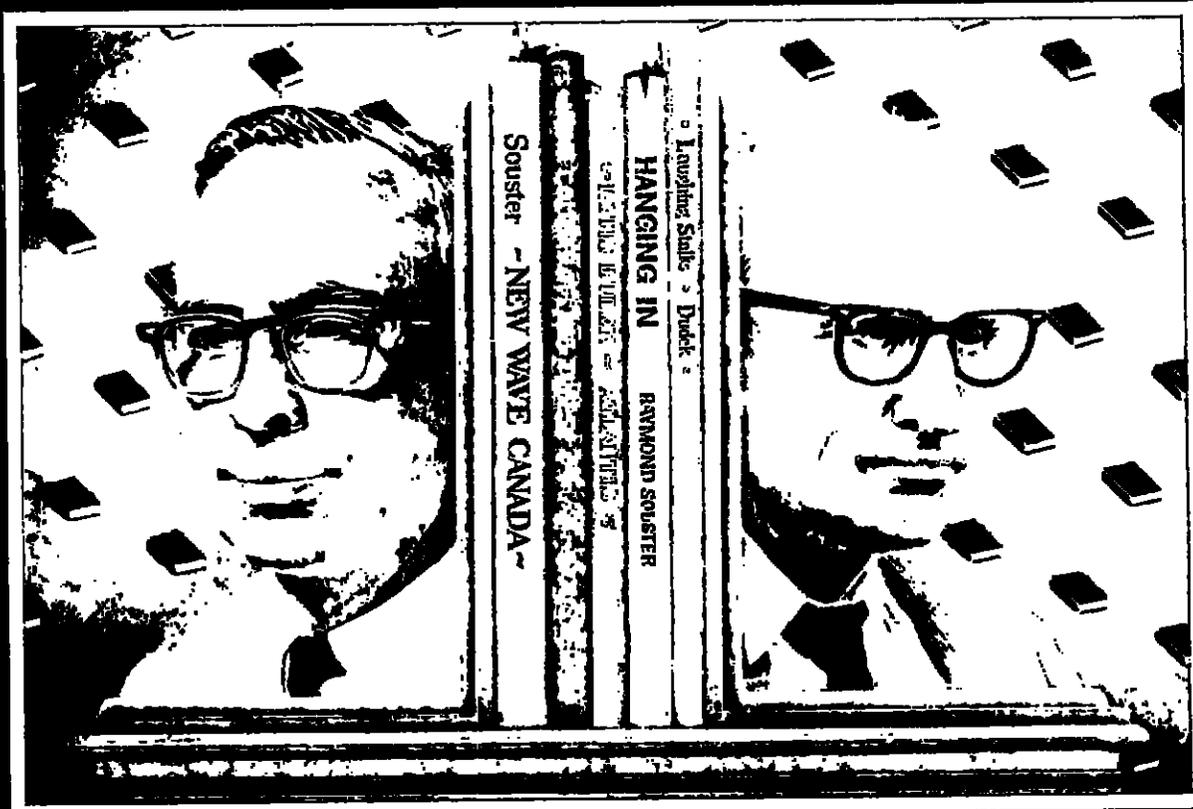


# BOOKS IN CANADA

## MAKING CONTACT: SOUSTER AND DUDEK



To see ourselves: How CanLit is viewed abroad  
Jack Hodgins on the short stories of Edna Alford  
Helen Weinzweig on her life and work  
Plus reviews of new books by Keith Maillard,  
Ian McEwan, Peter Gzowski, and Donald Jack

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BOOKS IN CANADA

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# TO SEE OURSELVES

An international poll finds that our greatest domestic problem, the conflict between Quebec and English Canada, may be our greatest literary asset

By **BARBARA WADE**

Research by **LINDA M. LEITCH**

AT HOME, sounds of applause, praise, and backslapping greatest publishers' lists last fall — especially the season's crop of Canadian fiction — but how is Canadian writing faring abroad? Lest we grow deaf from all the cheering, *Books in Canada* decided to undertake a worldwide survey to determine some major foreign writers' and critics' awareness and opinions of Canadian literature and its growing presence on the international stage. The results, perhaps predictably, were not entirely enthusiastic. A handful of respondents replied to our first mailing of dozens of questionnaires, mostly to report that they didn't feel well enough acquainted with CanLit to venture any comments. Only two — the British critic and translator James Brockway, who lives in the Netherlands, and anthologist Karla El-Hassan of Friedrich-Schiller University in East Germany — wrote detailed replies. These were supplemented by a series of interviews conducted by Linda M. Leitch during the Writer and Human Rights Conference in Toronto last fall.

Respondents ranged from those poor souls who have never troubled their minds over Canadian literature to such evangelists as Dr. El-Hassan, who is "determined to assist the recognition and spread of Canadian literature in the G.D.R." One trend, however, may be noted: writers from developing or strife-torn countries (such as Palestinian Fawaz Turki) tend to be interested in Canadian writing only insofar as it relates to their own situation or has sufficient political drama to sustain their interest. (Turki, oddly enough, relates Mordecai Richler's writing of the Jewish experience to that of the Palestinian.) Thus our greatest domestic problem — the conflict between English and French, between Quebec and the rest of Canada — has become, internationally, our greatest literary asset. Hans Magnus Enzensberg of West Germany believes that "the only major thing about Canada that intellectually interests people is the Quebec thing." Vassilis Vassilikos of Greece agrees: "I think that the French have contributed a lot to an image of Canadian independence through their literature."

Our English-language literature is generally considered to be "North American" or "Anglo-Saxon." It may be a problem of distribution, as is frequently mentioned, or of promotion, or of a simple lack of history that would give Canadian literature enough of a past to be considered as a body of work. But it has also meant that those writers who do stand out (has Margaret Atwood got a team of publicity agents in every country?) are evaluated for the merits of their individual style rather than for whether or not they conform to a pre-existing notion of what Canadian literature should be.

Some will no doubt use the results of this survey as more lining for their hairshirts, more evidence that CanLit is hopelessly outranked and cruelly ignored in an international context. To this we can only reply that our initial reaction to

the number of references to Yugoslavian writers was that we didn't know Yugoslavia *had* any writers. Everyone is guilty, to a degree, of ignorance about other countries' literatures. But we are, on the whole, doing very well, thank you.

**Vassilis Vassilikos (Greece):** It is the same thing that happens



with Italian literature: we know Italian movies better than we know the literature, and we know much more about Canadian movies than we know about Canadian literature — especially the French, the Québécois cinema. Also, it tends to be that Canadian writers are part of the vast community of English writers,

like, let's say, the British. We don't distinguish British writers from American. In Greece we say "Anglo-Saxon writer." Leonard Cohen is famous, not only in Greece, but every place. His poems have been translated into Greek. But I didn't know he was a Canadian. Mordecai Richler — I know the name, but I didn't know he was a Canadian.

I think that the French Canadians have contributed a lot to an image of Canadian independence through their literature. From French literature I have a clear idea of Canada. Not from Anglo-Saxon literature.

**Josef Brodsky (U.S.S.R.):** I read a lot of Malcolm Lowry back when I was in Russia. He was known as a Canadian. I read *Under the Volcano* in Polish.

**Susan Sontag (U.S.):** Americans and Western Europeans are



woefully ignorant of Canadian literature, there is no denying that. I don't know why this should be so. I mean, speaking as an American who reads a lot, I can't explain it, I really can't explain why. I read very obscure writers from very obscure countries. I read writers from Yugoslavia, or countries like that, which are

not world-stature countries. And here is this huge nation right next to mine, we share the same language, and it's perfectly true, I know nothing about Canadian literature. I have read some Canadian books, so in a sense I'm ahead of most Americans. I have read Margaret Atwood, I've read Mordecai Richler, I've read one novel by Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers*. And Marie-Claire Blais, also, I read; she became well

PHOTOGRAPH BY JILL KREMENTZ

known in the States because of Edmund Wilson's essay about her many, many years ago. And, of course, I am a great admirer of Northrop Frye. I would say that those are the only Canadian writers I can think of who I've read.

I think the answer is that Canadian writers should try to publish more in American magazines. I mean, I think that we're not likely to see Canadian magazines. Some of the foreign writers I discovered — let's say a Yugoslav writer or a Polish writer or a Chilean writer — it's because I read the writer first in an American magazine in translation. So there's no reason why I shouldn't also read a Canadian. It occurs to me that precisely because we share the same language and the same continent there may be a feeling that it's wrong for Canadian writers to publish in American magazines as opposed to Canadian magazines, because they should be supporting the magazines published in their own country. I understand that reasoning, but the effective result of it is that since the American literary public doesn't read Canadian magazines, they simply don't know the names of the Canadian writers. I don't want to use such vulgar notions as "publicity." It's simply availability, accessibility.

**Wole Soyinka (Nigeria):** Margaret Laurence, of course, is well-known because she has interested herself in Africa, but she is not known to the average person. Only in university and schools under the context of Commonwealth literature, which is being studied as a course at a number of universities.

**Alan Sillitoe (U.K.):** Apart from Margaret Laurence and Margaret Atwood and Mordecai Richler, I haven't read many Canadian writers, I'm sorry to say. England's a very insular, isolated place. There's not a large awareness of anything that's written outside that island, I'm afraid. It's a rather tough situation.

**Luis Valenzuela (Argentina):** I gave a lecture on Margaret Atwood when I was in Argentina, so I've read quite a lot, but not the latest books. I must confess one horrible thing: now that I'm living in the States I avoid as much as possible reading in English. But I have read Atwood, Marie-Claire Blais, Margaret Laurence, and a few other Canadian writers. I can't say that I was interested in Canadian literature *per se*, but some books that interested me came into my hands. Michael Ondaatje I like very much. *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* — I love that book. I think that there are a great many things in common between Canadian literature and Argentine literature. Our literature has a much larger tradition. We are a very literary people. But our countries are much alike. So perhaps the search for identity for a country that's been colonized . . . there should be a connection.

**Hans Magnus Enzensberger (West Germany):** I'm not saying anything new if I speak of the abysmal ignorance of Europeans about Canada, and this is especially true in the field of literature. I am a sort of internationally-minded person, and indeed have put in some work in publishing and so on. I know Yugoslav literature, I know Italian literature, I know all sorts of literature, but I know practically no Canadian literature. There's always a sort of token publishing going on, which is subsidized by the respective governments. There's an anthology of all renowned Canadian writers, but it's symbolical publishing, it's vanity publishing almost. The public at large

does not know. There is one name that is known: Margaret Atwood. She has a book currently in Germany that is really being read, being sold, being talked about. But otherwise, it's ignorance.

I think the only major thing about Canada that intellectually

Vassilis Vassilikos:

'Mordecai Richler — I know the name, but I didn't know he was a Canadian'

interested people in my country generally are aware of is the Quebec thing. This awareness may be very limited and very little, but I think that it is the most interesting thing that is happening in Canada. You're fortunate to have this problem, I'm bound to say, because it obliges you to take notice of some aspects of your own condition and it's good for all thinking Canadians. When I was in Montreal some years ago, I got very excited about it.

Writing in English is not Canadian or American, but Anglo-Saxon. From a German point of view, the distinction is made only when the book is specifically about the place where it originates. The other day I read an interesting book about Quebec and the question of separatism. Such a book, of course, is bound to be very Canadian in its appeal. But a story about a suburban marriage going to pieces would not necessarily sound very Canadian to us. It would sound Anglo-Saxon, by and large.

**D.M. Zwelonke (South Africa):** I've just finished reading a book by Maria Campbell, a Canadian. It's called *Halfbreed*, a very good book to read. I think it's her first book, too.

**Zegoun Nokan (Ivory Coast):** I don't know a lot of Canadian literature. I have heard of and read Gaston Miron, and I listened to an interview with Marie-Claire Blais.

**Mongo Beti (Cameroon Republic):** I'm familiar with French-Canadian writing, but primarily socio-political writing like Bergeron's, although we've studied structure and other matters of French-Canadian literature. The primary interest is in those kinds of works that are trying to vitalize, to bring the French-Canadian people their language and develop it. But I'm not familiar with English-Canadian writing at all. For us, coming from Africa, English-Canadian literature appears the same as American, attached to the States like a sort of appendix.

**Mumtaz Soysal (Turkey):** We do hear names like Margaret Atwood, but there are no translations made of these. Since there are no translations, these authors are not known in the country, only through their names. We hear of them through the media, mostly the literary magazines that come out once a month or bi-weekly. But they're read by small numbers of people.

**Hans Christoph Buch (West Germany):** I do know those who are known anyway, like Margaret Atwood. She's translated into German and she's popular in Germany right now. But I can't say that I'm an expert on it, really. I know some French Canadian writers and their work, but that's a coincidence because I was invited to Quebec once and since I speak French I have close ties there. But I know less about the English-speaking Canadian writers. It's a language question. I'm German, but I was brought up in France and for me French-speaking Canadians, Québécois literature, is somehow



familiar. That doesn't mean I'm not interested in the English-speaking literature, but somehow I can't keep it well apart from North American, U.S. literature.

Bertrand de la Grange (France): I'm fully aware of Margaret Atwood and other names that are very well known outside of Canada. I know a lot more French-speaking writers like Michèle Lalonde and Gaston Miron, and many others who are very well known outside Canada, mainly in the French-speaking world. So I read them and I think many people in France have read them. We don't really care if it's a Canadian writer or an American writer. The thing is, very often we can't make out the difference between Susan Sontag and Margaret Atwood, for example. We don't know that Atwood is a Canadian writer and Sontag is an American one. We're only thinking in North American terms.

Susan Sontag:

**'I think Canadian writers should publish more in American magazines'**

Michael Scammell (U.K.): I was aware of Canadian authors, but I fear very much as a superficial reader of the weekly reviews. The name that I know best, I suppose, is Mordecai Richler. I'm not sure whether Brian Moore counts any longer as a Canadian writer, but I'm aware that he spent time here and wrote novels set in Canada, which I've read. Margaret Atwood I've certainly heard of, and read a few poems by; again, not a collection, but in individual reviews. Morley Callaghan is someone I've read, and I know his son Barry Callaghan slightly, and I've seen his literary magazine [*Exile*]. But I can't say that it adds up to very much.

I met Suran Musgrave at a congress, heard her read, and I was very impressed and I got a book of her poems and read them. And ever since then, if I see any reference to her, I read it. But I must tell you — and I personally think that this is best for Canadian literature — that generally I try to be guided by

Michael Scammell:

**'I'm guided by what I find to be excellent, not by the fact that it is Canadian'**

either what I find to be excellent or what I hear to be excellent, and not at all by the fact that it's Canadian. I would never pick up anything because it was Canadian.

Karla El-Harraz (East Germany): I came upon Canadian literature by chance about six years ago. Frederick P. Grove, Morley Callaghan, Sinclair Ross, Earle Birney, Mordecai Richler were among the first authors whose books I read. Their novels awakened my curiosity about your literature, about which very little was known in the G.D.R. at that time. Thanks to the help of writers such as Hugh Hood, Norman Levine, George Bowering, and Ray Smith, and to the assistance of critics such as Eli Mandel, W.H. New, Robert Fulford, as well as some well-known Canadian publishers, I succeeded in gaining a first survey of Anglo-Canadian literature. Realizing that the works I got to know are manifold as to subject-matter and artistic and aesthetic composition, and that they are part and parcel of an interesting and valuable contem-

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porary literature, I grew determined to assist the recognition and spread of Canadian literature in the G.D.R. in the late 1970s.

At present I am concerned above all with the Anglo-Canadian short story. In my thesis I deal with authors such as Leacock, Munro, Laurence, Smith, and their special forms of interrelated short stories. Some years ago I edited a volume of stories by Norman Levine, and I published a scholarly article on Levine's short prose. Now I am about to prepare an anthology of Canadian short stories of the 1970s. The large number of Anglo-Canadian short stories I read comprise well-known and less famous writers. I am impressed time and again by the "renaissance" of Anglo-Canadian short prose in the '70s and its richness of themes, subjects, and structures. It is the fact that many Canadian authors are concerned with universal problems put into a "Canadian" setting and their diverse techniques that always strikes me.

**James Brockway (U.K. and the Netherlands):** Although I have read the work of a number of Canadian authors in the past 15 years or so, mainly for reviewing, I could not say that I have ever approached one of their books with the attitude: "Now, this is Canadian writing; let's see what's different about it; let's try to find specifically Canadian features." But I have noticed two common features in all the work I have particularly liked: most of the work was in the form of short stories and, probably as a result of this, most authors were not treating grand or trendy themes. They weren't out to illustrate theories about life, but were concentrating on individual lives. This doesn't mean that grand themes like love, fear of death, loneliness, weren't involved at all. But they were handled in an intimate, realist manner.

The authors I have read are: Mavis Gallant (impact of her volume, *The Pegnitz Junction*, unforgettable, so that she has always remained in my mind since as someone specially able to convey human predicaments in a quiet, telling manner. Recently, in Germany, seven years after reading this collection, I searched for and found the Pegnitz Junction on the German rail network. I have since read her *From the Fifteenth District* too). Margaret Laurence, whose famous and filmed novel I hadn't liked too much because of some too highly wrought prose here and there, but whose subsequent book of short stories I greatly enjoyed and admired. Alice Munro, whose collection *Dance of the Happy Shades* I had drawn attention to in 1974 (I think) long before she became last year a candidate for the Booker Prize in Britain. I liked the way she showed the old Canada disappearing before the onslaught of the chic and the affluent. There were small details in her work — a mother pinning up a girl's party dress — that were brilliantly done and remain in the memory. Norman Levine, on whose work I have concentrated most, translating some of his stories for the Dutch. There is a bareness, a sparseness, a chill in his stories, in which the environment often mirrors quietly but cleverly the bleak interior of people's lives, that fascinate me. I can understand that some readers feel he pares away so much, leaves so much unsaid, that his stories have a thinness that threatens to make them disappear altogether. Some, perhaps not very subtly minded Dutch editors, can't see the point of them. I can, and the cool tragedy of his work, the insistence (though he is never seen to be insisting) on the importance of small lives, hidden, perhaps even trivial, tragedies, does seem something very special to me.

I have not read the work of better known Canadian writers like Mordecai Richler and Margaret Atwood. This may be due to a tendency in myself to veer away from work that attracts a lot of attention and to go looking elsewhere in the corners. As Canadian authors often seem to do, when choosing what they are going to write about. There is, I believe, a French Cana-

dian woman author, a novel of whose I did read, in English translation. This was trendy and I didn't like it. □

**Allen Ginsberg (U.S.):** I used to live with Leonard Cohen, and I sang backup vocal with Bob Dylan and Ronnie Blakely on one of his records a couple of years ago. And I used to send poems to Ray Souster for his magazine *Combustion* with Kerouac and Peter Lawski back in 1959. I know Irving Layton. I've read Margaret Avison. The West Coast writers I know better: George

Bowering and Victor Coleman. Victor came and taught at the school where I teach. I know a lot of the younger poets. There was like an awakening in Canadian literature back in the '50s. In fact, I think *Combustion* led the world as the first mimeographed magazine. So I'm relatively conversant with some Canadian poets. I don't read much fiction, American or Canadian or anything.

**Fawaz Turli (Palestine):** Perhaps Mordecai Richler is better known to us than other Canadian writers because his writing hits a sensitive chord in us. It talks about issues that concern us. It talks about otherness, it talks about exile. I mean, of course, he's talking about the Jewish experience, but the Jewish experience is now like the Palestinian experience.

**Vincent Buckley (Australia):** I was in Canada as a visiting writer in Edmonton for seven months in 1973. I found it very interesting and in fact I developed a great interest in Canadian literature, more the novel than poetry on the whole, and took a lot of books back to Australia. I think that the physical landscapes of the two countries are so different that, in Margaret Atwood's terms,

the mental landscapes would also have to be pretty different, and I think I would say that the various Canadian temperaments are very different from the various Australian temperaments. For example, I've used Margaret Atwood's thesis in *Survival* and pointed out the respects in which I think it applies to Australian literature and the respects in which I think it doesn't. But I think a work like that can be exemplary for literatures like the Australian, not because it applies to them point by point, but because it teaches people the things to look out for. Also because it's so hissingly critical of the Canadian mentality. Australian literature has fallen into a complacent phase at the moment, and I think it needs that kind of thing.

