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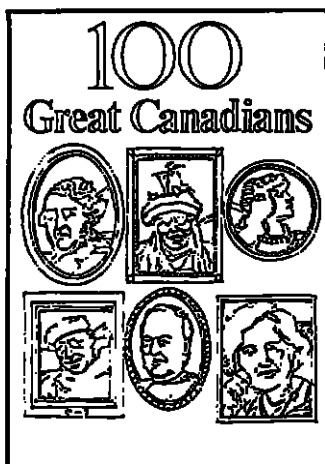
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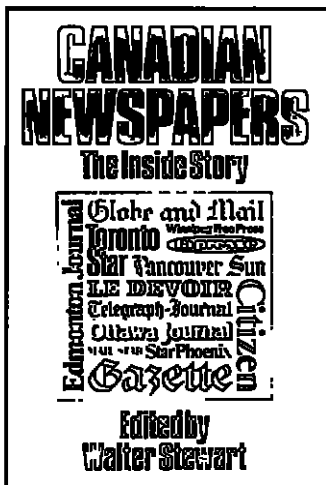
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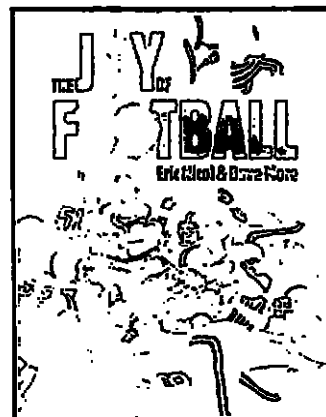
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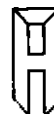
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FEATURES	
The Night That Ends the Debauch. Robin Mathews reviews Hugh MacLennan's first book in 13 years, Voices in Time	4
Ezra's Monuments. C. P. Stacey weighs the historical merits of Pierre Berton's anecdotal account of the War of 1812. <i>The Invasion of Canada</i>	7
Core Wars. A roundup of new educational textbooks, by Lorne R. Hill	23
Put It All In, Norman. Phil Surguy reports on the marketing of <i>Once Upon a Woman</i> , the Harlequin-style debut of a new Vancouver publishing house	27
Fen and Oink. Theresa Carrothers examines the strange proliferation of pigs in the literary world	29
REVIEWS	
Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa, by W. P. Kinseala; <i>The Glace Bay Miner's Museum</i> , by Sheldon Currie	8
General Ludd, by John Metcalf	9
Power Game: The Making of a Prime Minister, by Eugene Benson	10
Magic Realism, edited by Geoff Hancock	10
Cock-Eyed Optimists, by Dorothy O'Connell	12
Falling in Place, by Ann Beattie	13
The Selena Tree, by Patricia Joudry	14
Confessions, by Barbara Amiel	15
Havelock Ellis: A Biography, by Phyllis Grosskurth	16
Scarecrow, by Douglas Smith; Leaving, by Dennis Cooley; Interstices of Night, by Terrence Heath	27
Conversations with W.A.C. Bennett,	
by Roger Keene and David C. Humphreys	17
Contemporary Quebec Criticism, edited by Larry Shouldice	18
The Struma Incident, by Michael Solomon	20
Land of a Thousand Sorrows: The Australian Prison Journal, 1840-1842, of the Exiled Canadian Patriote, François-Maurice Lepailleur, edited by F. Murray Greenwood	20
The Hansard Chronicles: A Celebration of the First Hundred Years of Hansard in Canada, by John Ward	21
Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist of Empire, by Thomas E. Tausky	21
Island Sojourn, by Elizabeth Arthur	22
The Pre-Confederation Premiers: Ontario Government Leaders, 1841-1867, edited by J.M.S. Careless	26
Promises, by Charlotte Vale Allen	28
DEPARTMENTS	
In the Beginning, by Mary Ainslie Smith	32
A Thousand Words, by Christopher Hume	33
On the Backs, by Paul Stuewe	34
First Impressions, by Douglas Hill	36
The Browser, by Michael Smith	37
Interview with George McWhirter, by Aron Senkpiel	38
Letters to the Editor	40
CanWit No. 55	41
The editors recommend	41
Books received	42
ILLUSTRATIONS	
Cow photograph of Hugh MacLennan by Peter Paterson	4,7
Drawings by Bill Russell	
Photograph of Barbara Amiel by John Reeves	15
Drawing by Rudy McToots	29
Drawings throughout the issue by Michael Constable	
CONTRIBUTORS	
Theresa Carrothers works for the <i>Catholic New Times</i> and has no Circean ambitions. Michael Constable is a Toronto artist. Doris Cowan is a Toronto actress, critic, and expectant mother. Michael Drache is a Toronto freelancer. Gary Draper teaches English at the University of Western Ontario. Doug Fetherling is the author of <i>The Gold Diggers of 1929</i> , published last fall by Macmillan. George Galt is an Ottawa critic. Wayne Grady is the editor of <i>The Penguin Book of Canadian Short Stories</i> , which will be reviewed in our October issue. Absenting btff from academic felicity a while, Douglas Hill has gone fishing in Pan Kirwan, Nfld. Lorne R. Hill is the head of the history department at U of T's Faculty of Education. Christopher Hume is a Toronto aesthete. Scriptwriter Richard Lubbock belongs to the Libertarian Party and practises what he preaches. Judy Margolis is the former editor of <i>Apr. Review</i> . Rabin Mathews teaches English at Carleton University. David J. Mitchell is an aural historian with the Provincial Archives in Victoria, B.C. Regular contributor I.M. Owen has long been a critical follower of Hugh Hood. Peter Paterson and John Reeves are both distinguished Toronto photographers. Poet Monty Reld ( <i>Karst Means Stone</i> ) lives in Camrose, Ate., and has just ken appointed poetry editor of Edmonton's <i>NeWest Review</i> . Toronto artist Bill Russell's drawings have often graced these pages. Aron Senkpiel is a freelancer based in Vancouver. Freelancer Sherry Simon hails out of the Port of Montreal. Novelist Chris Scott works hi piece of birchbark in-Balderson, Ont. Mary Ainsley Smith raises children and chickens in St. Marys, Ont. C.P. Stacey is Canada's pre-eminent military historian. Paul Stuewe is a Toronto bookseller and critic. Donald Swainson teaches history at Queen's University. Phil Surguy is an editor at <i>Today</i> magazine. Dana Thurlow is a freelancer based in Digby, N.S. Barbara Wade is a Toronto freelancer.	

EDITOR: Douglas Marshall. ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Michael Smith. COPY EDITOR: Judy Margolis. ART DIRECTOR: Mary Ltt Toms. GENERAL MANAGER and ADVERTISING MANAGER: Susan Traer. CIRCULATION MANAGER Susan Aihoshi. CONSULTANT% Robert Farrelly and Jack Jensen.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Eleanor Wachtel (West Coast); Stephen Scobie (Prairies); Wayne Grady; Douglas Hill; Christopher Hume; Sheila Fischman (Quebec); Phil Milner (East Coast); Tim Heald (Europe).

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# THE NIGHT THAT ENDS THE DEBAUCH

Our trite, self-indulgent, rootless day is done, Hugh MacLennan suggests in a far-reaching new novel, and we are for the dark. But the spirit of man survives

by Robin Mathews

Voices in Time, by Hugh MacLennan, Macmillan, 320 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9590 0).

A NEW NOVEL by Hugh MacLennan is a major event, cultural and notional. More than any other living writer in Canada, MacLennan is a national institution whose novels mark steps in the country's consciousness. *Voices in Time*, a hefty, serious novel set in the post-destruction period of the world, will stir endless discussion — fueling the esteem of his admirers, the disdain of his detractors. How else could it be when a national institution releases a major statement that deepens and intensifies a character familiar over decades to both friends and enemies alike?

None of that is said in jest. MacLennan has a presence that lurks in the mind, even though nearly 13 years have passed since his last novel. It would be wrong to say he's a one-man Crown corporation, but there is an aura about his name that one associates with the CBC or Air Canada or the National Film Board. And so to read a major fiction from his hands is to read differently than we read a novel from any other Canadian. It is to take the national pulse, to hear a progress report on mankind, to be asked to judge who we are, in this place, now.

MacLennan is nearing his 40th year as a published author who has had honours and awards loaded onto his shoulders: the Lorne Pierce Medal, the Canada Medal, five Governor General's awards, membership in the Royal Society of Canada, and more. But his long life as a writer and his harvest of awards have not made him the national institution he is. That has come from a dedication to the country that other Canadians recognize and have a deep fellow-feeling for. It now is axiomatic that some of his novels are irreplaceable in the national life. In them — *Barometer Rising*, *Two Solitudes*, *The Watch Tower*, *Ends the Night* — he has pried at the mysteries of individual and national identity. He has done so lovingly, as any Canadian would, if any Canadian could do what MacLennan has done. He has wanted to say what this people is — warts and all, perhaps, but with a love for human kind that has always guarded him from the easy effect, the petty sally, the cheap shot.

His dedication has taken him back and forth across the country, lecturing, speaking to every kind of audience, participating in every kind of conference and assembly, always with palpable respect for his auditors who have been, always, his great subject. His essays have often provided small meditations on individual being in this place. His topographical works about Canada have undertaken larger considerations of the role of place in character and identity. No wonder, then, we read him in a way we read no other Canadian writer.

And no wonder *Voices in Time* exists as many more things than

are set down on its pages. To add to the cultural overlay that results from his being a national institution, the *sub-text* of his novel as actors call it — what is present but unwritten — exists as an enormous presiding force. The sub-text suggests that Canadians are too innocent, that they haven't learned the lessons of history. It suggests, too, that Canadian innocence may be dangerously like German innocence before Hitler, and that we are a people capable of moving, with our eyes wide open, into ugly situations we should be able to foresee and prevent. MacLennan places Canadian innocence over against European, and particularly Jewish European, experience.

The story is recorded, and mostly narrated — except for the last



few pages — by a man in his late 70s, John Wellfleet, a former teacher, one of the relatively small number in the world to have survived the intercontinental blasting that put an end to civilization as the late 20th century had known it. The end that came was “quick . . . colossal, and pretty well . . . universal.” MacLennan tells us it returned the population of the globe to what it was 400 or 500 years ago. Remnants of the technological order remain: civilized life is heaving itself back onto the stage.

Wellfleet lives in what appears to be a mostly insensitive bureaucratic state, but one that is emerging into new creative life. Since MacLennan's purpose is not futurology, not science fiction, nor a foray into the literature of utopia or anti-utopia, he doesn't deal much with post-destruction society. His purpose is to assess and consider the forces *before the destruction that caused our civilization to shape its own demise*. The novel spans the period from before the First World War to our time, and then, of course, briefly beyond. The reach is long and is presented to us mainly through the story of the Wellfleet family and their close connections.

Needless to say, MacLennan reaches out far elsewhere to present images of other civilizations that have passed. Indeed, his picture of modern bread and circuses makes the comparison with the aging civilization of Rome all too obvious:

There was always plenty of beer and sex, the stadiums were crowded, and the action spilled out into the living rooms of everyone with a television set, which in my country meant about ninety percent of the population. The Deer Park of the old French king had become democratized and it was at least more salubrious than the original one, for most of us washed and didn't have to use civet to drown our body odours.

The question MacLennan asks is of enormous importance: Has the modern world so bereft itself of personal and public values that it is doomed to disintegration? For some, such a question has to come from a puritanical pessimist who really believes our world deserves to end — perhaps even wishes it would. For others, the question is the fundamental one of the century, the question that lifts the book out of national place and makes it a significant novel of Western culture.

Indeed, MacLennan is in good company. He asks the question that Harold Innis, Donald Creighton, George Grant — some of the most powerful intellectuals of our time and place — have all asked in various ways. Maybe, in fact, MacLennan believes what D. H. Lawrence wrote in the first lines of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1928:

Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes.

In a sense, closer to home, *Voices in Time* has astonishing parallels with F. P. Grove's *Master of the Mill* (1944). Both are four-generation novels. Both deal with the changing character of successive generations since the late 19th century. And both present technology, finally, as the destructive master in a situation where human character and personality degenerate in a squalor of permissiveness, confusion, and neo-reaction.

The novel might almost have stepped hum the pages of the Harold Innis essay, “A Plea for Time.” Innis claims that destruction of the historical sense, of traditional values and the deep roots of generational dialectic, eventuates in an “instant” culture in which the self becomes pre-eminent and dominates all social considerations, all personal relations. MacLennan deals with that kind of destruction and attempts to tell us the character of the age that results. The picture he draws is of a world in which grandfathers are the last people with credible integrity. Timothy Wellfleet, a media man of the 1960s says his grandfather “was the only man I ever knew who could use words like honour, duty, and responsibility without making me feel like throwing up.”

Fathers are men losing their grip. The First World War wenchens them from fixed values and the Second World War takes them into psychotic compulsions that engage their loyalty or trap their humanity. That generation spews onto the scene a new generation of blind, savage nationalists and decadent self-indulgent personalists.

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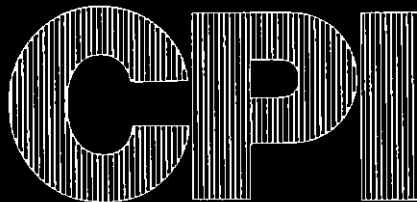
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surrender to the indulgence of pride and self-gratification. The German nation permits a psychotic individual to turn the machinery of state towards genocide. Timothy Wellfleet, in his hugely successful post-war Montreal-based television show, *This is Now*, savages persons and titillates the most dangerous human emotions in order to build his own image and to live in a bath of self-indulgent narcissism.

The move towards destruction is painful, inevitable. Eve's "good me" cannot control the juggernaut. Much appears to happen as a result of stupid accident. But accident, in reality, is the logical result of the movement of history. Personal catastrophe is the

---

**People prevail, for MacLennan, in the face of manipulating élites whose infectious sickness can be traced in the records of history. That is both a positive and a negative outlook.**

---

result of historical tragedy: a civilization that has been built to self-destruct carries off in bizarre and irrational ways people who are neither responsible for nor involved in the worst qualities of the age.

The novel is mostly about men, probably because the age MacLennan is tracing has been a male-dominant age. "New" women are present, and the healthiest characters in the book are women. But no woman has a significant power role. That may not please some readers, despite the fact that MacLennan is suggesting the wars and the fatherlessness that wars create have had peculiar effects upon men in the century, so that men have been the driving force in the desolation of the culture.

Within the structure of historical inevitability and apparently accidental mayhem he creates, MacLennan also postulates a strong psychological basis for the events that occur. But he sees no kid of "new man" appearing after the destruction. Maybe the remaining people will learn something from the past, or at least have different forces acting upon them so that a different kind of society may be possible for a time. But a kind of cosmic Spenglerianism prevents him from postulating a future ideal order.

To some, MacLennan's reading will be unsatisfactory. But his world view is — and has been for a long time — one in which civilizations collapse from remarkably similar causes. People prevail, for MacLennan, in the face of manipulating élites whose infectious sicknesses can be traced in the records of history. That is both a positive and a negative outlook. A conservative fatalism attaches to it, which suggests that no force of renewal can arise to stop the coming destruction. No blame, moreover, can be placed on class or country, for all are caught and propelled onwards by the moving wheel of history.

On the positive side, an intense life-wish is present in humanity as MacLennan sees it. Just as the birds come back after the senseless devastations of war, to nest in the indestructible lilac bushes, so the spirit of man rises to seek life, beauty, well-being, and virtue. *Voices in Time* is almost Augustinian in its mixture of pessimism and optimism. Man's history is cyclic. When he has strayed too far from God's will, God smites him and devastates him. From the tragedy of the devastation springs the comedy of rebirth.

Some readers will criticize MacLennan's mode of framing the action, some the "sampler" structure of the novel. Some will criticize the ideological bias that resolutely refuses to see the brutalities present in capitalism and its responsibility for grief in the modern age. If we are on the brink of a modern devastation, some will not be content to read the narrator saying: "The huge computer networks . . . suffered the equivalent of a collective nervous breakdown"; and, "There was no more malice in it than in a combined earthquake and volcanic explosion on a large scale." Some will be alienated by MacLennan's refusal to see in socialism anything but negative worth. Most readers, however, will enjoy this novel, even if it makes some of them determine — sometime soon — to take up the subject themselves in order to do different and better. □

# BROCK'S MUNIMENTS

Raiding the archives, Pierre Berton has come up with a highly anecdotal account of the War of 1812. But his face may be crimson about a couple of points

by C. P. Stacey

**The Invasion of Canada, 1812-13.** by Pierre Berton, McClelland & Stewart, illustrated, 363 pages, \$19.95 cloth and 324.95 slipcased (ISBN 0 7710 1235 1).

PIERRE BERTON does not tell us just why he has undertaken to write what is clearly going to be quite a long book on the War of 1812. One more book, one might say; for there is a large literature on this war and historians and near-historians have produced a good many books and articles about it in recent years. Inevitably, Berton is threshing old wheat and he has not been able to find much that is new to say. But there is a certain perennial interest in this strange conflict among North Americans, and he and his publishers evidently feel that it is enough to support this considerable literary enterprise.

Interest among North Americans. This was essentially a war between Britain and the United States that was fought mainly in Canada. (To call it "the war that Canada won," as Berton does in the beginning, is foolish and he goes on to explain that he knows it.) Yet the English, who were a main party to the war, have never heard of it, and the Americans and the Canadians have quite different conceptions of it. American popular history has tended to represent it mainly as a naval war, fought on the oceans, in which a few American frigates humiliated the Royal Navy. Canadian legend centres on land battles, chiefly on the Niagara frontier, in which the gallant Canadian militia supposedly played a leading part in vanquishing the proud invader. This is myth; if the defence had been left to the Canadians, it wouldn't have lasted a month. It was the British professionals in their scarlet mats (*not* crimson, please, Pierre) who provided the leadership and bore the brunt. These old tales, no doubt, are still not extinct; so perhaps there is room for a popular book, based as this one is on careful research in the contemporary documents, to bring to the masses (if they can be prevailed upon to read it) some knowledge of the actual facts as writers and readers of history have known them for years.

The author and his helpers have done a great deal of investigation, as his bibliography and references testify. Nevertheless, as a history of the war *The Invasion of Canada* leaves much to be desired. Its approach, not surprisingly, is anecdotal, and on the analytical side it falls short. Some things are overdone; others are almost entirely missing. It may be, as Berton says, that the Indians have had less than their due from some writers, but he errs in the opposite direction; we are inundated with Indians throughout. (Indians, of course, are much in the public eye at the moment.) On the other hand, the naval forces on the Cheat Lakes — the real key to victory in warfare on the Canadian frontier — are very inadequately dealt with; the Provincial Marine, which made Sir Isaac Brock's successful defence of Canada in 1812 possible, is mentioned only incidentally, and is not even in the index. The nature of the land forces on each side is likewise never fully explained. In Canada Berton talks about "the militia" but never tells us the nature of the force or of the laws that created it; Brock's innovation

on the eve of war, the law setting up the volunteer "flank companies" that gave him the most effective militia units that fought under him, is not mentioned. And the author has a tendency to interpret the early 19th century in terms of 1980. He seems astonished to discover that Brock "despised democracy" — in other words, that he was typical of his time, class, and country. One might as well attack the poor general for never having voted NDP.

Anecdotal, I said, the book is, and Berton is a skilful anecdotist. On the most important anecdote in the book, however, his researchers have slipped a bit. He quotes the Kingston *Gazette* (incidentally, it was actually quoting the York *Gazette*) as writing of Brock's fall at Queenston Heights, "'Push on brave York Volunteers,' [they] being then near him, they were the last words of the dying Hero." He is quite right in saying that these words cannot have been addressed to the York Volunteers, for they were not yet on the field when Brock was killed; he is right in saying that it is well established that Brock said nothing after he was hit;



but he is not right in saying that if the words were said at all it could only have been when he passed the Volunteers as he rode towards Queenston. He has missed a letter dated two days after the battle and printed in the *Quebec Mercury*. The writer, probably himself a Volunteer officer, says, "The York volunteers to whom he was particularly partial, have the honor of claiming his last words; immediately before he received his death wound he cried out, to some person near him to push on the York volunteers, which were the last words he uttered." It is quite possible that this is the true version.

Baton is not the first to point out that the leaders of the militia in 1812 later became the leaders of the Family Compact (whom he seems to think of as pretty villainous, as per the school histories of half a century ago). But is he really right in saying that Brock's Monument on Queenston Heights is merely a "symbol" of the Compact? I wonder whether the thousands of people from all over Upper Canada who converged on Queenston on July 30, 1840, to make plans for a new and finer monument to replace the one that had been bombed were really there for political reasons? I would prefer to think of Chief Justice John Beverley Robinson, who was there and was a leader in the movement, not as a political figure in this connection but rather as the hero-worshipping militia subaltern who followed Brock in the capture of Detroit and who met his body being carried back as he and his company of the Volunteers pounded into Queenston on the bloody morning of Oct. 13, 1812, and who never forgot him. And I suspect that those crowds of Canadians who assembled in 1840 were moved not by political motives but by the continuing power of the legend of the Hero of Upper Canada, and by gratitude to the memory of the man who had, beyond all question, saved the province from conquest. It takes more than politicians to create such waves of feeling. Especially, I suspect, in Canada.

This is a long-winded book. The present volume (the first of two) gets us only to January, 1813, covering eight months of a 2½-year war. Berton often goes into enormous detail, particularly on the American side. He and his helpers have dug deeply into the accounts the assailants of 1812 left behind them — they are almost all in print, somewhere or other — and he quotes fairly relentlessly. His own lively style and skilful organization are sometimes almost swept away in the flood of early American rhetoric. The documents familiar as brief quotations in the old textbooks are given here *in extenso*. The book's title, one speculates, was chosen with intention: the emphasis is rather more on the invasion of Canada than on the defence. One notes that it was "printed in the United States of America." Is it a fair assumption that this time the Great Canadian Storyteller and The Canadian Publishers are out to crack the Great American Market? Well, if they are, good luck to them. □

## From majors to miners, by way of left field

by Wayne Grady

Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa, by W. P. Kinsella, Oberon Press, 153 pages, \$15.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 341 1) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 343 8).

The Glace Bay Miner's Museum, by Sheldon Currie, The Deluge Press, 118 pages, \$4.50 paper (ISBN 0 920068 08 1).

FOR THE RECORD, Joseph Jefferson ("Shoeless Joe") Jackson probably never saw Iowa, let alone played baseball there. There was an Iowa and South Dakota League for two years (1902-03), with teams in LeMars, Sheldon, Rock Rapids, and Sioux City. But Shoeless Joe was born in South Carolina in 1887 and played his Class D ball in the Carolina and Southern Associations in the early years of the century. Clinton, Iowa, had a Class C team in the Northern Association in 1910, but by then Jackson had broken into the majors with Connie Mack and the Philadelphia Athletics. In 1910 he moved to the Cleveland Indians, and in 1915 to the Chicago White Sox when, in 1919, he became involved in the famous baseball scandal that changed the popular name for the team from the White Sox to the Black Sox: eight White Sox players, including Jackson, took \$80,000 from a group of gamblers to throw the 1919 World Series to the Cincinnati Reds. Jackson and his seven co-conspirators were barred from organized baseball for life, and barely missed a five-year jail sentence for defrauding the public. Even those non-fans to whom Babe Ruth is a brand of candy bar have heard how the little boy came up to Jackson after the trial and pleaded, "Say it ain't so, Joe. Say it ain't so." And how Shoeless Joe hung his head and said, "Yes, kid, I'm afraid it is."

The main character in the title story of Kinsella's third collection is a lot like that wide-eyed kid outside the court room — an innocent determined to believe that the world can be pure and noble and just, that its real heroes are incorruptible, that true farmers enter into mystical union with their land, and that good wives snuggle and smile sweetly when their husbands decide to do something as crazy as build a regulation-size baseball park behind the house. In fact he just traces the outlines of the diamond, and spends most of his energy making a perfect left field in the hope that Shoeless Joe, who died in 1951, will materialize to try out the grass. Shoeless Joe played left field: Kinsella claims that Ty Cobb called Jackson "the best left fielder of all time."

Actually, Jackson was most admired by Cobb as a hitter: his .356 lifetime average is still the third highest in the history of baseball, with Cobb's .367 at the top. But Kinsella wants to remember Jackson as a left fielder, and Jackson obliges by showing up and remarking that "the ball bounces true." It's a hear-warming story, well-written and loony, with just enough touches of sanity to place it. I suppose, in the murky realm of "magic realism." And Kinsella knows his baseball, a game with its own blend of magic and reality.

