. But who speaks for and protects the interests of the reader?

Until government policy in the book world in Canada is focused around the needs of the reader, and enables the reader to get the books he or she wants at a reasonable cost, there will be little development (as distinct from mere growth in quantitative terms) in the Canadian book world.

Jim Lotz
Halifax

WE CARE, WE CARE.

Sir:

I was just on the point of firing a missal to *Canadian Forum* about their choice of book reviewers when I thought I should give you a glance. In your January list of contributors, there are at least 15 from Ontario out of 22. There is one from the West (your feature personality, George Woodcock), and none from the East.

Perhaps you don't realize it but there are a number of intelligent people outside of Toronto. The belief that all worthy Canadians live in Ontario is not unlike the view that all things of value are generated by Americans, a position often attacked in your pages. I recognize that there are many problems with long-distance book reviewers but they are problems which must be met if you wish honestly to present a national perspective. Otherwise you should change your title to something more accurate. How about *Toronto Attitudes to Canadian Books*?

Terry Goldie
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's

Editor's note: No magazine is more aware of this century-old problem than we are. We'll keep trying to overcome it. But don't judge us by a single issue; judge us over a year.

GETTING IT STRAIGHT

Sir:

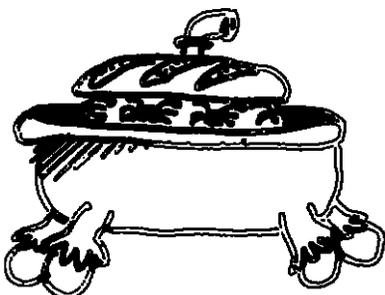
In his combination hatchet job/hand job in your November issue, Allan Safarik took *The Georgia Straight* to task for printing "articles on seal savers" instead of printing his poetry — as if poets are an endangered species and seals are not. In a fit of Freudian frenzy he claimed *The Straight* was "a limp liberal anachronism" and that "the counterculture has evaporated like a wet dream."

The editor of Blackfish Press should stop kidding/diddling himself. *The Straight's* mythical radicalism has been appearing and disappearing for 10 years now. Quixotic misfits like myself make sure of it. Every so often we wander in off the streets, pissed off at seeing *The Straight* evolve towards a lacklustre *Rolling Stone*, and gainfully unemploy ourselves with the self-righteous task of putting some heart and balls back into the paper. And yes, maybe even some poetry.

Six months ago, some of Safarik's criticisms would have been valid. Six months from now they could be valid again. At present, under yet another editor, *The Georgia Straight* is once again struggling to change society, not merely reflect it.

Nobody has the patent on radicalism. If indeed *The Straight* is "a ghost of itself" then let me remind Safarik that a number of people in this society still believe in ghosts. And in change.

Alan Twigg
Vancouver



Notes and Comments

NEXT MONTH we will announce the winner of the second annual Books in Canada Award for First Novels. The award offers a prize of \$1,000 to the author of what the judges consider was the best first novel in English published in Canada during 1977. The members of the panel of judges are: bookseller David Stimpson, manager of the U of T bookstore; freelance critic Anne Montagnes; novelist David Helwig, who has been contributing a regular column on first novels to these pages; Douglas Hill, who teaches English at U of T's Erindale College; and the editors of *Books in Canada*. Here are the novels on this year's short list:

Child of the Morning, by Pauline Gedge (Macmillan/Dial Press); *Sandbars*, by Oonah McFee (Macmillan); *A Small Informal Dance*, by Helen Levi (Queenston House); *Sidehill Gouger*, by Shane Denison (Doubleday); *I Do Remember the Fall*, by M.T. Kelly (Simon & Pi); *The Invention of the World*, by Jack Hodgins (Macmillan); and *The Abramsky Variations*, by Morley Torgov (Lester & Orpen).

ONCE AGAIN we apologize to subscribers for the postal disruptions that have delayed our last two issues. We understand that in some areas the January issue never arrived at all. The Post Office advises us that those copies are missing in action, believed dead. Naturally, we will extend the subscriptions of the persons affected. Please write or phone our circulation department to let us know. □

CanWit No. 31

AN AMERICAN NAMED Larry Wilde is making a lot of money these days out of something called *The Official Ethnic Calendar*, 1978 (Pinnacle Books, New York, \$3.50). "Through humor," writes Wilde in his non-introduction, "America has expressed an upsurge of ethnic patriotism never before witnessed. Polish, Jewish, Irish, Italian, and Black jokes have become the most popular joke fad in our cultural history, a salute to our sense of brotherhood." That rationalization leaves Wilde free to print just about every ethnic put-down ever conceived, devoting each month to a different culture. November is official Canadian month. Sample: "How cold does it get in Canada?" "Well, in November it gets so cold the pizzerias have to switch to winter weight olive oil." Yuk, yuk. Curiously missing, however, is official

