

A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

# BOOKS IN CANADA

May 1985 \$1.95



**WEST SIDE STORIES:  
P.K. PAGE AND  
THE WRITERS  
OF B.C.'S COAST**

Neighbourhood gossip:  
Toronto's Annex  
in poetry and prose

Brave new age:  
Ralph Gustafson's  
prolific 75th year

And an interview  
with Ken Mitchell

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### CONTRIBUTORS

Mark Abley is undertaking a book about the Prairies. Brad Adams is a freelance writer specializing in history and sports. Tony Aspler is an authority on crime and wine. From his Vancouver base, Kevin Barker writes about business and economics. Colline Calder is a Toronto poet. With John Bell, Lesley Choyce edited *Visions from the Edge* (Pottersfield Press). Louise Edmonds and Kristy Eldridge are freelance writers in Toronto. Cary Fagan's articles and reviews appear frequently in our pages. Brian Fawcett's most recent book is *Capital Tales* (Talonbooks). Doug Fetherling's interview with Peter C. Newman will appear in a future issue. Ray Fillip is at work on a novel. Greg Gatenby edited *Whales: An Anthology* (Lester & Orpen Dennys). Douglas Glover's next collection of short fiction will be published by Talonbooks. Wayne Grady is managing editor of *Harrowsmith*. Sandy Greer has a special interest in Canadian Indians. Roger Hall edits *Ontario History*, and Geoff Hancock *Canadian Fiction Magazine*. Dawn Hood, whose drawings appear throughout the issue, is a Toronto artist. Lorraine Johnson's latest post is at *Photo Communiqué*. Bernice Lever edits the little magazine *Waves*. Roy MacLaren is a historian and former federal cabinet minister. Alberto Manguel's work in progress is *The Kipling Play*. Herring Cove, N.S., is the home of poet Sparling Mills. With her husband Albert, Theresa Moritz has published *Leacock: A Biography* (Stoddart). The photographs of B.C.'s writers are by Paul Orenstein. Helen Parra and Helen Porter are freelance writers, respectively in Toronto and Mount Pearl, Nfld. Sherie Posesoraki's interview with Alexander Ross will appear in a future issue. Frank Rasky wrote *The Taming of the Canadian West* (McClelland & Stewart). John Reeves is a Toronto photographer. Richard Sherbanluk is a frequent contributor to the *Edmonton Bulletin*. Mary Ainslie Smith is curator of the St. Marys (Ont.) District Museum. David Stafford's history of spy fiction is to be published by Lester & Orpen Dennys. Paul Stuewe is a Toronto critic and bookseller. Derek Suchard is currently working on a novel about the Second World War. Sam Tata is a distinguished Montreal photographer. Eleanor Wachtel is a freelance writer in Vancouver, and Barbara Wade has become one in Toronto. George Woodcock recently won an ACTRA award for documentary-writing.

EDITOR • Michael Smith    MANAGING EDITOR • Fraser Sutherland    ART DIRECTOR • Mary Lu Toms  
GENERAL MANAGER and ADVERTISING MANAGER • Susan Traer  
CIRCULATION MANAGER • Susan Aihoshi    CONSULTANTS • Robert Farrelly • Jack Jensen  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS • Eleanor Wachtel (West Coast) • K.G. Probert (Prairies) • Alberto Manguel  
• Shirley Knight Morris • Paul Wilson • Ray Fillip (Quebec) • Terry Goldie (East Coast)

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## Aural dilemma

Amid a blizzard of rumours, the CBC and Canada's writers ponder the fate of *Anthology*, a literary institution for 31 years

**A**FTER CBC PRESIDENT Pierre Juneau announced last December that the corporation would be cutting \$35 million in operating funds and equipment from its budget, the question of whether or not the literary radio program *Anthology* would be part of the cuts became caught up in a winter storm of rumours. In mid-January newspapers began to speculate on its demise, and by month's end executive producer Robert Weaver, sipping tea with lemon in an office filled with packing crates and promotional posters, assured visitors that yes, he was retiring, but that was because he was offered "an attractive financial package" to continue work on the CBC Literary Competition and consult with the network. As for *Anthology*, he said, it would continue, perhaps at another time and under another title. Visitors left the office reassured.