The English-speaking world is divided up between the two great publishing empires, England and America. We are, broadly speaking, in the English sphere and you are, broadly speaking, in the American sphere. So we can't get Canadian books. I wanted to set books by Brian Moore, Earle Birney, and Susanna Moodie on one of my courses, and I couldn't get copies. There are quite a number of admirers of Robertson Davies in Australia. Margaret Atwood is very well known. Birney and Atwood have both been there, of course. They were also both published in Australian journals before they went there. There's a kind of traffic in poetry, and I'd say that Birney's work would have been known to some people there before he ever published in Australia. □



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELSA DORFMAN



PHOTOGRAPH BY LESLIE LANE

# Making contact

After 15 years apart, a new critical study reunites Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster, but mostly it shows how different they are

By ROSALIND EVE CONWAY

*Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster*, by Frank Davey, Douglas & McIntyre, 200 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88894 264 0).

*Collected Poems of Raymond Souster, Volume 2, 1955-62*, by Raymond Souster, Oberon Press, 340 pages, \$23.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 384 5) and \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 385 3).

*Criticism: Poems 1940-1960*, by Louis Dudek, Coach House Press, 96 pages, \$7.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910 221 X).

FRANK DAVEY'S DECISION to discuss Louis Dudek and Raymond Souster together in the 14th volume of *Studies in Canadian Literature* is an apt one for an editor and teacher of creative writing. He offers some valuable comparisons between the work and aesthetic of the two writers, and is certainly helpful in his recounting of Canadian literary history. But his study is confining and somewhat reductive as a treatment of the work of Raymond Souster.

The real focus of the book is historical. It opens with the first meeting of the two poets in a Montreal restaurant in 1943 through John Sutherland, editor of *First Statement*. Dudek did not choose to go into publishing right away; he went to Columbia University and worked on his dissertation on publishing and culture, *Literature and the Press*, which was finally published in 1960. Souster chose the route of the "doer" and embarked on editing with his first little magazine, *Enterprise*. In the early 1950s the two finally joined forces and founded *Contact*, from which Contact Press (in which Irving Layton also participated) later emerged.

Dudek's impetus was his frustration with commercialism and commercial publishers. He was an elitist and felt popular taste was the death of good literature: whoever controls the means of publishing, he believed, controls the development of literature. Souster came to a similar conclusion in a more intuitive manner. He wanted to publish his own work and that of his friends, but the literary scene was monopolized by

more established poets and tastes, so he took matters into his own hands.

Dudek and Souster were not simply publishers and editors; they changed the course of modern Canadian writing. They were promoters of what they felt was new, of what was written out of a native North American — rather than British — tradition, of what was idiomatic and natural rather than ornamental. They were also revisers of the relative reputations of their fellow Canadian writers, especially of such formalists as F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith. Many of Dudek's criticisms verge on outright nastiness, but perhaps the 1940s and '50s demanded the candour that was so much a part of their lives.

By the mid-'60s the literary scene had loosened up considerably, and Souster wrote to Dudek in 1966 about his decision to discontinue publishing: "I think Contact Press has done the job it was founded to do — we have bridged a very difficult time in Canadian letters — and now it's largely history."

In writing this history Davey is also "righting" history, redressing the balance. More space is devoted to Dudek, the lesser known of the writers, but Davey is more impressed with Dudek's poetic than his poetry. Dudek strives for greatness, not for writing "competent" poetry. His work is "courageous." His rejection of commercialism and popular taste meant that he was far less successful in finding an audience than Souster. Dudek's language is generally prosaic, denotative rather than connotative in meaning, because his focus is on content, and Davey feels his use of kinesthesia (which Dorothy Livesay called "identification with the object seen and its flow") saves the long poems from seeming too much like prose. However, Davey finds that Dudek's epigrams do not mitigate the rationalist strain of his "functional verse."

It all makes for fairly heavy going, and is all the more frustrating because Davey's admiration for Dudek's poetic (even though it is rarely successful in

practice) tends to make him underestimate Souster's achievement. Souster, unlike Dudek and Davey, is not an academic; he learned about modern writing from little magazines and other poets, especially the American poet Cid Corman. That he did not articulate a poetic beyond "Get the Poem Outdoors" seems irrelevant to me. Perhaps as a teacher of creative writing Davey is more impressed with Dudek's writing about writing than Souster's actually doing it.

Yet Davey does offer two valuable approaches to Souster. One is to view his work as embodying a conflict between negative "inside" and positive "outside" forces; the former being those of masculinity — war, sex, commercialism, and death — the latter being pro-life. Davey notes the essential pastoralism of Souster's vision. His other vantage point is to view Souster not simply as one who focuses on the poor, on cripples and hookers, on Toronto's down-and-outers, which is the standard analysis of his work, but as a Marxist, anti-capitalist writer.

But in the end Davey is really rather hard on Souster. He plays down Souster's skill at doing what good poets should do well: using evocative, memorable words to underline the poem's content. The better part of a chapter is spent on criticizing his use of habitual language and responses, of rhetoric and sentiment, his need to make an explicit point, and his evasion of two difficult topics: sexuality and personal joys and tragedies. That Souster chooses not to write personal poems seems neither problematic nor remarkable to me; I cannot see why a poet *should* write about anything. Davey's is a modernist bias.

The other criticisms are more persuasive, but they lose power when one examines Souster's work as a whole. It's not surprising that his early work is less accomplished on the whole than the later, as the latest volume of his *Collected Poems* shows.

Spanning the period 1955-'62 it demonstrates that Souster was himself

aware of these difficulties and strove to overcome them, most particularly his need to make a point. In *Place of Meeting* (1962) and *A Local Pride* (1962) he was more demanding of his work, and, as he says in his preface to this second volume of *Collected Poems*, "some sort of breakthrough had been made." That there are two halves to Souster's career becomes dramatically evident when one passes from *Walking Death* (1955) and *Crepehanger's Carnival* (1958) to the later poems. For example, "Choosing Coffins," in which Souster's father is reminded of a canoe he had:

*And though we moved right around  
that room,  
I somehow knew my father couldn't  
wait  
to circle back to that mahogany casket,  
to fondle its close-rubbed grain, to  
push back time  
to his young manhood, Rouge River,  
Humber nights,  
those sweaty, black-fly northern  
portages . . . .*

This volume is much darker than the first. Much of it is coloured with death, particularly the death of his brother. But it is a pleasure, as always, reading Souster; there is the drama, the realism, the music. Again he has painstakingly revised his poems, and few are left unchanged. And lest one get the wrong impression, I should say that as much as Souster is caught up with death, ultimately he rejects it:

*So hard to even think of death  
on such a pulsing afternoon . . . .*

*Sun catching every change of leaf,  
boys flailing chestnut trees, the  
squirrels  
all dart and doing in the grass.*

*Even the blackest tombstone shouts  
"Impossible, impossible!"*

Dudek's *Cross-section: Poems 1930-1960* contains previously unpublished poems in chronological order that are meant to be, collectively, an example of life as process. They reflect the shifting concerns of a maturing writer. However, I was frustrated by the inverted syntax and ellipsis as well as by the philosophizing: all meaning and no music. Dudek is not particularly readable. He uses the unadorned language of Souster and mixes it with the iconoclasm of Layton, with none of the persuasive euphony and detail of either, because he refuses to play to the crowd. This is from "These Young":

*Schoolgirls carry their baby books  
and boys like briefcases their morning  
satchels:*

*soon their world will be clear of  
obstruction,  
symbols become solid things.*

His epigrammatic poems are more

readable, and therefore more successful. "Freedom," in which his dogs insist on being unleashed only to lie down nearby, is a good example:

*Freedom may be  
only an idea  
but it's a matter of principle  
even to a dog.*

It seems surprising that two such different poets were revolutionaries together, but the complacency of the poetry scene in Canada in the 1940s and '50s, as well as their yearning for recognition and newness, drew them together. Davey has captured and charted this important chapter in Canadian literary history. □

## REVIEW

# Hearts of the West

By CHRISTOPHER  
WISEMAN

*The Shunning*, by Patrick Friesen, Turnstone Press, 105 pages, \$7.00 paper (ISBN 0 88801 038 9).

*A Shored Up House*, by Elizabeth Allen, Turnstone Press, 79 pages, \$6.00 paper (ISBN 088801 046 X).

*Dirt Hills Mirage*, by Barbara Sapergia, Thistle-down Press, 97 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 920066 33 X).

THE PRAIRIES ARE NOT a bad place for a poet these days. There is an active community of writers, progressive and, praise be, prolific presses, a creative and well-founded Writers Guild in Saskatchewan, and a growing confidence and sense of importance in the Canadian literary scene. But the unique problem remains. What do you *do* with the prairie in poetry? The landscape dominates with its enormity, looming and challenging. Write me, it says, then cheats by changing shape, by turning itself into plagues of locusts, drought, floods, unbearable heat, starving cold. It's a world of welcome and rejection, its history impinging on the present, sharp and pressing, urging the pen to move.

So what does the poet do? These three collections approach prairie experience in different ways — the historical/mythological, the lyric, and the descriptive. Patrick Friesen's *The Shunning* is the

most ambitious and the most impressive in its imaginative scale. A long, semi-documentary book, part in prose, part in poetry, complete with the seemingly obligatory photographs, diary entries, and even medical records, it examines the Mennonite consciousness as seen in the lives of two brothers and their families at the time of the First World War and afterwards. Peter, seen through various points of view, is shunned or banned by the church and kills himself because of a stubborn questioning faith that the orthodox see as heresy, because he "wanted so much that wasn't."

What we have here is a terrible and real existential crisis in a closely knit community, with its loves and deaths, its births and sicknesses, its human strivings, its response to religious and moral dicta, its memories of the old world, its struggle to come to terms with a new landscape. It is a superb study of spiritual violence translated into action; a frighteningly real community evolving into a myth of prairie settlement and adjustment to the new land and its exigencies. It works by accumulation, as lives are slowly revealed, not by the sharp lyric image (though there are many) but by narrative and pseudo-narrative as the multiple voices and consciousnesses all snap around the edges of experience and the after-shocks of the shunning, the casting out of Peter, whose stubborn insistence on the validity of his own apprehensions becomes heroic as well as plangent. The cool, detached Ontario doctor and midwife provide distance and an ironic chorus to the obsessive study of a web of relationships that has sucked them into itself in subtle ways.

The style of this work tears heads off clichés, making us see a whole place freshly — the inner and outer, the hardship and joy, the human heart fighting the enclosing stifle of prairie, of dogma. It is a complete world, reeling and tilting but enduring. The ruined heart struggles to love and to be free. "You live awhile and then time happens," writes the poet. How seemingly simple, yet, in this context, how utterly important. A fine book, full of bone and muscle. A totality. A must for any future edition of the *Long Poem Anthology*.

Elizabeth Allen's collection is very different, but fine, too, in its own way. She has a clear lyric voice, and her ear for the music of language is delicate but strong. Here we have the experience of a recent arrival on the prairies from the confined and lush fertility of New Zealand, whose imagination is wrestling with size, hardness, and inexorability. We also have a poet who has only been writing for five years. The result is

wonder, dismay, puzzlement, rejection, celebration, amazement. New vital feelings. The heart shaken by its transplant but moving urgently as it tries to adapt. Descriptive details of Saskatchewan are consistently welded into personal response:

*Should I  
shore up the old house  
that threatens  
to fall down around me  
fix the fence that lies  
bent & twisted  
mow grass, tend my garden  
or let it all  
run wild?*

This collection tries to answer this crucial personal question, through times of pain and times of love. The section called "transplant" treats the immigrant experience directly as threateningly attractive memories of greenness and seacape — roots that have always flourished — flood in to try to swamp the new life:

*I have not seen  
the inner landscape  
lately the door  
has been shut I  
cannot find the opening*

Yet the last section of the book shows a gradual coming to terms, a sense of possible discovery and balance in spite of the harshness. When "the cattle are sorted" there is a kind of peace.

Elizabeth Allen is the most naturally gifted of these three poets in terms of sheer concentrated power, the creation of the telling and potent image, the making and shaping of poem out of language. It is a strong book, one that makes us know the prairie by feeling it, not just by seeing it. And we are moved. She is a poet of great potential, who can already transmute the world and subsume natural objects into the press and tension of human longing.

Barbara Sapergia's first collection has some good poems — "Angels," "Burns," "Firedance," and the title-poem especially — but she doesn't yet have the consistent ability to rise above pure description and make full use of it. At its worst, her poetry merely describes, competently, solidly, but flatly, as if that is enough to carry the poem, and one often feels that it is all too familiar:

*a hawk hangs on a curve of air  
searching for meat  
& not to please my eye  
in the coulee wolf willow flares silver*

Yes. But. The poet tells us too much in this collection, which could well, I think, have profited from some strong editing.

The poems about her family history have great possibilities, but Barbara Sapergia doesn't do enough with them. Facts do not always speak for themselves, however touching or dramatic,

and have to be transformed into significance by imagination. And one wants more significance here and more surprise — in language and image, in dramatic handling of event, in the resolution of the poems. The prairie is not quite alive enough; not magical or threatening enough. And it's a pity because there is much evidence that the poet can write and has a fine observing eye.

The prairie unlocks its secrets reluctantly. These three books try to meet it head-on and they prove that the taut imagination and the right shaping of words can bring us illumination and, by doing that, can move us. That is no mean achievement. □

## REVIEW

# From magpies to booby coots

By ROBERT KROETSCH

*Lying in Bed*, by Mary Howes, Longspoon Press, 71 pages, \$7.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 06 6).

*Extreme Positions*, by bpNichol, Longspoon Press, 83 pages, \$7.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 07 4).

*A Grand Memory for Forgetting*, by Stephen Scobie, Longspoon Press, 145 pages, \$8.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 05 8).

*Gallimaufry*, by Jon Whyte, Longspoon Press, 64 pages, \$9.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 04 X).

THE COVERS OF the four new books from Longspoon Press announce, accurately and brilliantly, the reading act to which each is an invitation: the magpies on Jon Whyte's *Gallimaufry*, the legs at once, raised and crossed on Mary Howes's *Lying in Bed*, the wave-line through a square of deep-water blue on bpNichol's *Extreme Positions*, the circle squared and broken on Stephen Scobie's *A Grand Memory for Forgetting*.

Whyte, in *Gallimaufry*, is the poet as magpie, telling us in his introduction, "I started to compile, several years ago, a list . . ." He is the anatomist of our neglected word-hoard; caught in the ink-horn splendour of the academia he looks down on from Banff, he is a gifted word-buster on the Strawberry Roan, a crochety bamboozler, a high country raconteur who takes his readers on a

trail ride clean around the world.

For Whyte, a dictionary is an erotic event. The section from "Fells of Brightness" is proof positive that that poem is on its way to greatness. But even in talking about the ruddy duck, Whyte is a rejoicer in the extravagance of our given world:

*In general use: Butterball; ruddy.  
In local use: Biddy; blackjack;  
blatherskite  
(varied to blatherscoot, blatterscoot,  
bladderscoot);  
bluebill; bobbler; booby; booby coot*

Mary Howes, like Whyte, is an obsessive list maker. Where Whyte is attracted to the esoteric and the lost, Howes is concerned to note the strangeness of what is accepted as the familiar. The poem "not too much to ask" begins:

*I want you on top of everything else  
I want you under my skin  
I want you out on a limb  
I want you treed  
I want you floored*

Mary Howes is a wicked lady with her tongue. Like Mrs. Bentley in *As For Me and My House*, she begins by placing bed at stage centre. Where one, however, can never quite get in, the other can never quite get out. Lying passively in bed, seemingly nailed down, the narrator of Howes's poems is pure energy. The room of one's own spoken of so eloquently by Virginia Woolf becomes, eloquently again, a bed of one's own. For whatever reasons, the direct confrontation with erotic experience, in Canadian poetry, is best explored by women writers. Howes remembers (re-members), probes, goads, flays, laughs, laments, giggles, curses, all the way from lay one to the last delivery. And the book is superbly illustrated by Jane Ross.

Nichol, in *Extreme Positions*, tells a love story that is reminiscent of Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, but here that long tale of ambition and sex and ambiguous death by water becomes a post-structuralist visual poem. The Canadian poet harks back to that novel through Gertrude Stein and now writes:

*the bright boat in  
the bright sun on  
the bright water in  
the bright light in  
the eye*

Nichol calls this his fourth novel (after *Two Novels* and *Journal*), and indeed the book is shaped around an excruciating tension between the idea of narrative and an absolutist notion of poetic repetition. The entire story is embedded in repetitions of the letter "s." The occasion of the story (a murder?) is perceived through a combination of silence

(the literal whiteness of the page) and minimalist language. And yet the book speaks eloquently within the Nichol oeuvre — that spilling flow of language (“letting be”) that makes him a major poet of the second half of this century.

Scobie's *A Grand Memory for Forgetting* is also concerned with the problem of perception and its literary consequences. Scobie works often from occasion, as in the poem, “On the Road to Bonnyville”:

behind there is nothing  
to be seen in the mirror  
while  
of the snow that gathers behind us  
pulled like a parachute into  
the speed of our passing: in front  
when a truck overtakes  
we are driving snowblind

into a memory.

Scobie's book is in some ways a dialogue with Michael Ondaatje. It begins with a concern, as in Ondaatje's work, with photographs. Scobie, like Ondaatje, has moved to Canada from a distant land, and now explores both the lost place and the implications of the move. He engages in a difficult confrontation with his own past and with his own literary education, and finds a focus for both in his willed motion into a meaningful forgetting. The fear of forgetting and the need to forget find poignant intersection in the poem (“Elegy”) for a young Italian tourist who fell to her death at a historic site in Scotland:

Falling, away from all our questions,

all the anecdotes and history, down  
out  
of time to that hard ground where  
even history  
ends, one fact to make all others ob-  
solete...

Longspoon Press has finally justified the excitement that was felt, 18 months ago, at the news that a new press was in the printing. The idea of subscription or mail order presses was introduced by Gary Geddes of Quadrant Editions. Longspoon has now confirmed the success of the idea. The Island Writing Series, published by John Marshall and Daphne Marlatt in Lantzville, B.C., will soon release a major series of chapbooks for sale by mail. Poetry has a way of winning through against the economics of disaster. □

## FEATURE REVIEW

# Strange games

Shortlisted for Britain's Booker Prize, Ian McEwan simultaneously shocks and entices, but there is more to his fiction than meets the voyeur's eye

By D. W. NICHOL

*The Comfort of Strangers*, by Ian McEwan, Jonathan Cape (Clarke Irwin), 134 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 224 01931 7).

*The Imitation Game*, by Ian McEwan, Jonathan Cape (Clarke Irwin), 175 pages, \$20.95 cloth (ISBN 0 224 01889 2).

SINCE ITS INCEPTION in 1969, the Booker Prize, Britain's highest literary award, has had its fair share of media coverage, not always welcomed by the British literary establishment. A pittance of pounds compared to the Nobel or Pulitzer, a sizable nugget next to the Goncourt, the prize was founded as a result of the enormous profits Booker McConnell — the sugar, food-distribution and engineering magnates — made in tax-shelter schemes for mid-literary but super-lucrative authors like Ian Fleming and Agatha Christie. Guilt money, perhaps, but certainly needed in an age of declining royalties.

John Berger, the 1972 winner for *G*, aroused a storm of controversy when he split his £5,000 with the London Black Panthers after attacking Booker McConnell for capitalist exploitation in

Guyana. At this year's presentation, Salman Rushdie accepted his prize (now £10,000) with grateful decorum for *Midnight's Children*, pointing out that the money would allow him to write unfettered for a year. The presentation went not without incident: a few days before the ceremony Brian Aldiss dampened the anticipation by mouthing the shortlist a little too close to a *Guardian* editor's ear. *Private Eye*, ever quick to call foul play, pointed a finger spelling nepotism at one of the names on the leaked list, Ian McEwan's late entry, *The Comfort of Strangers*. McEwan, it seems, had once studied under Malcolm Bradbury, this year's chairman of the Booker judges, at East Anglia.

Other coincidences have cropped up in other years. One of the three judges in 1974, Elizabeth Jane Howard, happened to be married to one of the writers advanced to the shortlist. No matter how hard Ms Howard argued that Britain's literary community was so tightly knit that it was impossible to find a judge who hadn't any contacts (sexual or otherwise) with at least one of the runners-up, the fact that she was Mrs.