Most of the characters in Kinsella's other stories also manage to warp the world into their own personal patterns, although awareness of what is real and what is imagined usually saves the stories from pure escapism. In "Waiting for the Call," for example, Tipton is an 18-year-old who lives on Manitoba Street, which is called The Pit and is a kind of microcosm of the larger world: surrounded on his street by welfare families, wife beaters, immigrants, Indians, bikers, and hippies. Tipton works out his own ambiguous relationship with reality as he waits for a job on a weather ship to take him away from it. It is clear that the major characters in Kinsella's other stories — "Shoeless Joe" for example, and "Fiona the First" — have not quite outgrown the adolescent fantasies of Tipton. What is disturbing about these stories is that their fantasies are so successful, that they get away with it, that time is not as relentless and unredeeming for them as it is for the bulk of humanity.

In these stories, as perhaps in baseball, time doesn't exist. In baseball, the outcome is not determined by the clock, as it is in hockey and football and sometimes even in chess, but by events. So it is in Kinsella's stories. Many of them take place in transit — a boy between adolescence and maturity, between high school and his first job; a salesman between planes at the Los Angeles airport — and this sense of suspended animation tends to give the impression that the stories don't really take place at all, that nothing happens, that the events are figments or fragments of the writer's or the character's — or our — imagination. When the technique works, as it does in the title story, it can be as exciting as a stolen base in the bottom of the ninth.

It is difficult to imagine a more complete contrast to Kinsella's mid-western twang than Sheldon Currie's Cape Breton lilt, and



it is therefore interesting to find so many thematic and even stylistic parallels between the two writers. The dream-like quality of both Kinsella and Currie is a strength when they fire with all eight cylinders, but it is a weakness in the minor pieces. Kinsella, for example, has a trifling story called "Sister Ann of the Cornfields," in which a nun admonishes a community of Iowa corn farmers with such teleological tidbits as "Christ died for your sins" and "The meek shall inherit, etcetera." Nothing much else happens. Currie likewise has "Sanabatur Anima Mea," in which a nun walks into a drinking petty in Glace Bay, takes off her clothes, and delivers a lecture (complete with slides) on the evils of smoking cigarettes. Both stories are mercifully short, and suddenly and unsatisfactorily, and exhibit the kind of sexual naivety usually associated with anecdotes about teenaged boys and nuns in isolated Catholic communities. Male menopausal fantasy.

Many of the nine stories in Currie's collection seem to be excerpts from unfinished works-in-progress; another weakness. But the main complaint is that they all want to end with a vision of beatific righteousness that weakens the moral responsibility of the book. "The Lovers," about a middle-aged businessman who flirts with his secretary and is invited to her apartment for dinner while his wife is out of town, suddenly turns into a piece about bourgeois fidelity in which nothing sexual is accomplished, though a little climax of understanding is achieved nonetheless. Say it ain't so, Joe.

The two best stories in the collection are the first and the last. The first is the title story, a simple study of a girl in Glace Bay who marries a coal miner shortly before he is killed in a cave-in. The style, tone, and point of view of this story are well handled and appropriate, and Currie knows what he wants to say and how. When the realism trails off and the flight of fancy begins the reader already trusts the writer enough to go along with him. This doesn't happen with the shorter stories. "The Glace Bay Miner's Museum" is a kind of prose counterpart to Don Domanski's Cape Breton Island Book of the Dead, and there ought to be more stories like it in this collection.

The last story in the book is "Pomp and Circumstances," and like Kinsella's "Waiting for the Call" it is about a young boy hovering between adolescence and his first job. Jimmie MacNeil (everyone in Cape Breton seems to be either a MacNeil or a Currie) is the most fully developed character in the collection, and "Pomp and Circumstances" is consequently the most smisfying story. Jimmie, who takes a job as a helper in his godfather's bootleg coal mine, is shameless and picaresque: a regional hero. The story — actually more a novella than a short story — becomes a blend of Gordon Pinsent's *The Rowdyman* and Dylan Thomas's *Rebecca's Daughters*, though without some of the strata of the former and much of the lyricism of the latter. □

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## Kitsch 22: a pass option in mediocrity

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General Ludd, by John Metcalf. ECW Press, 301 pages, \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920802 22 2) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 920802 24 9).

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By MICHAEL SMITH

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NED LUD (with one d) was an English lunatic who in a fit of rage smashed up a Leicestershire weaver's mill and thereby inspired the destructive Luddite movement of the early 1800s to adopt his name. His spiritual descendent in John Metcalf's novel is James Wells, poet, winner of the Governor General's Award, whose alcoholic frenzy is directed not at industrial mechanization but the production of kitsch. As writer in residence at St. Xavier's University his target is the new Communication Arts Complex where, to his horror, students learn about "listening skills" and "the societal uses of advertising." He blames television in particular for the illiteracy, cultural poverty, debasement of feeling, and distortion of reality that surround him every day.

Wells's reaction to this pervasive mediocrity — end, to Canadian wines, frozen food, bad taste, and any number of other contemporary abominations — alternates between sour disbelief and drunken sprees, which twice land him in hospital. A prisoner of society, he searches for escape in grotty night spots and a rural winter retreat, but without success. He flimsies with personal destruction by pulling such pranks as stealing the English department's electric typewriter. So it's no surprise when he finally unleashes his fury on one of his adult students, Itzic Zemeremann, a pathetic, crippled Jew who has survived the Nazi concentration camps only to become a persistent writer of atrocious, pseudo-pastoral verse. Of course, the confrontation ends in disaster.

We know it has to end in disaster, because Zemeremann is so beeped with the trappings of a victim. For while Metcalf's previous fiction has been marked by finesse, he writes here with the deftness of an anvil. (The call-letters of a local radio station, CRUD, are but another smell example.) His characters seldom have any more dimension than the stick-figures that Wells habitually doodles, and lend 1" find themselves introduced, then thoughtlessly forgotten. Perhaps because Wells leads a portable, self-contained existence as a poet, Metcalf neglects to give even "him more than the sketchiest of pests. It's one of the novel's mysteries that Wells should be so infatuated

with his rather ordinary girlfriend, Kathy Neilson, and that she should see anything appealing in him — yet their relationship is central to Wells's eventual downfall.

It's easy to agree with Metcalf's attack on the mass media, whose simplifications, jargon, and clichés seem to have corrupted every level of society, but even a novel General Ludd is overly obsessed with his message. As a result, the chapters mostly comprise a collection of comic set-pieces — a faculty reception, a poetry reading, and so forth — to which Wells, as the first-person narrator, applies his caustic, single-minded commentary. Stripped of these cameo performances, the book is no more complicated than an extended short story. The climactic scene where Wells plots to destroy the Communication Arts Complex is telegraphed from the moment he sets foot in the place, not to mention the obvious historical hint in the title. The characters and events don't develop: they just happen, because they're only props in an illustrated lecture.

By the way, *General Ludd* is being offered both in the usual trade editions and in a special numbered, autographed, limited edition of 50 copies at \$40 a throw. Instant kitsch. □

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## The Hood line: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

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None Genuine Without This Signature, by Hugh Hood. ECW Press, 205 pages, \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920802 12 5) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 920802 10 9).

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By LM. OWEN

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THE 12 VOLUMES of Hugh Hood's work in progress, *The New Age*, are timed to appear in odd-numbered years, and he keeps the pot boiling by bringing out a collection of short stories in each even-numbered year. In this one, there is always enough entertainment and interest to justify the reviewer's recommendation; as usual, the entertainment and interest lie more in the stories' reporting and comment on the actual world than in specifically fictional, imaginative qualities.

There are two recurrent themes. One is the falseness of the consumer society whose wants are dictated by advertisers: an easy target for satire, but it's pleasant to watch Hood scoring his bull's-eyes, especially in the first story, "God lies Manifested Himself Unto Uses Canadian Tire." The couple in it, Dreamy and A.O., buy almost everything they see advertised, and discuss their possessions in a heightened version of the style of "Mrs. Wilson's Diary" that

used to run on the back page of *Private Eye* in the days of Harold Wilson:

After supper Dreamy comes and snuggles up beside me on the arm of our Naugahyde Recliner.

"I want the eight-ply steel-belted Polyester Radials," she whispers. "with the added protection of Hiway-Biway Winter Big Paws."

I can smell her toiletries. Hairspray, underarmspray, vaginaspray, and at the other end Desenex Foot Powder. Dreamy is covered, I think, triple-armour-proofed from head to toe, my Breck girl, my Once-a-Day girl, made of necessary iron supplements.

We last see them in bed, switching from channel to channel on their two television sets to catch all the commercials: "The one thing we never get around to anymore is actually well . . . screw. There doesn't see" to be any point to it. It's mom fun to watch what's on the commercials."

A subtler treatment of the theme comes in the title-story, where a landlady, her two lodgers, and her daughter produce and market a line of hand lotions, shampoos, and soaps with natural fruit flavours:

"We'll use my signature, 'Winifred Hislop,' on the label at the bottom." . . .

Harry raid. "I like it a lot. In flowing handwriting, copperplate. *None genuine without this signature.* . . Don't use your real signature, though."

"What do you take me for?"

The other recurrent theme is popular music. Perhaps the best story in the book, "Doubles," is narrated by a pop singer. (A popsinger very like Hugh Hood, though; he manages to work in a precise account of the physical geography of the Qu'Appelle Valley.) Another, "Crosby," is a history of the styles of popular music from the heyday of Bing Crosby to the year of his death, as mirrored in the career of a civil servant who once intended to be a singer himself. Put like that, it sounds odd: but it works rather well.

The most entertaining piece, though, is the introduction by Keith Garebian, who does his best to see Christian allegory in everything Hood writes. It reads like a parody of academic LitCrit at its most determined: but I fear it's serious. I fear even more that Hood may come to believe it — perhaps does already. For me the point about him as a writer who is a life-long Christian is that his religion is simply part of his everyday life. It's as natural for him to draw his figures of speech from it as from physical geography, but he doesn't deafen us with clashing symbols as converts are inclined to do. If he describes a hockey game, the 12 "en on the ice are hockey players, not allegorical representations of the Apostles.

Garebian refers to the "trinitarian" title of an earlier collection, *The Fruit Man, the Meat Man & the Manager*. That's the method: label a writer as Christian, and whenever he mentions a group of three he really means the Trinity. I think I'll write a

book exposing Hugh Hood as a crypto-Marxist. You see? The fruit man, the "cat man, and the manager are a dialectical triad. If fruit is the thesis, clearly meat is the antithesis, and they are synthesized in management. Good grief, I think I've convinced myself already. □

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## Gulp: Kaiser in power.

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**Power Game: The Making of a Prime Minister**, by Eugene Benson, NC Press, 238 pages, \$13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919601 09 X).

By CHRIS SCOTT

EUGENE BENSON BEGINS his novel with a jut: "The Cabinet of the Government of Canada meets every Thursday morning at ten o'clock in Room 340S, the Cc" Block, the Parliament, to decide on matters that affect the Dominion of Canada and the fate of its twenty-three million peoples. . . ." Come now, Mr. Benson, are we to believe things have reached such a pass that every man is a culture entire unto himself?

Furniture (severe, leather-backed), walls (dark), table (oval) are touched upon. So to a view of the Cabinet itself through the eyes of Summers., the one minister "untouched by the air of animation," an air more in the adverb than the evocation: "Skipjumper, Minister of Defence, was talking animatedly with Malmauvais, Justice. . ." The Postmaster-General, Teperman, "was busy designing a new stamp which his Department, as usual, would reject as pornographic." Others initial documents while the "Quebec Mafia hung upon the words of Gerard Chaudpain, Secretary of State, who was telling one of his ditty bilingual jokes." Miss Bella Dubois, Minister for Veterans Affairs, sits alone in a snit, "hitching her skirt, looking disappointed that no one was looking, and feeding her poddle [sic] another ice cream wafer." The names and the poddle give it away. This is a SATIRE, alas.

What is the cause of this extraordinary frisson? John M. Krakenbury, obese (250 pounds), aging (75), in poor health (rumoured), prime minister of Canada for the last 15 years, is about to make a statement (leaked): "The prospects are intoxicating. Resignation! A chance at the top. a place in history, power, perks." (Krakenbury must know about the perks. As well as the Nobel peace prize he holds the O.M. for which he is doubly disqualified. That this is a British decoration given only to British subjects seems to have escaped Benson's attention.)

Benson's sense of humour, like his style,

is somewhat less than intoxicating. For example, a CIA man is called Kim Burgess; the Minister of Justice has voted against the music of *Chc sara sara* as the new national anthem; the Minister of Defence has streamlined the Navy by abolishing surface ships while retaining 14 submarines (hard to do: Canada at last count had three).

The plot of this satirical stew centres on the fortunes of Julian B. Kaiser who, despite his name, is not what he seems. Elected MP for Sudbury Centre with 94.7 per cent of the vote after his Tory and NDP opponents are thrown in jail for embezzling church funds, he runs for prime minister on a policy of *quadrilinguisme* (Ojibway and Inuit as well as the other two) and paid home leave for unemployed foreign labourers. Kaiser is elected, declares war on East Guinea, Albania, France, and England, and reintroduces the death penalty for 'spies, war profiteers, multiple murderers (three or more), and hard drug pushers," the convicted felons being given a choice of how they must die. The executions make a TV show, *Last Request*, which regularly outdraws *Queen of Kensington* and *Woman Alive*. Mr. Benson is indefatigably unfunny.

It was Sir Francis Bacon who said that some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. Abstain from *Power Game*. □

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## Glitter basket

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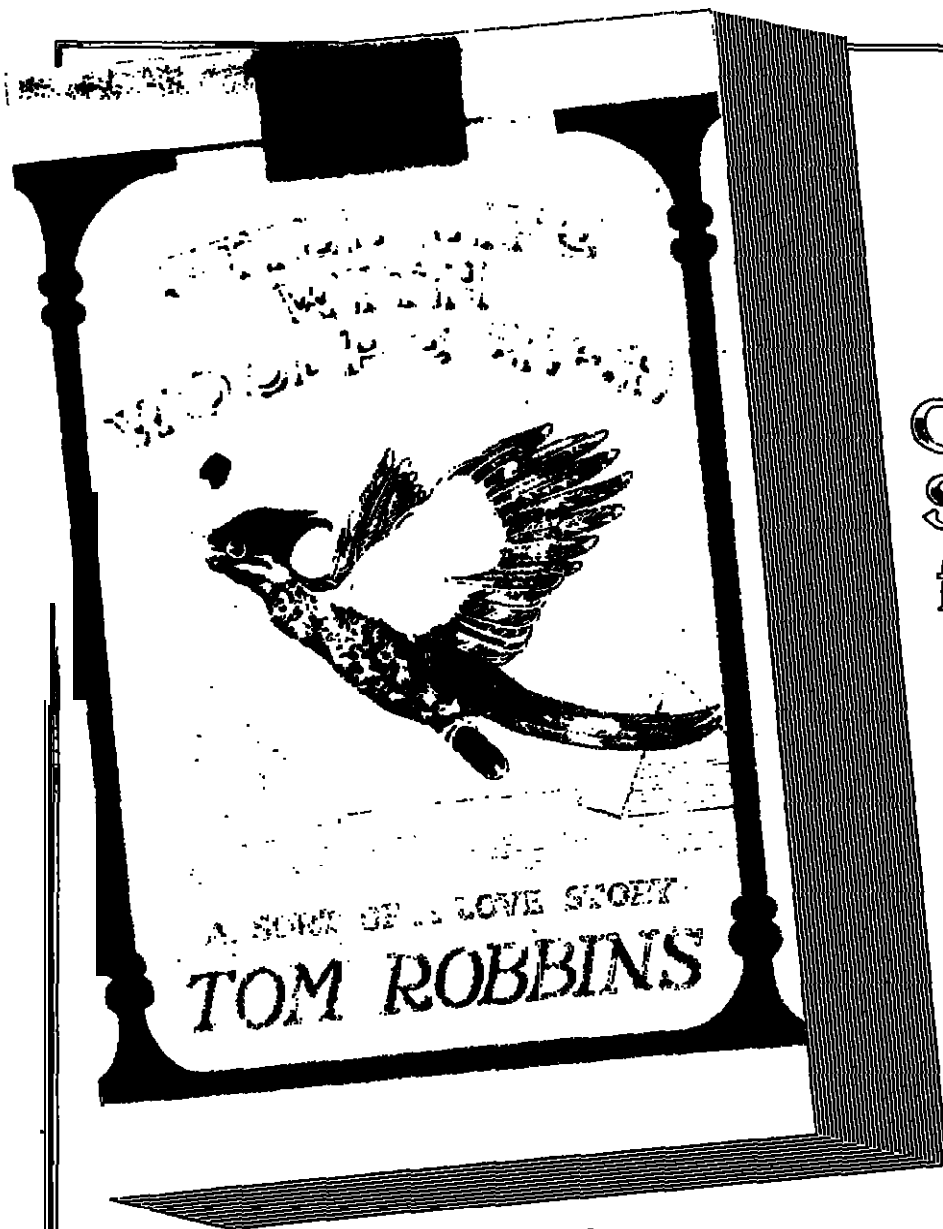
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**Magic Realism**, edited by Geoff Hancock. Aya Press, 200 pages, \$13.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920544 19 3) and \$9.00 paper (ISBN 0 92054 18 5).

By GEORGE GALT

A FEW OF THESE stories are as keenly observed, as well-crafted, and sometimes as humorous as any Canadian fiction being written. In this group I'd include those by Madeleine Ferron, Jean-Guy Carrier, Leon Rooke, and Erika Ritter. Ferron and Carrier write fable-like Little tales set in rural Quebec, the first finely honed and my, the second sensuous and haunting. Rooke's story "Dinner with the Swardians" is the elegant mock-dream of a group of spent bluebloods — cockeyed, witty, decadent. He knows how to layer his text with meaning and suggestion while retaining the agility to bounce his characters (and "coders) all over the page. "The Swardians" is a memorable feat.

Erika Ritter's dry humour and sharp perceptions bring alive a young professional woman shocked by an unwanted pregnancy. Although predictable (she might



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have stepped out of one of Ritter's stage plays). **thii** protagonist is nevertheless compelling. The mice in one of Ritter's dramas are reincarnated here as experimental white rats; her rodents will one day be the subject of a literary colloquium. Meanwhile, they serve as endearing playmates for her tough-yet-vulnerable women.

I wish all 17 stories were as rich and readable. They're not. Half a dozen are so bad they beg not to be seen. 1. Michael Yates runs on for 15 pages in a story about a photographer who takes still shots of a mute stranger crossing the street. That's it. The stranger crosses and recrosses the pavement, and the photographer changes equipment and film again and again and again. In fact, the story should have been called "Again and Again and..." It may be the most boring piece of arty fiction ever published.

Then there are a couple of stories, by Peter Crowell and Rikki, that seem to be the working out of personal obsessions. The authors are clearly mesmerized by their subjects (in one piece a shrewish mother reappears out of nothing at arithmetically declining intervals; in the other, a brutish, moronic husband slays his wife by hurling soup cans), but the stories are tedious, entirely without flair. Even worse, they are technically competent. It's a shame to see writers who have obviously mastered the craft of using words to create character and mood wasting their energies on public therapy.

I shouldn't single these two out. Although every author in this book achieves interesting effects from time to time, many tell uninteresting tales. Esther Rochon's man who becomes a starfish, Andreas Schroeder's zombie-like camper. William Bauer's ghost-horse. and Lawrence Mathews's resurrected Rimbaud might all have been the balloons of entrancing fiction. but as it is they never get off the ground. They are leaden. single-minded metaphors sinking into dead heaps over several boring pages.

Death I mention on purpose. For the most part this book is given to gloom. Nine of the stories are either propelled or resolved by death. and another turns on coffins. The majority of these writers intend to bewilder or spook or wench rather than make us dance and whoop in a world newly colored. Two exceptions are Fraser Sutherland's "Wilderness Wild," a successful slapstick satire, and "The Murder That Saved a Marriage" by Sue Ericsson, an amusing struggle between fantasy and reality in the life and mind of a trapped housewife. Neither tale has much depth, but both are well-executed and entertaining.

Why many of the stories are included in what purports to be a collection devoted to magic realism puzzles me. Magic realism evokes the marvelous, the whacky, the outrageously impossible (yet awesomely poignant). the winsomely freakish, and the sagely profane. To my mind only half a dozen of these stories fit (including a good one by Jack Hodgins), which simply means,

I suppose, that editor 'Geoff Hancock's conception of magic realism and my own are different. I take the label to include writing in which imagination runs rich and rampant. yet where a credible, habitable world is created — as in the dreamer's dream, except that when we read we are presumably awake.

Hancock points out in his introduction that Gabriel Garcia Marquez is the magic realist *par excellence*. Would that all these Canadians had his zest, his triple vision, his sense of the outlandish, and his enormous heart. But to be fair, there is little evidence that many of these writers are even trying to be magic realists. Ritter apparently is not, nor is Marilyn Trinkaus, nor Ken Ledbetter, nor Madeleine Ferron, unless we say that any fiction dabbling in the slightly *bii* is magic realism, a definition that would rob the term of all meaning. Nor can it include the merely exaggerated or implausible, out of which several other stories here spring. If it did, much of what we now loosely call satire would suddenly become magic.

In any case, why quibble over theory? Each story can be judged on its own merits. There are four excellent ones here and a number of other good ones, and Hancock's scholarly introduction makes an interesting read. □

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## Chiclet without the candy coating

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Cock-Eyed Optimists. by Dorothy O'Connell. Deneau & Greenberg, 191 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88879025 2).

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By BARBARA WADE

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DOROTHY O'CONNELL's first collection of stories, *Chiclet Gomez*, read like one of those occasions you found yourself next to a chatty lady on the bus. At first she seemed amusing. but as she talked on and on you realized with horror that the humour was just bait for a vicious line of story-telling. She wasn't funny for long. And you walked five extra blocks home just to get off the bus.

Well, a note of bitterness. social anger, call it what you will. has crept into the chatty lady's voice. Maybe it comes from the fact that the political message of *Chiclet Gomez*, inkded to convey the bard facts of life below the poverty line. did not have quite the impact she hoped. O'Connell was touted as "a low-mmm Erna Bombeck," not someone who woke up the middle class with wit and humour. So in *Cock-Eyed Optimists* she's making sure the message is clear.

The characters with the cute names like Fat Freddy Fernandez have, for the most part, disappeared — unless they are local

politicians. It's us against them. The hare-brained money-raising schemes that were the excuse for practically every chapter of *Chiclet Gomez* have been replaced by a series of fights for basic rights in the housing project. The right to have fencing to keep small children from wandering on to the highway. The right to run a co-op grocery store without being squeezed out by free enterprise when the operation becomes profitable. The right to go to bed at night in relative darkness, without the heat and humiliation of huge "protective" lights that make the neighbourhood feel like Folsom Prison. In that story *Chiclet* and the other women stage a mock "prison break" for the benefit of the aldermen in order to prove their point.

O'Connell considers poor people to have a big foot planted on the backs of their necks, attached to a voice that keeps saying, "Get up! Anyone can make it in this society!" The foot will lift up slightly every once in a while in order to prove itself right. Tillie, the protagonist in the stories, remarks, "I bet if you played this game with rats, they'd all have nervous breakdowns, and just sit there shaking. Some of us go that way, but not as many as you might expect."

Ton degree the shift in tone has improved O'Connell's writing, because she's not as interested in force-feeding her audience with wacky stories. But when each anecdote is no more vivid than the last, when every story involves the same group of homogenous women fighting the *bii* bad housing

authority or the crooked politicians, the humour, once again, is revealed as simply bait. It loses its flavour.

A sense of direction is called for, as is some crisp, clear picture-making to go along with all that action. Then it might be possible to care more for the feisty *Chiclet Gomez & Co.* But I'm not really tempted to wait for a third book to find out. Uh, excuse me, I think this is my stop. □

## Life bombs in New Haven

*Falling In Place*, by Ann Beattie, Random House, 342 pages, \$13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 394 50323 6).

By DOUGLAS HILL

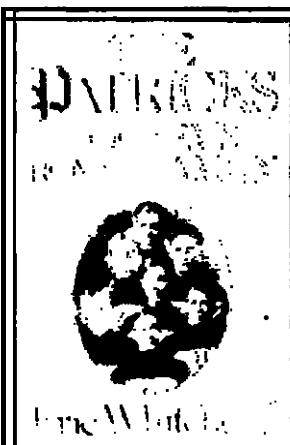
"ALL THE FACTS were so simple: that it wasn't a good marriage, that he loved Nina, that his son had shot his daughter." Or so the contradictions strike John Knapp, the main character in Ann Beattie's second novel. He's a worried man. His song tells of children and grown-ups, families and couples, who find their emotions at odds with their situations. "What was it like," John muses at his wounded daughter's

bedside, "so early in your life, not to love someone you were supposed to love?" *Falling in Place* anatomizes this predicament.