Two weeks later, the storm became a blizzard. The *Toronto Star* carried the four-column headline "CBC planning to drop *Anthology*," and declared that Weaver in fact "had his position declared redundant because of cutbacks." On a subsequent visit to the old CBC-Radio building on Jarvis Street, a reporter is pulled aside by the producer for a neighbouring radio program and told in a whisper how "disgusting" it is that Weaver is retiring with a generous settlement. "I have absolutely no respect for those people making the decisions around here. Why didn't they just say 'all who want to retire early, raise your hands?'" Asked if he would agree to be interviewed, he mutters, "No, I think I've said enough already" and walks away.

Ron Solloway is a program director at the CBC English network building on Bay Street and Weaver's boss. He was vacationing down south while protest letters from such groups as the Writers' Union, among others, were pouring into his empty office. He looks tanned and fit — if not rested — as he wearily explains that plans to change *Anthology* began a year ago, long before communications minister Marcel Masse ordered the CBC to take a hatchet to its budget.

"I mean, we knew Robert Weaver was going to retire sometime this year," he says gently. Behind his left shoulder is a poster of lemmings — no, they're sheep — rushing headlong over a cliff. The print on the caption is too small to read. "The people on the program, including Weaver," Solloway adds for emphasis, "knew it was time for a change."

The change is to a two-hour arts magazine on Sundays, to be aired on CBC Stereo from 1 to 3 p.m. and on AM radio from 7 to 9 in the evening. Listeners will hear one hour of Canadian stories and poetry and one hour of reviews, news, and arts criticism. Solloway insists that the program, as yet unnamed, will maintain the same attention to Canadian literature that *Anthology* had — "if it didn't, I wouldn't be interested in it." It is to go on the air October 6.

The change is from a literary institution that has remained basically unchanged in its 31 years on the airwaves. *Anthology* began at the sleep-inducing

lowbrow," *Anthology* suffered from the general Canadian malaise of literary insecurity for its first decade, when the stories might be excitingly Canadian but the criticism was almost exclusively British or American.

With the impending Canadian centennial in 1967 came an expanded 55-minute format and a vigorous interest in CanLit that at first pleased Weaver and then alarmed him. "We always kept the door open to other countries and other literatures," he recalls. "I don't believe in cultural nationalism and I went through a bad period in the late '60s and early '70s without changing my opinion about that. Maybe it was an inevitable part of broadening ourselves."

Some of the many Canadian writers who blossomed under *Anthology*'s care included Alice Munro, Matt Cohen, Susan Musgrave, Alden Nowlan, and French Canadians such as Hubert Aquin, Marie-Claire Blais, Antonine Maillet, and Gérard Bessette. Timothy Findley sold one of his first stories, "The War," to *Anthology* in 1958. It was read on the air by Mavor Moore.

In a country notoriously unsupportive of its writers, *Anthology* and its creator have become an institution writers are reluctant to leave behind. Says Weaver: "There's a lot of semi-hysteria around. I think that writers, many of whom knew I was going when I was 65, never really accepted the fact."

Sean Berrigan, who in 1980 wrote a master's thesis on the program, noted, however, that *Anthology* "was as much the reflection of what was acceptable as it was an instrument for creating acceptability."

Eithne Black, a producer for radio features and humanities and one of *Anthology*'s beleaguered staff, says: "There are all sorts of new writers-out there, who work with computers doing new, exciting things. I don't want to take anything away from the established writers, but I can't see Norman Levine and Morley Callaghan working with computers." She says she has "a good feeling" about the future, but adds, "I'm just tired of reading about what is happening to us by going to the corner and picking up a copy of the *Toronto*



hour of 11 p.m. on Tuesday, October 19, 1954, amalgamating two programs Weaver was running at the time, *Canadian Short Stories* and *Critically Speaking*. Intended as what Weaver called "a general literary magazine of middle-serious range, not highbrow and not

# Spring!

## ERIN MOURÉ



### Domestic Fuel

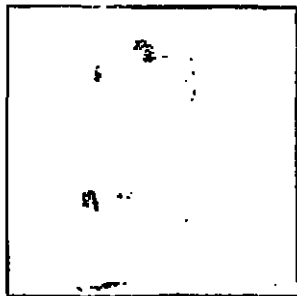
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*Sun*. My housekeeper knows the news about *Anthology* before I do."