Amis at home and that Mr. Amis's *Ending Up* ended up on the shortlist was hard to shrug off. Marital connection (albeit not semantically nepotism) seems more suspect in the conferring of pecuniary honours than a former student-lecturer relationship, husband-and-wife being thicker in thievery. McEwan and Bradbury, to apply a current television idiom, are not good *Borgias* material.

McEwan on his own provided some vivid *Borgias* family entertainment in his first novel, *The Cement Garden* (1978), in which Jack discovers masturbation at the moment of his father's death, buries mother in a trunk of cement, and, for want of offering a parental primal scene to his younger sibling, effects a double-edged climax with older sister. Similar imaginings abound elsewhere in McEwan's fiction. He deals adeptly with the father-daughter variation of familial favouritism in the title story of *In Between the Sheets*. The final image gives a superbly disarming example of McEwan's fine-spun prose:

But she was asleep and almost smiling,  
and in the pallor of her upturned throat

he thought he saw from one bright morning in his childhood a field of dazzling white snow which he, a small boy of eight, had not dared scar with footprints.

In this case the taboo remains intact, but the willingness to pursue one theme to either end (fantasy realized/fantasy subdued) suggests that there is more to McEwan's fiction than simply meeting the voyeur's eye. Still, he caters to a voyeur's imagination in various instances: castration fantasies are pushed to the brink of actualization in the short story "Pornography"; "Dead as They Come" is a punning update of "Porphyria's Lover." McEwan dispenses excremental observations with a Swiftian frankness: "Eaters of asparagus know the scent it lends the urine."

The trio of television plays in *The Imitation Game* vary tonally from the comically facetious to the deadly serious. "Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration" (whose celebrant professes a hankering back to the womb) feeds on a family reunion complete with clinging mother, ineffectual father, and motherly live-in girlfriend whose jokes about the writerly mother-swapping birthday-

boy's bed-wetting are given some credence in the final frames. "Solid Geometry" acquired some notoriety when the BBC pulled the plug during the final stages of production, possibly because the most notable stage prop was an auctioned-off "anatomical curiosity" severed from a captain and then pickled for posterity. Through a neat combination of mathematics — proving a plane without a surface — and yoga, Albert (another writerly recluse) discovers a unique method of voiding his mistress. "The Imitation Game," by far the best of these plays, treats the male-centred structure of the wartime code-breaking operation known as Ultra and the accidental infiltration by an (unfortunately) intelligent female auxiliary. The object of the "game" is to determine any difference between the way men and women think:

There are three players. A man, a woman and an interrogator who can be of either sex. The interrogator stays in a room apart from the other two but connected by a teleprinter. His aim is to find out which of the two is the man, and which is the woman. The object of the man is to try and cause the interrogator to make the wrong identification,

while the woman's purpose is to help the interrogator.

While the heroine serves tea, one of the code-breakers (a Cambridge homosexual) offers humiliation, asking, "Shouldn't you first establish whether the woman can think?"

McEwan delves deeper into the nature of feminism in his second novel, *The Comfort of Strangers*. Set in hazy, unspecified Venice, two English tourists, Colin and Mary, begin their holiday by getting stoned, lost, and uncomfortable. Mary, once married, remembers and forgets and remembers to send a post-card back to her kids. The will to apply stamp to card, card to letter-box, is dissipated as easily as the want to make love. Behind their lethargy is some vague sense of purposelessness, a nagging passivity; they are hip liberal Elois from the 1960s who, when discussing sexual politics, refer to *them* rather than *us*. "Travelling is a brutality," as the epigraph says, and on one of their journeys without maps Colin and Mary confront a barrage of contradictions of another culture. They lose their acquired bearings easily, but "without a specific destination, the visitors chose routes as

## HUGH MACLENNAN

'... the man who, through such novels as *Barometer Rising*, *Two Solitudes* and *The Watch That Ends the Night*, did more than any other writer of his generation to shape Canadian consciousness, and who in the process won an unprecedented five Governor-General's awards, has, in his seventh novel and 74th year, outdone himself.' — *Calgary Herald*

## VOICES IN TIME



The time is 1940. The place is Hitler's Germany and Conrad Dehmel, a 'good German', is struggling to pursue an honourable course and to save his Jewish fiancée and her family from annihilation.



The time is 1970. The place is Quebec and Timothy Wellfleet, Conrad's stepson, has become a media celebrity during the FLQ crisis, rising to prominence by devious and opportunistic methods.

Hugh MacLennan masterfully depicts two societies on the brink of total destruction and the loves and fears of men and women embroiled in the dramatic events of those fearful times.

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they might choose a colour, and even in the precise manner in which they became lost expressed their cumulative choices, their will."

They browse on the latest in Venetian bedroom accoutrements (including voltmeters) in a store window, then Mary translates a feminist poster. She tells Colin, "They want convicted rapists castrated. . . . It's a way of making people take rape more seriously as a crime." "It's a way," replies Colin, "of making people take feminists less seriously." In pursuit of food and exasperation, they encounter a native called Robert who insists on helping them, in exchange — as it initially seems — for subjecting them to the fate of every English tourist abroad: practising their own language upon them. Robert apologizes for the feminist tracts Mary peruses, saying, "There are women who cannot find a man. They want to destroy everything that is good between men and women." "There," says Colin, "meet the opposition."

Robert takes Colin and Mary to his home, there to meet his Canadian wife, Caroline. There is something vaguely menacing about Robert and Caroline; he has told Colin and Mary about a scatological trauma as a child in his father's study; she confides to Mary that she has crept into their room to watch them while they were sleeping naked. When Colin makes a slightly asinine remark, Robert responds by punching him in the stomach. As Colin and Mary prepare to make a civilized departure, Caroline, who has a painful limp, hints to Colin that she is Robert's prisoner, while Robert shows Mary a blown-up photo-



graph. Later she realizes the grainy figure in the photograph is Colin.

*The Comfort of Strangers* is a tamer

McEwan. The adolescent thrill of fiction has abated without any detrimental effect on the sheer taut line of authorial control. He has the talented knack of shocking and enticing simultaneously, of engaging his readers in an exploration of sexual awareness and psychological conflict, of breathing into old myths new fire. So far, he has spread his inventiveness sparingly over five slim volumes. His cool easy precision belies a confidence that no Booker Prize could supplement. McEwan's time-limited label as *the* writer in Britain to watch has been justified by his latest novel, but having graduated from pram-climbers to adolescent I-figures to narcissistic victims of travel, his hero(es) will have to break out of the hermetic bedroom into the larger realms of experience. □

## REVIEW

# Growing pains

By DOUGLAS HILL

*The Knife in My Hands*, by Keith Maillard, Musson/General, 336 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 0057 9).

KEITH MAILLARD calls this novel (his third book and planned as the first of two sequential volumes) an attempt to "create the *illusion* of autobiography." It's set in a lightly disguised Wheeling, West Virginia, the hero's (and author's) hometown, and a "fictionalized" Morgantown, where the state university is located. It spans five years — 1958 through 1963 — in the life of John Dupre; he's 16 when his narrative — loose, episodic, organically rhythmical — begins.

Maillard's approach to his material works well. This is a pleasurable and thoughtful book. The characters are attractive, their escapades and strategies are zany, the conversation is wonderfully serious and innocent, period details are lush and precise, local colour sharp as the grime of the Ohio and Monongahela valleys permits, sex and love are dazed, desperate, awkward, tedious, all at the same time.

One who has endured or witnessed the sort of long adolescence depicted here — the ricochet from sports to books to beer to ideas to erections — may find

Maillard's version brilliant and rich to the point of improbability. One asks: Was life really this dazzling? Were we all so deep and visionary and bright and ultimately noble? Was the hunger and frustration thus instantly decoded as beauty, poignance, holiness? Perhaps. Only a churl would fault the novel, or fail to enjoy it, on these grounds anyway. I hope in what follows it's clear that I like *The Knife in My Hands* solidly and consider its flaws slight and understandable. (Except — it has to be said — the extravagant and disconcerting typographical and editorial blunders, for which there's *no* excuse).

Sexuality is one theme of John's story. Not surprising. Not simple either, since what's at issue is a rooted and thoroughgoing gender confusion. John is caught by debilitatingly contradictory wishes both to be a young girl and to fall for young girls; 14, androgynous, newly sexual is the image he doubly longs for. He acts and anguishes as if no one else ever had or was aware of his problems — which is quite reasonable. So does the author, which sometimes causes him to lose perspective or proportion.

Growth toward spiritual insight is another concern. The emotional/intellectual awakening of John and his friends, each of whom Maillard turns into a fully developed character I wish I had space to discuss, achieves remarkable plausibility, mainly through good sound dialogue, and despite some esoteric delving into the sacred literature of introspection and enlightenment and some heavy breathing over aesthetics and *The Meaning of Life*. I think Maillard is successful in giving the possibilities for transcendental belief under investigation in our own age a nascence in the unfocused and doubtless overdramatized yearnings of two decades ago. His efforts here may seem anachronistic, but I'd prefer to accept that John's struggle for illumination then, as he interprets it now, could produce these resonances. For my money, Maillard's got his epochs on straight.

The occasional lapses of narrative distance may trouble other readers more than me. I know I'd feel better about the novel if I could attach all its considerable naiveté and repetitiveness and downright gee-whiz immaturity to the hero, none to the author. Mostly I can, but I think more editorial tightening would have allowed Maillard to give John his obsessive images, perceptions, and behaviour patterns without blurring their source. To be or appear, in other words, totally unconfused about a character who's pretty spectacularly and justifiably confused.

The voice Maillard creates for John is straightforward, natural, not particu-

larly stylish. With much of its "experience and suffering" (John's quotation marks) it's ironic and funny; when it takes off into neo-Kerouackiness it's charmingly derivative, but I suspect Maillard, and John, know exactly what

Sal Paradise; the tragedy of the generation of '57 — pardon the phrase — was always to follow after.

I finished *The Knife in My Hand* with a sense that Maillard really quite said all he wanted to say. The different levels of the book — sexual, social/historical, spiritual/poetic — all work, and work together, but they don't completely fuse. The pressures are uneven. What the novel accomplishes suggests that Maillard could get even farther into his subject than he has, clarify better, struggle harder, find ways to show more, explain less. He's *that* close. I'm eager for the next volume, impressed by this one. □

## REVIEW

# Golden threads among the grey

By JACK HODGINS

*A Sleep Full of Dreams*, by Edna Alford, Oolichan Books, 155 pages, \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 88902 031 7).

THOSE WHO LOVE the short story and all it can do in the hands of a skilled and original writer may already have noticed the work of Edna Alford, published occasionally in such journals as *Prism International* and *Journal of Canadian Fiction*. A few fanatics like myself may even have noticed that at least one of her stories has been listed in the honour roll of *Best American Short Stories*, or that the Calgary magazine *Dandelion* has published a special issue featuring her work. All short story lovers will be interested to learn that this young Prairie writer has published her first book and that it is a remarkable achievement.

It is so good, in fact, that I find myself hoping for a flaw or two so I can show I have some standards and am not too easily impressed. I considered disqualifying myself as a reviewer since a few readers may know the book's publisher

lives only a few miles from my home on Vancouver Island and suspect that I'm a secret publicity agent. Or that others may discover that Edna Alford (with stories other than these) has been a student of mine at the Saskatchewan Centre for the Study of the Arts and Letters. To be a review at all, I've decided, but the written equivalent of a fanfare: "Announcement, announcement! If you care about the short story at all, sit up and pay attention to this impressive debut!"

There are 10 stories here. Their common setting is the Pine Mountain Lodge, an old folks' home in Calgary, sitting on the edge of a park "like an aristocratic old woman, as aristocratic as anything could be in this country." The residents, however, share none of this aristocracy. They live in a rectangular flat-roofed addition tacked on to the main building, in tiny rooms with narrow windows that let in very little light. To Arla, the young nurse whose point of view controls most of the stories, the building resembles a holding pen.

The reader senses from the beginning that the house is as much a holding pen for Arla as it is for the old ladies she deals with. While the inmates wait to die ("my next room will be underground") or to be shipped off to the asylum, the short and chunky young nurse seems to be waiting for something *outside* the home to rescue her. She is engaged to someone named David; she seems to be full of the joy of this love whenever she is free of the old women, and by the final story we discover she intends to move in with him. In the meantime, she says, "I'm paid to do my job."

"So are prostitutes," snaps back one of the old women in her care.

If Arla's attitude toward these women is sometimes impatient, sometimes humorous, sometimes despairing, sometimes tempted by sentimentality, the author's vision is consistent. Arla and patients alike are the subject of a clear and steady gaze. Alford honours them all by bringing them wonderfully alive, with humour, with insight, with some anger, and with a patient relishing of their individual personalities.

Though Arla Pederson's relationship with her job is the thread that carries through the book, each story highlights a different old woman's struggle. And from the opening paragraph of the first story we are warned that it won't always be pleasant:

Pulled that little girl's arm right off (says old Miss Bole) and it fell and caught on one of those silver rungs of that ferris wheel and hung there dripping more'n an hour before they could catch it and take it off a there. The folks all stayed and watched.

Shy and angry Jessica Bole, club-footed and fat, fights the pain and humiliation or being lifted naked into her bath in a contraption called a Hoyer by relating stories of horrors more terrible even than her own. Like Arla, the reader does not understand the nature of the horrors. Unlike Arla, the reader comes to the end with some understanding of the paintings of flower-filled meadows that hang above Miss Bole's bed — painted by a painter who is a pretty spectacularly and with a certain amount of insight — Department of Cultural Affairs. Though this is perhaps the least skillfully handled of all the stories, it is delivered with a certain amount of insight.

All the old women are putting up a fight for their lives and their dignity, but not all are quite so grim. Tessie Bishop and Flora Henderson, two old gals with rumoured pasts that include running a bawdy house, paint themselves up, set out to watch a parade, and end up drunk and singing filthy songs in a bar. They get back to the Pine Mountain Lodge after the others have gone to sleep, and drunken Flora bangs on doors: "Wake up you deaf old coots!" and sings a variation of "The Dark-Town Strutters Ball":

Now honey, don't be late,  
'cause we'll be passin' out  
pussy 'bout half-past eight

But she interrupts herself. "Most of these old dames don't even make it to seven-thirty let alone half-past eight." Her friend Tessie, half-hidden in the shadows, looks back out of black-rimmed eyes, "like a mask on a stick." A very funny story (and there is considerable humour in most of the stories), but Alford has a way of snapping us up out of a laugh with a cold gasp.

In one story an attempt to set up a polling station in the Lodge is a total failure. "Who cares about the silly old vote," says one of the women. "Chicken wings again — that's what I care about. Wonder what they do with the rest of the chicken." In another story Myrtle Jane Emerson stalks with her cane through the hallways in search of Germans — "all Nazis and crooks and hangmen" — but suddenly disappears. Dead? No, Arla explains to the others. It's not *that*. It's even worse. The fight for life is so strong in some of these women that in one story a gentleman encounters one of them at a bingo game, where she just "knows" she is going to win, then discovers that his whole experience is impossible: she'd been dead (according to the Home) all along.

I realize that it is the expected custom while favourably reviewing a collection of stories to choose one to hate. It shows you have discriminating taste. Well there

isn't going to be one of those "however" paragraphs here. I'm aware that some readers will find these stories painful to read, some will find it necessary to take them slowly, and some will find that this or that story works better than the others. I have my favourites; I feel less satisfied with one or two. But when I came to the end of the final story — where Arla is walking away from her job, having decided on the basis of her experience here that companionship was what was important in this world ("Needing someone didn't make you weak. It made you human") — I knew I'd just read a book of exceptional stories.

Walking away, Arla "felt the presence of someone or something walking with her." Of course she is taking all of them with her — the aristocratic old house, the holding pen, the old women, the old women's battles — to strengthen or unsettle her the rest of her life. It is a mark of Edna Alford's unique and powerful talent, I think, that the reader is likely to have all of them around in his head for quite a while. □

## REVIEW

# Themes and variations

By GEOFF HANCOCK

*Best Canadian Short Stories*, edited by John Stevens, Bantam-Seal, 312 pages, \$3.50 paper (ISBN 0 7704 1702 7).

31: *Best Canadian Stories*, edited by John Metcalf and Leon Rooke, Oberon Press, 158 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 399 3) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 400 0).

*Second Impressions*, edited by John Metcalf, Oberon Press, 180 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 401 9) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 402 7).

IN JORGE LUIS BORGES'S wonderful Chinese encyclopedia, the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, animals are subdivided into new and startling categories: those that belong to the emperor, those that are trained, those that are embalmed, mermaids, suckling pigs, and fabulous beasts. Future editors

of Canadian short-story anthologies may well have to devise new categories as well. Dozens of authors, working in a myriad themes and forms, will mean that even the most generous anthology will omit someone. Instead of finding two or three dozen "best" stories, editors will have to work on literary strategies that find new orders and relationships. In addition to creative writing, we will have creative anthologizing.

Some excellent stories are reprinted in John Stevens's *Best Canadian Stories*, yet there remains something curiously unsatisfying about the collection. Part of this is the editor's attitude. He states flatly the selections "are not, definitively, the best Canadian stories ever written," but adds they are "among the best." Endless quarrels can be raised about authors excluded (Clark Blaise, Hugh Hood, John Metcalf, Leon Rooke, David Helwig, Matt Cohen), or even included, — such as Harold Horwood, Mazo de la Roche, and the obscure Quebec writer Yvette Naubert. Some of the stories themselves are disappointing. Charles G.D. Roberts's story of a bear that chases a New Brunswick girl into a cabin is simply overripe in its melodramatic flourishes. Several of the earlier stories in fact are roadblocks in the way of the development of the Canadian short story (the formula fictions of Hugh Garner and Morley Callaghan, for example), and some writers, such as Mordecai Richler and Farley Mowat, have only occasionally written stories; their best work is found elsewhere. Finally, the editor claims he doesn't even understand some of his selections, such as W.P. Kinsella's story about astral projection. With a weak but obligatory Margaret Atwood story ("A Travel Piece"), the first story Jack Hodgins ever published, and the over-anthologized "Bloodflowers" by W.D. Valgardson, the selection of "best" Canadian stories starts to weave and wobble.

Stevens subdivides the collection into thematic groupings, such as "Men and Women: Comic and Romantic Views," "Men and Women: Tragic and Ironic Views," "The Trouble with Families," "Violent Encounters," and, for the Borgesian encyclopedist, "Magic, Symbols and Fantasies." They include some excellent stories by Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, Alistair MacLeod, Stephen Leacock, Sinclair Ross, Gabrielle Roy, Roch Carrier, Margaret Laurence, and Howard O'Hagan. But while subject-related stories may be a good way to organize an anthology, they also limit the selections to those that fit the theme. *Best Canadian Stories* has a limited number of themes, and so limits its possibilities as an anthology of "the best" Canadian stories.

The annual Oberon anthology, *Best Canadian Stories*, is not limited by theme or subject matter. This 11th volume ranges from studies of Oedipal schoolboys and anorexic artists to stories about writers caught up in the process of story-telling. Its well-known contributors include Clark Blaise, Kent Thompson, Alice Munro, Norman Levine, and Mavis Gallant. Contributors appearing for the first time include Katherine Govier and John Riddell.

The editors try to second-guess the reviewers' complaints this year. They suggest the 10 selections cannot possibly compete with the 25 selections in *Best American Stories*. Not all magazines send in entries, so some good stories are omitted from consideration. To which I would add that the introduction is skimpy: to say these stories are more "sophisticated" says nothing at all. Stories in translation, from French or other languages, have never appeared in the anthology. And the so-called experimental story is poorly represented — though one could argue that such stories are not yet complete in their attempts to push back fiction's boundaries. Sniping aside, *Best Canadian Stories* will be a checkpoint for years to come. It gives good stories a second or even third chance (some are reprinted from book collections), and salutes the efforts of magazine editors to keep stories thriving.