This is a book that focuses on character, a teeming slice of middle-class suburban life put under the microscope. The action Beattie observes and comments upon takes place in New York and New Haven, Connecticut, and in a couple of affluent commuter towns between, over a hot desultory summer. Nobody is particularly happy; everybody wants to be somebody or somewhere else. Relationships are troubled and uncertain, even when they are the hoped-for alternatives. There's integrity and justice on every side of these extended internecine conflicts, balanced by inattention, incompetence, and cruelty.

John Knapp is in the ad game, he and his family in the doldrums. The bitchery and banality of unsatisfied wives and lovers and bored, cynical children is ceaseless and rasping, yet Beattie manages, by a careful hold on the continuity of her images and perceptions, to compose half a dozen fully realized characters. John, especially, is a complex, affecting figure, a man caught on a merry-go-round of frustration and anxiety, the music discordant, the brass ring plastic.

The most distinctive and, for me, questionable feature of Beattie's novel, and that which sets her off from the writers she might be shelved with — such as Anne Tyler or Diane Johnson or Laurie Colwin — is her style. Now and then, usually as a function of



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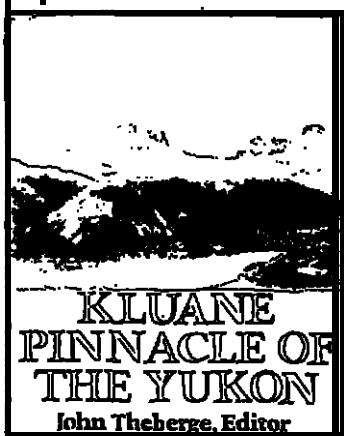
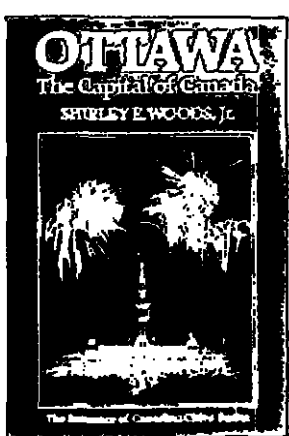
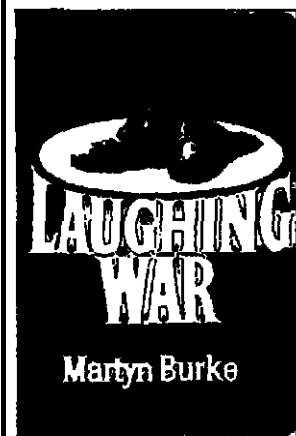
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the lives and scenes under scrutiny, it's so cool and eccentric and stylized as to seem precious, to become tiresome. One feels trapped in a closet with Bogart and Bacall: all that jump-out innuendo is exciting for a while, but not all night. This sort of writing is a phenomenon of recent American fiction, and pondering the aesthetic justification and effectiveness of it needn't involve us in cultural club-waving about "American Smartass."

Besides, there's substance to the book beneath its surfaces. Much of its life is verbal, and its language is vital. As one character rays: "Pointless to have a tongue if you don't talk. Like an anteatr showing no interest in ants." In reply: "Don't keep joking... This is my life." Beattie is locked into the tension between these recognitions, the disparity between words and feelings. She writes exceptionally well even if occasionally she sounds glib. Again and again there are lines that stop you short: "He would like to give her something miraculous: a humming-bird wing, beating; an opal, hot with real life."

Beattie takes risks — mannerism and pretension chiefly. In her *New Yorker* short stories one hardly notices; over the long haul one does. *Falling in Place* exhibits an excess of energy. For the people she writes about, this energy, boiling up through their boredom, is destructive. For the author herself? There are things she can do — mood, tone, dialogue — without appearing to strain at all, and when she's in complete control of her seemingly natural talent, she is most of the time, the book smmmers. L

## Manifest destiny

**The Selena Tree**, by Patricia Joudry, McClelland & Stewart, 352 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 077104359 4).

By JUDY MARGOLIS

"O LISTEN AND you will hear the music of the spheres sod beat time to it as you walk the earth," echoes the rhapsodic refrain in *The Selena Tree*. "Your steps will not then falter or lose direction..." Why the high-flown rhetoric so clearly in the 19th-century romantic tradition? One reason is obvious: the novel opens at the dawn of the Edwardian em. There is also Patricia Joudry's fascinating psychological and religious background to consider.

Playwright sod novelist, Joudry at one time regarded herself as "St. Patricia," the spiritual bride of George Bernard Shaw, mother-to-be of the coming messiah (naturally she had followers), and the "hollow shell" through whom Shaw, among other literary giants, "transmitted" a startling number of posthumous plays. Before she came to her senses, Joudry in her monumental egotism and capacity for self-delusion, resembled her beautiful heroine in *The Selena Tree*, the dark and tragic Sophia da Silva.

Sophia fancies herself a great opera singer — a star — but in reality she never rises beyond the chorus in a company touring the Prairies. Abandoned by her troupe and forced to marry for the sake of survival, she finds herself in a one-horse frontier town, the desperately unhappy wife of Emery Pollack, a storekeeper powerless under the thumb of his self-righteous mother Gertrude. Hungering for love and beauty, yet still convinced of her own greatness, blind to the absurdity of her situation, she dreams of a return to the East. Moreover, she decides that her daughter Dorothea is someday destined to become a great opera singer.

Through suffering, Sophia does come to heed the inner voice, "and it told her the purpose of the mighty striving that never ceased in her. It was not so that she might be great, but that she might let her greatness sound through her; and for that she had to be simple and quiet and small."

In her autobiography, *Spirit River to Angels' Roost: Religions I Have Loved and Left* (1977), Joudry describes her own case of "psychic inflation" and "spiritual evolution" in similar terms. This is the spiritual quest that lies at the heart of *The Selena Tree*, a quest that ends with Selena who emerges as the true artist, purposeful, "ha destiny in full control."

Epic in its proportions and in its pretensions, this novel dramatizes Joudry's coherent, though rather naive, world-view, her version of Creation and Destiny. She depicts the forces of good and evil locked in classic opposition, but on the most superficial level. Sensitive souls, those lovers of music and beauty who are receptive to the rhythms of the universe, are tormented by the brutality and shallowness of the insensate. But "Life" proclaims Joudry, overrides these opposites in an ever-flowing "torrential stream" of rebirth and renewal. Even the hard-bitten, puritanical Gertrude, the most explicit symbol of death-in-life, rages to live.

Joudry, in fact, is so eager to have us share in her spiritual vision that her charactera new folly emerge. Flat and one-dimensional, they are given expression through symbols that confine them to 8 limited set of actions, either life-embracing or life-denying. Because her symbols fail to vibrate, they are often jarring, like the all-too-obvious "clash of cymbals" she uses to herald Dorothea's renewed awareness of the music known dimly from childhood, linking berm the rhythms of the earth and sky.

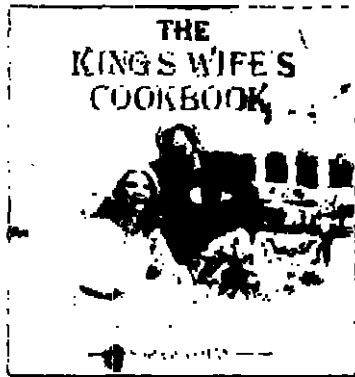
*The Selena Tree* should be a pleasure to read for those who low losing themselves in epic sagas where life is both meaningful and ordered. □



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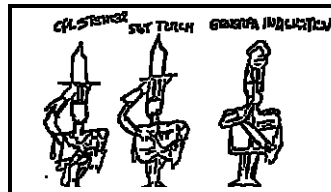


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# Don't gong the liberty belle

by Richard Lubbock

**Confessions**, by Barbara Amiel, Macmillan, 241 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1841 9).

NOWADAYS THERE ARE TOO many irreplaceable English words getting stolen — hijacked — by special-interest groups, and thereby being rendered useless for general communication. Everyone knows the words whose abduction I am deploring; “gay” is one; “chauvinist” is another. A magnificent term of praise that’s been ruined in this way is “liberal,” which once denoted someone with a genuine concern for human dignity and values but now has come to mean anyone who advocates government intermeddling with the rights of citizens. I find this especially regrettable because I am compelled to describe Barbara Amiel, author of the outstanding new book *Confessions*, as a liberal humanist, and I don’t want anyone to misunderstand me.

An unfortunate consequence of this adverse mutation of language is that many true liberals now describe themselves, and are described, as “conservatives.” This piles muddle upon confusion, for in its paternalistic, nationalistic, and authoritarian propensities, conservatism is much closer to socialism than it is to true liberalism. A conservative by his very nature is bound to be a defender of established privilege and to lean on the power of government for the protection of his privileges. The essence of true liberalism, on the other hand, is the denial of privilege, either to individuals or to groups, and in this it stands opposed to both socialism and conservatism.

The message of *Confessions* is that current tendencies in Canadian politics are not compatible with the preservation of a free or prosperous society. This warning from a liberal will be unpalatable to conservatives and socialists alike.

The book is organized around a chilling incident endured by Miss Amiel at the hands of Dr. Gunther Plaut and the racial relations industry. The episode was prompted by her use of the word “Hun” in an article in *Maclean’s* magazine. (Under the contemporary New Order of joy and love, apparently, we are not allowed to be verbally beastly to anyone any longer, not even the Hun.) Plaut, acting as angel of compassion, was despatched by his fellow members of the Ontario Race Relations Commission to apprise Miss Amiel of the

error of her ways. His venture was launched (and Foundered) in the *soigné* surroundings of Toronto’s Courtyard Café. The whole operation was conducted with the utmost propriety and, to judge from Miss Amiel’s account, the rabbinical special agent pm himself across as smoothly as oiled silk.

The incident goes to show that in politics, as in psychiatry, it is not easy to perceive that many of the innocent masks conceal villains. It is difficult for us to discover within the frame of the saintly Rabbi Plaut, shining veteran that he is of countless humanitarian causes, the cruel and vengeful figure of Darth Vader, scourge of all that’s true and noble.

Yet, harmless dimwits though they may seem to many, zealous reformers like the good Dr. Plaut are actually advance bacilli of a vicious social pestilence well known to freedom lovers as “friendly Fascism.” The phrase is a new coinage (benign, in this case) that signifies the group of ideological pathologies dissected from Friedrich von Hayek in his 1944 liberal classic, *The Road to Serfdom*. In the book, Hayek examines the affinities between socialism, nationalism, and totalitarianism; one chapter is a thought-provoking analysis of the socialist roots of Nazism.



Barbara Amiel

Today we are no longer as free to link socialism with Nazism as Hayek was more than a generation ago, even though the evidence is now far, far stronger. Miss Amiel is compelled to write with more cautious allusiveness:

I am a wandering Jew. I always have my toothbrush handy. My allegiance is not to any piece of earth or particular set of rock outcroppings. My allegiance is to ideas, and most especially to the extraordinary idea of individual liberty. That idea is still there in the North American lands-cap, a landscape that I have come to love. But my suitcase is packed. I do not feel bound to any country or any popular will more than to my own conscience. I would leave here as easily as I would have left Germany when its people elected Hitler to power.

Those words embody precisely my own sentiments but I would prefer to edge closer to the grisly truth than that. Canadian irrationalists (predictably of the conservative or socialist ilk) seem unable to imagine why so many immigrants of my persuasion keep their travelling gear at the ready. We do it because of the disquieting omnipresence in Canadian life of zealous prefects like Rabbi Plaut and his fellow human-rights vigilantes who would coerce us into loving our brothers and sisters. Make no mistake about it, they are the front men for the socialist Gestapo. Their associates have wrought miracles of loving-kindness in Cambodia and the back wards of the Gulag Archipelago, and are hoping to repeat their therapeutic triumphs here.

Indeed, therapeutics is part of the friendly fascist strategy. *Confessions* touches on the way our kindly governments, for the purpose of reprocessing deviants, recruit smarmy psycho-police, typified by Ontario’s Addiction Research Foundation (not to mention their hardball accomplices, the narcotics squad). Both socialists and conservatives approve of this. In justifying such coercion, the State addresses itself solely to our welfare. “It is not your social awareness that leads you to resent our low-motivated legislation,” it tells us. “You are sick. In just a jiffy we will have a hospital bed ready for you and it you think you don’t need treatment, that is all pan of your delusion. For your own benefit we will have the Court of Racial Harmony certify you insane.” I have no doubt that we in Canada are only a step removed from the concentration-hospital and political persuasion by electric shock and brain surgery, all in the name of loving-kindness. The apparatus is in place and it only awaits the arrival of a suitable ruffian to set it in motion. Yes, Dr. Mengele is alive and well and living at the ‘Clark -Institute of Psychiatry.

Miss Amiel offers a common-sense liberal policy to help replace the menace of Government as Nurse, at least as far as mind-altering drugs are concerned:

All one can do is legalize everything, and then hold everyone responsible for their behavior while under the influence of an intoxicant. Liquor, for example, would not be a mitigating circumstance in the case of a criminal act. Rather than raying alcohol prevented someone from farming intent, one ought to say that the voluntary taking of alcohol constructs liability in itself.

*Confessions* is best appreciated if read in

tandem with *The Road to Serfdom*. Examined in the light of Hayek's more academic presentation, Miss Amiel's bill of indictment can be seen as a passionate revival of penetrating insights that true liberals have been preaching for 40 years and more. Nevertheless, socialists and people with socialist-infested minds can be relied upon to react to such revelations as though they have never encountered them before. "What? Pure hearted little me a friendly fascist? Slander! McCarthyism! Smear!"

At the mot of all the perverse projects Miss Amiel examines — from legally guaranteed equal rights for women to State welfare schemes for caribou — is the absurd belief that people can be coerced into acting morally. The exact opposite is true; only free, unconditioned action can be moral. Fortunately, the establishment of freedom in the moral sphere conduces to optimum benefits for each and every individual in the economic and social spheres as

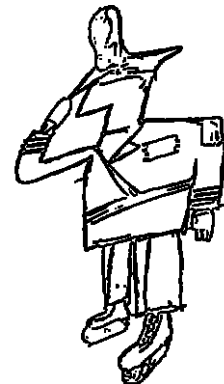
well. This feature of rewards for everyone, regardless of status or privilege, has always been the chief glory of *laissez-faire* capitalism and the main reason why it is the object of fear and loathing on the part of conservatives and their socialist twins alike.

*Confessions* appears at an auspicious moment in world history, when the stampede to socialist idiocy seems, at least, to have hesitated and a renaissance individualist libertarianism is sure-footedly moving to centre stage. Miss Amiel presents her timely critique with judicious coolness and objectivity. Throughout the book she is scrupulously fair and displays an exemplary tolerance for fools. Rhine, from the stricken Dead Sea landscape of Canadian political journalism, *Confessions* is an encouraging landmark of unblinking observation and provocative analysis. It crackles with moral energy and provides a valuable example for those who would understand the genuine, passionate, and generous-hearted meaning of that much-misused word, "liberal." □

handles it with unsensational fairness), but Ellis was somewhat odd. He was, for instance, unable to conclude normal intercourse and was also a urolagniac (he liked to watch women pee). Yet he carried on several affairs (including one with Margaret Sanger, the birth-control pioneer) under the nose of his wife, a lesbian who subsequently went mad. There were also many female disciples, who seemed drawn to his air of being an Old Testament prophet (an air not likely hindered by his almost complete lack of humour). Ellis would often encourage these young women to send him nude photos of themselves. But as he himself said, with a commonsensical tone that no doubt added to the attraction. "I do not feel that I have cause to be ashamed. I do not accept conventional standards and do not wish to be judged by them." As regards his private life, fine. But by such standards his work inevitably has been judged — and found wanting.

One of Ellis's tenets was that although sex is intended for reproduction it is also the most spiritual of acts between two people, and that the two functions need not be a case of two birds with one stone. He's a little fuzzy on this sometimes, but the point was clear to a generation coming of age after the First World War — a generation that, like Lewis Mumford, honoured him because "he peered where no one had dared to look." But as a scientist, his method was to simply pile case-history upon case-history, to go on endlessly collecting and classifying ("like a nineteenth-century botanist," says Grosskurth) and letting these findings speak for themselves, as though the medium were indeed the message. In light of the entire subsequent field of sexology, he came to seem at best quaint. At worst a silly old fool, though for all that no less fascinating a subject for biography.

This is a wonderful book, not simply flawless in its scholarship but refreshing in its texture. Like a good novelist, Grosskurth believes in revealing, not explaining. The result is that Ellis emerges as the simple yet complicated figure he was, flowing in and out of the intellectual melting pot of his period, that great age when socialism, feminism, vegetarianism, literature, and much else besides went together somehow as one Gestalt. More than once Grosskurth calls him a seminal figure. There's no pun intended. □



MILITARY ROLLER SKATES

# Why Ellis doesn't live here any more

by Doug Fetherling

**Havelock Ellis: A Biography.** by Phyllis Grosskurth, McClelland & Stewart. Illustrated, 492 pages, \$22.50 cloth (ISBN 0 77103641 8).

By DOUG FETHERLING

TWO GROUPS of 1920s intellectuals looked back to Victorian times for most of their heroes. There were the ones temperamentally given to admire 1890s aesthetes of the Leonard Smithers variety. And there were those who turned instead to the aging progressives, such figures as Wells and Shaw who had first wanted to be scientists but settled for being social scientists and ended up social critics. Among the most memorable of these icons was Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), whose seven-volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, a dry compilation on various loves that dared not speak their names, made him, toward the end, a cult figure.

in his prime, which came to him rather late in the day. Ellis had the best of both the commercial and non-commercial worlds. He saw his books sold openly at last and in good quantities, and even wrote a column for William Randolph Hearst. Yet all the while he was befriended by Sylvia Beach and admired by Emma Goldman. H.L. Mencken, of all people (but with characteristic hyperbole), called him "the most

civilized man in England." But then, suddenly it seems to us now, fashions changed to the point where, in the view of Graham Greene a few years later, Ellis was "rather like a Santa Claus at Selfridge's." What went wrong? Why wasn't Ellis respected much any more? "Why was it," asks Phyllis Grosskurth in this excellent biography, "that Freud, not Ellis, has been accepted as the conquistador, the great pioneer of the modern spirit?" The answers, as such things tend to be, are intricately bound up with the advances he made in his lifetime.

Ellis was the true Victorian rebel in love with the notion of the gifted amateur. Although trained in medicine, he made his living solely by his pen, and he wrote all sorts of unlikely things (including a godless hymn) in addition to his works on sex. Much of Grosskurth's study, for instance, is gleaned from approximately 20,000 letters he left scattered behind him, and these tell a curious story. In Grosskurth's view, two things made Ellis a figure ahead of his time: an acceptance of abnormal sexual behaviour for what it is, nothing more, nothing less; and a belief, in theory at least, in woman's right to sexual fulfilment. Yet there's more than a strong suspicion that both these ideas sprang largely from his own inadequacies and predilections.

The subject is a bit dicey (and Grosskurth



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## Highways and black holes

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*Scarecrow*, by Douglas Smith, Turnstone Press, 65 pages. \$5.00 paper (ISBN 0 88301 036 2).

*Leaving*, by Dennis Cooley, Turnstone Press, 29 pages, 53.00 paper (ISBN 0 88301 0397).

*Interstices of Night*, by Terrence Heath, Turnstone Press, 64 pages, \$5.00 paper (ISBN 0 88301 034 6).

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By MONTY REID

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OVER THE PAST several years Winnipeg's Turnstone Press has built up a reputation for producing handsomely designed books to which a great deal of care and attention had obviously been given. The three here do not enhance that reputation; one I simply find unappealing, the second is in the standardized format of the Turnstone Press chap book series, and the third cops the cover design of Jim Christy's *Palatine Car*.

There are, of course, saving graces. The first is that Turnstone Press is publishing a considerably larger number of books this year than last: a decision was obviously made to publish more instead of publishing nicer. Second, Turnstone remains an important outlet for Western Canadian writing. And third, the writing itself remains interesting and vital.

One of the most interesting things about Doug Smith's *Scarecrow* is the highway. It is an image that recurs in poems as diverse as "Bridge" and "On the Road to the Last Dry Town in Manitoba" (dedicated to Robert Kroetsch). It appears as well in the title poem of the collection. The scarecrow, after singing his "existence in/to the fragile darkness" also foretells "death on the far-off/highway."

The highway provides a link between the city and the countryside. The tension between rural and urban is a major part of Smith's work. And although the poems suggest that Smith likes to get out of town on the weekends, he does not seem to be truly comfortable in the city or out of it. In town, he notices the disappearance of the city deer ("City Deer"): on the highway, he notices roadkill.

The rural/urban tension is also important to Dennis Cooley's *Leaving*. Two of the central poems, "Fielding" and "Walter," are an attempted leave-taking of rural memories. And the highway recurs in these poems as well.

Leaving the farm behind is just one of the many kinds of leaving that occur in Cooley's book. People leave each other, leave Winnipeg, leave the womb behind. Sometimes it seems as if everyone's pecked up and gone. But all of Cooley's departures

are balanced with an arrival; when a baby leaves the womb it slides through the gates of our lives. Sometimes this recognition does not rise above the formulaic, but it can be, as in "Birth/Day," lucid and moving: "in the raw May light/ shocked she drops/ into the hardened grammar/of our lives."

*Interstices of Night* is my favourite book of the three, primarily because of the central "black/ white sonnets" sequence. The austerity of black end white has infiltrated many of the poems in the other books. Here the poet feces that austerity, and makes a virtue of necessity.

Although black end white are the limiting colours, Heath's imagination finds much to work with. The frost makes ferns in a window that is a "vase of night"; the milky way is "only dust on a pilgrim's coat"; the poet is held "within the blossoming white of walls." And like the stars that "turn into black holes," everything contains its negative, just as all Cooley's departures contained arrivals.

In a sense, black end white create a containment, a kind of form for the sequence. It tends to formalize the series, thus making the notion of sonnet more apt. Within the pen, the poet lets his imagination run. It gives the sequence a density that individual poems rarely achieve. □

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## Thus spake Wacky

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*Conversations with W. A. C. Bennett*, by Roger Keene and David C. Humphreys, Methuen, illustrated, 146 pages, 511.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 94300 2).

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By DAVID J. MITCHELL

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AS A TECHNIQUE for studying the past oral history holds great promise. In Canada, however, that promise has hardly been fulfilled. The national literatures of the United States and several European countries have in recent years boasted fine works of biographical and historical scholarship that make creative use of tape-recorded reminiscences. Most Canadian writers who have chosen to employ the methods of oral history have fallen upon it as a crutch or, as one wit has remarked, a form of "literary decoupage."

Unfortunately, *Conversations with W. A. C. Bennett* falls well within this inferior tradition. It is a small book that purports to be a first-hand account of the life of one of Canada's best-known and most flamboyant politicians. Based on Roger Keene's taped interviews with the late, former premier of British Columbia, the reminiscences are punctuated by commentary intended to place them in perspective — a seemingly sensible formula. The book

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is introduced by Bennett's son, Bill, the current premier of the province. It also presents a foreword by Joey Smallwood, the former premier of Newfoundland, who modestly reminds us that "Wacky's" regime "overlapped twenty of my twenty-three years in office" — apparently an assurance of Bennett's greatness.

The major fault of the book is its strict reliance on Bennett's oral testimony. It is not clear if the authors made any attempt to check facts or substantiate legend. And it would be useful to know something about the way these recollections have been edited. Bennett was an effective communicator, but anyone who ever heard him speak, publicly or privately, knows he could be relied upon to demolish rules of grammar and other niceties of the English language. Of course, few people speak in complete sentences, but in *Conversations with W. A. C. Bennett* the first-person reminiscences are so obviously laundered that one wonders if the essence of the man has been more camouflaged than revealed. Thus one of the great advantages of using oral history is lost.

The commentary that attempts to link Bennett's memories is written by David Humphreys who, we are told, has produced radio documentaries on Bertrand Russell and Bertolt Brecht. Perhaps he should have remained in the company of European literary giants, for he seems strangely out of his depth with this small-town hardware

merchant and politician. In fact his narrative is often curiously irrelevant. For example, we learn more about Baron von Richtofen, the First World War German flying ace, than we do of most of Bennett's cabinet colleagues, one gets the unfortunate impression that the commentary is simply padding for material and couldn't otherwise stand on its own.

Small but irritating errors plague the book and are the result of an obvious unfamiliarity with the politics and history of British Columbia. The premier who preceded Bennett in office was known as Byron not Bjorn Johnson; Bennett's executive assistant was Ronald not Robert Worley; the process of counting votes under the system of the single transferable ballot that catapulted Bennett to victory in 1952 is explained incorrectly; the sequence of events in the famous Sommers affair are recounted mistakenly; the reader is given a false impression of the form and of the Bank of B.C. One could easily go on and on.