Meanwhile, several blocks away, Solloway and his staff pore over some 60 proposals for the new program. Three will be chosen to prepare pilots and run the final race for the laurels of *Anthology's* successor. The storm has subsided, but the saga continues.

— BARBARA WADE

## Soul mother

THE LITTLE GIRL doing chores on the family mink ranch in the Ontario hamlet of Haydon would see a passing jet overhead and think, "I should be up in that plane, going somewhere." Now a middle-aged wife and mother in the Metropolitan Toronto city of North York, poet Dale Loucareas travels on those jets — to China, Japan, England, Scotland, Europe, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand — by way of her monthly publication *Earthlink*. A breezy collage of poetry markets, travel jottings, and family tales, *Earthlink* currently reaches more than 100 readers. "It could get much bigger," Loucareas says, "but I want to keep the personal touch."

She does, in one issue quoting her 15-year-old daughter: "Our weird mother! Whenever she wants an orgasm she simply collects the mail." When Loucareas didn't get sufficient response from British readers, she embarked on an expedition to ferret out poetry markets and resources from London to Aberdeen, "a sort of Canadian spy, wearing blue jeans and flashing no credentials." The spy mission resulted in a plethora of contacts (in Kent "a walk around the village of Istead Rise and a chance remark brought me face to face with Jim Dennington of the Gravesham Writers Circle") and travel observations:

I detoured off the path at Blackfriars Bridge and made my way to St. Paul's Cathedral to pay my respects to my old pal, Sir Christopher Wren . . . Chris had one helluva time getting the plans for his dome accepted by the city fathers.

*Earthlink* is directed at "lonely, beginning poets in search of soulmates," poets who are just "getting there." Loucareas believes that "arrived" poets have already established their own network and are reluctant to welcome newcomers. Her newsletter has a subscription price of \$5 a year (\$8 overseas), although she exchanges with other publications and sends it free "to people who *should* read it, whether they're interested or not."

With evangelical fervour, Loucareas

composes *Earthlink* at home on an electronic typewriter and photocopies it for mailing. She finances it with part-time work for TPUG, an international computer club. The postage bill alone averages about \$50 monthly, and the price of postage has on occasion provoked a testy exchange with her readers:

By the by to Americans — no the rest of the world is not an American colony. Each country has its own postal system run by its own government that issues its own stamps. No other country can use your stamps on the SASEs you send here.

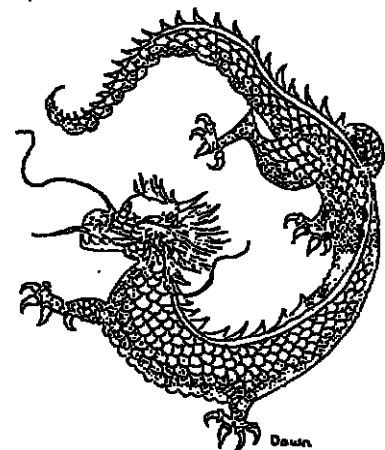
In addition to compiling her newsletter, Loucareas is a poet who began "writing seriously" in 1976. Undaunted by rejection slips, she founded Waitaka Press in 1983 to publish her first chapbook, *Starlines and Sunspots*, and last year *The Female Eunique*. *Eunique* is her best seller — not, she complains, because of her maturation as a poet but because of its erotic content. "Marathon Man"

*Holds back his love  
Holds back his come*

*The expert on restraint  
Afraid to succumb*

Early literary influences, she says, include Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, Pauline Johnson, and Emily Dickinson. Among contemporary poets, she quickly cites Fred Cogswell. "He's been very kind."

Loucareas is director of literary events for the North York Arts Council and a member of a short-story workshop. She plans to write stories about childhood experiences and "perhaps a novel." And to travel more. She has poetry readings



booked with a Tokyo feminist group when she visits Japan next year, and plans to revisit fans in California. "Perhaps because it's skin-and-sun country . . . Californians are more open-minded."