Editors Rooke and Metcalf have picked some strong selections. Blaise's story of Oedipal sexuality, poor television reception, and skipping out without paying the rent in 1952 Pittsburgh is a sobering account of children more daring than the adults they become. Levine's "Continuity" is a fine story, one that turns in on itself as a student revisits a former teacher, and the teacher in turn revisits an old Jewish cemetery. The story works on several levels and through subtle indirection, something new in Levine's recent fiction. Alice Munro shows an uncanny ability to find the right metaphor. Her "Wood" is about a sign painter and woodcutter who suddenly fears he may lose his livelihood. Nothing seems to happen on the surface, but the story plummets straight into the character's soul. It's also a departure for Munro in that it deals with the psyche of a man.

Compared to the brilliant "Speck's Idea", which appeared in the 1980 Oberon anthology, Gallant's "The Assembly" seems an amusing and successful exercise. A group of tenants, frightened about rapists, robbers, changes in French society and the new Europe, gather together in an apartment building to discuss changing the locks. Gallant's satire skewers all her targets

morelessly, but it's not one of her most outstanding stories.

*Best Canadian Stories* has always been generous toward writers in earlier stages of their careers. Terence Byrnes has a funny, grim story about a modest artist who cannot handle a sudden flurry of successes. In a society that measures accomplishment by entertaining supper parties, the artist decides to fast. In losing his appetite, he discovers himself. John Riddell appears for the first time in *Best Canadian Stories* with the only experimental piece. The story is told in the present tense, second person, with intrusive authorial comments about the problems of setting a story in a tough sailor's bar. It's an instant lesson in some of the possibilities of short fiction, though it lags far behind some of Riddell's more flamboyant excesses, such as his concrete novel, *transitions* (Aya Press). But there is still pleasure in seeing some of fiction's finest tricks on display. Katherine Govier's story about a psychiatrist who is crazier than his patient is less satisfactory. It's a well-written, publishable story, but it's not one of the year's best.

Rooke and Metcalf clearly have a soft spot for some of their contributors. Not only does Linda Svendsen appear regularly in *Best Canadian Stories*, she also has four stories in Metcalf's *Second Impressions*. This is the second volume of the *Impressions* series, a showcase for writers somewhere between apprenticeship and first book. In essence, *Impressions* is an annual literary magazine, with Metcalf acting as talent scout.

Linda Svendsen is a talented writer who knows how short fiction is constructed. Her emotional range seems a little pinched yet, as if she isn't sure if she should stretch out with her language, situations, and subject matter. But her stories occur naturally on the page, with authority and a sense of projection. The best, "Who Do You Sleep By," is about a young woman who observes her brother and his girlfriends over a 20-year period, discovering the core of their sibling relationship in the process. Svendsen displays a similarly fine poetic ear for the relationships between mother, daughter, and unborn baby in "Marine Life." She tries out a travel story set in Japan in which a young woman changes her mind about her lover. Her story about a teenager's graduation night bristles with the unseen but strongly tragic undertows of generations in conflict. Her multi-layered imagery reveals without forcing. Even the weakest of the stories, really an exercise from a writing workshop, about a clairvoyant gypsy who senses her husband is having an affair, radiates emotional fallout.

Peter Behrens is starting to find his voice, but he still seems uncertain. His stories don't excite, and he has a tendency toward loose writing and sentimentality. His characters, whether a loving young husband who doesn't understand his wife, a young engineer in Africa who discovers fraud, graft, and corruption, or a city boy who learns about life from a group of prairie farmers, seem to be filled with misguided optimism. His stories reflect, but they don't reach.

After many years, Ernest Hekkanen is beginning to get the recognition he deserves. His best stories are tough, and he uses them as hammers to pound out his characters, to find the tenderness underneath. After taking his characters through a rough rural landscape, he goes straight for the emotional centre. Hekkanen is especially strong on the relationships between sons and fathers. The pain and the pleasure found in carnivals, the failure of a chicken ranch, a son's refusal to listen to painfully accumulated wisdom — all are dealt with in well-shaped stories.

Considering these three collections as past, present, and future, one fact emerges clearly. The short story is one of Canada's most interesting and innovative

prose forms. Some might be better off embalmed, some are fabulous, and some just might belong to the emperor. □

## REVIEW

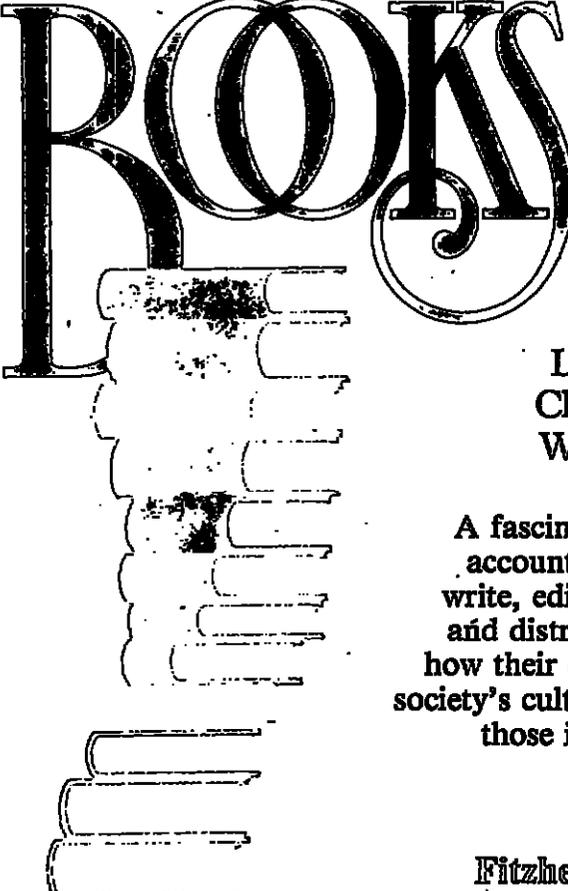
# Beyond the Point

By DON OFFICER

All in Good Time, by Don Gutteridge, Black Moss Press, 159 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88753 072 9).

Platonic Love, by Scott Watson, New Star Books, 105 pages, \$6.25 paper (ISBN 0 919888 41 0).

LIKE DON GUTTERIDGE'S first novel, *Bus-Ride*, this second one concerns a mythical Ontario village on the Point, circumscribed by the City, and perched



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on the Lake close by America. *All in Good Time* begins about six years later than *Bus-Ride* and covers one cathartic week near the end of the Second World War, which was about to begin as the previous novel was closing. The view from the Point in 1945 is somewhat altered.

War has changed life in the village. Most of the hockey team is overseas. Patriotism and politics (an obsequious handmaiden) now dominate the scene. No longer does Gutteridge take delight in prurient espial upon the fantasies and enactments of village wooing. The fewer wartime couplings are tainted by frustration and irony. Perhaps it is the discipline of Mars.

Actually, Gutteridge has changed more than his village. Around and between his novels he has published a series of book-length poems — *Coppermine*, *Borderlands*, *Tecumseh*, and *A True History of Lambton County* — whose subjects and their treatments disclose significant trends in his writing. In intense but often digressive lyrical episodes he works out obsessions that would otherwise recur to haunt, probably in some anti-creative form. At the same time he demonstrates an appetite for the historical fact and an aptitude for illuminating it. In this respect he somewhat resembles E.J. Pratt as a narrative poet.

But suppose for a minute that the Village does exist, and it does at least embody some demographic or historical foothold secured by Gutteridge's imagination. Even that supposition would not make this second book, as the promotional blurb on its back cover declares, a sequel to the first.

His qualities as a writer might have remained in permanent, perfect counterbalance had he not decided to venture into fiction. Great poetry may be timeless, but nearly all poetry, except for the incidental romance of place, is spaceless. Poetic intensity derives partly from an ambiguity of location that it shares with the realms of dream and trance. Fiction extends no similar option. Locale must be determined and then point of view. And in modern times we ask, Is the point of view inner or outer?

Which is why *All in Good Time* is not a true sequel to *Bus-Ride*. In the earlier work Gutteridge offered a view of the Point through the consciousness of his characters. In *All in Good Time* he gives us the village globally, but fragmentedly, from without. We do not, for instance, share Reeve Macintosh's frequent discomforts — instead we laugh at his buffoonery. Gutteridge's decision to move from an inner view to an outer point of view in his second novel has created a number of unnecessary dif-

ficulties that he has not been able to overcome.

His chief difficulties are of context and authenticity. He is much more comfortable with the purely personal details than with the political or social circumstances of his characters. The events of the fateful week during which the story transpires depend mightily upon political promises, machinations, and outcomes only sketchily introduced. The impending merger of the Point with the City, and the implications of the promises extended to the reeve, remain dim, and their significance to the story stays murky. There is also a disturbing dissonance between character and action. Gutteridge is fond of coincidence as a device and often blends it with irony to considerable effect. However, he is frequently led to build elaborate characterizations that can scarcely be exemplified in the sudden sweeps of action.

As for authenticity, the following highlights the problem: "When William Dougall MacAdorey pronounced the word 'aloof,' one listened, mesmerized by the Scottish burr (only slightly affected after four generations) . . ." After two generations a burr would be affectation. After four, it is burlesque. The novel suffers from numerous instances of this kind of awkward implausibility. Individually they are forgivable, but collectively they undermine credibility.

Eventually students may be exhorted to read *All in Good Time* as an example of a writer's transitional phase. I believe Gutteridge's next novel will resolve most of the problems this one presents.

I did not find the explicit homosexuality in Scott Watson's *Platonic Love* offensive, but I was offended by the manner in which he reduces the real person to an object of his desire, and then to a mere object of contemplation. At one point, in the last of the three tales that comprise the book, Watson as narrator criticizes Christopher Isherwood for writing a dishonest book about a gay love affair. But Watson appears to deny other kinds of truth by omission. The relationships he describes in his "three tales of language and desire" are cold, shallow, and obsessive.

Nor is there any respite in the writing. Here is the kind of prose Watson treats us to:

The smoke which curled lazily from all the cigarettes froze in its tracks, as though the wispy ribbons had hesitated in the shape of question marks, asking whether it would be possible to solidify and clang to the floor or whether they should obey, as usual, the laws of natural science and disperse.

Watson's imagination may be inventive, but it is easily distracted. □

# Of ice and men

By JOHN T.D. KEYES

*The Game of Our Lives*, by Peter Gzowski, McClelland & Stewart, 278 pages, \$13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 3741 4).

GRACING THE front cover of *The Game of Our Lives* is Ken Danby's water-colour, *Sketch for Lacing Up*; on the back cover is a picture of author Peter Gzowski in an Edmonton Oiler uniform; and the 278 pages in between can't quite decide what they are supposed to be: an accurate but nostalgic and evocative history of hockey, one man's year-long night out with the boys, or both.

In the summer of 1980, says Gzowski, the sport needed looking into, and he was determined to be the one to do it. "In a way," he writes, "I would be . . . trying to look from the perspective of middle age at the game of my boyhood. But at the same time I might be able to find out something about the heroes of the new game, and the world in which they operated." With that motive in mind, Gzowski approached Edmonton Oiler superstar Wayne Gretzky, then team owner Peter Pocklington, and before long he was travelling with the team for a full season's worth of NHL games.

Well, almost a full season. For Gzowski, it seems, hockey last year ended when the New York Islanders eliminated the Oilers in the playoff quarter-finals. As fans continued to watch the semi-finals and finals, Gzowski went off, one presumes, to write his book, concluding it with elegiac prose befitting a year on the road with a by-then-beloved group of young men. Of the team-photo session the day after their elimination he notes that, "for the men looking into the lens, the occasion marked the end of a time in their lives. And that time, with all its frustrations, disappointments, and adventures, and — gilded by the unforgettable achievements of the still-innocent young superstar who had played among them — with its ultimately happy end, was now a part of the history of their game."

Ultimately happy end? The Oilers lost in the quarter-finals. This may not have mattered to Gzowski (after all, he had envisioned the book as being framed

around the team's performance), but the facts of the matter call into question the whole "Cinderella Team" school of sportswriting that Gzowski, who's capable of extremely graceful but restrained journalism, has mastered and displayed, but should have reconsidered in this case.

The "year in the life" approach is perfectly acceptable, but last year's Oilers were, ultimately, simply one of 21 teams. It wasn't their first year in the league, nor was it their first year with Wayne Gretzky. Their surprising victory over Montreal in the preliminary round of the playoffs was simply that — surprising — and it is not about to transform the sport (if anything it will merely transform Montreal). To make, through subtly idolatrous prose, more of the Oilers' performance than it really was is to wander into Cinderella territory. And for that you have to have a Cinderella who at least made it to the ball and danced with the prince — as did, say, the 1967-68 St. Louis Blues, who in their first year in the NHL made it to the *finals* and went cheek-to-cheek with the Canadiens.

But who would want to read a book about the 1967-68 St. Louis Blues? This raises another loophole in pinning a sports book to a team's single-season performance: by the time it arrives in the book stores it seems old hat. Already this year, for example, the Oilers got off to an unprecedented fast start, and fans are waiting for Gretzky not just to win the scoring championship, but to score 50 goals at a record clip.

Given all this, Gzowski has provided the reader with everything he would ever want to know about the 1980-81 Oilers. With a deft and observant touch, he paints thumbnail sketches of each player: of Brett Callighen, No. 18 and the team's player representative, he writes, "His nickname, Key, refers not to this position but is an abbreviation of Monkey, and was given him in tribute to a jaw so simian as to be almost beautiful; Key does commercials on Edmonton TV." Answering the journalistic requirement of being on the inside of things whenever possible, he assumes the role of team stick-boy and subjects himself to the good-natured bantering of the players. There are insights into the corporate games played by owner Peter Pocklington and, at the other end of the scale, the distress caused to players by trades, or to coaches by dismissal or the Damocletian threat of it.

He even goes so far as to provide paragraphs here and there of play-by-play, though this is a less than satisfying component of the book. There's little true excitement to be gleaned from: "Almost as soon as the teams are back

on the ice, Dave Lumley gets his fourth goal of the year to bring them within a goal. Wilf Paiement of the Leafs makes it 4-2, but less than a minute later, Kurri finishes off a snappy passing play from Price and Callighen. 4-3. Then Doug Hicks breaks up a Toronto play. . . ." All this really proves is that Gzowski was there, and that's rather superfluous. The whole *book* proves that Gzowski was there.

Also sprinkled throughout *The Game of Our Lives* is Gzowski's abbreviated history of hockey, provided in dollops that touch on turning points and key contributions by players. They serve their purpose (he could hardly have called the book what he did without mentioning Howie Morenz, Rocket Richard, Bobby Orr, *et al.*), but they also allow him to wax eloquent about Wayne Gretzky — undeniably the most important hockey player today. (It's probably safe to say that had Gretzky played for Washington last year, this book would have been framed around the Capitals.) Perhaps most important of all, the history sets the stage for Gzowski's best writing — when he talks about what the game has meant to him over the years.

Here, his work is first-class. To a young boy (Gzowski grew up in Galt, Ont.) a rink is any piece of frozen water larger than a puck, and Gzowski speaks to generations of children for whom winter was the only season worth living for. "Swapping memories in later years," he writes, "I would sometimes imagine one great outdoor hockey game, stretching from just inside the Rockies to the shores of the Atlantic, detouring around the too temperate climate of a few of the bigger cities. Or, perhaps, a hundred thousand simultaneous games, all overlapping as our own used to overlap at Dickson Park, kept separate only by the carved initials, inlaid in snow, on our pucks."

Gzowski simply loves hockey, and one gathers that — whatever happens to the sport — he will always be able to summon such memories, rather as a young fan will shuffle and reshuffle his hockey cards, returning inevitably to his one, favourite hero. When all is said and done, Gzowski might even prefer to fondle the dog-eared deck: for this book, he entered a world that was really quite different from the frozen rink in Galt. Watching the Oilers at practice he writes, somewhat wistfully: "They are like show animals . . . always on parade and always kept separate from their judges. The game they play is the game all of us played, but the game of our lives is the business of theirs, and they are a long, long way from Dickson Park." □

## For whom the Bill tolls

By PAUL WILSON

**Fragile Freedoms: Human Rights and Dissent in Canada**, by Thomas R. Berger, Clarke Irwin, 298 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7720 1358 6).

THOMAS BERGER'S *Fragile Freedoms*, which argues persuasively for the entrenchment of the fullest possible charter of rights in the new Canadian constitution, is a timely, lucid, and humane contribution to our apparently endless and frequently confusing constitutional debate. It is especially relevant now, when the first ministers appear to have treated the rights of some groups as little more than bargaining cards in the game of carving out their spheres of political influence.

Berger is no stranger to public debate on human rights and constitutional law. He has served on the Supreme Court of British Columbia for a decade (he was only 33 when first appointed), and before that, as a practising lawyer, he frequently acted on behalf of native peoples in land claims cases. In addition to two brief terms in both the B.C. and federal legislatures, he has headed several royal commissions, most notably the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry. The report of his findings became the best-selling government document in Canadian history.

*Fragile Freedoms* is an often disturbing excursion into our past. Beginning with the expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in the 17th century, Berger examines eight different episodes in which the rights, and sometimes even the existence, of a certain minority have been threatened by government indifference or hostility, usually with the tacit or open support of the majority. Some of the events, such as the defeat of the Metis under Louis Riel, the dispersal of the Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, the October Crisis of 1970, and the struggles of the native peoples, especially in the last decade, for recognition of their aboriginal rights, will be familiar to readers, at least in their broad outlines. Others, such as the separate school crises in Ontario and Manitoba that plagued the incumbency of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, or attempts to

suppress the Communist party and the Jehovah's Witnesses, may be less so.

Each of the studies is a small masterpiece in the art of concise, detailed historical exposition and clear, comprehensible legal argument, and their combined effect is to reveal how a particularly Canadian slant on human rights has evolved, literally through trial and error, over the decades. His position is that entrenched human rights are essential to protect the existence of minority groups and dissent, and that they, in turn, are essential to the well-being of the country because they are the source of diversity and change. The arbitration of these rights, he feels, is too important to be left to governments, with their miserable record of trampling on those rights in the name of the majority. "Judges may not always be wiser than politicians," he says, "but they should be able to stand more firmly against angry winds blowing in the streets."

One of the main heroes of Berger's story — and there have been many great defenders of human rights in Canada, most of them unsung — is Justice Ivan Rand, who was serving on the Supreme Court when the Witnesses' appeals were heard in the 1950s. Rand's decisions, from which Berger quotes liberally, are the best arguments in the book for leaving final arbitration to the courts.

Berger's chapter on aboriginal rights is one of the most interesting, probably because he has been personally involved in the question. Using land claims by the Nishga Indians of B.C. as an example, he explains the origins of the notion of aboriginal title, by which the British government recognized in law the Indians' prior ownership of their land. In the 1970s, native peoples with whom no treaty had ever been made (the Nishgas fall into that category) began turning the notion of aboriginal title to their own advantage in true dissident fashion to compel settlement with the government. The chapter is a remarkable and moving account of how the instrument of law may be used to achieve a justice so fundamental it is almost beyond granting.

My only quarrel with Berger's general approach is that he identifies the notion of diversity too closely with minorities and their rights. Minority groups are not the only source of diversity in society, and government disregard for those rights is not the only danger we face from that quarter. There was something in his argument that made me feel as though stressing individual rights was somehow not in the Canadian grain, although I doubt that was his intention.

I have no quarrel, however, with Berger's basic political philosophy, which is that the final form of a society

is never fixed, and that the entrenchment of rights is one way of helping to ensure (there is no ultimate guarantee except our own willingness to stand behind those principles with our lives) that a uniquely Canadian blend of identities, both individual and collective, will flourish. "It is not the function of the government to keep the citizen from falling into error," he says. "It is the function of the citizen to keep the government from falling into error." That is a statement worthy to have come from the pen of a Vaclav Havel or a Sakharov, and worthy to be carved in stone over the entrance to every legislature in the country. □

## REVIEW

## In sickness and in health

By STEPHEN DALE

**Rogues, Rebels and Geniuses: The Story of Canadian Medicine**, by Donald Jack, illustrated, Doubleday, 664 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 15575 1).

THE ARCH FOE of the art of healing, contends Donald Jack in *Rogues, Rebels and Geniuses*, is the dogmatic ignorance that seems to have plagued mankind from its earliest history. Out of all the varied incidents and histories in this rambling, colossal book, there is one story that recurs in various guises: that of the pioneering doctor butting heads with an establishment steeped in preconception and falsehood.