There is an obvious reason for most of these errors. The authors have relied heavily on the limited body of available literature dealing with B.C. politics, much of it unreliable and sophomoric, and of which this volume becomes the newest unwelcome member. On the whole, the reader does obtain a rough idea of who W. A. C. Bennett was, but as an account of his life and public career the book is seriously marred by factual mistakes and a complete

lack of critical judgement. It is also ill-balanced (less than one half deals with the lengthy history of Bennett's government) and this can only be owing to the lack of depth of the taped interviews.

Apparently, the interviews with Bennett were initially intended as the basis for a radio documentary. The authors would have been wise to have stuck to their original intention. With some judicious editing, the tapes could have been made into a good half-hour, possibly hour-long, broadcast. But as a book, *Conversations with W. A. C. Bennett* leaves far too much to be desired. Not only does it do an injustice to its subject, it also does a great disservice to the potentially valuable use of oral history as a form of historical documentation. □

## Plus ça change . . .

Contemporary Quebec Criticism, edited and translated from the French by Larry Shoultice, University of Toronto Press, 217 pages, \$20.00 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2344 4) and 67.95 paper (ISBN 0 8020 6376 4).

By SHERRY SIMON

"THE QUEBEC 'intelligentsia' has come a long way in the past twenty years," exults Michèle Lalonde as she plots the progressive enlightenment of Quebec thought from the rebellion of Paul-Émile Borduas's *Refus global* through the Christian humanism and liberalism of the early 1960s to the Marxist nationalism of the late '60s and early '70s. Such demonstrations are reassuring. So thought does progress after all! But as the reader passes on to other selections of *Contemporary Quebec Criticism*, he is quickly undeceived. The main components of Quebec's literary neuroses — the problems of language and nationalism — seem to remain unresolved, though they are reformulated by successive generations of writers and critics.

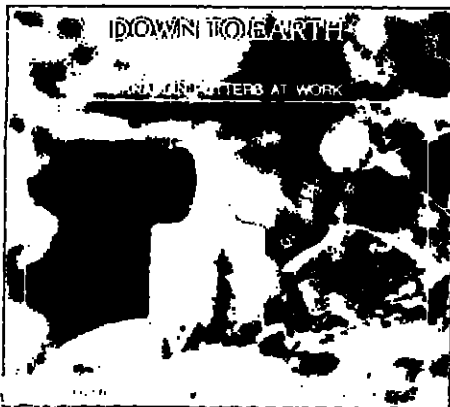
The central debate that emerges from the earlier pieces in this collection (which covers the period 1958-78) is the conflict between "provincial" or "nationalist" interests (depending which side of the fence you're sitting on) and "international humanism." Here lies the question of language, of choice of themes, of emotional allegiance. The most thorough and pregnant exposition of the debate is found in Pierre Elliott Trudeau's 'The New Betrayal of the Intellectuals' and Hubert Aquin's celebrated reply, "The Cultural Fatigue of French Canada," but only the latter is included in the anthology.

Aquin opposes Trudeau's outright dismissal of nationalism, arguing *inter alia*

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that there are emotional aspects of the question that cannot be rationalized away. "Is it necessary to catalogue the psychological implications caused by the awareness of this minority position -all the underlying reactions to dispossession that anthropologists refer to as 'cultural fatigue'? French Canada is in a state of cultural fatigue, and because it is invariably tired, it becomes tiresome." So much for a polemic that was vigorous and exciting in 1962.

The other selections in the anthology include "Gut Pioneers in Criticism" by Jean-Ethier Blais; "The Major Options of French-Canadian Literature" by David M. Hayne; "The Evolution of the Hem in the Quebec Novel" by Jean-Charles Falardeau; "The Poetry of Exile" by Gilles Marcotte; the remarkable "Founding the Territory" by Paul Chamberland, and the fascinating "Notes on a False Dilemma" by Jacques Brault. Ten pieces in all, superbly translated by Larry Shouldice and chosen for their accessibility to the English-speaking reader and their reflection of the variety of critical approaches adopted by Quebec critics.

Shouldice is former chairman of the English department at the University of Sherbrooke (which specializes in English and French-Canadian comparative literature) and m-director of *Ellipse*, a journal devoted to publishing writers in translation. His introduction is addressed to the reader who has little familiarity with Quebec literature: the headnotes to each piece are incisive and informative. All the essays articulate observations on important tendencies in Quebec writing and many of them are established classics.

What is lacking in this collection, however, is a true reflection of the term "contemporary." The kinds of theoretical problems that critics face today (problems inspired by French thinkers such as Roland Barthes or by such new forms of writing as the work of feminists in France and Quebec) are largely absent from the anthology — although there is a piece of semiological criticism by Louis Francoeur on Quebec theatre. Because the selections date back to 1953 (which seems a long time ago) the anthology as a whole seems somewhat dated.

*Contemporary Quebec Criticism* was perhaps published just a little too soon to mark the emergence, for example, of feminist criticism in Quebec. Suzanne Lamy's brilliant and original collection of essays, *d'elles* (Editions de l'Hexagone) appeared just as Shouldice's anthology (long since prepared as a doctoral thesis) was being published. Selections by younger writers, which Shouldice was obliged to exclude for reasons of length, would certainly demonstrate new awarenesses of critical forms.

It won't be long, then, before a New Contemporary Quebec Criticism will be needed, to follow an anthology that — as the first selection of Quebec critical texts to be offered to the English-speaking public — could hardly claim to be exhaustive. □

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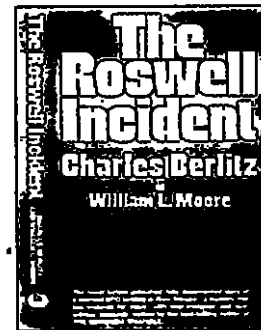
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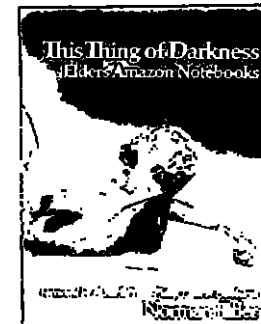
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## Boat people of the Holocaust

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The *Struma Incident*, by Michael Solomon, translated from the French by Carol Dunlop-Hebert, McClelland & Stewart, 174 pages, \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 9218 5).

By BARBARA WADE

MOST HOLOCAUST incidents now have been put into book form for historical, exploitive, or therapeutic purposes. This dark and spectral library is on the whole judged slightly differently from the records of other historical events because of a legitimate need for many survivors, regardless of literary talent, to record their experiences. But Michael Solomon, a Romanian refugee, now makes his living as a journalist in Montreal, and he would have done the spectral library more honour if he had written a better book.

The *Struma Incident*, like Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts's *Voyage of the Damned*, is a story of an aborted sail to freedom by desperate and determined Jews during the Second World War. In 1942, Romanian Jews paid more than \$300,000 for an ancient, leaking cargo ship after months of coping with blackmail and stall tactics by a fascist government that would have preferred, it seems, to spend the money and manpower necessary to round them up and shoot them rather than permit their departure.

When it left the Constantza docks the *Struma's* hold was crammed with nearly 800 Jews, five to each two-metre compartment. They managed to survive departing gunfire from the Romanians, an engine failure mid-journey (fixed by some German seamen for the price of all the wedding rings on board) and the four-day limp across the Black Sea. They were greeted with a 72-day wait in the docks at Istanbul; neither the Turks nor the British controllers of Palestine wanted them. The two governments booted responsibility back and forth while international Jewry complained and a quarantine imposed on the ship for delay purposes became a necessity. Many of the families on board succumbed to starvation and disease. Finally the *Struma* was ordered out of port again, and in a few hours exploded mysteriously on the sea. The Turks' and Britons' refugee "problem," with the exception of one survivor, had disappeared.

When recording the historical circumstances of the incident Solomon writes reasonably well. But he errs in fictionalizing a handful of the *chalutzim* for us in order, I suppose, to bring the tragedy closer to home. The Coifman family, consisting of Srul, Sarah, and their daughter and son-in-

law Frida and Sol, is followed through their attempts to get false passports, their manoeuvring through an increasingly anti-Semitic European society, and their struggles on board the *Struma*. But Solomon's anger, palatable in documentary form, chokes and debilitates his novel-writing.

In the opening chapter, for example, Sol's reaction to the "two me" in green shirts and leather belts who take over his business, "staring at him in silent arm-gance," is to simply kiss his business goodbye, and then to ruminate bitterly over the plight of the Jews for several pages. Solomon's own voice is heard too clearly here. It's an unfortunate truth that the most effective of the Holocaust novels, such as Elie Wiesel's *Night*, are the ones most delicately written. The horror of the writer's words is then unleashed in the reader's imagination, and remains there longer.

Since the characters are cardboard cut-outs, with voices that are stilted and contrived, we have to wait for the journalistic reportage of *The Struma Incident* in order to be truly moved. The fictional thread of the book is like the *Struma* itself, limping and creaking along, completely unworthy of the cargo it is trying to convey. □

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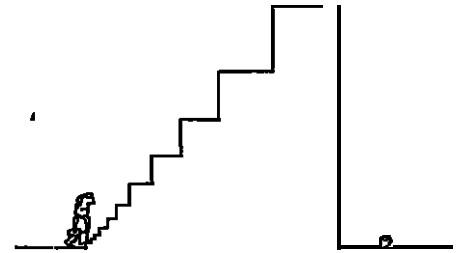
## True Patriots all, bound for Botany Bay

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Land of a Thousand Sorrows: The Australian Prison Journal, 1840-1842, of the Exiled Canadian Patriote, Francois-Maurice Lepaillieur, edited and translated from the French by F. Murray Greenwood, University of British Columbia Press, 174 pages, \$25.00 cloth (ISBN 0 7748 0123 9).

By MICHAEL DRACHE

THE REVOLUTIONS of 1837-1838 remain the watershed event of 19th-century Canadian history, though they were quickly silenced by the British Colonial Office and the governors of the Canadas. Among the Patriots charged with treason for their participation in the armed struggle for independent and representative government was Francois-Maurice Lepaillieur, a bailiff from Chateauguay, who was exiled to New South Wales, Australia for life. On September 27, 1839, Lepaillieur and 140 others were put on H.M.S. *Buffalo* at Quebec and began their five-month journey to Hobart Town and Sydney. Upon disembarkation they rent up the Parramatta River by barge and were placed in the stockade at Longbottom. For the next two years Lepaillieur was to document the activities of life in the prison camp.



After three months at Longbottom Lepaillieur wrote:

There is nothing in the world more painful and wretched than an exiled prisoner. I can never find an expression to explain the extent of such misery; it is without equal. First you are a slave of everyone, not only one person, but all those in authority. You don't starve to death but you are always hungry. In the morning you get half a pound of corn kernels for your breakfast; for dinner and supper you get a pound of beef or mutton . . . the bread is black as iron and in a paste.

His description of the prisoners quarters is particularly graphic and disturbing:

Our huts have no windows, only two iron grills on each side which bring us a lot of dew in the nights and make us suffer. Our bed is a little mattress, about 15 inches wide, by, three inches thick, without a pillow for the head and placed on the floor. We are shut into these boxes at sunset which is about 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening and let out about 6 o'clock in the morning. The foul smell is shut in all night. There are about 17 or 18 people together in an area of 17 feet by ten. In addition, no one is allowed to go beyond the camp fence on pain of being severely punished, either in the lark-up on bread and water or by receiving several lashes, at the hands of the Sydney executioner, which is the most unnerving part. All the public papers are prohibited and there is no communication with outsiders. I will not bother to give all the rules which must be followed here because I don't know all of them yet and I pray to God that I'll leave here before learning them all.

Life at Longbottom gradually became a dull, oppressive routine for the Patriots. Hectored by petty officials and often regarded as common criminals by the Australian authorities, their only hope lay with petitioning the Crown for work outside the penal colony and ultimately a royal pardon. As that opportunity seemed to fade for them, they would find solace with parish priests, or mass at Parramatta. Lepaillieur often served as a scribe for illiterate prisoners and was much in demand. Letters from home remained their main source of outside communication, aside from Australian newspapers occasionally smuggled in.

At the end of two frustrating years, the Patriots managed to secure their petition fortickets-of-leave and took employment in

the Sydney area. Lepailleur worked at house-painting, coach-driving, and window-glazing. In June, 1844, the Patriots were finally pardoned, and on July 10 Lepailleur left the "land of a thousand sorrows."

While we have sources that describe the events and consequences of 1837-38, Lepailleur's prison journal adds another dimension to the evaluation of a defeated revolution: the thoughts of the defeated in exile. Though not a political or ideological journal *per se*, his diary gives us insight into the characters who fought in Canada's War of Independence and the terrible price that they paid in their struggle for liberty. □

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## One honourable critic: 'Oh, oh'

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The **Hansard Chronicles: A Celebration of the First Hundred Years of Hansard in Canada**, by John Ward, Deaneau & Greenberg, illustrated, 243 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88879 023 6).

By PHIL SURGUY

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JOHN WARD is the Associate Editor of Debates in the House of Commons. He and his publishers probably think they have

produced a pleasantly discursive account of how verbatim parliamentary reporting came into being in this country. What they are actually peddling is an irritating mishmash of inept history, feebly told anecdotes and inanimate personality sketches. Almost half the book is given to those long, dull swatches of quotation that too many Canadian publishers and authors think are an acceptable substitute for real writing. There are also three numbing chapters on the history of shorthand; and, in seven or so separate chapters and scattered elsewhere in the book, we have a patchy biography of an early York (Toronto) newspaper editor named Francis Collins, an enemy of the Family Compact and evidently Ward's hero. -

Ward tries to turn the evolution of unbiased parliamentary reporting into a simple black-and-white struggle against political repression, even though he repeatedly lets slip that there were many important commercial, personal, and religious factors involved as well. The political and social context of his story is never made clear. Once again, a potentially exciting and illuminating piece of our history has been lost in the mire.

But all the blame can't be dumped on the author. After all, as one of the dust-jacket flaps says, "For Ward, writing is a part-time hobby," and copying out MPs' speeches year after year is no way to prepare to write a concise, organized book. One can, however, wonder about the editors and whoever else lets this thing get by them. □

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## Authoress on whom the sun has set

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**Sara Jeannette Duncan: Novelist of Empire**, by Thomas E. Tausky, P. D. Meany Co. (Box 534, Port Credit, Ont.), 300 pages; \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88835 006 6).

By GARY DRAPER

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THOMAS TAUSKY has three obstacles to overcome in this book on the works of Sara Jeannette Duncan. Did someone say "Who?" That's the first one. Duncan has not, I suspect, found her way out of CanLit courses into the light of general recognition. And if the lady herself remains in the shadows, all of her books but one are quite in the dark. The exception is *The Imperialist* (1904), a witty novel of politics and love, set in a thinly disguised version of her home town, Brantford, Ont. She wrote, by Tausky's count, 20 more (none of them set in Brantford, or anywhere else in Canada). It's no wonder these books are largely unread: they're unprinted and unavailable.

Tausky helps his readers over the first

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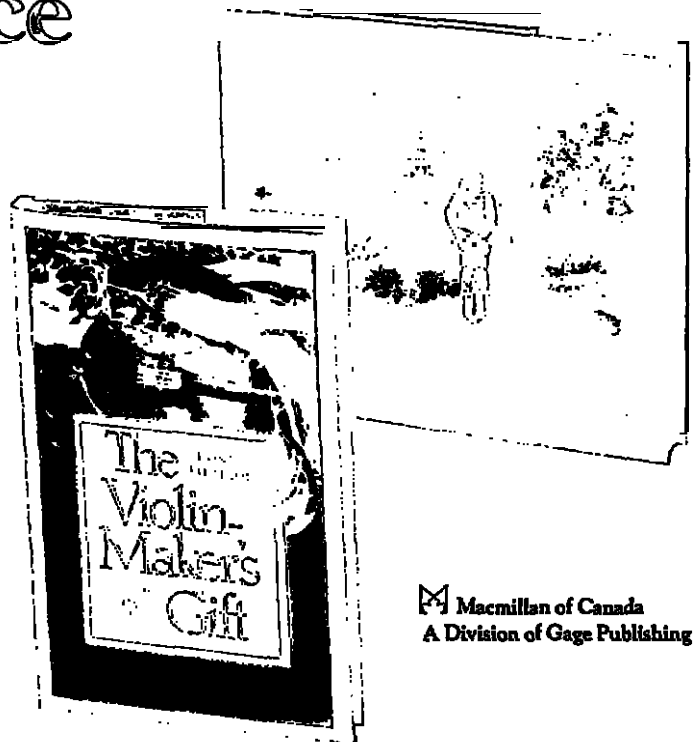
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obstacle with an introductory chapter that has enough biography in it to provide a start. lie slips in more as he proceeds, chapter by chapter. The problem of the unread books he solves, inevitably, with plot summaries. Not riveting, perhaps, not always gripping, but painless.

This cuts into the space left for the actual business of criticism, but it may not be a bad thing. Which brings us to the third obstacle. Sara Jeannette Duncan is a very good writer thoughtful, entertaining, clever. She is not a great writer. On the evidence Tausky present?, it seems likely that a heavy and elaborate critical structure would not only be quite inappropriate but would do the writer a disservice.

Tausky's solutions to these problems seem admirable, but not perfect. The bibliography is clear and full; the list of contemporary book reviews is an unexpected bonus. There are enough footnotes for clarity but not enough to get in the way. But passing from work to work without substantial conclusions (and sometimes without clear transitions), the book occasionally descends from criticism to cataloguing, and at times there's a flatness to the prose.

In general, the focus is on the central female characters of Duncan's fiction. Along the way, Tausky provides a context for reading *The Imperialist* in relation to Duncan's lesser books. This helps to shake *The Imperialist* out of its isolation in much the same way as Douglas Spettigue's un-

covering of F. P. Grove's European life and works helped us to see his Canadian writing in a new way.

Tausky is not a slavish apologist. He is willing to point out the lady's flaws, and if he thinks a book merits no more than a glance, he just glances. But above all he made me want to read more of Sam Jeannette Duncan, especially by including generous excerpts from the works. Incidentally, in his recent edition of her *Selected Journalism* for Tecumseh Press he has also given me a place to start. □

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## Easier said by Donne

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*Island Sojourn*, by Elizabeth Arthur, Fitzhenry & Wbbiide, 220 pages, 310.50 cloth (ISBN 0 88902 560 6).

By DORIS COWAN

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ELIZABETH ARTHUR and her husband, Bob Gathercole, moved in 1974 to "an island sanctuary" in Stuart Lake, B.C., to build what they hoped would be "a permanent home in the wilderness" where they would find "a life of simplicity and peace." *Island Sojourn* is based on her memories of their

two years there, and on a journal that she kept; she attempts to convey the essential quality of their life, what they learned from the experience, and why they left.

They built their house on a high, south-facing hill on their three-acre island. It was to be a real home, not just a cabin for weekend retreats, and they skimped on neither time nor money. They moved into it before it was finished, and spent the first winter happily completing the inside. The second winter, with no more building to occupy them, things began to go wrong.

Arthur describes the slow laborious processes of building, and their gradual settling into and exploration of the landscape that was to be their home for the rest of their lives. She is an observant, careful writer, and she piles detail upon detail with a delicate, poetic intensity. But strangely, in a narrative so full of wind, stars, waves, and the northern lights, her prose seems oddly airless, and its cumulative effect, for all its patient accuracy, is one of diffusion. It lacks both force and a compelling point of view.

Throughout the book there is a suggestion that she and Bob, in this tale, are Everyman — that given the same circumstances, this is what would happen to anybody. This is what would happen to you. She moves too often and too easily from the particular to the general, and she leaves their lives before and after the island years almost totally blank. Where she and Bob came from, what their ambitions were, how they met, how they came to agree that they would go together to a remote island and live there forever — all of this is left out; it's clearly intentional, and meant to isolate their experience, make it more like a kind of island of time in their lives, and thus increase its universality. But for me it doesn't work.

This seems to me to be the book's major flaw, but it is a fault of the kind that still has its own peculiar virtues. Her focus is narrow, occasionally even myopic, but she does manage to give us some highly effective close-up views of the natural world, and the material processes of battling the wilderness: her encounter with a lynx, for example.

The first three quarters of the book is concerned with the building of the house and the friends they make in town, on the Indian reserve, and in other isolated spots. In the last part she begins to speak more specifically about the emotional effects of life in the wilderness: the month-long snowstorms, the silence, the emptiness, the hopelessness, the madness; the suicides, and the murders.

During their second year the tiny group of scattered acquaintances and friends they have acquired is diminished by several deaths — two accidents, both of them possible suicides, a murder, and one death of natural causes. Their illusions of permanence and security recede and finally vanish. Halfway through the third summer they realize that they are not prepared to stay another winter. "We can all sojourn and we can all build," writes Arthur, "The only thing we cannot do is stay." □

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# CORE WARS

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away from Hall-Dennis, teachers had the force. It's beginning to seep back to them, so choose your texts with care

by Lorne R. Hill

THE CRISIS is fast upon us — declining enrolments, redundant teachers, financial cutbacks, closed or twinned schools, bottle-necks at the promotion levels, courses being phased out and extra-curricular activities reduced, public outcries for literate school graduates, new teachers unable to find employment, businessmen who have all but given up on the schools as a training ground for skilled workers, teachers whose jobs are in such jeopardy they are being massively retrained, and everywhere rumours of curriculum changes. So how are we coping?

One way is to sell our courses. The newest offering always attracts the uncommitted students. The game is to capitalize on the latest fad, get there with the best, and then get out when the interest wanes. It's the marketing of education: the teacher as ad man; the prostituting of professionalism for the sake of jobs.

Chairmen have been known to circulate among the younger classes at option time as pitch-men for their senior courses. "You must take Literature next year! It's been field-tested and 87 per cent of this year's class recommends Literature over Brand X taught by that awful other department. Why, you will be shacked by Margaret Atwood; exposed by Margaret Laurence; shamed by Chief Dan George; and pulverized by Irving Layton! We are even offering (and for a limited time only) that scandalous, naughty, and very controversial *Catcher in the Rye*, banned in Boston, Huron County, and other juvenile jurisdictions. And because we love you, this course comes to you at no extra charge. After all, what's a year in your life? You only go around once!"

Perhaps. But if change in education is based on the same assumptions as change in business, if the new model is really no different from the old (but a name change may fool some students), and if it's the packaging that really counts, then we are still going to get the same old content from the same old teachers in the same old way. Peanut butter is peanut butter and no matter

what the brand, it still sticks to the mof of your mouth. And this is not to denigrate the good work that is being done. It is intended to deplore the con game teachers have been forced into for the past 15 years because they have been put into the marketplace with a product that is too serious to have to "sell."

It's not that teachers can't sell. Just think of the advertising campaign they could run if they wished! Television spots filled with kids on crutches, overcrowded classrooms, fights in the school yard, spaced-out seniors, emotional cripples isolated in the "hole," slashed tires on teachers' cars, pot parties after lunch on Fridays — oh yes, teachers could put that message across. But since they have been trained to "tell" youngsters on the intellectual life, they have a strong and understandable aversion to the phoniness of shallow commercialism. But what choice do they have? Today, society's model teacher is a used car salesman.

Departments are fighting within each school to establish and protect territory. Which courses belong under which subject department? The more courses you get, the more students you get, the more teaching jobs you protect. So what falls within the jurisdiction of social studies, literature, or multiculturalism? Does economics belong with the social sciences or with the commercial department? Where does law belong? Should family studies programs include psychology and sociology and if so, should they be taught by home economists or social scientists? Is geography a social science or not? Is history? Which department in the school gets to teach the Canadian Studies program? Or CanLit? Women's Studies? Classical Studies? World Religions? Or Values Education? Is this the beginning or the end of interdisciplinary endeavours?

Take multiculturalism as an example. Multiculturalism is spread over Canadian studies, literature, history, politics, family studies, sociology, native and women's studies, geography and even math. Who owns it? Is the inevitable duplication in

programs necessary or even useful? And above all, how does one stop the pirating of the content of the best-selling courses, no matter which department offers them? A redefinition of boundaries is in order and on that redefinition depends the futures of many teachers and the quality of instruction for thousands of students across Canada.