American month. Perhaps Wilde will correct that omission next year. Meanwhile, let's give him some research material. We'll pay \$25 for the best official American joke we receive by March 31. Address: CanWit No. 31, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 29

THE THEORY THAT cynics make the beat detectives would certainly seem to be true when oxymorons are the quarry. We had an abundance of entries, most of them reflecting a fairly wry view of the world in general and Canadian institutions in particular. As might be expected, there were many duplications. "Postal service" and "national unity" cropped up on at least 20 lists. Also popular were "fresh frozen" and (cutting close to the bone, this) "Canadian literature." The winner of the special \$50 prize offered for this contest is Margaret Pointing of Mississauga, Ont., who submitted these (unusually gentle) oxymorons:

- light heavyweight
- mltonwool
- slip knot
- washer/dryer
- stop motion
- recorded live

Honourable mentions:

- spendthrift
- modern history
- permanent loan

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The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind Julian Jaynes

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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 Macmillan Book of Canadian Place Names, by William B. Hamilton, Macmillan.
- It's All Done With Mirrors, by Hazel Elves, Sogo Nis Press.
- Some Angry Summer Songs, by John Herbert, Talonbooks.
- City for Sale, by Henry Aubin, Editions L'Étincelle with James Lorimer & Co.
- Gathering Fire, by Helen Hawley, Thisledown Press.
- The Big Nickel, Inco at Home and Abroad, by Jamie Swift and the Development Education Centre, Between the Lines.
- The Making of the Canadian Media, by Paul Rutherford, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Thy Nature So Deep, by Joan M. Griffin, The Spiritual Press.
- Honey Bear on Lasquet Island, B.C., by Robert Sward, Soft Press.
- Quebec: The People Speak, by Rick Butler, Doubleday.
- Warehouses for Death, The Nursing Home Industry, by Daniel Jay Baum, Burns & MacEachern.
- Literary Glances of the Commonwealth, edited by James B. Bell, John Wiley.
- The Rise and Fall of an African Utopia: A Wealthy Theocracy in Comparative Perspective, by Stanley R. Barrett, Wilfrid Laurier Press.
- Third World Deficits and the "Debt Crisis", by the North-South Institute, Ottawa.
- Stage Voices, edited by Geraldine Anthony, Doubleday.
- The Firebrand, by William Kilbourn, Clarke Irwin.
- The Community of the Vill, by Edward Britton, Macmillan.
- Shadd, by Jim Bearden and Linda Jean Butler, NC Press.
- The Lark in the Clear Air, by Dennis T. Patrick Sears, Seal Books.
- So We Bought the Town, by Margaret Owen, Mitchell Press.
- Small Ceremonies, by Carol Shields, Talon Books.
- Reincarnation and Karma, Their Significance in Modern Culture, by Rudolf Steiner, Steiner Book Centre.
- The Land of Cain, Class and Nationalism in English Canada 1945-1975, by Phillip Resnick, New Star Press.
- A Border of Beauty, Arthur Lismer's Pen and Pencil, by Marjorie Lismer Bridges, Macmillan.
- Lore and Legends of Long Point, by Henry B. Barrett, Burns & MacEachern.
- Changing Your Name in Canada, by Cozstance Mungall, Self-Counsel.
- Chemistry of Metallurgy, by Graham Worthington, The Book Society of Canada.
- How Women Can Get the Best Jobs — and Keep Them, by Marilyn Evans, How Books.
- Rapids Away, by Leslie E. Wisner, Vesta.
- English Grammar for Beginners, by Stephen Gill, Vesta.
- Sounding, by E. D. Blodgett, Tree Frog Press.
- We and You II, A Canadian Anthology, illustrated by Ljil Grol, Trillium Books.
- Capital & Labour: Partners?, by Victor Levant, Steel Rail.
- General Leasing as an Instrument of Public Policy, edited by Michael Crommelin and Andrew R. Thompson, UBC Press.
- Any Other Business? How to be a Good Committee Person, by Jim Parr, Clarke Irwin.
- Living With An Empty Chair: A Guide Through Grief, by Dr. Roberto Temes, Mandala.
- The Correspondence of Erasmus, Letters 446 to 593, translated by R. A. B. Myrors and D.F.S. Thomson, U of T Press.

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