One early example is the case of a brilliant but misinformed healer named Galen, who confidently asserted that women have not one, but two uterine cavities. His imaginings held as fact from 200 A.D. until the Renaissance, when the renegade practitioner Vesalius finally set the record straight. But even Vesalius had to skirt social taboos, risking excommunication and hell-fire by practising dissection.

Medical advances in Canada seem also to have been won through hard-fought struggles against officialdom and accepted norms of the day. Dentist Horace Wells contributed to the development of modern anaesthesia with his

discovery that nitrous oxide (laughing gas) could be used to deaden pain, but he was laughed into obscurity by his peers, who dismissed him as a fanatical crank. Wells, embittered and insane after his humiliation, committed suicide.

Another example of how innovations first meet ridicule is the case of Dr. Hans Selye, the pioneer researcher in the area of stress. Though he was condemned for his belief that a "non-specific disorder" could produce symptoms of illness, Selye continued to experiment by injecting animals with toxins. His overseer counselled him to "realize what you are doing before it is too late. You have now decided to spend your entire life studying the pharmacology of dirt." Selye's experiments later proved to be important to tension-loaded 20th-century man.

Dr. Morton Shulman, Metro Toronto's chief coroner during the mid-1950s, found himself up against another kind of roadblock, this one political. In the course of a crusade against "cancer quacks," Shulman took on a Dr. Hett, who charged exorbitant sums for injections of a supposed cancer cure. The College of Physicians and Surgeons analyzed the formula and found it to be a mixture of opium and liver. Hett's licence was ordered revoked, but the order was abandoned when Hett's personal friend, then-Premier Mitchell Hepburn, threatened to strip the College of its licensing powers.

Throughout these and many other examples Donald Jack, a doctor's son himself, holds the banner high for that special character, the maverick who will stick to his guns in spite of a complacent society. Jack dedicates his book "to the glory of the independent spirit, and to the progress of medicine." For him the two are the same, for medicine cannot proceed if it is fettered to the norms of the day, to accepted ideas and political and religious dogma. The ultimate significance of this "independent spirit" is not just more advanced and conscientious medical treatment, says Jack, but a new enlightenment in our social attitudes and hence our way of life. For example:

Only a few decades ago, baby girls, if they survived the contemporary fevers, were indoctrinated into sexual inferiority; in adolescence educated into ignorance and shame of their own bodies; in young womanhood psychologically impaired by political, religious and medical moralists. In marriage their instincts were artificially suppressed, in maturity they were encouraged to think of themselves as physically inferior because of their monthly "illness" or the discomforts associated with child-bearing; in their thirties they were encouraged to withdraw still further

from reality by hysteria or fainting; in late middle age they were expected to resign themselves to bodily decay; and in death they were sentimentalized.

Jack maintains that, by contrast:

Today, through drugs and hygiene, contraceptives and endocrinology, diet and genetics, vitamins and exercise, and many other positive ways, medicine can keep a woman looking and feeling fit past middle age; keep her self and her spirits healthy well beyond the old span of three score years and ten; and encourage her to be proud of her body and determined to be the mistress of its fate.

Despite an emphasis on the progressive aspects of medicine, the typical doctor in *Rogues, Rebels and Geniuses* is neither the harbinger of social change nor the genius of technological advancement. More often he is the simple practitioner who has had to make do with whatever technology is available to him. But it is in the area where medicine encompasses broad moral and social implications that the book gets hot. In his account of the work of Dr. Guy Richmond, who has studied social deviants, the author contends that "the 21st-century reader will look back on our treatment of the social offender with the same kind of wonderment as we today read of the unenlightened treatment of the mentally sick in earlier centuries." In dealing with Montreal abortionist Dr. Henry Morgentaler and his clash with the law, Jack makes it clear whose side he is on: "Given the history of women's rights in the 20th century, it was surprising that it was a man rather than a woman who was prepared to sacrifice himself on behalf of women and their struggle against male arrogance in the political, judicial, ecclesiastical and medical professions, over their rights to control their own bodies. That he was prepared to go to jail for it, was an even greater



demonstration of courage, considering how much he had already suffered in prison under Nazi thralldom."

Best known for his series of comic novels *The Bandy Papers*, set in the First World War, Donald Jack has harnessed his penchant for history, confined his humour to brief asides, and come up with a much more substantial book. The research is extensive, and the prose, at best, is gutsy. For the student of Canadian history, it provides an interesting angle on the progress of our society; for the person interested in medicine, it deserves to become a life-long companion. □

## REVIEW

# Hawks and pidgins

By MICHEL HORN

*The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam 1945-1975*, by Michael Maclear, Methuen, illustrated, 368 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 95170 6).

THE IMAGES OF Vietnam are with us still. As Michael Maclear writes in introducing his book, "Vietnam is unique as the first television war." For years Americans and others watched, many with growing horror, as television newscasts bore witness to the death and destruction in that distant country.

Wars give birth to television series; series spawn books. *The Ten Thousand Day War* is based on the acclaimed series of the same title. It relies heavily on interviews, both with prominent public figures and unknown participants. It does not claim to be a history or definitive record; it seeks to be "a compilation of first hand testimony." Although Maclear concedes that much of that testimony is self-serving, his book "aims to clarify, not judge, the statements made." I sensed that Maclear is critical of U.S. policy concerning Vietnam, but he never assesses it directly.

Readers who know little about the war will find this book useful. The steps on the road to the undeclared war in the 1960s get due attention, as do the major events in the conflict, its impact on U.S. politics, and the reluctant approaches to eventual American withdrawal in 1973.

The book is at its best as an outline of events, but makes little attempt to analyze them. Maclear is determined to give space to all opinions, and he leaves his readers to make whatever judgements they like. Possibly he is unwilling to take a critical view of cold-war mythology at a time when that mythology is regaining believers, and when some of its true believers, such as Secretary of State Alexander Haig, enjoy more power than they have ever had before.

As one might expect from so good a reporter as Maclear, factual and editorial errors are few. It must be noted, however, that John Foster Dulles was not secretary of state in 1950, that there is no McAlister University in St. Paul, Minnesota (there is a Macalester College), and that Richard Nixon was vice-president for eight not seven years. It would have been helpful had Maclear included the terms of the Geneva Accords of 1954.

The concern for factual accuracy is not matched by a concern for style. Not for several years have I read a book so badly written. Lyndon Johnson is "the most grass roots of presidents"; Washington looks "for simplistic or easy way out solutions." President Johnson is said in 1968 to have "faced the double election year dilemma of choosing between escalation or what might seem retreat. Whichever fork in the road he took, he needed the strongest support." His dilemma, of course, was single, and while forks in roads present occasions for choice one can hardly choose the fork. However, Johnson apparently opted simultaneously for two directions: "the fork in the road had been faced, and chosen."

Lines like the following are not uncommon: "Vietnam is a continuing urgency, petrifying the future. Some Americans fear its heat re-erupting in every brushfire. Some, conversely, fear a war-seared pacifist America inviting its own aches." Evidently Maclear has trouble with similes and metaphors. Of Ho Chi Minh he writes: "Although his country was only a slight tuft on the chin of China, as sparse and straggling as Ho's beard, he and his people had the reputation of an Asian Samson, again and again displaying legendary strength." Well, was his hair thick? And who was the Asian Delilah? After reading this early passage I wished that Maclear had known how to let a misbegotten figure of speech die quietly. It was not the last time I made this wish.

There are few typographical errors in the book, but I did learn to my amusement that one Vietnam veteran "knew a little pigeon [sic] Vietnamese." It struck me that much of the volume is written in a sort of pidgin English that may have

sounded fine on TV but looks all wrong in print. Its use detracts from a generally interesting book. □

## REVIEW

# Good things grow

By DONALD SWAINSON

**The Politics of Federalism: Ontario's Relations with the Federal Government, 1867-1942**, by Christopher Armstrong, University of Toronto Press, 279 pages, \$25.00 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2434 3).

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE governments of Canada and Ontario have often been tortured and nasty. Christopher Armstrong has performed a signal service in presenting us with a meticulously researched, attractively organized, and well-written account of this relationship from 1867 to the demise of the tacky government of Mitchell Hepburn in 1942.

*The Politics of Federalism* is a timely book. Since the election of 1980, Canadian politics has been convulsed by two concerns: the attempt by the federal government to give us fundamental constitutional reform, and the federal resolve to provide Canada with a national energy policy that will change ownership, pricing, and supply patterns in the oil and gas sectors. Both initiatives have been vehemently opposed by several provinces.

We have heard much about resource ownership and management, the confederation agreement, patriation, the role of provinces in constitutional amendment, and provincial (as opposed to national) rights. In short, for months Canadians have indulged in a spirited debate about the role of the national government and the nature of our constitution. To the surprise of many, we have been excited by the debate. It is of fundamental importance; it is really an argument about the nature of our country. What kind of Canada do we want? How do we wish to distribute the immense wealth that cartel-dictated prices for hydrocarbons are providing to the treasuries of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia? Should Ottawa

be the main player in Confederation, or should we follow the policy line of premiers Peckford, Lévesque, and Lougheed and establish a denary version of the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary?

One of the main virtues of Professor Armstrong's book is that it demonstrates that strident premiers, provincial alienation, threats of secession, and vicious federal-provincial fights over resource control and taxation jurisdiction have been with us for a long time. For much of the history of Canada since 1867 the centre of the conflict has been in Ontario. As Armstrong points out, the provincial rights movement was "usually headed by Ontario . . ." So much for the current Western view that historically Canadian public policy has been dominated by an alliance of Ontario and Quebec against the provinces in the East and West.

At the heart of Ontario's public policy during Armstrong's study period has been provincial rights. Regardless of party affiliation, the premiers of Ontario have espoused that doctrine and battled Ottawa. Oliver Mowat, as a father of Confederation, was one of those responsible for the British North America Act that concentrated vast authority in Ottawa. But only a few years later, in a dispute with Ottawa over the province's western border, he threatened secession: "If they could only maintain Confederation by giving up half of their Province, then Confederation must go . . ."

It was the influence of Premier Howard Ferguson, one of William Davis's Tory predecessors that secured recognition of the principle that "all constitutional changes would require provincial approval." That alleged rule has been heavily disputed, but until recently Ontario operated as though it were a fixed constitutional convention. In 1937, Ontario was committed to this position on natural resources: "The Dominion Government by its corporation tax on the profits of mining and lumbering has levied a tax that belongs to the provinces, and, therefore, disregards the intention of Confederation that the natural resources should be the particular property of the provinces and that any benefit that should be derived therefrom should flow to the provinces." That was Mitch Hepburn's Liberal provincial government speaking to Mackenzie King's Liberal federal government.

It is not necessarily a comfort to know that our current problems are as old as the federation, that they have divided parties in the past, and that they are at the root of much of our regional rancour. However, it is useful to remember that within our federation economic

disputes have generated as much heat as has cultural conflict. The Canadian federal structure was able to deal with such problems in the past; it will almost certainly continue to cope.

Professor Armstrong ends his story in 1942, just before George Drew established the Tory dynasty that still rules Ontario. Drew and his successors adhered to the traditional policy of provincial rights, and nobody assaulted Ottawa with finer hammer blows than George Drew. Lately that has changed, and our present provincial government has abandoned provincial rights and become Ottawa's closest and most important ally. Why has that happened? Professor Armstrong cannot be blamed for not dealing with this question: a proper answer would require a major independent study. Recent Ontario policy shifts concerning federal-provincial relations constitute one of the great discontinuities in Ontario's public policy. A successor volume to *The Politics of Federalism* is badly needed. □

## REVIEW

# As it happened

By MARIA HORVATH

*Where Were You? Memorable Events of the Twentieth Century*, by Sandra Martin and Roger Hall, Methuen, illustrated, 238 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 453 94310 X).

AT FIRST GLANCE the idea seems to be a clever one: select the most important events of the century, ask some famous people where they were at the time, and publish their recollections as a sort of oral history by the *Who's Who*. At least that was the idea behind *Where Were You?* Unfortunately, the finished book is disappointing.

Martin and Hall worked hard to produce this book, writing to at least 1,000 famous people, compiling the more than 300 answers they received, and supplementing those responses with lengthy introductions and even more quotes culled from books and periodicals. They chose the eight most frequently cited events, including the 1918 Armistice, the 1929 Wall Street Crash, the abdication of

Edward VIII in 1936, highlights of the Second World War, flare-ups during the Cold War, and John Kennedy's assassination.

As one reads *Where Were You?*, however, one gets the feeling that the authors had to make the best of a bad situation when the responses they received didn't fulfil the original vision of the book. The result is that often the only connection between an event and the celebrity quoted seems to be that he was alive at the time. For example, there's no reason to expect Benjamin Spock to have anything interesting to say about Edward VIII's abdication. And he doesn't. Yet he is quoted as saying that it was an event "of no importance, about which I didn't have to take sides." The acerbic Gore Vidal shows that he too can be as boring as a mere mortal: during a visit to London in 1939, "I stood in front of 10 Downing Street and watched Neville Chamberlain come out; he waved to a small crowd which moaned curiously instead of cheering, got into his car and drove to Parliament to say that war was at hand. Two days later came the declaration. He looked to me like a butler in an MGM film; the head was too small for the body."

Not all the remembrances reported are so banal. Some appear sharp and perceptive. However, the authors' failure to include endnotes indicating the dates and sources of quotes sometimes leaves the reader wondering which ones are brilliant prophecies, which are intelligent observations, and which are merely the products of hindsight.

As a "popular oral history" the book has other important shortcomings. First, quotes make up a mere one-third of the text while almost two-thirds, the narrative, is devoted to putting the quotes into context. Second, the views collected too often provide only one vantage point on a given historic event. Britain's declaration of war in 1939, for instance, is covered by quotes mainly from Britons and North Americans. The reaction of the Germans is included only in a note by the British ambassador in Berlin. Third, the book fails to cover any one event comprehensively.

The authors also make some confusing statements. For example, in discussing the importance of radio during the 1938 Munich summit, where the British and French betrayed and surrendered Czechoslovakia to the Nazis, they say: "Radio brought the sound and the tone of Hitler's fevered exhortations, Mussolini's shameless bombast, and Chamberlain's wearisome accommodations right into people's living rooms. Munich demonstrated as never before radio's ability to capture and sway a mass audience. A month later the

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## The outside track

By JUDY MARGOLIS

**Unfinished Business: An Autobiography**, by W. Gunther Plaut, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 374 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919630 41 3).

GUNTHER PLAUT IS one of Canadian Jewry's most outstanding spokesmen and political activists. Senior scholar of Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple, human rights advocate, he is regarded by many as Canada's chief rabbi. One might expect his memoirs to be as charming, congenial, and erudite as the man himself. Instead, *Unfinished Business* is a plodding, deadly earnest, 374-page *curriculum vitae* in which he offers few opinions and only the scantest of allusions to the people who surely must have had a hand in shaping his life.

It is a shame, really, that at age 68 he is intent on baring nothing more than his public face. He might least have taken advantage of the opportunity an autobiography affords to air differences, to vindicate or, if need be, to vilify. But as he sees it, "At best, we are all footnotes to history, and one footnote more or less will not matter."

On the other hand, Rabbi Plaut's rambling account of his deeds may reveal more of himself than he knows. On the surface he would appear to be a passionless, emotionally detached man. Nevertheless, he seems to enjoy dabbling in a little myth making. In the way he characterizes himself, one can detect the archetype of the wandering Jew — the objective outsider who is both participant and spectator. A scholarly, quiet man, he tells us that he has always felt as though he lived "suspended in a vacuum between solitude and company, between introversion and extroversion." As he once told a congregation, "If Jews are lonely people, if they are perushim [set apart], then the rabbis . . . who serve them are even more set apart."

Such objectivity, however, exacts a stiff price, a price Plaut seems only too happy to pay: it means living with the sense of never truly belonging to one congregation, one community, or one country. At the end of his autobiography, after he has told all he cares to tell, he asks, "Who then am I Where do I fit the scale of commonly accepted

descriptions? Nationality will not describe me. Jew, German, American, Canadian? All of these, in varying proportions, have a share in my make-up."

But he's not being entirely objective, despite the romantic image he creates for himself. The notion that he finds so terribly difficult to accept is that he is no more or less than the product of history, of the centuries-old cultural heritage that spawned him. Whatever his inner struggles to achieve his own unique sense of identity, or the feelings of alienation and guilt he may have suffered as a Jew who left his native Germany before the Holocaust, he remains, above all, a German Jew in exile. Whether he knows it or not — and I suspect he does — his infatuation with his homeland is a passion, however irrational, that he cannot deny.

It was only chance that brought him to the United States in 1935 to study as a rabbi; only chance spared him when he returned to Germany, in the summer of 1937, at his mother's bidding. Hard as it is for many Eastern European Jews to understand, Plaut and his family were such hard-core Germans that, despite the Nazi party's growing stranglehold on liberal ideals, they thought it would all blow over, as it had in the past.

After all, that was the optimistic stance taken by many educated German Jews, particularly the followers of Reform Judaism, a movement about which Plaut tells us very little. Founded early in the 19th century, its intention was to wed liberal and spiritual ideals into a religion of reason that, its early proponents thought, would speed up the process of assimilation and promote ecumenism. To this day, Rabbi Plaut, optimist and pessimist both, still lives by those humanely rational principles, the undeniable legacy of his German heritage.

For him, "the world's essence" is "sustained in the tension of opposites," and God, the great synthesizer, is "He who holds this impossible structure in possible balance." Thus, no matter how many humiliations and setbacks the Jewish community suffers in its bid to stamp out intolerance, nothing can dissuade Plaut from taking a leading role. He wisely recognizes that he can neither betray nor reject his inescapable Jewish heritage, a message that comes across most strongly in his fiction. In the didactic, deterministic tales published in *Hanging Threads* (1978), Plaut dramatizes his most deeply felt belief: that good cannot exist without evil.

Though Rabbi Plaut could be dismissed as a hopeless romantic, I think that would be grossly unfair. In any reckoning, what cannot be overlooked are his many accomplishments, the latest one

full impact of that dramatic, day-by-day coverage reverberated throughout the United States when, on the night before Halloween, a radio dramatization of H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* gripped a war-scared, depression-weary American public."

Good editing would have caught that *non sequitur* as well as other mistakes in the book, such as ". . . the downfall of the late Shah of Iran in 1979 — an event that had been flashed around the globe by satellite with the result that, because of time differences, the news was known in some parts of the world before it happened." We know what the authors mean to say, but they certainly didn't say it.

One also wonders why they wrote this: "Now Suez and Hungary shared the front pages and the editorial columns [during October, 1956], and *Time* called the ongoing events a 'World Crisis.' The inside pages, though, were crammed with the lavish bounty of the American Dream: ads for the new finned '57 model cars, reviews of Maria Callas at the Met . . . and notices for films . . ." Are they implying that newspapers should exclude ads on those days with banner headlines on the front page?

This book would have been much improved had the editor included an index, corrected the confusion between "flout" and "flaunt," and prevented such hyperbole as "a pall of ominous silence hung over North America and Europe" (on the morning of the Wall Street Crash). He should have also stopped Martin and Hall from discovering so much "irony" in those historic events. Irony, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "a condition of affairs or events of a character opposite to what was, or might naturally be, expected; a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things." Mere coincidences or seemingly similar events are not examples of irony.

*Where Were You?* does contain some interesting facts. It reveals, for example, that "a shaken, tearful Nikita Khrushchev was the first to sign" the condolence book at the American Embassy in Moscow after John Kennedy's assassination. And Soviet radio "played dirges while the television network carried the funeral, including the service in the church." There are enough such tidbits for an interesting television program or magazine article. Not enough, however, for the more permanent bindings of a book. □



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being his Torah commentary, a project that has not been undertaken for 300 years. As his autobiography indicates, ultimately he would prefer that history judge him on the basis of his deeds, not just his words. □

## REVIEW

# Love amid the ruins

By ROWLAND LORIMER

*Mentely Handicapped Love*, by Marie Putman, Harbour Publishing, 42 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 920090 03 0).