These problems are particularly acute in Ontario. Schools are being closed in major urban and suburban areas. Teachers with as much as 12 years' experience are being bumped from schools with declining enrolments into ones that are holding their own or increasing slightly. Nearly 5,000 teachers were retrained this summer at one faculty of education alone. In some cases, it was retrain or walk the streets. Even established teachers are beginning to demand an end to the ruinous credit system that allows the student to select the course he or she wants and thereby select the teacher he or she doesn't want. The smorgasbord should be replaced with compulsory courses to guarantee both literacy and jobs. Meanwhile, prospective teachers are training in special education, developmental reading, and English-as-a-second-language. Or trying to get jobs in private cram schools for recent immigrants from the Third World who, incidentally, have been promised admittance to prestigious universities after their brief encounter with Ontario education. Alternatively, these new teachers take a compulsory course in religion so they can get a job in the separate-school system despite a disagreement they may have had with their god during university days or their priest who seems to have forgotten their names. If there is any way aspiring teachers can pull strings with those who have influence they will. But how many teachers are going to remain in the jobs they originally spent years training for? Do you want your child taught by an expert or by someone who has just spent one summer in retraining?

The Ministry of Education in Ontario is under considerable pressure from 95 groups lobbying to get their views reflected in the

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curriculum., So the ministry has recently established a commission to inquire into the state of secondary education and the betting is that the whole province will move forward to the fundamentals as a result. Ontario is also establishing a provincial pool of test items so students' knowledge of the curriculum can be readily evaluated. although teachers fear the pool will be used to judge their teaching. But the effect may be to standardize the curriculum. No doubt the skills demanded by the business community will figure largely in the new proposals. But which subjects will win the war for core? And even if the ministry allows the teaching profession to control certification of teachers, and even if the profession is willing to pay the price by giving up the right to strike, and even if the teachers shoulder the responsibility of closing or curtailing faculties of education under the guise of controlling admittance to the profession, declining enrolment and budget cuts will still be felt in the classroom. And they will be reflected in what and how the students learn.

Cynics have long claimed that the curriculum doesn't matter. Teachers ignore it and go their own way, regarding the ministry's moves as simply political and es having little relationship to informed opinion. Others have claimed that it is the publishers and not the ministry that decide the curriculum. After all, when compulsory subjects were eliminated for the most part, the publishers lost their guaranteed market, their licence to print money. The ministry had to save them somehow. So it changed the curriculum every five years, thereby ensuring that the old books were useless and new ones were required. Publishers were delighted. They could capitalize on obsolete knowledge and as long as they could keep the ministry changing the curriculum they could keep producing books. It was a profitable partnership. Throw in the public's dislike of the old curriculum (because it did not allow its kids to pass in school and become successful) and we have a public susceptibility to change. The hope is that finally this change (unlike all the others in the past) will be the magic formula that lets our children into the fight for the big bucks. Stir in a little Ivory Tower egg-on-your-beard theorizing over the latest research project (based on a minuscule sample, of course) and we have the intellectuals' input. The result — constant change, whether we need it or not. It is possible that in the next decade the rate of change may slow perceptibly.

A prominent American educator was asked to describe the new educational direction he saw emerging south of the border. He replied: "Back to the 1950s. back to core content, compulsory subjects, the fundamentals, one standard text and individual teachers spread over a variety of subjects. back to discipline, deportment, dress, and detentions." The day of the student is over. We can no longer afford a system in which the inexperienced decide what is best for society. Select your texts

carefully. It looks like a long dry spell ahead.

Here's a roundup of some new school texts available this fall:

### CANADIAN HISTORY

Canada. **Growth of a Nation**, by Stan Garrod, Fred McFadden and Rosemary Neering, Fitzhenry & Whiteside. 304 pages. \$9.95. Intermediate. Canadian history teachers have waited long for a general-level text and this is the best to date. The authors have made use of the latest research into how children learn at this level. Each chapter is divided into short two-page sections with large print, simple words, timeliness, and one or two visuals per page. Each chapter has an advance organizer and to a large extent the story of Canada's past is told through the lives of individuals. Where larger events are discussed, short biographies of key people are integrated into the text. Causation is handled by examining motives and not by stressing large abstract forces. Then is a historical picture gallery to open the book. summaries of each chapter, and questions for review, discussion, research, and projects. The book's weakness may lie in its narrative rather than inquiry approach. Highly recommended.

Canada: **Builders of the Nation**, by Ian Hurd, Macmillan. 338 pages, \$10.95. Intermediate. This sequel to *Canada: Immigrants and Settlers* continues the story of Canada's development from the rebellions of 1837 to the 1950s. It includes profiles of famous Canadians and descriptions of social life. The chapters and sections are kept short to suit the attention spans of young historians and throughout the text there is an obvious attempt to appeal to the intermediate student suspended as he is between concrete and abstract thought. There are questions for review, activities to enrich the text, further readings, vocabulary exercises, documents, and simulation games. Both volumes must be seriously considered for this level, and we hope there will be a concluding book to bring the story to the present.

Donald Smith and the **Canadian Pacific Railway**, by Keith Wilson, in *We Built Canada Series*. The Book Society of Canada, 1978.84 pages. \$1.95. Intermediate. "At last the spike and Donald with the hammer!" Why was this wealthy businessman chosen to drive the last spike in the railway that joined Canada coast to coast? How did he make his fortune and become Baron Strathcona? Should he be remembered as a great Canadian or a dishonest buccaneer? Wilson tells the story of Smith's career from Scotland to Labrador, Red River to British Columbia; and Montreal to London. "That fellow Smith is the greatest liar I ever met," said Sir John A. "I could lick him quicker than hell could scorch a feather!" Also in this series: *Nellie McClung and Women's Rights*, by Helen K. Wright (76 pages, \$2.95); *Look Riel and the New Nation*, by Colin Davies (84 pages, \$2.95); *George Simpson et la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson*, by Keith Wilson (60 pages, \$2.95).

### CANADIAN STUDIES

**Political Decisions in Canada**, by Frederick E. Jarman and Allan D. Hux, Wiley, 128 pages, \$7.95 plus teacher's guide. This welcome addition to the growing list of civics texts contains 17 case studies, documents, questions, statistics, terms (defined in context) and all are bound in an attractive narrative format. The text builds on students' perceptions of





issues and includes an inside look at elections as well as a chapter on values, opinions, and political behaviour. The authors have consciously taken a middle-of-the-mod position and believe that the book is an alternative to existing texts in its approach, style and learning activities. Recommended.

**Canada and The World Wars**, by Iain R. Munro, in *Canada: Origins and Options Series*, Wiley, 96 pages, \$4.50. Intermediate. Why are there wars? What is war like? Can we find alternatives? Why did Canadians get involved in two world wars in the 20th century? Aren't we a peaceful people? Songs, photos, diary accounts, maps, paintings, documents, text and summaries tell the story of Canada's involvement and its effects. An obvious anti-war bias.

**Canadian American Relations**, by Darrel R. Skidmore, in *Canada: Origins and Options Series*, Wiley, 96 pages, \$3.95. Intermediate. Will Canada be annexed by the United States? Should we attempt to stem the tide of American investment? Can our politicians make independent decisions? How extensive is the penetration of American culture? This up-to-date introductory text includes cartoons, pithy sayings, excerpts from experts, photos, charts and narrative.

**Across Canada: Resources and Regions**, by Christine Hannell and Robert Harshman, Wiley, 336 pages, \$13.95. Intermediate general level. A profusely illustrated text, pecked with information in every conceivable form to encourage the development of geographic skills and a broad perspective on modern Canada. Also useful at senior levels. Highly recommended.

**The Canadian Oxford School Atlas**, edited by Quentin Stanford, Oxford University Press, fourth edition, 1971, 172 pages, \$7.00 plus teacher's guide *Canada and the World, Book 1*, by Weller G. Kemball, 1980, 38 pages, \$5.50.

**The Mennonite Canadians**, by Joanne Flint, Van Nostrand Reinhold, in *Multicultural Canada Series*, 72 pages, \$5.50. Intermediate. This story of two Mennonite families presents a broad and vivid picture of their life in Canada. The book contains features on folk art, cooking, the Old Order, work bees, and Mennonite relief work.

**Teaching Canadian Studies: An Evaluation of Print Materials; Grades 1-13**, by Virginia Robson and Christine Sylvester, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 340 pages, \$18.95. Primary-Senior. This OISE project to decide which materials are appropriate for classroom use includes lengthy analyses of more than 500 titles. They express concern that

so little exists at the primary and junior levels and call attention to the fact that materials for intermediate and senior levels are not suitable for non-academic students and poor readers. This handy guide should strike terror into the hearts of many pedagogical entrepreneurs. Among the titles *not* recommended are *Focus on Canada*, *Climate Canada*, *Many Cultures*, *Many Heritages*, *Way, One Dominion*, *North American Neighbours*, *Northern Destiny*, *Canadian Studies: Culture and Country*, *Regional Disparity*, and *Canada: Towards Tomorrow*.

#### CANADIAN LITERATURE

**Discover Canadians**, by L. Dale Guy, Globe/Modern Curriculum Press, 96 pages, Intermediate/Senior. The text presents 18 true stories from the lives of outstanding Canadians in such fields as medicine, women's rights, sports, entertainment and industry — Nellie McClung, Norman Bethune, Anne Murray, Sam McLaughlin, Charlotte Whitton, and others. Each chapter is followed by questions for review, vocabulary exercises, and topics for further research.

**CanLit Crash Course**, by Peter Birdsall *et al.*, CANLIT, revised 1979. Contains a new section on the studying and teaching of Canadian literature. References have been up-dated but the main body of the 1975 text has not been changed.

**Crossroads I and II**, edited by William Boswell, Betty Lamont and John Martyn, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 144 pages, \$4.95 each. Teacher's resource guide, available for \$3.96. Two sequential anthologies for the intermediate level.

**Yesterstories A: Fish & Ships**, by Elma Schemenauer, Globe/Modern Curriculum Press, 128 pages, \$3.99. Intermediate. Contains eight Canadian stories of fact and fiction related to fish and the sea. The stories are followed by a wide range of "language across the curriculum" activities.

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

**Words on Work An Integrated Approach to Language, and Work**, by David Booth *et al.*, Globe/Modern Curriculum Press, 160 pages, \$5.95. Intermediate/Senior. The book presents some 300 workers' views of their job — the role it plays in their lives, their feelings towards other workers, their joys and disappointments. It includes more than 20 profiles of well-known occupations and each chapter ends with reading, writing, discussion, and research activities.

**Who's Going To Read This Anyway?**, by Ray Matthews and Gary Webb, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 308 pages, \$7.00. Senior. Teacher's manual available. Material in this reader has been chosen from popular magazines and newspapers on topics appealing to students. Exercises stress form and content as well as practical application. About 60 per cent Canadian content.

**Time Enough . . .**, by Jack Booth, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 500 pages, \$8.96. Intermediate. An abundance of Canadian material in this illustrated anthology of stories, poems, a play, and a short novel, arranged in thematic units.

**The Canadian Writing Workbook Instruction and Practice in Writing Sentences, Paragraphs and Essays**, by Ronald Conrad, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 185 pages, \$6.95. Designed for college and university English courses but useful for secondary students. Stresses the principles "that are actually needed" through a variety of exercises in workbook format. Useful section on essays. □

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## The fallacy of the excluded middle men

The Pre-Confederation **Premiers: Ontario Government Leaders, 1841-1867**, edited by J. M. S. Careless. U of T Press. 340 pages, \$15.00 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 3363 6).

By DONALD SWAINSON

THE ONTARIO Historical Studies Series is an important and ambitious project. It seeks to be "a comprehensive history of Ontario from 1791 to the present, which will include several biographies of former premiers, numerous volumes on the economic, social, political, and cultural development of the province, and a general history incorporating the insights and conclusions of the other works in the series." A substantial number of volumes have been commissioned; three have been published. Joseph Schull's *Ontario Since 1867*, a narrative survey, appeared in 1978. Two of the biographical volumes have also been issued: G. Howard Ferguson, by Peter Oliver, was published

in 1977; and *The Pre-Confederation Premiers: Ontario Government Leaders, 1841-1867*, edited by J.M.S. Careless, appeared earlier this year.

It is too early to appraise The Ontario Historical Studies Series, but it is perhaps appropriate to ask some questions about the biographies.

A major concern is the decision to limit these studies to premiers. Premiers are, for the most part, very important figures. But so are major opposition politicians and other key actors on the political stage. A real understanding of public life in Ontario would be much facilitated by lives of major figures who never served as premier. A small such group could easily include Sir Adam Beck, John Graves Simcoe, J.J. Morrison, William Lyon Mackenzie, David Croll, W. R. Meredith, Francis Gore, E. B. Jolliffe, Marshall Spring Bidwell, John Beverley Robinson, and Hartley Dewart. Some of these persons have received biographical treatment, although none in a definitive manner. The inclusion of such persons would add to the comprehensiveness of the series, chronologically, ideologically, and thematically. As it is, the biographies series excludes most of the Upper Canadian experience and gives too much of an impression that it is an "official" history.

Another concern relates to the selection of premiers to be included. Virtually any such selection can be criticized and a series

cannot be expected to be totally comprehensive. The omission of A.S. Hardy, W. H. Hearst, and G.S. Henry is regrettable but understandable. However three omissions — Allan MacNab, George Brown, and Edward Blake — seem to be so major that they distort the history of Ontario public life, at least in the 19th century.

Professor Careless explains two of these omissions. MacNab, he argues, "does not qualify strongly as a government leader. Much of his career was spent in opposition. . . Although he did attain the premiership, he held it for only a year and nine months. . . Furthermore, Sir Allan was past his prime." All of this is true, but a couple of other points merit consideration. MacNab's premiership is crucially important: this was when the alliance between Ontario conservatism and the French Canadian majority was forged. Until the end of the century, this basic coalition dominated Canadian politics. Also, a treatment of MacNab would have done much to link together the histories of Upper Canada and the post-responsible government era.

George Brown is left out because "he was premier of the briefest Canadian government of all" and "scarcely ever held a ministerial post." On the other hand, he was premier, did serve as a Father of Confederation, and stands as one of the truly towering figures in the history of Ontario's public life. As a post-Confederation premier, Edward Blake is

### RINGS OF STONE

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Aubrey Burl, with photographs by Edward Piper

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### THE-VIKING WORLD

James Graham-Campbell

The Viking explorations by sea reached as far west as the Mediterranean and North Africa, and westwards across the Atlantic to North America, while on land their trade routes stretched from the Baltic to China. Thriving trade centres were established at Kaupang, Hedeby and Birka, where traders from Russia, Ireland, the Rhineland and Egypt came with furs, wine, glass, weapons, silks, spices, silver and slaves. Colonies were set up in Britain, Ireland, France, Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland and became so integrated with local populations that Viking culture was inextricably assimilated into the native ways of life. At home the Vikings had a settled, agricultural society, a pantheon of gods flexible enough to accommodate Christian deity, and woodcarvers, jewellers, sculptors, runemasters and poets of great skill and originality. This book surveys the Viking phenomenon in all its aspects.

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Edited by David M. Wilson

The Renaissance made us forget our Northern ancestors, yet the contribution of the Germanic speaking people to our civilization between AD 400 and 1100 is as vital as that of the Latin speakers. Who were these men — the Goths and Franks, the Saxons and Celts, the Slavs and Vikings — to whom we owe so much? Why is it that until recently we paid them so little attention? To answer these questions David Wilson has assembled a team of historians and archaeologists from England, Germany, Denmark and Sweden. They have condensed the discoveries of modern research into a concise and readable form, illustrated by a wealth of photographs and diagrams. Separate chapters are devoted to the Germanic tribes, the Anglo-Saxons, the Scandinavians in their homeland, the Vikings overseas, the Celts and the Northern Slavs. In addition there are two chapters bringing the story up to modern times.

340 illustrations, 82 in colour \$49.00

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not the concern of Professor Careless and we do not know why he was excluded, although the reason is no doubt the brevity of his administration. But Edward Blake founded the Liberal dynasty that ruled Ontario from 1871 to 1905 and he dominated Canadian liberalism during the late 19th century.

It might be argued that biographies of MacNab, Brown, and Blake would be redundant because of previous treatment. All have received biographies, but only Careless's *Brown of the Globe* is arguably definitive. This does not, however, seem to have been an editorial concern. Mitch Hepburn, Job A. Macdonald, and John Sandfield Macdonald have received fairly

recent biographies, and they are included. William Henry Draper has been extensively discussed by George Metcalf, who contributes yet another article to *The Pre-Confederation Premiers*.

J.M.S. Careless and four colleagues shdy five Ontario government leaders during the period of the United Province of Canada (1841-67). In fact, because the United Province was a legislative union of Ontario and Quebec, they were really co-premiers who functioned in partnership with a French Canadian colleague.

George Metcalf tells the stay of William Henry Draper, who opposed responsible government, but who nevertheless was forced to function as Canada's first real

premier. Careless analyses the life of the famous Robert Baldwin, and tells again the story of responsible government. He strives valiantly, if not too successfully, to humanize Baldwin. William Ormsby contributes a much-needed assessment of Francis Hincks, an inhighul.9 figure who presided over the corruption and excitement of the railway boom of the early 1850s. One is left with the impression that too great an effort was made to sanitize Sir Francis. In a very interesting article, I. K. Johnson presents John A. Macdonald as a policy-maker, administrator, and practising politician. Johnson does not attempt to write another life of John A. The result is a piece that is filled with insight into a much-studied

## Put it all in, Norman

"COME, STEP INTO Coreen Brillan's world." That's the invitation at the end of the blurb on the first page of a remarkably trashy paperback novel called *Once Upon a Woman* (\$2.95), the first publication of Maxxam House, a new Vancouver publishing firm.

The author of the book ("A story that spans the boardrooms and bedrooms of more than 40 years of America's steaming history") is Norman Wise, a 55-year-old Vancouver accountant who until a year ago worked as a sales-tax consultant. He and four other entrepreneurs own Maxxam House, and their mission is to help sate what they perceive as the reading public's unsatisfied hunger for entertaining books.

They should do very well. The buyer at the Toronto book store where I bought my copy of *Once Upon a Woman* says a box of about 50 was delivered to him unannounced, without even an invoice. Normally he simply returns or destroys such things. Beth this case, he says. "It was Friday, late. I WY busy. There was a hole in the best-seller rack, so I stuck some in there. We ended up selling almost all of them."

The covers of the book are an expert fusion of the styles of American and British paperback graphics. The front cover is dominated by one of those circular, saw-tooth cookie-cutter seals with a big "RI" in the centre of it. This is usually a proclamation that the book is a "best seller." Here, however, the small print proclaims that *Once Upon a Woman* is "Guaranteed #1 in cover-to-cover Entertainment Value (see page 527)." And page 527, the last page, is a bona fide guarantee: "If you are not thoroughly entertained and satisfied with your purchase, you may return the complete "owl, pre-paid within seven days — together with your cash register slip — for 100 Percent return of your purchase price. (Be sure to supply us with your name and return address.)"

In 3 recent telephone conversation, Wise told me that so far, with 15,000 copies sold, they have had to make only two refunds.

The novel is the story of Coreen Brillan, an ambitious Seattle woman who screws and schemes her way into sole possession of a large corporation that is faintly reminiscent of the Boeing Company. Before that, she almost becomes a movie star and the wife of a Hollywood mogul, bet bet seamy past is exposed and her fiancé publicly humiliates

her and chucks her out. In another extravagant humiliation, the only scene in the book that really sings, the corporation is taken away from her. Then, in the final section of the novel, when poor Coreen is about 60 and broke, all the people she has ever hurt or damaged entice her onto a yacht and humiliate her again. It all ends a few pages later with a climax too bizarre for words other than the "Norman Wise's."

By most standards he is not a very good writer. The book is a virtual, occasionally twisted, treasury of English catch phrases and clichés, Wise's persistent use of which reaches a kind of perverse perfection in this sentence: "She would fly off the handle at the drop of a hat."

That's Coreen's mother-in-law. She's worried about tk "rift-raff" her son is sure to meet in the army. Another character is forced to "eck" out a living. Still another steps into an "anti-room," which raises a number of SF possibilities that are never developed. And, during tk Second World War, Coreen's corporation manufactures "bombsites." Just how this is done is "ever explained, but it's usy to imagine craters end rubble rolling off the assembly line and being rushed to war-torn Europe.

There are the requisite sex scenes, of course ("Put it in," she pleaded. "Put it all in, Carl"), but *Once Upon a Woman* is not an exceptionally salacious novel. Rather, it is a thoroughly amateurish imitation of my number of thick American chronicles of wealth and power. The result is a tedious near-novel that, with its scattered structure, ankle-deep characters, and profusion of illiteracies and typographical errors, often gave me the impression I was reading some new prose equivalent of naive painting.

Yet, having said all of the above, I most quickly add that Wise's book is essentially no more mean-minded or meretricious than most of the flaccid American best sellers that the majority of Canadian novel readers like to read more than anything else. If an American publisher had accepted *Once Upon a Woman* (and there is no reason why one shouldn't have), he might have trimmed it a bit, ironed out the prose a little and had a proofreader look at the galleys, but the book that appeared wouldn't have differed in any important respect from the one Maxxam produced.

In our telephone conversation, Wise said

he started writing novels several years ago for his own enjoyment. He says he has no trouble typing 8,000 to 10,000 words a day. "It's a labour of love. It just comes out of my head."

At first he never did anything with his novels except put them in a drawer. So people heard about his hobby and asked to read some of his stuff. Their response was encouraging and eventually he and his partners formed Maxxam House.

They intend to bring out 12 titles a year. On the cover of each will be the big #1 seal, which is the key to the "product awareness" they wish to create. Harlequin is their model. They want readers to look to Maxxam House books for stories with an "international flavour" and guaranteed entertainment.

"We think people are due for some entertainment," Wise told me. "So many books you read, the authors are inundating you with psychology. They set themselves up es shrinks. Most are not qualified to spout what they spout."

I asked him for examples of unentertaining books, expecting him to name a title or two from the CanLit Top 100. Instead, he singled out *The Thorn Birds*. "I mean, how often can you read about the weather in Australia? I know people who skip-read it looking for the meat of the entertainment of the story. I was not impressed by the way the book moved. The writing, yes; but a lot of people would say it was a lecture on theology."

Then he added "Ninety-nine point nine nine nine per cent of the people who read books are not majors in English. They are not as concerned with the construction of the sentences and grammatical phraseology es they are with the story."

In other words, "a jest CanLit, but lit of any kind, is totally out of the ken of Norman Wise and the people he hopes to reach. So, for that matter, is Canada itself, et least as far as his writing is concerned. lie believes that stories set in Canada won't sell abroad, won't have that international flavour he and his partners are striving for. That's why he set the bulk of his book in Seattle instead of Vancouver. Presumably that's also why, in one scene, he implies that the Allied side of the battle et Vimy Ridge was fought by the U.S. Army. As he pets it: "If a Canadian author wants to starve to death, he should write Canadian scenes."

—PHIL SURGUY

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figure. Finally, Bruce W. Hodgins tells us again about the often-ignored John Sandfield Macdonald. This is a thoroughly researched biography of a figure who merits inclusion in any such series.

*The Pre-Confederation Premiers* is a solid end readable account of five important figures in Ontario's past. The book is an important addition to the historical literature concerning pre-Confederation Ontario. Yet omissions from this volume and the larger series are troubling, as is the decision to limit biographical treatment to premiers. Perhaps the Board of Trustees of The Ontario Historical Studies Series should look again at the nature and structure of its biographical program. □

## Sex and the sinful woman

Promises. by Charlotte Vale Allen,  
Clarke Irwin, 343 pages, \$15.50 cloth  
(ISBN 0 525 18540 2).

By DANA THURLOW

"I HAVE ONLY one rule," says the prostitute less to her clients. "You have to say you love me." With this and other elaborate pretences she is able to hold onto her identity and her sanity all through the miserable, lean years of the late 1930s and early 1940s when she becomes the sole support of herself and her sister Tillie. Refusing to be overcome by her sordid life, she keeps a kind of dignity about her which, along with her fabulous physical charms eventually prompts Sanford Woodrich, a supermarket tycoon, to marry her. He helps her regain her trust in men and in her own sensuous appetite: for Jess really does equate love with sex, in spite of her unhappy experiences with it. A passionate woman, she never stops wanting the definite physical expression of a man's approval of her: and this need to explore and acknowledge and take responsibility for sexual desires is what fundamentally motivates less end, to a lesser extent, Tillie, throughout the novel.

Such a theme is worth exploring, as well as timely. Ms. Allen is not the first to attempt it, but she must be among the early writers of popular women's fiction to deal with this problem, which is difficult to work out in the highly emotional, exaggerated, and overactive plot situations such an audience has come to expect. The female intellectual, on the other hand, has been accustomed for some time to books telling her she must come to terms with her sexual needs; to view them clinically, or at least analytically. There is usually no plot and little action to these books; the theme is carried to exhaustion by repetitive dialogue

between moody, introspective characters and pages of stream-of-consciousness intuiting. There is none of that in *Promises*. With several best-selling paperbacks to her credit, Ms. Allen is well aware of the emotional needs of her audience.