THE PUBLICATION OF *Mentely Handicapped Love* is the publishing event of the past year, the Year of the Disabled. It is not one of those books that play on one's sense of pity or horror or tragedy. Nor is it a project that should be considered only to have relevance to the disabled. It is a marvellous story of the life and loves of Marie Putman, the 20-year-old author, a girl "born with brain damage," as she says, and classified by the experts as having "mild to moderate" retardation.

One rainy day in 1979 *Raincoat Chronicles* publisher Howard White received a used 9" x 12" manilla envelope in the mail. Inside were 39 loose-leaf pages of laboured printing, sometimes in pencil, sometimes in blue ballpoint, and sometimes in purple or red crayon. "Chapter 1" began:

Dear Staff,

Here story for you to printed in a book.

By Marie Putman. Mentely Handicapped child.

It called Mentely handicapped Love. This story is true.

The manuscript ended with the same directness:

Sunset Street is the boogie disco now.  
My boyfriends are in love with me now.  
Surrey is big place now.

Mother went to go shopping now.  
Nowhere is not nice to be lost.

I call Linda now. Someday, she got it now. Stephen is here now.

Soon it was going out now.

I had my loves.

"When we decided Marie's manu-

script should be published," White writes in the foreword, "we based our decision on exactly the same criteria that would be used for the most sophisticated writing: we found it a thoroughly edifying and moving experience to read."

Marie Putman, working without benefit of a ghost writer nor editorial guidance, places her world on view: her family, her friends, her school, and Harlequin romances. The Harlequins provide the overall structure for her work. The classroom and her parents' kitchen are the settings of her teenage concerns, the luscious joys and sorrows of adolescence. Her drive to tell a story, her boundless energy and appetite for life are her engagement.

Her world is one of frankness and unself-consciousness; where she and her characters fall in and out of love with reckless abandon. The beauty of it all, the beauty of her, is a complete lack of suffering over the consequences of such a style of living. It is a condition devoutly to be wished. She has few long-term expectations from life and sees few in others. She suffers no remorse for what the world has dished out to her, or

at least none she dwells upon.

As her story — a mixture of truth and fiction — unfolds, we are treated to what society has to offer to someone free of the worries that adults try daily to impose on the consciousness of adolescents. She shows Salinger's characters to be neurotic shadows of adults reconceived as adolescents: what adults hope them to be if they must be misfits. She outstrips the psychologists' romantics, the created Charlies and Elephant Men, and provides a path out of nothingness.

She also manages to absolve us of our running guilt for our treatment of her people so well that her work should take its place in every social worker's and psychologist's education. At the same time she pares from us the excuses we construct for enticing such people into discovering their unspoken difference, an enticement so charged that they always know they are tainted but never know by what.

For the theoretical psychologist she reopens basic questions. What is the nature of brain functioning? What is intelligence and its relation to language? And, indeed, what makes a writer? □

## ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

The problem of prestige, and other persuasive reasons why writers should lend an ear to grammarians and avoid further chagrin

By BOB BLACKBURN

MY THANKS TO R.J. Baker of Charlotte-town for keeping me humble by spotting my misuse of *convince* in a recent column. "It does not mean *persuade*," he writes.

I had written of wanting to convince someone to do something, when what I meant was that I wanted to persuade him to do it. Or, possibly, I meant that I wanted to convince him that he should do it. I don't remember. Although I remain neither convinced nor persuaded that there is no circumstance in which it would be permissible to substitute the one for the other, Mr. Baker is absolutely right in taking me to task for that use of *convince*. I am chagrined.

Incidentally, I grew up convinced that *chagrin* meant anger, and went on believing it until an angry editor persuaded me to look it up in the dictionary,

which said: "chagrin — what you are feeling at this moment."

I SEE BY the papers that more and more people are winning prestigious awards. Indeed, the reader might well wonder whether there is any other sort of award. Are there, perhaps, ignominious or degrading awards? There are, of course, booby prizes, but few of their recipients boast about them. Yet there are so many awards being dealt out these days that their winners (or their winners' press agents) feel the need of some qualifying term. It is no longer enough for the CBC, say, to announce that one of its programs has won an international award; it has to be a *prestigious* international award, or else it has to be awarded by a *prestigious* film festival.

It's not a very happy choice. *Prestige*

used to mean deception. In the last century it swung around to mean a blinding or dazzling influence, and then came to refer to the influence or reputation derived from past performance.

*Prestigious* did not change as quickly, and still, to some readers, retains its suggestion of deceit. However, perhaps it's fitting that the word used to describe so many of these awards may suggest that there is something illusory about the honour bestowed on their recipients.

The word seems to have fallen into disuse during the first half of this century. My favourite desk dictionary, which was published in 1954, weighs 10 lb. 3 oz., and defines *myrmecophagus*, does not mention *prestigious*. Since we weren't making much use of it all those years, I suppose we can't complain about the publicists picking it up, but I think: we all ought to regard with suspicion anything that it's used to describe.

I KNOW AT least one editor who froths at the mouth at the sight or sound of *loan* used as a verb, arguing that *loan* is the noun, *lend* is the verb, and that's all there is to it.

The fact is that *loan* was current in England as a verb for centuries. It was eventually replaced by *lend*, but by then *loan* had moved to the United States and taken root there. Its use in that country is virtually unexceptionable, and, given the degree to which Canadian writers have embraced U.S. idiom, we cannot say flatly that it is wrong.

It is, however, wholly unnecessary in any country. It has crept back into England, where Fowler's successors still term it a "needless variation," and it doubtless will outlive us all. I find it has a disagreeable ring. It is widely used on television talk shows by people who give the impression that they believe it lends an air of elegance to their speech. You may, if you wish, deride their pretentiousness, but they are within their rights.

It would be good if all Canadian editors shared my friend's ambition to stamp out the verb *loan*, but such action can be justified on grounds of taste only, not propriety. And, considering the real errors that riddle our speech and writers, such a crusade should not be given the highest priority. I'd prefer, for example, to see a slaughter of sportscasters who say things like "he's hurting real good."

SOME OF OUR most careful writers cannot seem to shake the habit of using *the reason why*, as in "the reason why he's frothing at the mouth is that someone just said *loan* instead of *lend*." I don't know the reason *why* is inserted in such constructions, but it offends me more than *loan*. □

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Unfit, unwell, unreadable: from a gay murder in Montreal to a Trollope's view of theatrical culture in Richmond, B.C.

By DOUGLAS HILL

*Sunday's Child*, by Edward Phillips (McClelland & Stewart, 240 pages, \$14.95 cloth), is hard to classify. It's part thriller, part social satire, part comic love story. Blend with a perceptive gay sensibility, literate prose, and the upper-middle-class Montreal scene; the result is good entertainment.

Geoffrey Chadwick is 50, a lawyer well but quietly out of the closet. It's a new year, he's recently had a long-term love affair disintegrate, his nephew is coming to visit, probably to discuss his own homosexuality, a flamboyant old friend is in town. At loose ends and drinking too much, Geoffrey complicates his life by accidentally murdering a dangerous young trick who tries to assault him. The

main plot line (I think) has to do with disposing of Dale, the dead hustler, whom Geoff has stashed in his aunt's deep-freeze.

Phillips gives his narrator a witty stylish voice, sharply observant, epigrammatic, sexually explicit. For all his urbanity, Geoff tends to be long-winded — some of the dialogue is shaky, verging on incompetent — and the novel bogs down in talk occasionally. It would have profited from some editorial queries and an overall stripping and polishing. If *Sunday's Child* doesn't ever quite figure out what it wants to be, it nevertheless manages both sensitivity and fun, and its angle and achievement are certainly distinctive.

## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE THIRD WORLD

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PERHAPS IT'S TRUE, as was once alleged, that because I don't live and write in Vancouver, or Victoria — or was it Sudbury? — I'm unfit to review any novel not composed and set in downtown Toronto, outer Mississauga, or greater Port Kirwan. Perhaps. I've read *The Potter's Guild*, by William Maranda (Mundi Press, 255 pages, \$6.95 paper), and I definitely feel unfit. Also unwell.

Here is part of the blurb tucked into my copy:

... a novel obsessed with humour and Richmond things and in many instances the reader will know exactly what is being talked about and, in other instances, he will be left wondering just where in Richmond that could be. The characters of the story are recognizable

and many of them you might swear to have met on Richmond streets, but then, that would be quite surprising if you had. The time of the novel is modern, at least 1980, though some of the plots and ideas are as old as the hills. The truth to the writing will rest on how well it can stir the hearts of its readers and we recommend that you purchase a copy to see if there is any truth to the humorous side that Richmond could well do with culture and theatre.

This book is simply unreadable, and were the Christmas spirit not still fresh in me, I'd add unspeakable. I guess there is "truth to the humorous side," etc. If you like your lesser Trollope cut with bad Beatrix Potter, dialogue and titles by Leslie Charteris, by all means have it. Don't phone me, though. □

### ON THE RACKS

## Historical fiction: from tortured frontier women to ladies' tea in the calcified society of Britain's colonial regime

By ANNE COLLINS

I HAVE A confession to make. Here I am, no cighing teenager, having to reveal that I like and in fact sometimes inhale pounds of historical fiction. Not just the acceptable work of Robert Graves, where you can reassure people that you're really learning about patterns of history and the Romans, but also the kind that sells millions and causes the incurious to sneer: *Anthony Adverse*, *Forever Amber*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Shogun*, they're all on my shelf, rather low down, but there, dog-eared and haggard from rereading. I also hate to confess to rereading, but I'm forced to. I'm cut off from 99 per cent of the activity in the historical fiction field because I don't like family sagas, which are usually all about business, and I hate the work of the costume pornographers who ride history's coat-tails to titillate the weary. Imagine then the pleasure it gives me to report that Valerie Fitzgerald's India manuscript has been rescued from her Ottawa storage cupboard, published to fanfare as *Zemindar*, and now is coming out in paperback (Seal, \$9.95).

*Zemindar* owes more to Jane Austen than to *Gone with the Wind*, despite its dust-jacket blurb. It is written with economy and a beauty of metaphor unusual to the overstuffed form.

Though set at the same time and in the same area of India as M.M. Kaye's *Shadow of the Moon* — and offering the same historical analysis of the 1857 sepoy uprising — *Zemindar* is far less "exotic" and by far the better book. Though it is devoted to exploring the character of one unconventional woman and how she came to love, it also illuminates the calcified social order of the British in India, the brave, the foolish, and the despicable, the ladies maintaining their pecking order and tea rituals even under heavy siege at the Lucknow Residency. The nature of martyrdom and the motivations of those who commit atrocities are other themes.

Laura Hewitt is the heroine and narrator of the book, plain but not too plain, orphaned, a perpetual outsider with a piercing eye for inconsistencies in anyone but herself. Her Rochester is Oliver Erskine, not handsome but powerful, the zemindar of the title, the gone-native ruler of a huge feudal estate in Oudh. My one complaint is that their happy ending is too inevitable, but Fitzgerald does work extraordinarily hard to get us there with credibility intact. *Zemindar* is now on my shelf.

Two other Canadian projects are not. Avon and Seal books have been playing

tag with each other in the release of volumes of two "Canadian" historical fiction series. Both were hooplashed as if they were breaking new publishing terrain, when in fact there has been a great deal of fictional exploration of English-French-Indian colonial conflicts. Try Mary Lee Settle's *O Beulah Land* if you want something good.

Seal has three books out by historian Robert Wall: *Blackrobe*, *Bloodbrothers*, and now *Birthright* (Seal, \$3.50). Each is more accomplished than the last, and Wall at least has the right attitude toward the pursuit. He lets you know that he knows something about the period and is confident enough to launch off on educated tangents, like describing the kind of wall-clock a wealthy Bostonian businessman might own or the atmosphere of a Mohawk long-house.

The historical sketching and descriptive writing in *Bitter Shield*, Book 2: *The Story of Canada* by Dennis Adair and Janet Rosenstock (Avon, \$2.95) never rises much above the level of this exciting scene, in which a scout bearing word of the French army approaches Fort Necessity:

Christopher reined in his big mare and paused long enough to greet Militiaman Henry Thomson, who was in charge of the road crew. Thomson stood in the middle of the path. Gist's intelligent-eyed chestnut mare twitched her tail.

Thomson looked up expectantly, petting the mare's nose to calm her.

"What's your news of the Frenchies?"

Exciting stuff. The book is not only a narrative failure, but somehow banally perverse. *Birthright* contains one thwarted rape scene; four brutal rapes and one explicit female torturing are described in *Bitter Shield*. The family, which is supposed to enliven and ennoble the proceedings, is so boring as to be hardly an alternative to the villains. Mathew and Janet Macleod fornicate like Mr. and Mrs. Dullsville, produce children and are each given to exclaiming beamishly while gazing on them, "My own clan!" At least Wall has got the Nowell family successfully loving, hating, and moulding each other, as families are wont to do.

Adair and Rosenstock also display a rather silly interest in the possible sex lives of historical figures. They conspire at scenes like the one in which Benjamin Franklin and General Braddock have a cozy, pot-bellied orgy with three little Dutch girls before Braddock marches his troops off to slaughter at Fort Duquesne. This is shy costume pornography that reduces all the inventive ways that people come together to clumsy breast-grabbing. It is what happens when romancers are not

engulfed and obsessed with history, but rather with a hole in the market.

I THINK SOMETIMES that Canadian writers have invented a new form of the novel, a stripped-down model that functions in a flash of pistons and gears. I think of Margaret Atwood, whose prose-style is colloquial-poetic, both too empty and too full. In particular I think of Matt Cohen, who with *Flowers of Darkness* (Seal, \$2.75) has published the fourth and last novel of his Salem series. Salem should be as familiar as Wessex or Faulkner country, but Cohen hasn't been concerned with drawing us a map. Connections of town to territory to world are immaterial. Salem is not an imagined place so much as a fictional code, a shadow town in which the emotions of characters flare as fierce as a sunset. Each character is only as real as he needs to be to heighten the impact of those emotions: Cohen allows you no breathing spaces in the childhood or past histories of his people.

Annabelle Jamieson is our port of entry into the melodrama, a city woman newly moved to Salem to take her lawyer-husband, the bland but clever Allen, away from scandal and allow him a fresh start. (The book's epigraph is from Wilde: "Anyone can be good in

the country.") Annabelle has made her life "civilized and ironical" — two planks thrown over the sucking bog of her former emotional life. In Salem she walks over the bog into the mire, into the love life of the Reverend Gordon Finch, a creepily black-bearded womanizing Protestant preacher torn between poles of salvation and desire. Though she is awakened, terrified, driven into the ground by her need of Finch, Annabelle is like us, a breathless witness to the forces of love and anger at war between Finch and his crippled wife Maureen. Finch gets his redemption, Maureen her revenge. We get a guided tour into the darkness where unhealed wounds are kept, never distracted by the worldly scenery of the conventional novel.

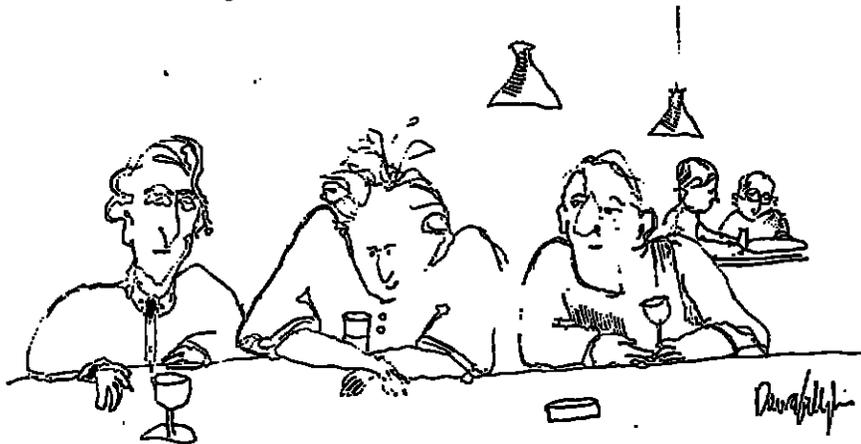
More melodrama by a master. In *The Weekend Man* Richard Wright made art out of the life of an emotional cripple, a played-out modern nowhere man. Charlie Farris, Wright's hero in *Final Things* (Seal \$2.95), is another failure, as distanced from his emotions as he can get, a written-out alcoholic sports journalist reluctantly divorced from his wife and living in self-righteous seaminess in a derelict part of Toronto. He loves his wife and he loves his son — whatever that means, since he loves his numbness

better. Wright has decided that Charlie must wake up, and the author's alarm bell is brutal: the homosexual rape-murder of Farris's 12-year-old son. Watch Charlie feel.

Again this novel is almost in short-form, a thin casing over the violent mechanism of revenge. Cohen's book works because it is all about passion. Wright needs more novel in his novel because Farris is so deadened that we need more time to believe in his final passionate act. The narrative pull is excellent and strong, but I kept wanting to dig my heels in against it, to know more about everything before it is all covered in blood.

Fierce reactions are not required by Lew Anthony. He (or rather they, since Lew is actually a two-part creation of film producer Bill Marshall and journalist Bob Miller) is just here to entertain us with tropical adventures on a cold winter's night. *Dreadlock* (Seal, \$2.95) is in the American detective mode. Its hero, Mike Shuter, is a Travis McGee of the airways, a Philip Marlowe figure who couldn't take getting himself slimy along with the other Mounties in security services. He now works as security chief of a Canadian tour-packaging airline, which seems to allow his protective and aggressive instincts

## The Meeting Place for Canadian writers



Margaret Atwood, Earle Birney, Irving Layton, Norman Levine, Dorothy Livesay, Eli Mandel, Susan Musgrave, Michael Ondaatje, Al Purdy, Leon Rooke, Rick Salutin, Josef Skvorecky, Phyllis Webb, George Woodcock . . .

and a host of others, side by side in the pages of *The Canadian Forum*, the magazine that the *New York Review of Books* calls "in a class by itself." With feature articles on major writers such as Rudy Wiebe, James Reaney, and David Fennario, interviews with important figures like Margaret Laurence, and reviews of new Canadian books, *The Canadian Forum* is the magazine to read for the best in Canadian writing.

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full rein. The straight-shooting Shuter wins an O.K. for his debut appearance, aged a bit and added a few more inches of insight to his vaguely noble brain.

The voice of the hero is what gets you hooked on these kinds of novels — not the sex or even the incidental music of

Anthony's Jamaica-Babylon. Shuter has a chance of turning into one of those riors, full of articulated spiritual and physical aches. Lew Anthony writes well enough to let Shuter tell us something. Here the slot in the commercial market fits and they should wear it. □

National Party (University of Toronto Press, 188 pages, \$17.50 cloth and \$8.95

want answered: namely, what do Prairie liberals want? What they want, says Smith, is a sense they haven't had since James G. Gardner ran for the Liberal Ottawa understands and cares about their provincial interests. Otto Lang, Smith points out, was the only minister from the region in two decades with any kind of national reputation. But Lang's political roots weren't in Saskatchewan. As a result Ross Thatcher's provincial Liberals viewed Lang with great suspicion.

NEWFOUNDLAND'S RAY GUY is easier to take in small doses than in large ones. His new collection of columns, *Beneficial Vapors* (Jespersion Press, 131 pages, unpriced), proves the point yet once more. But at his best, Guy can be wickedly funny. (Some readers may recall his article inviting tourists to come help bash baby seals.) And at his best, his prose beautifully captures the tone and rhythm of Newfoundland speech. Here, for example, is part of an open letter from Guy to Jean Luc Pepin, then of the Task Force on Canadian Unity:

It is only for you to halt your motor car at will, Monsieur, abreast of any one of these wooden houses and it is only for you to go up and rap on the door and you will be asked inside to warm yourself and have a bite to eat . . .

All you have to do in return is to tell who you are, name the place where you belong, whether your parents are still living, how many brothers and sisters you have . . .

ANYONE WHO OWNS Lorne Rozovsky's *The Canadian Patient's Book of Rights* probably doesn't need *The Choice is Yours: Making Canada's Medical System Work for You* by Gerald Turner and Joseph Mapa (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 120 pages, \$8.95 paper). But few of us are sufficiently knowledgeable about our rights as patients that we couldn't profit from having one of these two books on our reference shelves. I was pleased to learn from Turner and Mapa that some hospitals now employ "patient representatives" to whom one can take one's questions and complaints. It's about time.