But the complicated formula plot leads the novel in one direction and the outspoken, up-to-date theme leads it in another. The characters, pulled both ways, fail to be consistently convincing. The theme advances steadily through a long series of highly explicit sexual encounters of every type; these intimate, explosive scenes are uneasily woven into the fabric of the story, not without some tearing of fibres. The readers is constantly trying to absorb the impact and significance of them all the while she is sorting out the heroic manoeuvres of Jess to survive (in the grand Canadian tradition) such plot complications as the death of her husband, her subsequent difficulties and triumph as ruler of the supermarket empire, mother, end sitter. In her role as executive and saint, she becomes more and more remote from the reader and even the other characters. Her unrivaled superiority and heroism are qualities Tillie cannot forgive her until the very end and René, who loves Jess from the time he brings the sisters to Toronto early in their story, feels alienated by her success:

He'd taken years of English lessons in order to be able to talk to her without sounding ... like a peasant. He'd acquired ... a fondness for the things he believed she liked, remodeling his externals to better fit what he thought were her expectations.

The sad thing is that Jess can be very human, likeable, and appealing. Usually she is all three things in scenes concerned with her anxiety over her intense physical hunger to be comforted. The best one comes when she and René finally meet in a hotel to make love. No longer young, suffering



from damage in child-bearing, and reminded of her wretched early sexual experiences by the setting, Jess falters. René, too, is older, tired, uneasy; yet they manage, awkwardly, to love each other with tenderness and maturity, end to part as equals. With sex now finally in perspective, less sums it all up this way: "I like who I've come to be. . . . I feel as if I fit my skin." A fair comment, but somehow it seems a little shallow for what she and Ms. Allen have been trying to accomplish. □

# PEN AND OINK

Why Ed the book-packager is convinced that PigLit's hour has come and he can look forward to days of swine and roses

by Theresa Carrothers

I RAN INTO Ed, a creative consultant for trade-book publishers, in an east-side bar frequented by publishing pundits and other assorted creatures of the printed word. He stood out among the rest because he was smiling, while all the others were crying into their tequila and beer over the declining Canadian dollar and the even more dramatic decline in the literacy rate.

He called me over and offered to buy me a drink. I was mystified. Ed's career with a variety of small, smaller, and finally bankrupt publishing houses had been notable to date only for its spectacular failures. In a world mesmerized by gnomes, faeries, and other short people, Ed's own *Trolls* had come out so badly that the publisher drove the books directly from the factory to a paper recycling centre.

"What's got into you?" I asked him finally. "Has the *Picture Book of Plagues* begun to sell?" He shook his head. "What about that lickable book of recipes by celebrity cooks?"

"Nopa," Ed said cheerfully. "It's pigs. Open your eyes, pigs are everywhere."

I looked around nervously. The place was none too clean or well-lighted, but it seemed to be pig-free. Reassured, I turned back to Ed, who was grinning foolishly. It seemed a shame to bring him to his senses. "Love is everywhere, Ed. Pigs are at the CNE, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, and pigpens everywhere."

"That's all you know," he replied. "But before I tell you about it, you have to promise to keep it a secret. I can't bear to be scooped thii time." I found myself taking an oath that I would keep our conversation confidential.

"My next project," Ed said in a frantic whisper, after we had withdrawn into a corner where no one could overhear us, "is the *Illustrated and Illuminated Pig*: 400 glossy pages of elegant extracts from *belles-lettres*, snappy zoological patter, and full-colour spreads of the artistic pig."

"*The Illustrated Pig*?" I said incredulously — really, quite incredulously. "You've got me playing 007 for this? Ed, I am talking to you as a friend. Pigs are turkeys."

"Pigs' knuckles," Ed shouted. "Man's fascination with the pig is timeless. What about Ulysses and Circe, and all those Greek sailor pigs? Think of Lewis Carroll's winged pigs, and *Animal Farm's* autocratic pigs and James Dickey's abused pigs in *Deliverance*."

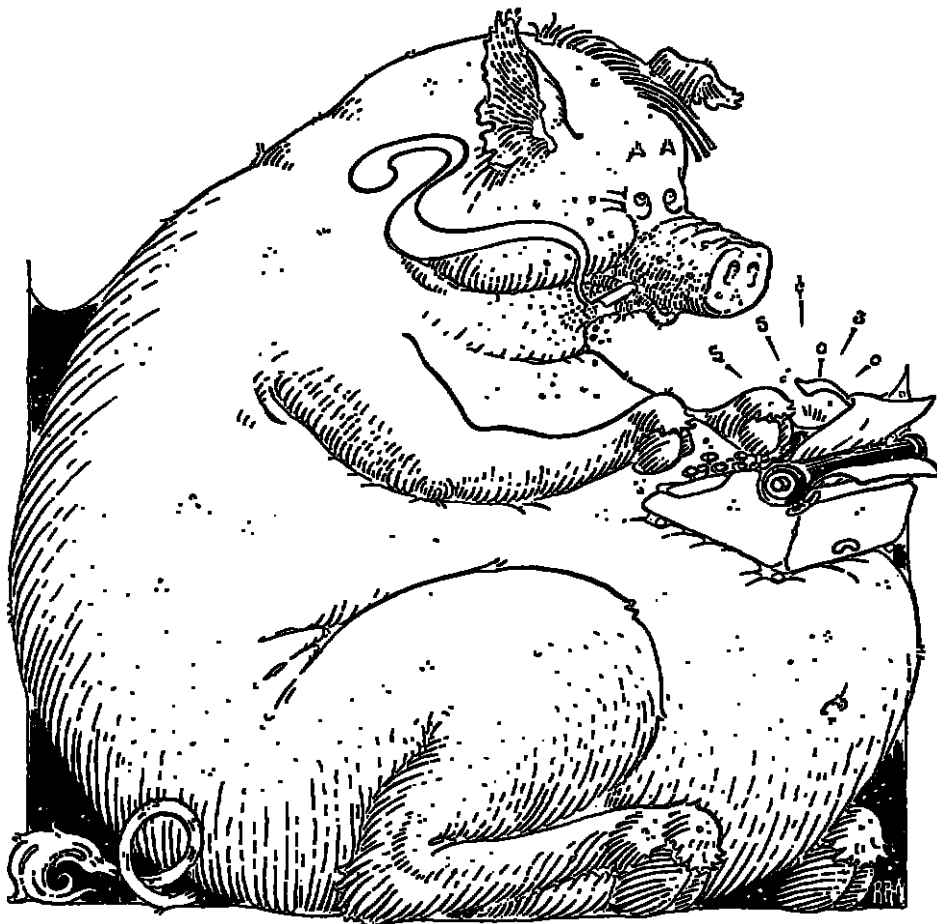
I had to grant him his point. "I've always liked the one in *El A&O Manso*." Ed looked at me suspiciously. "You probably studied French in school and missed that one, Ed." I assured him. "It's by Benito Pérez Galdós, the Spanish Balzac. The hem. *Manso*, interviews a nurse for his newborn child. The nurse is minus an ear,

which a pig had bitten off when she, herself but a child and in need of a nurse, had wandered ill-advisedly into a local pig-holding area. Curiously, another earless victim of a rampaging porker turns up in a novel of the Spanish Civil War. . . ." I was just warming to my muttons (or perhaps my trotters. I should say) when I noticed that Ed was scribbling furiously on his shirt cuffs.

"What are you doing?" I demanded.

"Just taking a few notes," he told me.

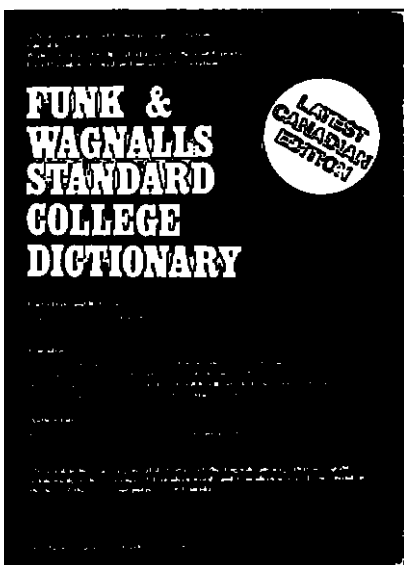
"Everybody's got a great pig tale to tell, even you." He paused thoughtfully. "You know, I bet that's why those Spanish gypsies always wear bandanas over one side



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think of the right  
word

Think of the right  
book

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of their head." He noted this down, too, on  
the tail of his undershirt, which he had  
extracted for the purpose.

"How far have you gone with this, Ed?"  
I asked. He waved me closer, so that he  
could whisper in my ear.

Just before Christmas, at a rake for a  
publishing house he had put under with his  
visions of the big bucks to be made with  
"how to" books — *How to be Kidnapped  
by a UFO. How to Cause an International  
Monetary Collapse. How to be the Last  
One to Know* — one of the now unemployed  
copywriters, drunk as a dog (or, as Ed put it,  
drunk as a pig) began telling pig stories.

He had been collecting them for years, he  
confided drunkenly to an enraptured Ed,  
with hopes of gathering enough material so  
that he could go back to school and get his  
Ph.D. His last attempt had failed at the  
dissertation defence: he blamed a poor  
typing job for making the discussion of the  
evolution of the apostrophe in 14th-century  
Thuringia impassible to follow.

Ed had found a kindred spirit. They went  
off to an all-night doughnut shop and drew  
up their plan over a couple of cinnamon  
dutchies. There were pigs to be eaten — like  
the one in *Jude the Obscure* and ones in  
danger of being eaten, like *Pigling Bland*  
and Charlotte's friend Wilbur. There were  
pigs off their feed, like the noble spirit of  
P.G. Wodehouse's country estates, the  
*Empress of Blandings*. There were intelli-  
gent pigs, like the 19th-century carnival  
attraction, the *Learned Pig*, and the poet  
Robert Herrick's beloved pet pip. There  
were even solemn, clerical pigs, like *Ed-  
ward Lear's Piiggywig*.

"We even had a villain in the piece," Ed  
said exultantly, "from *Margery Alling-  
ham's Case of the Lore Pig. They were all  
there, right down to Porky and Miss  
Piggy*." A cloud in the shape of a winged  
pig passed over his shining countenance. "I  
wonder how that guy-missed Amigo  
Manso."

"He probably took French, too," I  
suggested.

This seemed to satisfy Ed. He continued  
his story. With his usual blind enthusiasm  
he had convinced this unemployed writer to  
meet with an unemployed illustrator, an  
unemployed book designer and an unemp-  
loyed picture researcher (somehow, all of  
Ed's friends end up unemployed), and they  
came up with a sample layout and a few  
pages set in type.

By selling off for scrap the thousands of  
complimentary copies of old projects which  
he used to reinforce his basement walls, Ed  
got enough money to go to New York.

"It was heaven down there," he recalled  
blissfully. The first place I went to, really  
big home, you know, held me hostage for  
two days so they could get exclusive rights  
to it, but I held on to my principles, and got  
out without signing anything."

"Was that wise, Ed?" I asked mildly.  
"A pig, I mean, a bird in the hand, means  
you'll bring home the bacon."

"Are you kidding?" he answered.  
"They just proved to me that I could afford

to bechoosy. Every place I went wanted the  
book, and I'm organizing an auction. This is  
going to be really big."

Some of the New York houses were  
talking about blitzkrieg promotional pro-  
grams with a full range of marketing tie-ins  
— at least, that's how Ed described it.  
Simultaneous with the book's release there  
would be pig calendars (adults and kids  
versions, of course); pig appointment  
books; pig diaries (adult and teens); pig  
stationery: pig party products; pin the tail on  
the pig games; pig puzzles, in everything  
from five-to 5,000-piece designs; pig col-  
ouring books; pig desk sets; pig piggy  
banks; pig pajamas; pig T-shirts ("I'm  
Dirty," "Want to Feel My Trotters?"),  
etc.); pig posters, and so on.

There was talk of a record album,  
movies, TV series and, of course, many  
sequels. *Piglets. Boars. Pigs on the Moon  
and an X-rated Pigs in a Blanket*.

"We're talking about a tie-in with a  
sausage company, and maybe working out  
something with the Pork Marketing  
Board." Ed looked sentimental. "I may  
draw the line there: it's almost like can-  
nibalism."

"What really sold them was the sure-fire  
TV coverage we'll get," Ed said. "We'll  
do the whole thing talking-head circuit.  
With Carson behind us, we'll get Griffin,  
Douglas, Donohue, Alan Hamel, Joyce  
Davidson, Bob MacLean, maybe even Ed  
Allen."

"Carson?" I said doubtfully.

"You remember the old argument he had  
with Ed about whether pigs were smarter  
than horses; Johnny always stuck up for  
pigs." He looked crafty. "We're going to  
play up that angle, with SF stories about the  
close genetic resemblances between me"  
and pigs."

"It sounds like a sure thing," I said  
grudgingly. "You must have found the  
*Symbolic Pig* really helpful."

"*Symbolic Pig*?" Ed asked, immediately  
on his guard.

"*The Symbolic Pig*." I repeated pa-  
tiently. "It was written by Frederick  
Cameron Fillar, and published by Oliver &  
Boyd of Edinburgh, in 1961. I say, it must  
have been useful to you."

"You mean," Ed whispered, "you mean  
... it's been done?"

"Well," I said, "something's been  
done. I just wondered what made your  
approach different."

JUST WHAT I'VE  
ALWAYS WANTED



"Well, mine will be illustrated," Ed said hopefully.

"The colour plates in the *Symbolic Pig* are lovely," I answered. "I'm especially fond of the Burne-Jones window depicting St. Fritheswide in the pig sty."

"Traitor! Spy! Butcher!" Ed shouted. He said desperately. "If I've never heard of it, maybe no one else has either. Maybe you saw it remaindered somewhere, or in a Queen Street second-hand store? Maybe we could buy all the copies around and have a good old-fashioned barbecue." He cackled a little.

"No chance." I replied. "R's pretty common in Libraries, and some copies are pretty well-thumbed. I don't think you could hush it up completely."

"How did you find out about id" he asked glumly.

"Well, Ed." I replied, dissolving in a flashback. "I think there's a little bit of the pig researcher in every English Ph. D. candidate. That fellow you met might have been me a few years ago. At one time I was going to write my thesis about pips; after I read *El Amigo Manso*, you see, I began finding pips everywhere.

"An unusual experience saved me. I was in the library one day looking for pips, when I heard a strange, hoarse voice of doom speak my name. It was a grad student friend of mine calling in a library whisper. He had sniffed out the *Symbolic Pig* and was eager to gloat over the fact that my thesis topic had already been done."

"It must have broken your heart," Ed said, with feeling.

I nodded. "I dropped out of school for a semester. I had to find myself. Fortunately, I was able to complete my degree with a thesis on *The Semi-Tractor Trailer Jockey as Anti-Hero in the Twentieth Century American Novella*." (I coughed modestly.)

"The whole bitter experience taught me one thing, Ed: steer clear of pips, especially hardbound. Be honest, now. Wouldn't this have turned out to be another *Our Friend the Ferret*, for you?"

Ed buried his face in his hands and his shoulders shook as if he were crying. I couldn't find it in my heart to blame him. Pigs have caused a lot of heartache.

"How about another banana daquiri, Ed?" I asked him after a bit. He drained that heady, nutritious concoction at a swallow. It seemed to restore him. He looked at me with the old madness in his eyes.

"That book was from Britain, right?" I nodded. "And nearly 20 years old?" I nodded again. "How big was it?" I indicated a standard-sized volume, about six inches by nine.

"Aha!" he cried. "Completely wrong for the gift trade. It probably never got outside scholarly markets." He pounded the table. "Don't you see, you bacon rind! I'm still first, I can still corner the market here in North America. America wants a pig to believe in. Look at *The Muppet Show*."

He looked at me with pity. "And you, you poor sap, you could have been the one, but you just didn't have the vision. Don't

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worry. I'll give you a line in the acknowledgements." And whistling "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf," he strolled out of the bar, leaving me with a bill for 10 daquiris, assorted fruit flavours.

Now here I sit, wondering what to do. Do I laugh it off as just another of Ed's crazy schemes that will decorate remainder bins everywhere come next year? Do I go to him on my knees offering to buy in? (He always needs suckers — I mean, backers.) Or

## in the beginning

by Mary Ainslie Smith

### Daddy drinks and mummy's a hooker? So read this, kid, it'll give you a high

THERE SEEMS TO be a certain pattern regularly followed in fiction for young adolescents. Consider the following:

On *the Rocks*, by Robert R. Robinson (Scholastic-TAB, 142 pages, \$1.50 paper). Greg, a grade 10 student, tries to deal with his parents' heavy drinking, their fighting, and the resulting threats to his family's stability.

*Exit Barney McGee*, by Claire Mackay (Scholastic-TAB, 146 pages, \$1.25 paper). Thirteen-year-old Barney decides to run away because he feels excluded by his mother, his step-father, and their new baby. He runs to his real father, who he discovers has become a skid-row alcoholic.

*Not Yet Summer*, by Susan Bmwn (Scholastic-TAB, 120 pages, \$1.50 paper). Marylee is a 14-year-old crippled foster child who finds and decides to keep an abandoned baby. Her accomplice, 12-year-old Petey, comes from a broken home and has just been suspended from school.

*Wilted*, by Paul Kropp (Academic Press, 111 pages, \$9.95 cloth). Fourteen-year-old Danny's father drinks, his parents fight, his older sister smokes dope, and his little brother clings to him. Danny himself has trouble with school and, possibly worst of all, has just begun wearing glasses.

The pattern emerges. In all of these books, as in many others previously published for this age group, the main character is somewhere between the ages of 13 and 16. He or she not only suffers the normal pangs of adolescence but also has grave personal or family problems. The adult characters are, for the most part, selfish, remote, and unable or unwilling to see their own defects. But there are exceptions: each story provides at least one "good" adult — 3 teacher or a social worker, someone who understands and can suggest some answers to the problems. (In *Wilted*, the "good" adult, an elderly mathematics teacher, has a heart attack and dies right in school.)

The main character must deal with his problems alone, although he may have

should I go all out on a quickie pig book of my own?

After all, I've paid my dues. I've got a pen full of file cards on the little squealers back home. Pi just seem to get into your blood—maybe there is something to that evolutionarily angle. I seem to hear that voice again, and it's saying, "The Literary Pig, The Literary Pi." See you on Johnny Carson. □

someone — one close buddy, a pet — to confide in. If it is a pet, the animal inevitably becomes central to some pathetic incident before the end of the book. Petey's dog in *Not Yet Summer* dies; Greg's dog in *On the Rocks* is merely hit by a car and injured.

Each plot progresses through a series of minor crises and confrontations to a grand finale. This climax is physical and violent. It's the parents' drunken New Year's Eve party in *On the Rocks*, a rooming-house fire in *Exit Barney McGee*, a storm in *Not Yet Summer*, and a fight in *Wilted*. The events of the climax test the mettle of the main character and, by the end of each novel, he or she possesses new insight and maturity. The problems may not be totally solved but there now is new hope for a better future.

Who reads these stories? I can't believe that kids who really read would be satisfied with either the improbable events in some of the plots or the superficiality with which the problems are treated. I can believe from my own experience that these hooks, especially the ones from Scholastic-TAB with their attractive, inexpensive format, would be welcomed by teachers of "difficult" English classes, teachers trying to persuade their students to read anything.

But in many ways it seems unfair to present such students with such stories. Perhaps there is something to be learned from them. On *the Rocks*, for example, contains a great deal of specific advice (from the "good" adult, a guidance teacher) on how to deal with alcoholic

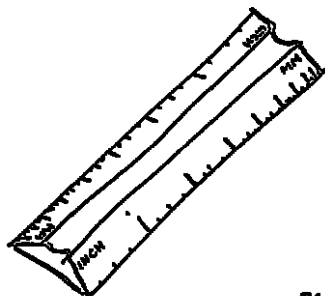
parents. Probably the students can identify with many of the problems faced by teenagers in the books. But in these stories the problems are everything. Character, plot, and setting are merely sketched in to provide a framework, a means of presentation. There is nothing to take the readers beyond what they may already know a great deal about. There is no relief, no escape, no enlightenment.

A more satisfactory book, although it still follows the formula closely, is *You Can Pick Me Up at Peggy's Cove*, by Brian Doyle (Groundwood Books, 120 pages, \$12.95 cloth and 34.95 paper). The problem this time: Ryan's father is having a change-of-life crisis and has run away from his family. As a result, Ryan has been sent to spend the summer with his aunt in Peggy's Cove. The novel attempts to deal in some depth with Ryan's reactions to his father's behaviour. It also creates a strong sense of place—we see *Peggy's Cove* amid the turmoil of full tourist season. But the plot leads inevitably to the typical violent climax. One of the "good" adults, a kindly old fisherman, has his thumb ripped off by a shark. Ryan's test of maturity comes when he must get the fisherman ashore for help. Then the fisherman's deaf-mute partner returns in the boat to take revenge on the shark, and drowns in the process. After Ryan has absorbed these astonishing events, he is ready when his father returns to form a more understanding relationship with him.

Not all fiction written for adolescents follows the same formula. *What's the Matter, Girl?* by Elizabeth Brochmann (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 121 pages, 911.75 cloth) is different. The main character is a 13-year-old girl; the jacket cover recommends it for ages 12 and up, but it can be read on an adult level. Anna waits with her family for the return of a favourite uncle from the war. Her traumatic realization of how the war has changed him marks the end of her childhood.

*Between Sea and Sky* by Enid D'Oyley (Williams-Wallace, 121 pages, \$12.95 cloth) is also different. Two children, ages 8 and 11, spend the summer with their parents visiting friends and relatives in Jamaica. For their mother, it is a hip of self-discovery back to her birthplace, and the text is rather heavy with exposition of her feelings. Her recollections of her childhood, of life in Jamaica 30 years ago, are interesting. Less interesting are the parts of the book that read like straight travelogue. There is a sub-plot involving drug smugglers and secret hide-outs. It is obviously an attempt to balance the description with some action, but it is rather awkwardly fitted in.

Neither *What's the Matter, Girl?* nor *Between Sea and Sky* would be particularly easy reading for children. Both require some effort to understand. But unlike the formula books, both offer some rewards for the effort made. Both try to take their readers deeper and wider in new directions. It would be nice for children to learn that reading has that potential. □



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## What do Alberta artists have in common? The fact that they all live in Alberta

BY NOW MOST of us have heard something about the "art boom" in Europe and North America. Art has become big business. Banks hire art consultants, large corporations spend millions of dollars on paintings and sculpture, and collectors have turned into investors. Enter Toronto lawyer Aaron Milrad. Milrad is to the Canadian art community what Alan Eagleson is to the NHL. Realizing that an ability to appreciate the visual arts depends to some degree at least on an awareness of the legalities involved. Milrad and his partner, lawyer Ella Agnew, have assembled a "comprehensive handbook" entitled *The Art World: Law, Business and Practice in Canada* (Merritt Publishing, 204 pages, \$24.95). It's not exactly the sort of book that makes great bedtime reading unless you're unnaturally fond of watered-down legalese. But for some. *The Art World* will be a handy addition to their collection.

Artists of Alberta by Suzanne Devonrhii Baker (The University of Alberta

Press, 97 Pages, \$25) is a handbook of a different kind. Included is a reproduction of one work and a short blurb on nearly 100 contemporary Alberta artists. It makes for interesting viewing. Judging from this book, the art scene in Alberta is at least as healthy as that province's economy. The artists represented have nothing in common but the fact they all live in Alberta. Figurative art would appear to be most popular among Prairie painters, but basically it seems that anything goes.

Moving further west we come to Bill Brooks' *The Colour of British Columbia* (Hounslow Press, \$14.95). During his photographic career Brooks has produced a number of well-received books such as *Canada in Colour* and *The Mill*. Brooks concentrates on natural scenes — the B.C. interior, the Rockies, and wildlife — but devotes a chapter to the urban delights of Vancouver. The pictures are in the standard-dazzling and routine-beautiful categories. This is a tourist-trade book. It

will undoubtedly appeal to fervent Westerners, who will buy it for those "Eastern bastards" to remind them of what they're missing. "In British Columbia," says the author, "you can, indeed, have your cake and eat it too." What are we waiting for?

But there are still some who manage to find beauty east of the Red River. From Richard Vrom and Peter Hopwood comes Ottawa: A Pictorial Salute (Deneau & Greenberg, 63 pages, \$12.95). This five-minute quickie, consisting of pretty pictures and obligatory text, might be ideal for a bored and lazy traveller casually passing through. Having leafed through it over a coffee, he or she could dispense with the real Ottawa: it never looks this good anyway.