THE FIRST FOUR books in Quadrant Editions' second series are now off the press. And they're quite handsome. (Quadrant, you'll recall, publishes its titles on a subscription basis. Seven books for \$30. Write: c/o the Department of English, Concordia University, Montreal H3G 1M8.) I expected to be put off by one of the four books, George

## THE BROWSER

### A legacy of blood: from sepia-tinted memories of the First World War to the hidden side of our murderous national psyche

By MORRIS WOLFE

NON-BOOKS — books for semi-literates and others who don't really like books — take up more and more shelf space in our book stores. Now we have a non-book titled *Books* by Gerald Donaldson (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 128 pages, \$19.95 cloth). Donaldson, you may recall, has produced such other distinguished non-works as *The Great Canadian Beer Book*. The colour reproductions in *Books* are crummy. The black-and-white reproductions are even worse; they look like photocopies rather than photographs. Only the cover is attractive. And I'm sure a good researcher could have dug out all the quotations and other snippets in *Books* in no more than a couple of days. (*Bartlett's* and similar books contain about half the stuff.) The price, for what you get, is outrageous.

I'D LIKE TO propose a moratorium on the use of sepia. For the next hundred years, say. I'm prompted to make that modest suggestion by William Mathieson's *My Grandfather's War: Canadians Remember the First World War* (Macmillan, 352 pages, 19.95 cloth), a book done entirely in sepia — sepia text, photographs, endpapers. (There's probably even a sepia contract.) But what's the point? Even those of us who are semi-literate don't need books that shout from every page "IT'S NOSTALGIA TIME, GANG." We get the message. I found this book just too distracting qua book to be able to judge its contents fairly. *Poor Bloody Murder: Personal Memoirs of the First World War* by Gordon Reid (Mosaic, 260 pages, \$12.95 paper and \$16.95 cloth) is, on the other hand, quite unpretentiously produced. Reid, a journalism student, interviewed 50 veterans

across the country. That's not a large number as oral history goes, and the book feels thin as a result.

These books sent me back to *Ruhleben*, J.D. Ketchum's lovely account of the prison camp he and Sir Ernest MacMillan and other British subjects were placed in when the war broke out. (Ketchum, a Canadian, had, like MacMillan, been studying music in Berlin.) The approximately 4,000 men and boys remained in *Ruhleben* for four years. No direction was given to their life; they were allowed to create their own little world. And they did. It's a remarkable story. Someone should one day make a movie about *Ruhleben*.

"LIKE IT OR NOT, murder reveals something of our national psyche," writes Frank Jones in his prologue to *Trail of Blood: A Canadian Murder Odyssey* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 228 pages, \$15.95 cloth). Unfortunately, Jones never gets around to telling us exactly what it reveals. But he does tell his 20 murder stories briskly and well. I was especially interested in the case of Charles Gibson, who was found guilty of murdering a Jewish businessman in Toronto in 1912. His death sentence was commuted as a result of public pressure — much of it from members of the Jewish community, who feared an outburst of anti-Semitism. "If Gibson had murdered a pillar of the Gentile community," speculates Jones, "he might have been strung up without a second thought. Killing a Jewish scrap dealer was a whole other matter in the world of 1912.

IF PIERRE TRUDEAU is interested, David E. Smith's *The Regional Decline of a*

Woodcock's *Taking It to the Letter*, a collection of excerpts from letters Woodcock has written to other Canadian writers. There's something unseemly, I thought, about a living writer collecting his own letters. Yet it works. The book offers a fascinating, informal look at the Canadian literary scene over the past 20 years as seen by someone who's been as close to the centre of things as anyone. The Woodcock who appears in these pages plays the part of benign *paterfamilias* to a large, anarchic brood of writers whose work in

a wide variety of forms and styles he gently encourages. Oh, there are a couple of *bêtes noires* — Robin Mathews and Mordecai Richler. But mostly what flows through these letters is a sense of Woodcock's integrity and good will. My guess, based on this appetizer, is that in the long run the contribution to Canadian literature that Woodcock will be remembered for will not be his critical writing so much as his letters (and his forthcoming memoirs). My one complaint about this particular Quadrant book: there are too many typos. □

## A THOUSAND WORDS

The past in perspective: from the extinction of the world's animals to historic photos of immigrants as they emerge from the Dark Ages

By CHRISTOPHER HUME

IT'S HARD TO imagine anything sadder than this catalogue of animals now extinct. David Day's *Doomsday Book of Animals* (Wiley, 228 pages, \$49.95 cloth) tells the story of 300 species and subspecies that are gone forever from the face of the earth. In his foreword, Prince Philip points out that "the cause of the disappearance of species is largely if not entirely homo sapiens." Considering the enormity of the charge, the royal statement seems remarkably polite. Think of what happened to the buffalo: 75 million killed from 1850 to 1880. In 1839 some herds were so large a man on horseback needed three days to ride through. A single herd would occupy a grazing area the size of Rhode Island. Today fewer than 30,000 remain worldwide, and this is considered a success story.

Think also of poor Steller's Sea Cow. This magnificent creature became extinct in 1767, only 27 years after being discovered by Europeans. It weighed up to 14,000 pounds and measured 30 feet in length. Not even the rat is safe from man. Day documents nine varieties of this rodent that have been entirely wiped out.

The author and his researcher, Séan Virgo, have done a thorough and original job of putting the reader "in touch with the reality of extinction." Their book makes for some very unsettling reading. We will never again see the many animals listed and illustrated, and no matter how popular this book might

become it is hard to imagine that the rate of extinction of the world's wildlife will abate: they estimate that rate to be one species a year, and accelerating. Should Day decide to produce periodic updates of his *Doomsday Book*, it would grow fatter each time. It is an important and useful book. Through the sheer beauty of the illustrations it overwhelms us with a sense of tremendous loss. Everyone should buy a copy, read it, and be appalled at what man has destroyed.

Selling Canada to Canadians seems an endless task. The country must have been crossed dozens of times by anxious photographers looking for perfect sunsets and the ultimate panoramas. The current crop includes Sherman Hines's *Alberta* (McClelland & Stewart, unpaginated, \$24.95 cloth) and *Heritage Canada* (McClelland & Stewart, 125 pages, \$29.95 cloth) by Philip Graham. Both are excellent examples of the genre. *Heritage Canada* succeeds in capturing a glimpse of the nation at the height of its Victorian splendour. It is interesting to see how its various architectural specimens have survived the last 100 years. Some, like the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce building in Regina, sit alone, empty and forlorn. Others, like the Kingston City Hall (built in 1844), have been carefully and lovingly restored. The colours of *Alberta* are particularly impressive. This is the best book yet from Hines, whose past works include *Nova Scotia*, *Outhouses of the East*, and *Atlantic Canada*.

Islomania is a disease Lawrence Durrell describes in *Reflections on a Marine Venus* as "a rare but by no means unknown affliction of the spirit." Islomaniacs, says Durrell, are those "who find islands somehow irresistible. The mere knowledge that they are on an island, a little world surrounded by the sea, fills them with indescribable intoxication." Canada would be judged a fine place to live by an islomaniac. Though commonly considered the land of lakes, the northern part of North America also offers more than its fair share of islands. Marian Engel and J.A. Kraulis, author and photographer, collaborated to give us *The Islands of Canada* (Hurtig, 128 pages, \$29.50 cloth). The emphasis is on the quaint and artsy-craftsy, but it preserves enough island quaintness to keep islomaniacs happy. Engel's text is quite bearable and Kraulis's pictures are simply superb.

The One-Room School in Canada (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 168 pages, \$19.95 cloth) by Jean Cochrane packs a lot of history into a small book. Extremely well illustrated and unbelievably informative, Cochrane's work will surprise anyone expecting just another pretty book. The author has done a first-rate job of selecting the visuals and presenting the information.

Canada: A History in Photographs (Hurtig, 350 pages, \$24.95 paper) by Roger Hall and Gordon Dobbs is another excellent pictorial look at the nation since Confederation. Pictures may not tell us much about specific events, but they reveal a lot about people. Here we see our ancestors at work and at play (somehow the two look very similar). The photographs convey a wealth of information. By and large, early Canadians seem a very dour lot. An exception, and an ironic one, is an informal portrait taken in 1927 of Edward, Prince of Wales, with his brother the Duke of Kent at Union Station in Winnipeg. They make a very dapper pair in straw boaters and double-breasted jackets. A contrasting shot, also taken in 1927, shows hordes of immigrants disembarking from a train: they look as though they have just stepped out of the Dark Ages.

Publishers never seem to grow tired of Northwest Coast Indian art. In fact, they're in the midst of a passionate love affair. The latest offspring comes from Vancouver's Douglas & McIntyre (where the fever runs very hot). Northwest Coast Indian Graphics (144 pages, \$35.00 cloth) by Edwin Hall, Margaret Blackman, and Vincent Rickard almost manages to avoid the feeling of *déjà vu*. Perhaps a few too many of the images reproduced have been seen elsewhere. Of course, they're always a delight, even

though some are much more accomplished than others. In the hands of a Robert Davidson, for example, an ancient native decorative form becomes modern art. For some others, the transition has been more difficult.

Serigraphy has developed into a major medium for Canada's Indian artists. The appearance of this book is, therefore, timely and welcome. The 17 colour plates highlight a very thorough survey of a unique art. □

## INTERVIEW

### Helen Weinzwieg on the emotional trauma that shifts her writing from familiar reality to the schizophrenic realm of fantasy

By DORIS COWAN

BORN IN POLAND in 1915, Helen Weinzwieg moved to Canada at the age of nine, and didn't begin writing fiction until she was 45. She is the author of two novels, *Passing Ceremony* (House of Anansi, 1973) and *Basic Black with Pearls* (1980), which won a City of Toronto Book Award in 1981. Her short stories have appeared in such magazines as *Saturday Night*, *Toronto Life*, *Tamarack Review*, and *Canadian Forum*. She talked to Doris Cowan in Toronto about her life and work:

**Books in Canada:** *What made you, in your mid-40s, decide to become a writer?*

**Weinzwieg:** The active, doing part of my life kind of wore out, and the reflective, contemplative part began. I had made a great deal of effort in a great many directions, but the years passed and the sense of accomplishment was never there. Discoveries and satisfactions came, and then they went; they were gone. A discovery in creative work is tangible. As I got older it became very satisfactory to learn about life not through doing but through writing.

**BIC:** *Did writing come easily to you?*

**Weinzwieg:** No, never. Because by the time I started writing I had read so much that my standard for fiction was as far from what I could do as another planet is from this earth. I had to go step by step, there was no short cut. I knew what good fiction should be, but I couldn't write. I had read all my life, read everything in sight. There was a 15-year period when I read only fact, read only for information. Then I went back to fiction and discovered that for me the truth in fiction was the only truth. Facts kept changing; they might or might not apply, but the truth in fiction was

universal, for all time, for everybody. All the years I was reading for information I didn't learn a thing.

**BIC:** *But you rejected the conventional forms of fiction.*

**Weinzwieg:** Not at first. But after a couple of short stories I realized I was incapable of writing "straight," because by that time I was well into what had become a hobby — what's new in fiction? As a reader, I was up to my ears in Joyce and Beckett and the *nouveau*



Helen Weinzwieg

*roman*, yet as a writer I was still trying to do Dick and Jane. So I gave up trying to write straight. It works for some people, but not for me. I think it depends on how your mind is set.

**BIC:** *What writers do you admire? Are there any in particular you like and feel have influenced you?*

**Weinzwieg:** Oh, yes. Pinget, Robbe-

Grillet, Butor, Calvino. Pinget's new book, *Passacaglia*, just blows my mind. Some of the South American and Cuban writers. Cortazar. His short stories are written absolutely straight, piling event on event; then suddenly everything shifts and you're disoriented. It's a kind of fiction that works directly on the reader's mind. The writer anticipates the patterns of thought that former literature has established, and subverts them.

**BIC:** *Your novels are structurally very unconventional, and some aspects of the action are quite unreal, but the physical details and the emotional experiences of the characters are concrete and realistic.*

**Weinzwieg:** One of the discoveries of my reading has been that the more fantastic, imaginative, and "subjective" your material, the more precise your language has to be. In *Basic Black with Pearls* I tried to break the tradition of exposition. To tell a story through ideas, not so much through events. To present ideas that are of interest to me. I found ways to do that by breaking time sequence, shifting from reality to a kind of schizophrenia, moving freely between consensus reality and another kind of reality, another level of consciousness. And the technique has to be so clear that there's no division between the two.

**BIC:** *In Basic Black with Pearls the narrator is a reluctant visitor to her own city, searching for coded messages from her lover, who may or may not be planning to join her there. What's the relation between the real and the fantastic here?*

**Weinzwieg:** In my own theories of fiction I use emotional experience as a form of the unreal; an emotional response involves the imagination. Once it's triggered it continues and enters the world of fantasy. *Basic Black* is more autobiographical than any of my other work — though I swear every work of fiction is autobiographical. Some scenes are based on direct experience, others are based on emotional trauma and go into the fantastic. My narrator's situation is a fictional expression of the feeling I've had all my life of not belonging. If I can be pretentious I'll use Shakespeare's phrase "unaccommodated man." It's a way of showing how she can be unaccommodated in the place where she has lived all her life, where she has married and had children. There's a distance between her and the familiar reality that surrounds her. You've met people like her.

**BIC:** *The two men in the book are both remote, evasive, or unforthcoming — one of them in a way she has come to find hateful and the other in a way that she still finds fascinating, and maddening and desolating as well, but she is in love with him and accepts her situation,*

more or less. Is this your comment on the possibility of communication between male and female?

Weinzweig: It's my comment on a certain kind of person, who is uncomfortable with the inauthentic. As we get older we accept the masks that society requires us to wear, and learn to relate to the masked individual as the real person. That's what civilization is all about. Well, some of us are very slow to learn this. What I was trying to show in *Basic Black* was a protagonist who is unable to deal with masks.

BiC: *She goes along with it though, the code, the disguises.*

Weinzweig: Yes, and she always has to guess whether it's him or not, wearing that disguise. But I hint, and perhaps I wasn't too clear, that there is no mask in the sex relationship. It's my smart-aleck way of saying that a woman can't tell what a man's all about until he takes off his clothes. He dresses as a great lawyer, or as a man who knows everything about cars; men are defined by what they do, what they know. That is their mask; their profession, their work. And if he isn't what he does, if he takes off the mask, then who is he? So "put the mask back on . . . I still don't know you." Having him always in disguise is my way of saying that we women fall in love with

the whole thing, disguise and all.

BiC: *Does a writer of fiction have a moral responsibility to society?*

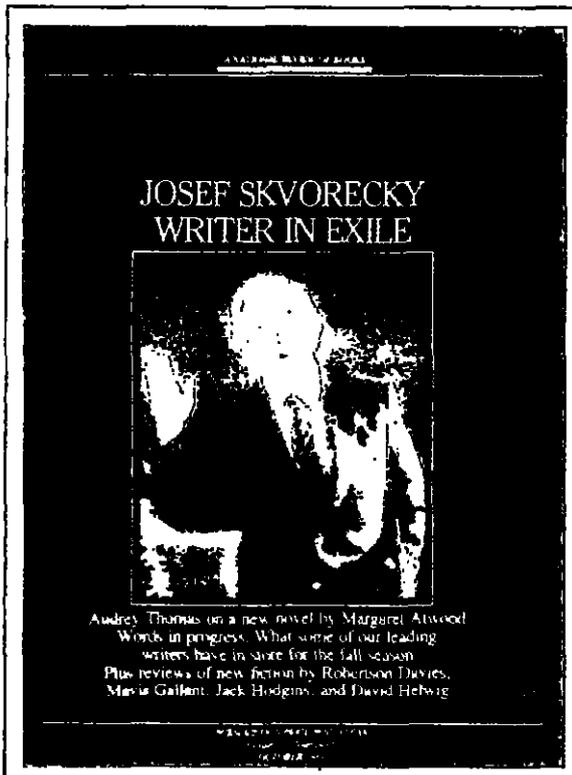
Weinzweig: That question has plagued me personally. Yet I've never heard of a writer who was immoral in her relation to the world. She is a social being, and by writing, she takes a position indicating her concern. If she sets out to be didactic, or to produce a diatribe against injustice, she rarely succeeds artistically. If there is a message it has to be deduced by the reader, not stated by the writer.

BiC: *There are passages in Basic Black with Pearls where it is possible to deduce a message, although it is certainly not didactic. The narrator is haunted by guilt and mourning for members of her family killed by the Nazis. Her lover, Coenraad, with his mysterious work for the "Agency," may be on the side of terror, for all she knows. He tells her nothing. In one brief episode, a man, ragged and frightened, takes refuge in her hotel room in Ecuador, where she and Coenraad have arranged a rendezvous. She and a weeping chambermaid help him to escape from his pursuers. She says nothing about it to Coenraad until the next day, when he assures her that the "terrorist and his wife" have been caught. The narrator says, "I forgot everything . . . later that night,*

*drinking rum and listening to the singers, I never once thought of torture."*

Weinzweig: Yes. There is lurking in her mind a little uneasiness. She wants to forget, and at the same time wants not to forget. Perhaps there is some horror going on around her lover that she is unaware of. But she is aware of her unawareness. Still she longs for her lover because "in his presence terrors vanish." Women's involvement in the world is totally affected when they are in love. My feelings about these matters are stated, or rather understated, in *Basic Black*. Like my narrator, I've never been able to forget "the torturer who consulted Franz Fanon for treatment for insomnia, the torturer who protested he could not sleep nights because his stubborn victims made his work so difficult."

It's a paradox. The most important things can't be come at directly. I was born in one world war, I lived through another, I've lived 60 years. What is there to say? I've had nightmares since 1932. My memory of Poland is of a life lived in constant terror of pogroms. All I ever heard from the adults was who got killed, and how. Jews had to live in ghettos, they couldn't own land. Two of my husband's relatives escaped to Russia. When they came back after the war, one



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of them was killed by people from his own village.

But to write about such things directly, unless you are a polemicist, is a kind of titillation. Fiction should reflect injustice, but to set out to prove that oppression exists: to me, that won't work. I want to focus on the life of my character. Does she care? In what way can we care? She is busy making love. Afterwards she remembers the guerrilla leader and his wife, who may have been killed while she and Coenraad were in the midst of their lovemaking. The dilemma is stated: some of us are safe and comfortable, while others are in pain and terror of death. In the book the narrator asks "Against whom should I direct my protests?"

**ED:** What kind of fiction are you working on now?

**Weinzwelg:** I'm in a bit of a dilemma. What was so intriguingly new to me 15 or 20 years ago — well, the world has caught up with it, and it's also not so new to me. But there are still problems I want to solve. I got hung up in the novel, because I wanted to present the material differently, but how? I want to be free of that difficulty. I'm doing a series of short stories, each one with a technical problem, no two alike, so that by doing it, doing it, and doing it, all in short stories, then I'll have the techniques and I'll be ready for whatever I want to write.

The different ways of story-telling that have come up in the last 50 years have all been taken up by modern writers and a lot of them can handle the techniques. What you are saying to a reader, your ideas, that's what makes a book: or a story interesting now. Not just reflecting life or reality so-called, but proposing ideas about our society. □

## LETTERS

# First things last

Sir:

Thank you for the review of my first novel, *Hans Denck, Cobbler*, in your November issue. I would like, if possible, to clarify two points that the reviewer touches lightly on.

By using the word "shtetl" and comparing my work to Singer and Malamud, Douglas Hill has left some readers with the impression that my work is Jewish. While I am genuinely flattered by this, I do think it is important to note that the criticisms of Christian life and anti-Semitism my work contains are made from the perspective of Christianity, which is, to use George Grant's phrase, "at furthest remove from Judaism." My little work is somewhat haunted by the responsibility German Christians bear for the Holocaust: Hans Denck tries to expiate some of the guilt of our tribe and his "triumph" (?) belongs to the history of Christianity. My own success — if it is that — in dealing with it "competently" in a "rich, suggestive form" owes what life it has to Mavis Gallant and T.F. Powys. What I have written and the way I wrote it should be credited to their influences. This, too, seems important since Mrs. Gallant is paid far too few tributes in her native land for the intelligence she has brought to bear on the issues that divide us and the effect that has had on younger writers. And T.F. Powys is almost utterly neglected everywhere.