The best news for armchair travellers is still Oxford University Press's Regional Portraits of Canada Series. The most recent entries are Sainte-Marie among the Hurons by Barbara McConnell and Michael Odette (612.95) and Image of Acadia by Romeo Cormier (\$14.95). The latter book is everything a photographic portrait of a people and their land should be. Cormier, born in Cap-Pele, N.B., is himself an Acadian. It shows. He knows his subject and brings to it a love, affection, and awareness so often lacking in books of this type. Cormier has gone beyond the usual collection of pretty pictures and visual clichés to record something of real life in Acadia.

Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, built in

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from North Winds Press

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1639 by Jesuit missionaries, was "the first inland European settlement north of Mexico." Situated near the mouth of the Wye River on Georgian Bay ("at the extreme end of the world," according to one of its inhabitants) the settlement was destroyed by its creators 10 years after it was founded "to save it from desecration." The site was reconstructed by the Ontario government in the 1960s. This book will probably interest armchair archeologists more than living-mom travellers. Unlike other volumes in the Oxford series, the text is better than the photographs, which are competent but don't convince. Still, it's a compelling document of the European arrival in North America.

Jumping forward a couple of centuries, Terry Boyle, with Peter 1. Stokes, has produced *Under This Roof: Family Homes of Southern Ontario* (Doubleday, 131 pages, \$19.95). The idea behind this book is a nice one: take 60 or so old houses from Southern Ontario, get an artist to do a drawing of each one, and add a short history. Unfortunately somewhere between the idea and the reality some sort of a shadow has fallen. Mostly it fell over Boyle's choice of artists. A good number of the sketches in his book are nowhere near the architectural standards of the houses he included. There's one cm page 33, a draw-

ing of an Iroquois dwelling, that is bad enough to make the reader laugh. Never do the illustrations rise above the level of the commonplace. Too bad. The homes are mostly vintage 19th-century Southern Ontario — fancy brickwork and loads of gingerbread. It's not hard to understand why Terry Boyle loves them as he obviously does.

Now for something entirely different. . . . Wood, Ink and Paper, (The Porcupine's Quill, 97.95 paper), a book of wood engravings by G. Bender and Brandis. This is actually a charming and rather lovely little book. On tint impression, it may seem incomplete—a series of illustrations without a story. But it's more than that. "The book", writes Brandis, "is not merely a container holding a number of small works of art — it is a work of art." I tend to agree. Nothing overwhelming — a miniature — but with every detail in just the right place.

And finally, from the sublime to the absolutely ridiculous, there's *Have a Look* by Peter Sobotkewich (Iconographics, 34 pages, unpriced paper). Sobotkewich is a cartoonist who has inflicted upon an unsuspecting public a series of visual statements "dedicated to the baby boom." The paper could have been better used making disposable diapers. □

not interest me in any way, and I would not write about it unless I were paid to."

Fortunately people have often paid Margaret Laurence to do occasional journalism, and *Heart of a Stranger* (Seal, \$2.25) brings together an enjoyable pot-pourri of her articles and essays. The African pieces are particularly fascinating because of the light they cast on her earlier fiction, and several others contain valuable insights into the working habits of one of our finest writers. The book demonstrates that Laurence could have been a successful journalist if need be, which is not surprising.

Meanwhile back in the wilderness Sii Marty's *Men For the Mountains* (Seal, \$2.50) covers the timberfront with an attractive blend of intelligent reflections, interesting experiences, and memorable characters. It is written with a deep respect for nature while sparkling with a marvelous inner life of its own. If you're having just one outdoorsy title this year, Marty's book is the one to have, but if you'd care to try two, Pi Berton's *The Wild Frontier* (Seal, \$2.50) is another breezily narrated collection of historical anecdotes along the lines of his recent *My Country*. It will be a hard heart indeed that can't share Berton's enthusiasm for the highways and byways of the Canadian past.

*Love Affair With a Cougar* (Seal, \$2.50) describes Lyn Hancock's latest experiment with live-in animals. It's as warm, humorous and suitable for children as her previous books. A cynic of my acquaintance claims that Hancock has moved into an abandoned church and begun work on "There's a Bat in My Belfry," but there's no truth in that rumour. More vicious two-legged beasts are afoot in *The Heroin Triangle* (PaperJacks, \$2.75) by Michael Mastantuono as told to Michel Auger. This autobiographical account of a young Frenchman's experiences in the drug trade is primarily of documentary interest. The material simply hasn't been shaped into any coherent form, and the rambling narrative is only fitfully relieved by sporadic bouts of action.

A much more enjoyable kind of documentary realism can be found in Joyce Hibbert's *The War Brides* (Signet, \$1.95), an oral history of Second World War marriages that will appeal to fans of Barry Broadfoot's similar collections. More traditional types of military titles are represented by Hal Lawrence's *A Bloody War* (Signet, \$2.50), a stirring and authentic account of the Canadian navy during the Second World War, and Joe Holliday's *Mosquito* (PaperJacks, \$5.95), the second in the large-format *Canadians at War* series. It's an over-priced but fairly interesting history of the *Mosquito*, a wooden-bodied airplane that achieved a number of combat successes, with a laudable emphasis on how the plane was designed and manufactured. As a \$1.95 or \$2.50 pocket-sized book there would be no cause for complaint, but in the larger format the low quality of both paper and pictures makes you want to swat it rather than read it. □

## on the racks

by Paul Stuewe

## Virtuoso performances between the covers, from private park to strangers' hearts

AMONG THE MANY accomplished collections of short fiction published by our smaller presses, John Metcalf's adroitly crafted and eminently readable stories have always impressed me as likely candidates for a mass-market readership. The two novellas comprising *Private Parts* (Signet, \$1.95) are choice specimens of his work. The title story's raunchy sexuality and "Girl in Gingham" 's delicate balancing between comedy and tragedy add to our appreciation of his virtuosity at the same time as they coalesce into a memorable reading experience. Both are mature, affecting, and often very funny explorations of the sublimely ridiculous aspects of being human. They should appeal to anyone who reads to enhance time rather than kill it.

Two very different and very good first novels deserve some attention from those interested in getting in on the ground floor of promising literary careers. Gail Henley's *Where the Cherries End Up* (Seal, \$2.50) takes its gritty heroine from the backwaters of rural poverty to hard-earned urban self-knowledge, and along the way there's enough drama and acute social insight to more than compensate for a certain preachiness of tone that occasionally gets out of

hand. Laurali Wright's *Neighbours* (Signet, \$2.25) takes fewer chances by sticking close to the mad-housewife-gets-madder genre, but she weaves such an intriguing atmosphere of developing craziness that one must admire her technique while hoping it will next be applied to a somewhat less predictable plot.

In the formula fiction department there's nothing amateurish about Elizabeth Woods's *The Amateur* (PaperJacks, \$2.50), a highly sexed romp through the international drug culture that seeks only to entertain and does a fine job of it. Christopher Hyde's *The Wave* (Seal, \$2.50) won't wash away your memories of a zillion other disaster epics, but some convincing technical detail gives it a knowledgeable air somewhat dissipated by its dull dialogue. As for thrillers and drillers, Bruno Skoggard's *China Hand* (Seal, \$2.50) offers a healthy portion of exotic Eastern adventures spiced by flavourful back-grounds, but the plodding prose of David Mounce's *The Luger's Eye* (PaperJacks, \$2.95) evoked hardly any response whatsoever. It did remind me of George Orwell's observation that often a reviewer can make only one honest comment: "This book does

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introduction by Kenneth Hughes*



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Adrift in a convolution of thrillers, from high finance to hashish on the high seas

**Smart Money** Doesn't Sing or Dance, by Joseph Mark Glazner (Warner Books, 190 pages. \$1.95 paper). is the first of a moss-market series that will chronicle the adventures of Billy Nevers, high-risk financial consultant. While Glazner's km. with his interest in such timely pursuits as corporate mergers, real estate, and gold futures, isn't your run-of-the-mill private eye, there still isn't much here to occupy a discerning reader.

The story has to do with art theft and bankruptcy, and is set in "Metro," an indistinct North American city not unlike Toronto or Montreal. There's one reference to the Argos, one to a river, one toe perk, and the paper money displayed on thenicely epidermal cover is U.S. green. Though Glazner is from Toronto, and the publishers claim Canadianness, this is fiction to the cold formula of multi-national anonymity. It all seems slightly garbled moot-of-focus, as if produced too quickly by a defective

computer. But if the line "She wore a kind of perfume that said node" strikes you es classy, you jest might lli the book.

The story moves well at first, with a plot straight out of Raymond Chandler by way of Ross Macdonald — concealed sisters, missing lovers, extra mothers. The style is super-cool, with the requisite short chapters, paragraphs, sentences, thoughts. It reads smoothly, if predictably, until near the end, when the pace is destroyed by 20 pages of laborious explanation. I have no doubt there is a public for non-nutritive, mass-produced junk of this sort. It's to the real thing es Fresca is to home-made spruce beer.

\* \* \*

EDWARD LLEWELLYN'S **The Douglas Convolution** (Daw Books/Signet, 190 pages. \$1.95 paper) is challenging science-fiction with an intriguing-at least to a layman — scientific underpinning. It

exhibits the virtues common to the classics of the genre: suspense, technical and historical plausibility, compelling characterization, a comprehensiveness of imagination that can poll a reader in and lock the door behind him.

Ian Douglas, mathematician and developer of a concept to explain "an interaction between energy, mass, and time whiih would require the conservation of the one at the expense of the others," disappears in Hudson's Bay in 1980. Caught in the "time-transit" (a version of time-warp) that he has predicted, he reappears in 2170 es Captain Jan Dart of the Patrol of Sector 10 of the United Settlements, the remnant of North American civilization.

The narrative structure is one of the novel's merits: it's in the form of a journal set down by Dart's helicopter pilot, the enigmatic Diane, with comment by Dart, and it enables a reader to make fair sense out of the book's elaborate and provocative theology, potentially confusing political and social hierarchies, and complicated personal roles and relations. The writing is strong, with a herd, clear, documentary objectivity, except for some rather talky theoretical patches. Details are clever and entertaining. All in all a thoroughly satisfying production in a mode I confess I usually have little patience for.

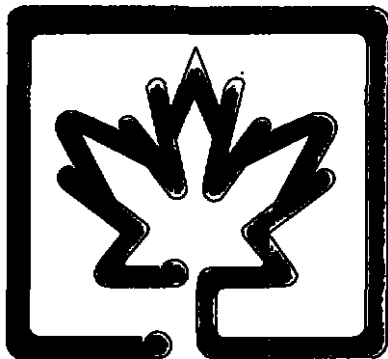
\* \* \*

**Five Hundred Keys**, by Michael Carin (Deneau & Greenberg, 240 pages, \$14.95), is a ho-hum thriller that doesn't tap into its potential. Set in 1972, in Montreal and Casablanca and on the North Atlantic, it concerns the attempts of a stereotypically disparate group of young people to gel 500 kilos ("keys") of Moroccan hashish across the sea in a Newfoundland longliner.

There are well-composed pictures of student politics around McGill, pieces of perfunctory travelogue, and some interesting technical discussions (hash production, diesel engines, celestial navigation). The book is competently written and organized, though a bit al&-moving. Only the dialogue is truly inept, and then chiefly in exchanges of explanation. (Descriptions of sex — on the order of "in a coma of searing pleasure my pelvis arched" — are mercifully infrequent.)

Whet I think is wrong with *Five Hundred Keys* is that although it displays plenty of intelligence, in plot and character construction, its fictional possibilities are underdeveloped. Carin hasn't found a tone or a style, hasn't found the ways to make what's in his mind happen on the page, without recourse to authorial gloss and declaration. The book seems naive — enthusiastic, correct, immature — somewhat like a feature-piece in an undergraduate newspaper.

There's a problem with the narrator, too, and it may reflect something of Carin's attitude towards his book. The narrator doesn't want to commit himself — to anything. In politics and personality he's a



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bit of a creep. No" I certainly don't intend to mark up the author with his own pencil, but Carin, in his obvious concern to mix in all the ingredients of the successful

adventure-novel formula, seems nowhere to have let himself go. He doesn't seem at all inspired, just reasonably clever, and the novel doesn't ever really take off. □

## the browser

by Michael Smith

# Thanks to you, Jimmy Higgins, there's a bit less stain on our name in Spain

MANUEL ALVAREZ was 11 years old when he was yanked, badly injured, from the torrent caused by Fascist bombing of a community water tank during the Spanish Civil War. When he regained consciousness he vowed to find and thank the anonymous Canadian soldier "who had rescued him, but his quest is only part of *The Tall Soldier: My 40-year Search for the Man Who Saved My Life* (Virgo Press, 230 pages, \$14.95 cloth). His book is an affecting memoir of the struggles of ordinary Spanish citizens to survive the war, the perils of post-war Fascist rule (during which his Republican father was imprisoned and died), and his own service for two years as a conscript in the Spanish navy and seven as a merchant seaman. In fact, Alvarez doesn't manage to set foot on Canadian soil until the last 30 pages, when his search intensifies and he finally hacks down his saviour, Jimmy Higgins, a 71-year-old veteran of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion who now lives in Peterborough, Ont.

The Western democracies' abandonment of Spain to the Fascists is not a very celebrated period in Canadian history, and so my exposure to the war comes mostly from such fiction writers as Ernest Hemingway, Hugh Garner, and lately (in a more emotional sense) Mordecai Richler. Alvarez acknowledges Hemingway's role in a conversation with the proprietor of a bar that "as popular among the International Brigades:

"There was this older character. A big man with a big moustache. He spoke fair Spanish and knew a lot about the bull fight. All the Americans and Canadians seemed to know him and made a big fuss about him. A lot of the time he was drunk. He would get into arguments and try to hit somebody and they would hold his arms and they would all end up hugging each other and he would order drinks for everybody in the bar and then embrace and drink with the man he had been trying to hit. . ."

"Remember his name?"  
"Of course I remember his name. . . His name was Henry. Sometimes the others called him Papa Henry."

Both during and after the war the Alvarez family was often short of food — a problem that Manuel, like other war urchins, solved by cheating and stealing. As a result, they never faced the kind of starvation that killed

Edgar Christian just a few days short of his 19th birthday. In the winter of 1926/27 Christian "as on his first trip into the Northwest Territories, accompanied by another greenhorn and John Hornby, their eccentric leader, who left their survival too much to chance. Christian, the last to die, recorded their relentless suffering in a diary discovered by RCMP investigators in 1929 and published, with an extensive introduction by its editor, George Whalley, in *Death in the Barren Ground* (Oberon Press, illustrated, 192 pages, \$15.00 cloth and \$6.95 paper). Apparently the possibility of cannibalism — a contingency that has been made much of recently — never occurred to Christian. He blames an undigestible diet of wolverine hide and crushed bones for the crippling constipation that preceded the deaths of his companions and, several weeks later, himself.

Canada's wilderness parklands have become so depleted that the Hornby expedition's plan to live off the land — depending principally on a caribou migration that failed to pass their way — is no longer acceptable to modern conservationists. The "conqueror type of camper" must give way to people who "leave no trace of their visit so that those who follow them can also experience a place of solitude away from the destructive side of man and technology," says Elliott Katz in *The Complete Guide to Backpacking in Canada* (Doubleday, illustrated, 255 pages, \$14.95 cloth and \$8.95 paper). Katz's book combines how-to information with a directory of backpacking trails in each of the provinces and the territories. A particularly attractive complement to the Alberta section is *A Nature Guide to Alberta* (Hurtig, 368 pages, \$14.95 cloth). Published in conjunction with the Provincial Museum of Alberta, the guide includes colour plates of flora and fauna, descriptions of their natural habitats, and detailed regional maps.

Devotees of wind and water will want to look at *The Complete Sailing Handbook* by Roland Denk (Collins, 344 pages, \$29.95 cloth) — a large-format book so sumptuous in its illustrations that it might be mistaken for the coffee-table variety. Part of the allure of sailing is the wealth of technical lore, and this encyclopedia ranges everywhere from basic hints to the science of

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celestial navigation. It also has a section on windsurfing — a pastime that has enjoyed considerable free publicity thanks to those sportive beer commercials — but sailors who crave still more will find it in *The Book of Windsurfing: A Guide to Freesailing Techniques*, by Mike Gadd, John Boothmyd, and Ann Durrell (Van Nostrand Reinhold, illustrated, 128 pages, \$9.95 paper) and *The Wind is Free: Windsurfing with Ken Winner*, by Ken Winner and Roger Jones (Personal Library, illustrated, 128 pages, \$8.95 paper).

Given the choice, I would rather sail than drive. I don't trust cars, mainly because I don't know enough about them, but since I live in a place where public transit is almost non-existent, I have to depend on mine. So when I had some clutch trouble a while ago, I tuned to Mitch Bronaugh's *How to Find Out What's Wrong with Your Car* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, illustrated, 120 pages, \$6.95 paper). Damned if I could even find out how a clutch works. I wasn't expecting it to be a mechanic's manual, but Bronaugh's book does promise to diagnose "all the common — and many not-so-

common — automotive problems." Instead, I owe my mechanic another hundred bucks.

And, fittingly, in last place we have Rick Bosetti, centre fielder for the Toronto Blue Jays, who once confided to a newspaper reporter his ambition to urinate in the outfield of every natural-turf ballpark in the American League (artificial turf leaves puddles). Bosetti, who is currently on the disabled list, has a batting average that hovers in the low .200s — which means, though he practises the basket catch, that he's no Willie Mays. Nevertheless, he is the co-author with Phil Stone of *Rick Bosetti's Baseball Book* (Personal Library, illustrated, 96 pages, \$5.95 paper), which seems primarily aimed at the juvenile market, because it's so rudimentary. There are lots of photos of Bosetti, and youthful readers may find the autobiographical chapter interesting, but beyond a few basics — the right stance to bunt, how to handle a grounder, etc. — they won't find much to advance their knowledge of the game. Perhaps Bosetti himself still has a lot to learn. □

## interview

by Aron Senkpiel

## Poet George McWhirter's odyssey leads inevitably back to Lotusland's fertile shores

IN HIS POEMS and short stories, George McWhirter has explored a wide range of subjects — from the myths of Greece to his own mythical land of Sarnia. Born in Ulster, he left Ireland in 1964. After two years in Spain he moved to Canada, where he began his writing career. His first collection, *Catalan Poems* (1971) won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize. It was followed by a book of short stories, *Bodyworks* (1974), and poetry about Belfast, *Queen of the Sea* (1976), and Mexico. *Twenty-Five* (1978). A new collection, *The Island Man*, is to be published by Oberon Press this fall. McWhirter teaches creative writing at the University of British Columbia. Aron Senkpiel talked to him in Vancouver about his travels and his art:

**Books in Canada:** In the preface to *Catalan Poems* you say that Spain became the image of your poems. What in particular did you find so imaginatively captivating?

**McWhirter:** Colour woke me up. I think I had been snoozing back then in Ireland. Then in Spain the light was turned on — literally. People were enlarged by the sun. It was like changing out of black and white movies and moving into colour without any definition being lost, with every complexion and shade being seen. Also, people were more forthright emotionally — if not politi-

cally — in what they said. They showed what they felt — nothing was very much veiled there. The other thing that fascinated me, particularly in Barcelona, was the layers of history, from the Roman times, supporting the present. There was a sense of that in the people, but also a sense of irreverence, of healthy disrespect. There wasn't the pious pride of place that you find in the Parisians, but a rough and ready sense of appreciation.

**BiC:** By immersing yourself in a new culture did you discover a clearer notion of who, what, you are?

**McWhirter:** Living in a new country is like jumping into water — a baptism, a waking-up. But I didn't go in and find myself. I didn't write in Spain; I wasn't a poet, but a teacher. Later, when I did write about Spain, the voice was a surprise — it was more sensual than I could have believed. I suppose that I was descending from cloudy abstraction into my mortality or something; but that mortality was richer than the cloudiness and windiness of my teens and upward. I suppose a sense of rich mortality made me measure everything and it weighted the voice accordingly. My responses are, I suppose, attempts to create a sensory identity. Knowing things by their taste and texture. Knowing yourself by your own taste in your mouth.



George McWhirter

**BiC:** *What do you look for when you write: a person. a place. an arrangement of words?*

**McWhirter:** People and things are what I make poems of, and the words arrange themselves around these.. The most likely start is a specific thing. For example., the apple trees were blooming not long ago. There's a big one in the neighbour's yard. a Gravenstein. Then down the lane a friend had a treehouse nailed into one for his daughters. I put these two things together. It seemed that the father had gone daffy indulging his daughters — the world going irresponsible and soft. This connected with other things, finally with the cyclists around here who never seem to carry lights and with the geese honking their way up North in the night sky. Finally, the poem says:

*Be sober please. i-he apple tree, like a green brain seized with the first hints of blossom, sparks around the stellar's joy, and cannot shut up about the father who nails a house into the crook of its branches.*

*The stern ones are giving in. Freckles of vine maple float over the cliff face*

*of shadows in the wood — the conifers drop like long stripes on a blind lowered to the ground.*

*The blunt fingers and thumbs of stone clasp it.*

*If such grey gravity lets go.*

*Again and again the geese are honking up the hill*

*of the world. Like the students cycling, they carry no lights in the dark.*

*Who will step out to fine them fifty dollars? Even the glacial angels swerve out of their path*

*and go down in a last appeal of snow.*

People and things. The poems polish them up.

**BiC:** *Apart from your collection of short*

*stories, Bodyworks, you seem to have concentrated on verse. Why?*

**McWhirter:** Recently the concentration has swung back to prose, short stories. I think the tendency towards poetry at the beginning was because of my entanglement in language. Poems were as much as I could handle. Given my attraction to the richness of language, I couldn't get very far — like a fly hying to walk through honey. Also, impatience interfered. I could handle short, dramatic episodes, ending in equally dramatic gestures, but I hadn't the endurance or patience to delay or defray these delights. Love of good lines didn't allow me much latitude. When I came to prose, I overloaded it a lot.

**BiC:** *What major differences do you see between verse and prose?*

**McWhirter:** Prose isn't as highly strung as verse; it's paced slower because it has to go farther. You walk in paragraphs, not stanzas. With a novel, it's a matter of doing it in stages — like a flight hum Vancouver to Halifax with changes at Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal. The novelist will accommodate the stops, but the poet wants to cover the country in a flash. This isn't to say that he doesn't toil as much as the novelist, just that it's outside the Page and doesn't show as much. But there has been a great tendency of late in poetry for poets to write about the labour of writing a poem. Too often the only subject for the poem is the poem and its process. Same with novels. Novelists and poets can be great indulgers.

**BiC:** *While almost all your writing has been about places other than Canada. you do almost all of your writing here. Why?*

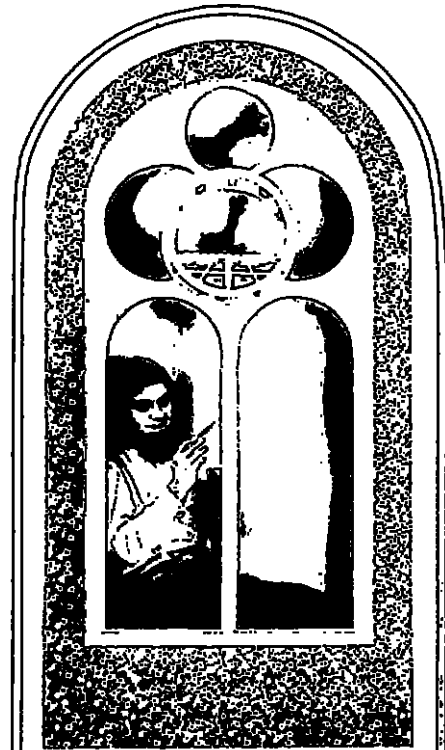
**McWhirter:** *Fitt* of all. thii place encourages writers from all kinds of backgrounds. There are facilities like the writing department I teach at, writers' groups, cafes, and so forth where you can get serious attention. There's sufficient diversity for the appreciation of diversity, and there's enough good writing to set high standards. But, Personally, Canada coincided with a time in my life when I was ready to open up into words and I had the will to work. And now I live in a place as rich in natural growth as Ireland, more so. It was like a ma&al match for the tangling and growing of language inside me. What a rich bed to dream on. . . .

**BiC:** *The tide of your next book, The Island Man, suggests that you've again focused on a particular person and place. Could you elaborate?*

**McWhirter:** It's set on Vancouver Island and takes the *Odysseus* thing as a Dirty Thirties dilemma, that's to say his 10-year absence: a going away and coming back. The first poem, although about a Spanish explorer, highlights this: he came, he saw, and he left the vegetable wonderland. I mean British Columbia — I call it Lotusland. Then in the last poem, the main character returns and lines up with the conifers for his benediction of rain.