At a time when novels are frequently bloated with self-indulgence, smut, gossip, near libels, or daft myth-making, Mr. Hill can easily be forgiven his puzzlement at the claim my work makes to being one. But it is not an unreasonable assertion. Like those extended pieces of prose that once made the term *novel* definite and distinguished, my piece offers a sustained and controlled criticism of social life. Since it spans 50 years and explores relations among three generations "through events too complicated to summarize," it is something more than a long short story. I would prefer to think of it as that old-fashioned thing, a *tale*, but calling it a "first novel" will perhaps allow my next book to be viewed more in itself and less as a species of literary dog that should dance to the tunes of publicity and promotion.

The prevailing notion that the writing of serious fiction is in any way encouraged by puffery and literary competitions is as empty-headed and untenable as the notion that the few publishers interested in fiction have the resources to lead an author up carefully constructed ladders of literary achievement. The sequence in which things are now likely to be published bears less and less relationship to their author's order of composition. In my own case, *Hans Denck, Cobbler*, is the fourth and briefest of the five extended works I have written thus far that are intended for publication. The third of those works will, with luck, appear next. As to the first of these

things, I expect it to appear sometime after 1987 if the world lasts that long — a thing in which I have no great confidence given the kind of Christianity being practised by Ronnie "Nuclear Warning Shot" Reagan and his gang. At the moment, I have no great desire to pack my readers in an old Chevy, head them on down to a levee, and have them consider the ways our music died. That's far too soft a thing for these hard times.

T.F. Rigelhof  
Westmount, Que.

## Ghetto mentality

Sir:

Douglas Hill's "First Impressions" in your October issue is interesting partly because of its sensible review of Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, a timely and truly poetic book that is, as the reviewer states, a "quietly savage indictment of Wasp-Canadian racism." What is surprising, though, is the heading that it is "ethnic fiction." Whether deliberate or not, I suppose, there is the inchoate tendency of categorizing Canadian literature into such a segment, which can become dangerous. Kogawa's book is more than ethnic fiction, as I am sure Mr. Hill believes — for the very reason he points out in his review. But I want to draw attention to the fact that writing that might appear to come from outside the mainstream of Wasp-Canadian literature tends to become ghettoized, and thus not to be taken seriously. It's a tendency that is creeping into the tenor of Canadian literary criticism, and I am concerned.

Cyril Dabydeen  
Ottawa

## The Peacock papers

Sir:

In reviewing Robertson Davies' new novel, *The Rebel Angels* (October), I.M. Owen talks of his "long and lonely devotion to the works of T.L. Peacock." In fact, his devotion is not entirely lonely. I too have been a devotee, at least since boyhood, of Peacock's great conversational novels, and this makes me rather surprised when Owen asserts that as far as he knows Peacock's form has never been "adopted by anyone up to now."

In fact, there have been two very distinguished Peacockian novelists. George Meredith was not only Peacock's son-in-law; he adopted his form in a number of works, notably *The Egoist*, and what used to be spoken of as Meredithian talkiness was in fact Peacockian talkiness somewhat transformed. Aldous Huxley was a Peacockian in the beginning and never completely ceased

to be one. *Crome Yellow*, with its country house gathering of intellectuals, is an almost pure Peacockian novel, adapted to a later era. So are *Antic Hay* and *Thoss Barren Leaves* and though later, in *Point Counter Point*, Huxley fell under Gide's influence in terms of structure, there remained long passages that were entirely Peacockian. I could go on and on, mentioning forgotten novels like W.H. Mallock's *The New Republic*, etc., but I think I have said enough to show that in using the Peacockian form Davies is merely following a perceptible tradition among English fiction writers.

George Woodcock  
Vancouver

#### Topic of cancer

Sir:  
Why must the adolescence of Canadian writers be prolonged and even encouraged by the media and those readers requiring increased literary titillation? I refer to the review of Margaret Atwood's new novel in the October *Books in Canada*, a review unfortunately entitled "Topic of Cancer."

First we have Audrey Thomas telling us with some pride that she was asked to review *Bodily Harm* because she is considered a specialist in "mutilated women." Ah, yes. She then proceeds to cite such brilliant images as coiled ropes and rats emerging from vaginas. The latter is certainly a reality for women existing in those countries with oppressive regimes, and it's a fact we should be concerned with, but I'm unconvinced that it has much to do with Atwood and her own fiction. Or that it ought to. The protagonist of *Bodily Harm*, similarly, has suffered a mastectomy. Having endured the various Atwood interests — the battered animals, the male penis-as-fishhook fixation — for the sake of her sheer skill and craft, I am absolutely appalled at this new "theme." Why must she consider torture and breast cancer as yet another contemporary wilderness to explore and exploit with her usual cynicism? Breast cancer is an immediate concern in my own family and I am disgusted that someone with Atwood's obvious literary talents finds it necessary to adopt the disease as evidence of her newly enlightened social conscience. It's dilettantism of the worst order.

Theresa Kishkan  
North Vancouver

#### Fighting Words

Sir:  
I've never been one to play verbal Ping-Pong with reviewers and letter-writers, but the blatantly muddle-headed

criticism of my book *Breaking and Entering* in your October issue compels me to make an exception. Albert Moritz not only quotes some of my lines out of context, but commits the more serious blunder of mouthing off for the sake of displaying his questionable cleverness. All I can say is that it's a pity 3,000 miles prevents me from delivering this letter to him in person.

Len Gasparini  
Vancouver

#### Uncivil service

Sir:  
I have just finished reading DuBarry Campau's review of *A Woman with a Purpose: The Diaries of Elizabeth Smith, 1872-1884*, edited by Veronica Strong-Boag (November), and I am filled with outrage that *Books in Canada* would publish such an insensitive, ill-informed, and chauvinistic review of a book that should capture the imagination of every Canadian reader who is interested in the intellectual history of this country.

In the first place, Campau summarizes Veronica Strong-Boag as writing that Elizabeth Smith "married a civil servant, Adam Shortt, gave up her practice (which had barely got underway), had children, and devoted the rest of her life to women's causes, losing her merriest and becoming something of a termagant suffragette." Now, to call Adam Shortt a civil servant and to leave it at that is absolutely absurd. Adam Shortt was an important intellectual and social thinker. To discover that he married one of the first graduates of a Canadian medical college should be of more than passing interest. To state that Elizabeth Smith's career had barely gotten started when it was abandoned for marriage and children is equally ridiculous. According to S.B.D. Shortt (*The Search for an Ideal*), Elizabeth Smith spent the first six years of her marriage teaching medical jurisprudence and sanitary science.

Finally, the characterizing of Elizabeth Smith's commitment to the suffragette movement as "termagant," to headline the review "the training of a shrew," is to insult all thinking human beings. Who in the 1980s would dismiss the pioneer efforts of a woman like Elizabeth Smith by describing her in such negative and stereotypical terms? Ms Smith is a vital and fascinating figure in Canadian intellectual history. Her diaries deserve serious and intelligent treatment by *Books in Canada*.

Laura Groening  
Department of English  
Carleton University  
Ottawa

WHEN VLADIMIR NABOKOV was asked what scenes from the historical past he would most like to see on film, his list included "Herman Melville at breakfast, feeding a sardine to his cat," and "The Russians leaving Alaska, delighted with the deal. Shot of seal applauding." What we'd like to see is a similar collection of scenes drawn from Canada's past. It might include Malcolm Lowry trying to get a drink on Sunday in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1955 (shot of six untouched cheese sandwiches), or Mackenzie King at lunch, feeding a dog biscuit to his mother. We'll pay \$25 for the best list of scenes received before Feb. 1. Address: CanWit No. 69, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

#### Results of CanWit No. 67

OUR REQUEST for new definitions for old literary terms was made even more difficult by postal delays and an early deadline that many contestants were unable to meet. (As a result we are herewith returning to our former, more liberal deadline policy.) At the risk of creating domestic strife, the winner is Barry Baldwin of Calgary — whose household submitted two separate entries — for a lexicon that includes:

- Ode: Usually by the publisher to the author.
- Work-in-progress: My grant has been cut off.
- Critical success: Sold five copies.
- Pornography: *Ass gratia artis*.
- Profile: Plagiarized from one source.
- In-depth profile: Plagiarized from two sources.

#### Honourable mentions:

- Critic: A Canadian writer between books.
- Plagiarism: The art of knowing a good line when you see one.
- Pot-holler: A novel with more heat than light.

— M.K. Elek and J.B. Kervin,  
Scarborough, Ont.

\*\*\*

- Sticheomythia: What the Greeks should have done with their legends.
- Loy: What doesn't happen in feminist fiction.

— Janet Baldwin, Calgary

\*\*\*

- Assonance: A literary euphemism for emanations from the lower orifice. See also cacophony and farce.
- Free verse: A poetry reading.

— David J. Paul, Lucan, Ont.

- **Part One of the Three Musketeers** in a novel by Dumas. His partners were Bathos and Artifice.
- **Anglo-Norman Period:** Levine's work before his return to Canada. See Anglo-Mordecian Period.  
— Ed Prato, Vancouver  
\*\*\*
- **Flashback:** A shy exhibitionist.  
— Raphael Soné, Ottawa

## THE EDITORS RECOMMEND

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

### FICTION

**Famous Last Words**, by Timothy Findley, Clarke Irwin. Findley's fourth novel examines the nature of fascism through the character of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (brilliantly recreated from the poem by Ezra Pound) and a plot that implicates, among others, the Duke of Windsor as a candidate for Fuhrer.

### NON-FICTION

**The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1930**, by David Lewis, Macmillan. Lewis, who died before its publication, doesn't get as far as Parliament in the course of this book. His account of his early career portrays a party functionary more at home in the back room than wooing the electorate.

### POETRY

**Field Notes**, by Robert Kroetsch, General Publishing. Kroetsch's collected poems display his wide range as a poet — his shifting tones, his seriousness, humour, and irony, his talent for epigram, lyricism, description, and narrative, his formal inventiveness, his learning, and his deft, unassuming way with an allusion.

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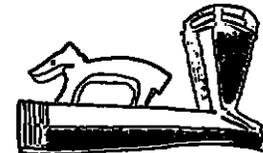
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## BOOKS RECEIVED

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

- The Acid Test, by Gary Geddes, Turnstone Press.
- Act of Art, by Jack Shadbolt, M & S.
- The Adventures of M. Hely, Tracy, Pappo and Cien, and How They Discover the Netherlands, by Kai Rekal, Canadian Stage and Arts Publications.
- All Star Poet, by Stephen Scrivner, Cotnam Books.
- The Art of Len Gibbs, by Betty Gibbs, Reidmore (M & S).
- Before Star Wars, by Clive Doucet, Black Moss Press.
- Edna's Bell, by Joan Bodger, illustrated by Mark Thurman, Oxford.
- The East from Alberta History, edited by Hugh Dempsey, Western Producer Prairie Books.
- The East of Canada Cookbook, by Tony Roldan and Jim White, M & S.
- Bicentennial Stories of Niagara-on-the-Lake, edited by John L. Field, the Bicentennial Committee.
- Disrupt for Victory, by William Gregg, Canadian Military Historical Society.
- Darker Creations, by Donald Lee Williams, Inner City Books.
- Boys, Bombs and Braided Sprouts, by J. Douglas Harvey, M & S.
- Bright Lands A Warm Look at Arthur Lemzer, by Lois Darroch, Merritt.
- By Reason of Doubt, by Ellen Godfrey, Clarke Irwin.
- The Canadian Wildlife Almanac, by Darryl Stewart, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
- Canadians at War, 1914-1918, by Donald M. Santor, Prentice-Hall.
- Canadians at War, 1914-1931 Stillbook, by Sharon A. Cook, Prentice-Hall.
- Canadians at War, 1939-1945, by Donald M. Santor, Prentice-Hall.
- Les Canadiens: The French in Canada 1603-1857, by Stewart K. Dicks, Prentice-Hall.
- Les Canadiens Teacher's Guide, by Stewart K. Dicks, Prentice-Hall.
- The Cart, by Jacques Ferron, translated by Ray Ellenwood, Exile Editions (1980).
- Chances One Step at a Time, by Lois Napier, Anderson, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
- Chief Davis' 1974 Vancouver Appointment Book, New Star Books.
- The Collected Poems of F.R. Scott, M & S.
- Collector's Items, by John Hearn, Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- The Confident Years: Canada in the 1920s, by Robert J. Bondy and William C. Mattys, Prentice-Hall.
- The Confident Years Stillbook, by Sharon A. Cook, Prentice-Hall.
- Conflicts of Spring, by Ralph Gustafson, M & S.
- The Crayfisher, by Judith Thompson, Playwrights Canada.
- Cultural Boundaries and the Cohesion of Canada, by Raymond Breton et al., The Institute for Research on Public Policy.
- Cutting Up the North, by Ken Bernsohn, Hancock House.
- The Dalhousie Journals, Volume 2, by Marjory Whitlaw, Oberon.
- Daughters of Copper Woman, by Anne Cameron, Press Gang Publishers.
- The Depression Years: Canada in the 1930s, by Paul Merrill, Prentice-Hall.
- The Depression Years Stillbook, by Sharon A. Cook, Prentice-Hall.
- Don't Billy Dally, Dear, by Joan Vowles, Lyndon House.
- Dreaming Backwards, by Eli Mandel, General Publishing.
- The Drug Industry, by Myron Gordon and David Fowler, James Lorimer.
- Edmonton: Portrait of a City, by Dennis Person and Carin Routledge, Reidmore (M & S).
- Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, edited by Helmut Kallmann et al., U of T Press.
- Energy Crisis: Policy Response, edited by Peter N. Nemetz, Institute for Research on Public Policy.
- Epic Fiction: The Art of Rudy Wiebe, by W.J. Keith, University of Alberta Press.
- The Egalitarian, by Louky Bersaniuk, translated by Gerry Davis et al., Press Perceptic.
- Evening Dance of the Grey Flies, by P.K. Page, Oxford.
- Europe on 64¢ a Day, by Gill White, BestSellers.
- F.H. Varley: A Centennial Exhibition, The Edmonton Art Gallery.
- Flax Things, by Richard B. Wright, Seal Books.
- Flex Lady, Last Lady, by Sandra Goolish, M & S.
- Front Page Challenge, by Alex Barris, CBC.
- The Gentle Balance, by Annabelle King, Denon Publishers.
- Gods Who Walk the Rainbow, by Sivananda Radha, Timeless Books.
- The Great Montreal Gold Rush, 1856-1858, by Donald M. Santor and Stewart K. Dicks, Prentice-Hall.
- The Great Stork Derby, by Mark Orkin, General.
- Heritage Canada, photographed by Philip Graham, M & S.
- Home Solar Gardening, by John H. Pierce, Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- How to Find Balis from Mgraine, by Rosemary Dudley and Wade Rowland, Collins.

- The Immigrant's Handbook, by the Law Union of Ontario, Black Rose Books.
- In Fairs of Painting, by Robert Gem, Merritt.
- The Inuit: Life as It Was, by Richard Harrington, Hurdig.
- Kyralind Legends, by Chief James Wallas, Hancock House.
- L'Elle-d'Amore, by Gaetano Donizetti, translated by Marie-Therese Paquin, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- Letters in Canada 1950, edited by W.J. Keith and B.Z. Shek, U of T Press.
- Life with Uncle, by John W. Holmes, U of T Press.
- Louis Riel et al. in Nouvelle Nation, by Colin Davies, translated by Rejeanne Bissonette, Book Society of Canada.
- Madder Lads, by Thomas A. Clark, Coach House Press.
- Maps and Dreams, by Hugh Brody, Douglas & McIntyre.
- Mart Keaney and His Western Gentlemen, by Mart Keaney, Western Producer Prairie Books.
- Memoirs of Hugh L. Keeleyside, Volume 1, M & S.
- Midnight Magic, by Spiros, Accent Canada.
- Mobilization for Total War, edited by N.F. Dreisager, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Music Trends, by John Felbi, Canadian Government Publishing Centre.
- My Memoirs of Stormont and Dundas Counties, by Margaret Scott, Vestin.
- A Nation Economics Canada 1985-1914, by Douglas H. Fairbairn and Graham L. Brown, Prentice-Hall.
- A Nation Economics Stillbook, by Sharon A. Cook, Prentice-Hall.
- A Nation Lunched: Macdonald's Dominion, 1867-1885, by Stewart K. Dicks, Prentice-Hall.
- The New Canadian Real Estate Investment Guide, by Henry B. Zimmer, Hurdig.
- The New Protectionism, by Fred Lazar, James Lorimer.
- The Next Move, by George Szanto, Playwrights Canada.
- The 1932 Canadian Engagement Diary, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
- 1932 Town and Country Appointment Book, by Charlie Farquharson and Valerie Rosedale, Macmillan.
- North Bay in Postcards, Commoner's Publishing.
- Northern Ontario, by Paul van Baich, Oxford.
- Northwest Coast Indian Graphics, by Edwin S. Hall, Jr. et al., Douglas & McIntyre.
- Office Party, by Michael A. Gilbert, General Publishing.
- Overland from Canada to British Columbia, by Thomas McMicking, edited by Joanne Leduc, University of British Columbia Press.
- Pace River Post, by David L. Macdonald, Venture Press.
- A Perfect Day for Kites, by Monique Corriveau, Groundwood.
- Pioneer Settlement in Canada, 1763-1895, by Graham L. Brown and Douglas H. Fairbairn, Prentice-Hall.
- Poems Twice Told, by Jay Macpherson, Oxford.
- The Polish Canadians, by William Kurelek, Tundra.
- Power to Choose, by GATT-Fly, Between the Lines.
- Radical Priorities, by Noam Chomsky, edited by C.P. Otero, Black Rose Books.
- Real Mothers, by Audrey Thomas, Talonbooks.
- Sad Fortraits, by brit hugarly, Talonbooks.
- Sentry the Pibe, by Bernie Bedore, Amethyst.
- The Secret, by Barbara Novak, illustrated by Katherine Helmer, Three Trees Press.
- The Sixth of December, by Jim Lotz, PaperJacks.
- Sleeping in Ruins, by Chris Falcut, Unfinished Monument Press.
- Snowfeather, by Cecile Gagnon, translated by Valerie Hepburn Craig, James Lorimer.
- So I'm Different, by Joan Weir, Douglas & McIntyre.
- Solpan 5, by Richard Kadulski and Terry Lyter, the Drawing Room Graphic Service.
- Soul dust and Pearls, edited by Peter Baltesperger, Ontario Council of Teachers of English.
- Space in Canadian Architecture, by Anthony Jackson, Tech-Press.
- The Spice Box, selected by Gertt Sinclair and Morris Wolfe, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
- Still Close to the Island, by Cyril Dabydeen, Commoner's Publishing.
- Sun/Flowers, by Beth Jankola, biewointmentpress.
- Survival in the Wilderness, by Alan Fry, Macmillan.
- Teaching Poetry Writing, by Bertie Jeffers Powell, Vestin.
- Ten Steps to the Gallows, by Jack Fitzgerald, Jaspersen Press.
- Thus Spoke Superman, by Catherine Ahearn, Golden Dog Press.
- Today: Starting Point for the Future, by Betty Coulter, G.R. Welch.
- Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism 1857-1892, by Gregory S. Kealey, U of T Press.
- Treaties on White and Tincture, by Robert Marteau, translated by Barry Callaghan, Exile Editions (1979).
- Unit for Paradise, by Susan Swan, Christopher Dingle.
- Walking Through Fire, by Maggie Helwig, Turnstone Press.
- Wax-feathered wings, by Hector Williamson, published by the author.
- Wednesdays Are Cabinet Days, by Russell Doern, Queenston House.
- The Winners of Pebbles, by Roger White, Oxford.
- Women Going Places, by Wendy Copeland, BestSellers.
- Years of Pro Hics Canada, 1945-1953, by Robert J. Bondy and William C. Mattys, Prentice-Hall.
- Years of Province Teacher's Guide, by Robert J. Bondy and William C. Mattys, Prentice-Hall.
- The Ziggy Effect, by Marc Diamond, Playwrights Canada.



COMING UP  
IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF  
BOOKS IN CANADA

A  
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report  
on

Quebec fiction 



The Quebec short story, a look at the year's best from Ferron to Andre Major



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