**BiC:** *With The Island Man you've in a sense arrived here poetically. Are you going to settle down or move on?*

**McWhirter:** Actually, I've been writing



Alex Wyse working on "There's an elephant in my window."

## Pluralities 1980

by Philip Ply, Willard Holmes, Allan MacKay, Chantal Pontbriand  
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about B.C. for a time. I didn't want to write about it until I had the feel of the corner that I lived in. I didn't want to take the place over: I wanted it to take me over. I'm settled here. The children wouldn't think of moving, neither would I. A year's trip maybe, but my work is ken, my wife's too. Our hopes ate here. □

## Letters to the Editor

### PURDY'S MOOSE

Sir:

I'll always remember George Bowering's January, 1979, article in *Books in Canada*, "English. Our English." In fact, I often find use for it in the first-year English course on campus. It is especially good for illustrating the folly of the misplaced modifier (MM). That portion of the grammar lesson is always lk most fun (which doesn't say much, I guess, but I do find it so). Generally I try to use the MMs I can collect from the students' most recent papers: this has the effect of shaming and laughing them out of the habit. Unfortunately, if I do so too early in the semester, I create a false impression of myself. (They find me arrogant, especially if they catch me displacing my modifiers). Then they are on the defensive, and the effect is lost (though some of them do get the point). It is easier, however, if I can use someone else's work. It's even fun for students if they can find MMs in professional writing.

Thus, I thank you for printing Al Purdy's misplaced modifiers (June-July), specifically: "After reading eight times in three days to audiences near Sudbury, Ont., a large moose appeared at the window whenever I spoke."

My daughter has a favourite book, called *Morris Goes to School*. Poor Morris, the moose, is still trying to read the words "Boys" and "Girls," so that he can figure out which washroom to use. And he still can't tell the difference between "sea" and "C", or "I" and "eye", or "B" and "bee". So I find it tough to believe that he could read eight times in three days — to such a sophisticated audience. et that! Furthermore, since Morris has trouble concentrating on what the teacher has to say, and is ecstatic when she finally lets him and the kids out to play, I am really curious to know how after so much reading poor Morris would end up watching Al Purdy through a window. A few of us teachers could use some of Purdy's practical advice on how to command such attention. Perhaps Purdy was the real teacher in disguise. It sounds to me like excellent material for a sequel to *Morris Goes to School*, entitled, *Morris Watches the Poet Pk*.

This is not to mention Purdy's anger at the school kids who wore "a blue denim uniform the way they did all the days of my remaining life." A surreal notion of lime and selfhood, I would say. What's really tough to imagine, though, is a "couple of Eskimo women who were feeding their babies all the lime, just to hear the sound of an English voice."

I'm still trying to believe that Purdy's MMs, etc., are an attention-getting con, but I can't figure out why. His gems, however, are priceless in the classroom.

Of course, this is not the only use we have for your magazine. Faculty and students on this campus are regular readers. We enjoy your reviews, browsers, impressions, interviews, and tidbits. Thank you for your contributions to the teaching devices of the nation!

Mary Seiferling  
University of Regina

Sk

I notice in the June-July issue that Al Purdy makes this claim: "After reading eight times in three days to audiences near Sudbury, Ont., a large moose appeared at the window whenever I spoke."

I think I have an idea why that happened. If this moose was smart enough to give poetry readings outside town, presumably in the Ontario woods, he was probably thinking that he might move into the Canada Council reading circuit, where poets, mooses or Purdies, are allowed to read indoors, and he was peeking inside to see how it is done.

I hope that he succeeds, and if he does, I hope that he passes on some advice to a bear I know. He has written a cycle of love poems about a bad-tasting but energetic lady who seduced him in the bushes a few summers ago.

E. B. Greengrass  
Vancouver

Sir:

Could you please give me the name and address of the moose mentioned in Al Purdy's article in the June-July issue. I should like to arrange a cross-Canada speaking tour for him/her. Thank you.

E. A. Walker  
Toronto

*Editor's note:* Actually, the moose was a syntactical cariboo in disguise and is not available for repeat performances. We hope.

### BRANDEN'S PORPOISE

Sir:

Most of the judges of your Award for First Novels (April) were kind to my novel, *Mrs. Job*, but I've been pondering for some time Sandra Martin's remark that "too often . . . Branden settled for being merely amusing."

What's so mere about being amusing? Most writers, especially Canadians, seem to find it difficult if not impossible. I am always on lk watch for something funny to read, and believe me it's uphill work. On the Canadian literary scene, there's a positive dearth of hilarity; for example, the Stephen Leacock award has just been given to lk same writer for the third time, suggesting either a grave shortage of amusing writers or something severely screwed up in the awards system.

Nothing, I suspect, makes Canadian critical opinion froth at the mouth so much as a non-lugubrious approach to literature. *Mrs. Job* did get a few favourable reviews (yours among them, Gad bless you), but in general the reaction was severe and disapproving. "A maddening book," said *Chatelaine*. "Humour tiresomely forced. . . ." They didn't even bother to mention that it was a Canadian book, though a note at the end suggested grudgingly that my writing showed some rudimentary signs of talent by which (if I controlled my deplorable penchant for comedy) I might eventually become, in Daisy Ashford's

terms, less mere. The *Montreal Gazette* nearly burst its spleen with outrage at my presumption. The critical code seems to be, roughly, that if it's gloomy and ponderous, it's gotta be good. "This book depresses me hideously; ergo, it mwl k a masterpiece."

Outside my native land, they are more willing to forgive. "A truly funny first novel," said the *Los Angeles Times*. "A rich comic talent, a good ear for dialogue, a sharp and flawless sense of detail. . . ." "A novel of social commentary that is original and funny," says the *Lewiston, Maine, Sun*. "A witty but essentially serious novel set in Canada," says the *Irish Press*. "Riotously funny and moving," says the *American Publishers' Weekly*.

Hardly mere at all! I recalled the cogitations of Garp, on receipt of a hostile letter from a reader: "Why did people insist that if you were 'comic' you couldn't also be 'serious'? Garp felt most people confused being profound with being sober, being earnest with being deep. Apparently, if you sounded serious, you were."

Okay, I get the message. I'm now working on a REALLY GOOD novel. It will be solemn, portentous, pretentious, depressing, lugubrious, and po-faced. In short, a Canadian masterpiece. Publishers wishing to bid on it please fall in line at the right. Plot outline on request. Only serious publishers need apply, cheque-book in hand.

Victoria Branden  
Waterdown, Ont.

### THOMPSON'S GAZELLE

Sir:

One of the things I love about questionnaires is the way they invoke — nay, demand — outrageous generalizations. And the day that the sociological questionnaire (my response is quoted in "Craft Tidbits," (June-July) arrived, I was in a particularly foul mood. I had just been shafted by the amateurism of one publisher — now deservedly defunct — and the incompetence of a CBC television producer. Besides, I believe in telling sociologists any damn fool thing that happens to pop into my head.

But for the sake of accuracy perhaps I ought to note that not all publishers are incompetent. Some few are professional and hard-working. I have no complaints at all about my present publisher. And the CBC is not entirely staffed by dolts. The radio side, indeed, has a few very good people to carry on the traditions of excellence established by Robert Weaver and Max Ferguson.

But I remain very pessimistic about the general situation in lk arts. There is plenty of creative talent in Canada, but there is a dearth of arts executives — entrepreneurs — to turn that talent into a flourishing culture.

Kent Thompson  
Toronto

### FRASER'S HEFFALUMP

Sir:

First we had all lk Hollywood vavavoom girls saying that they wanted to be recognized as serious actresses, and now we get Sylvia Fraser (*Letter*, May) complaining that reviewer I. M. Owen did not respect the "literary merits" of her novel.

Why should a person who is so successful at escapist porno-costume stuff want to go for "art"? There is nothing wrong with trash fiction, as long as its author does not confuse it with literature.

While I am here, maybe I should answer the question asked near the end of Ms. Fraser's funny letter. Sk asked, of Owen's remarks about a sex



scene in her book: "How does Owen's act of disambigment differ from that of the book-banners who snip out sexual scenes to be railed against, sneered at and drooled over?"

Here is the answer: the difference is that the book-banners complain that the sexual scenes are there. Owen (correctly) criticized the ludicrous writing in the sexual scene in question.

Ed Prato  
Vancouver

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## CanWit No. 55

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**PERCEPTIVE READERS** may have noticed that we have adopted a motto for *Books in Canada* (see page three) that we consider appropriate to our purpose and philosophy. Mottos are yet another of those fine old traditions that seem to have fallen into decline, although the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (magisterially), the U.S. postal service (damply), and the RCMP (maladroitly) have all done their bit to keep the tradition alive. But what about *Maclean's* magazine, say, or *Canada Post* or the CBC or *Macmillan of Canada*? Readers are invited to suggest or invent appropriate mottoes for Canadian publications or institutions that don't already have one, or alternatives for those that do. The winner will receive \$25. Address: CanWit No. 55, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. The deadline is Oct. 1.

### RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 53

OUR REQUEST FOR nouns or verbs coined from Canadian surnames brought a host of entries that should enrich our vocabulary. The winner is David J. Paul of Lucan, Ont., who missed a chance to endow Lucan's Donnelly's with lexicographical immortality but receives \$25 for these cogent neologisms based on familiar cognomens:

**bellard v.** To make the best of a bad situation (i.e., to be imprisoned yet get to eat your steak).

**belley n.** A hard-working, well-planned writer who carefully researches his subject, puts it on the assembly line, wheels it off, markets it in hotels, airports, and banking centres while being wry careful not to overload the market; the writer as businessman.

**corner v.** To switch allegiances, particularly to cross the floor of the House of Commons in search of ministerial plum.

**layton n.** Any writer of wit and sensitivity who, in order to be known as a prolific artist, writes reams of talk bombastic and scatological; hence, my writer who hides his quality with his quantity.

**macdonald n.** A very important person who disappears for a while to escape stress, tension, or attention; specifically, anyone who goes on an extended bender and wakes up sober in Quebec.

**msaker v.** To become wildly excited over a sports event; said of commentators who punctuate their play-by-play with such phrases as "Gee whiz," "By golly" or "Golly gee whiz."

■■■■■ ■ An ■■■■ critic who is ■■■■ brilliant

and cynical; a Canadian Voltairer.

**second n.** A person whose true role in history has been distorted to ensure the sweets of business success.

**sinclair n.** 1. The figure of an eccentric, opinionated millionaire. 2. A tactless money question.

### Honourable mentions:

**atwoodsman n.** An urban survivor.

**impearsonate v.** To lead the country.

**levesquetate v.** To answer one question by raising another.

**parrot v.** To repeat mindlessly militant slogans.  
— Janet and Barry Baldwin, Calgary

**taylor v.** To plan and execute a daring escape.

**crossbie v.** A plain truth that smarts.  
— Mary Lile Benham, Winnipeg  
\* \* \*

**chretienunciation II.** Something spoken out of the side of one's mouth.

— Madeleine Bailey, Edmonton  
\* \* \*

**ballardize v.** To let a sports team go to the dogs.

— R. D. Leachman, Fredericton  
\* \* \*

**lougheedocracy n.** A monolithic government.

— W. Ritchie Benedict, Calgary  
\* \* \*

**floradate v.** To cultivate a winning smile.

— Ian C. Johnson, Toronto

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## The editors recommend

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THE FOLLOWING Canadian books were reviewed in the previous issue of *Books in Canada*. Our recommendations don't necessarily reflect the reviews:

### FICTION

**Dragon Lady**, by Silver Donald Cameron, McClelland & Stewart. A headline-timely first novel by an accomplished non-fiction writer. Cameron admits it meant this as a "commercial" book, but it admirably transcends the formulas of more ordinary thrillers.

**Honour Your Parker**, by Helen Levi, Queenston House. Third in a trilogy about the manners of people in Plum Bluff, Men. Levi's satire is not quite cruel enough, perhaps, but she has a cool wit and a sharp eye for the peculiar.

### NON-FICTION

**Someone With Me**, by William Kurelek, McClelland & Stewart. Kurelek's strongest message was through his paintings, but his autobiography supplies some terrifying background to his often tortured vision. The "someone" of the title is God.

### POETRY

**In the Country of the Antipodes**, by Ludwig Zeller, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions. Collages and poetry written originally in Spanish between 1964 and 1979 by one of the masters of contemporary surrealism. Zeller's Chilean origins (he now lives in ■■■■) ■■■■ of his ■■■■

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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:

**Add Rain:** The Silent Crisis, by Phil Weller and the Waterloo Public Interest Research Group, Between The Lines.  
**Agriculture and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario until 1870,** by John McCallum, U of T Press.  
**The All Day How to Get Things Cheap in Toronto,** by Patrick Conlon, Greedy de Pencier.  
**Amazing Facts from the Notebook of Harold Greenhouse,** by Miss Williams and Roy Condy, Scholastic-TAB.  
**Answers to Prayer,** by Agnes Pierce, Lancelot Press.  
**Behaim's Apocalyptic Prophecies,** by Calvin G. Seefeld, Wedge Publishing.  
**Be Life Blat:** With Pearls, by Helen Weinreich, Anansi.  
**Bella Coola,** by Cliff Kogas, Douglas & McIntyre.  
**The Best of The Enigma Page,** by Stan Fisher, Best Sellers.  
**Declare the Fight,** by Gordon Korman, Scholastic-TAB.  
**The Canada Colouring Book,** by John Robert Colombo and Emma Hesse, Hounslow.  
**Canada's Flying Heritage,** by Frank H. Ellis, U of T Press. & WhiteSide.

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**The Canadian Career of the Fourth Earl of Minto,** by Cannon Miller, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.  
**Canadian Landscapes Address Book,** Art Gallery of Ontario/Van Nostrand Reinhold.  
**Canadian Nuclear Policies,** edited by G. Bruce Doern and Robert W. Morrison.  
**The Canadian Odyssey,** by Peter D. Chimos, M & S.  
**The Canadian Patient's Book of Rights,** by Lorne Elkin Rozovsky, Doubleday.  
**Catch as Catch Can,** by Don Flick, Lancelot Press.  
**Chiropractors: Do They Help?** by Merriljoy Keiner et al, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.  
**Citizen Politicians — Canada,** by Allan Kornberg et al, Carolina Academic Press.  
**Civil Servants and Public Policy,** by Robert J. McLaren, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.  
**Collected Archaeological Papers,** edited by David Skene Melvin, Historical Planning and Research Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation.  
**Collected Poems of Raymond Souster, Volume 1: 1940-55,** Oberon Press.  
**The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume 12: Marginalia I,** edited by George Whalley, Princeton University Press.  
**The Correspondence of Erasmus, Volume V,** translated by R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson, U of T Press.  
**Cost Fun Tuttle,** by Lorenzo Da Ponte, translated by Marie-Therese Papin, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.  
**Craft of the Dyer,** by Karen Leigh Casselman, U of T Press.  
**Curriculum Planning for the Classroom,** by Albert S. Dukacz and Frank Quinlan, OISE.  
**Customs and Traditions of the Canadian Armed Forces,** by E. C. Russell, Denon & Greenberg.  
**Dangerous Crossings,** by David Donnell, Black Moss Press.  
**Defence to Authority: The Case of Canada,** by Edgar Z. Friedenberg, M. E. Sharpe (Random House).  
**Divorce Mediation,** by Howard H. Irving, Personal Liberator.  
**Does She Know She's There?** by Nichola Schaefer, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.  
**The Dynamics of the Technological Leadership of the World,** edited by Zavis P. Zeman and David Hoffman, The Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
**Elbow Room,** edited by Linda Field and Mary Beth Kuechel, Pulp Press.  
**The Elements,** by Tom Marshall, Oberon.  
**End of Innocence,** by Abram Taylor, Harlequin.  
**Entropia,** by Tyler Trafford, Circle Publications.  
**The European Emblem,** edited by Peter M. Daly, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.  
**A Fist and the Letter,** translated and edited by Roger Prentice and John M. Kirk, Pulp Press.  
**From Dog Steds to Jet Planes,** by Annette Westley, Initiative Publishing.  
**From Fjord to Frontier,** by Gulbrand Loken, M & S.  
**From Prairie Kitchens,** compiled by Emmie Oddie, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
**From Russia With Luggage,** by Bella Bytenky, Annick Press.  
**Gainfully Employed in Limbo,** by Crad Kilodney, Chamel House.  
**The Gallery School 1930-1980: A Celebration,** Shirley Yanover, Art Gallery of Ontario.  
**Goodbye Summer,** by Veronica Ross, Oberon.  
**Government Intervention in the Canadian Nuclear Industry,** by G. Bruce Doern, Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
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**Have a Look, A Picture Book for Our Age,** by Peter Sobokievich, Iconographics.  
**Health Status in Canada,** by Russell Wilkins, Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
**He Moved,** by Brian Dedora, Underwhich Editions.  
**The Hope Slide,** edited by Art Downs, Heritage House Publishing.  
**Horses and Ponies,** by Joanna Spector, Totem.  
**How to Become a Lawyer in Canada,** by Duncan C. Thompson, Acorn Books.  
**How to Save the World,** by Robert Allen, Prentice-Hall.  
**The Imaginary Canadian,** by Tony Wilken, Pulp Press.  
**In Search of Living Things,** by Gail Fox, Oberon.  
**In This House There Are No Lizards,** by Ann York, Sono Nis Press.  
**Inalienable Rice: A Chinese and Japanese Canadian Anthology,** Pown Street Revue and The Chinese Canadian Writers Workshop.  
**Incredible Rogers Pass,** edited by Art Downs, Heritage House Publishing.  
**Inside Out,** by Archie Gmbak, Back Door Press.  
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**Magnificent Yellowhead Highway, Volumes I, II, & III,** Heritage House Publishing.  
**Majestic Jaguar,** edited by Art Downs, Heritage House Publishing.  
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**Northern Ontario Fur Trade Archaeology,** edited by C. S. Reid, Historical Planning and Research Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation.  
**Nothing is Lost,** by Susan Zimmerman, Califa Press.  
**The Old Stones of Kingston: Its Buildings Before 1867,** by Margaret Angus, U of T Press.  
**An Olive Branch on the Family Tree,** by Baba Abu-Laban, M & S.  
**Ontario Hydro Ontario Heritage,** by Mark Fram, Historical Planning and Research Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation.  
**Partition: The Price of Quebec's Independence,** by William F. Shaw and Lionel Albert, Thorndill Publishing.  
**A Part of One's Own,** by Alexander McGoins, The Purple Wednesday Society.  
**The Penguin Book of Canadian Short Stories,** edited by Wayne Grady, Penguin.  
**Paul-Marie Lapointe, Etudes Françaises,** Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.  
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**Pioneer of Visions: The Reminiscences of T. A. Patrick, M.D.,** by C. J. Houston and C. Stuart Houston, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
**The Pocket Glade Dictionary,** by Thomas A. Clark, Underwhich Editions.  
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**Villon, testateur, Etudes Françaises, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal**  
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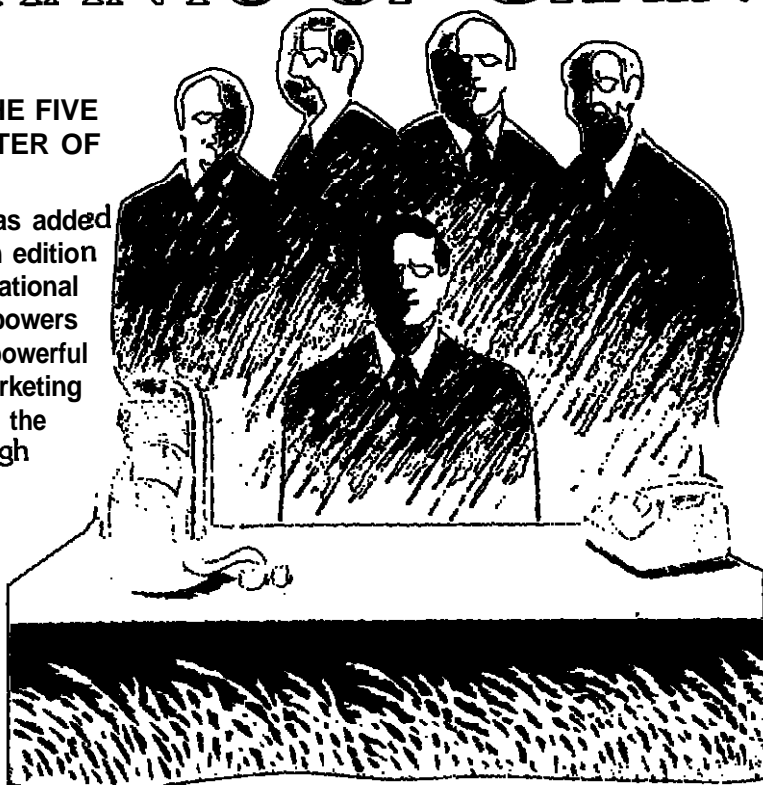
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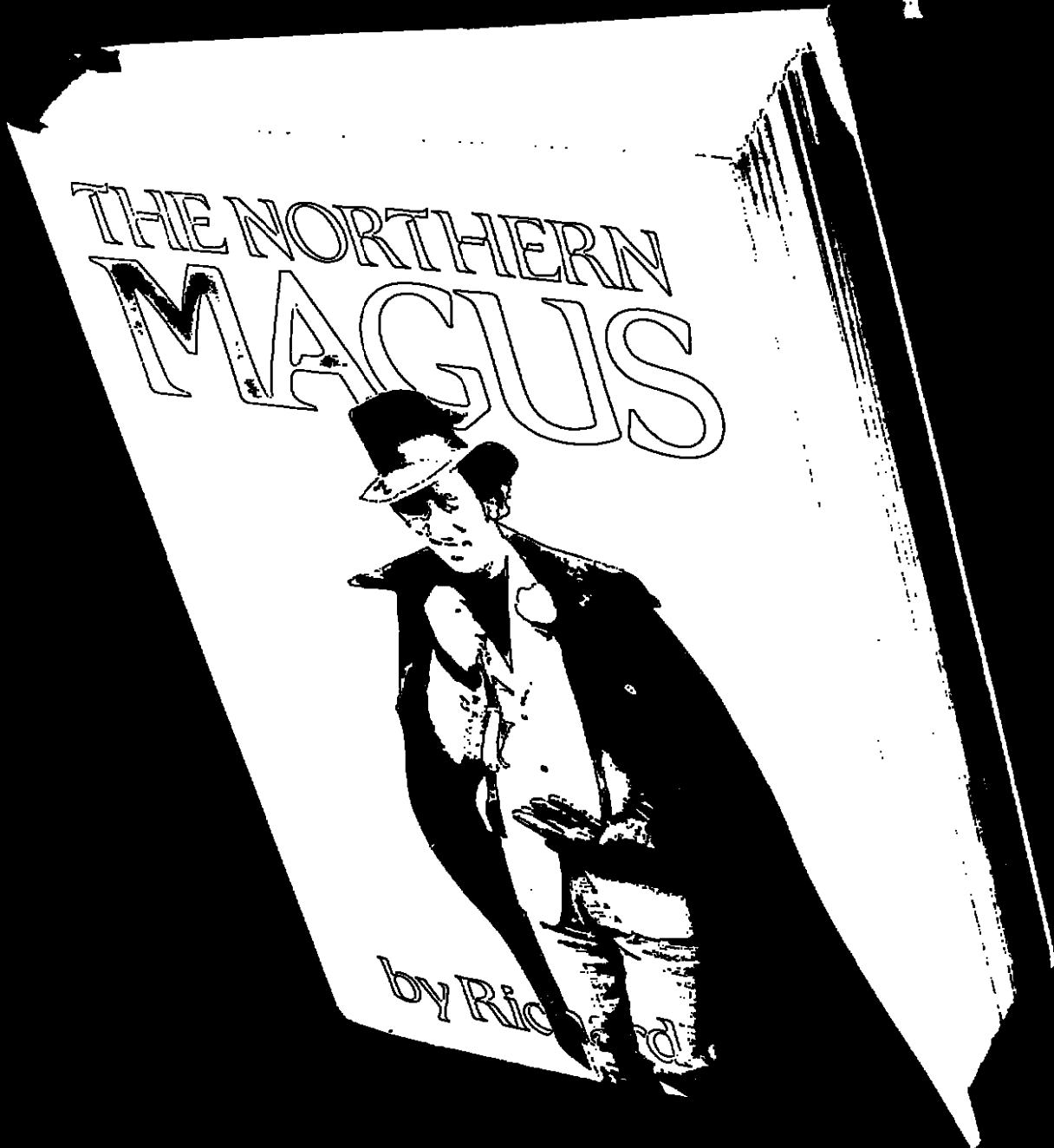
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