— HELEN PEREIRA

## On the fringe

The writers of British Columbia's coast are joined less by a sense of community than by the landscape that surrounds them

By Eleanor Wachtel • Photographs by Paul Orenstein

A WRITER ONCE moved to Galiano Island, thinking that there was a literary colony there. Thrilled at the idea, she called on everyone, expecting that there would be a reading group and exchanges of manuscripts. But everyone said no, they never had the time. They had come to the island precisely to escape from all that.

"We aren't a community," says novelist Audrey Thomas, "and you might have an interesting article explaining why." Over in Victoria, poet P.K. Page softly proffers: "Why not debunk the stereotypes about the coast and tell them how we actually live?" Novelist and short-story writer Jack Hodgins notes: "The problem of describing life on Vancouver Island is to tame it down enough so that people will believe it."

When asked to write something about West Coast writers, I looked for a way to limit the topic. That became doubly necessary when CBC-Radio's *Anthology* assigned me to interview a number of writers to find out what was distinctively West Coast about the literature that originates there. I decided to focus on the coast itself — literature on the edge, *littorally*. If I was going to consider to what extent there is a community of writers there, at least I could start with a common landscape. What I found was not a community, not a West Coast style *per se*, but writers in a landscape, reacting to (and against) that sense of place.

JACK HODGINS is a third-generation Vancouver Islander, the son of a logger and grandson of pioneer farmers, who now teaches at the University of Victoria. In many ways Hodgins's writing illustrates the theories about West Coast writing. Between *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* (Macmillan) one can find satire and exaggeration, the "magic" realism that is only realism, the concern for ecology and conservation, the search for a home, Eden and Utopia. People looking for Eden on Vancouver Island, Hodgins observes, come for the wrong reasons.

"Historically, they come to have a second chance, to set up new societies with new rules, often self-serving rules. You just go down Vancouver Island

and you see one failed colony after another — from the Danish colony at Cape Scott to the Finnish one at Sointula and the Doukhobors and Brother Twelve and so on. People come with great ideas; they think it's an opportunity to live free from all the restrictions they have elsewhere, but have neglected to notice they've brought all their own human failings with them, and these are exaggerated in this setting.

"So it all falls apart. The more recent influx has tended to be people running away from prairie winters, eastern regulations, harsh facts of life somewhere else. It's become a place where people congregate and hope that no one will disturb them for the rest of their lives. But then what happens when you go to this assumed Utopia and it turns out not to be paradise after all? Where do you go after that?"

IN THE LATE 1960s Audrey Thomas bought a ramshackle turn-of-the-century cottage at the north end of Galiano, a long green hump-backed island in the gulf between the mainland and Vancouver Island. Earle Birney summered there in the early '60s, stayed on Active Pass Drive and wrote poems. But when Thomas moved there, there weren't any well-known writers on the island. There was an Englishman who'd been at the BBC, but he went back to England. The painter Elizabeth

Jack Hodgins



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(Hoppy) Hopkins was Thomas's first friend, "because she was literary, I guess. The woman who typed up *Mrs. Blood* [Talon-books] for me had a husband who said that if he'd known what it was about, he'd never have let her do it. It was she who introduced me to Hoppy."

A more recent arrival, the novelist Jane Rule, is another Galiano "attraction," says Thomas, "because she's so generous with her time." Since settling at the south end of the island in 1976, Rule and Helen Sonthoff have created an oasis of civility and grace — and an azure swimming pool for the neighbourhood children. Rule is interested in invented communities — how people function away from the environments they grew up in. Her novel *The Young in One Another's Arms* (Doubleday) is partly set on Galiano.

Indeed, the residents who have contributed lately to Galiano's literary reputation read like a CanLit *Who's Who*: poet Maxine Gadd; Dorothy Livesay, retiring from the cold of Lake Winnipeg; Marian Engel, who stayed for a couple of summers, (which led to a coffee-table book, *Islands* (Hurtig), and some coastal setting for *The Glassy Sea* (McClelland & Stewart)); and last summer Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson. Still, the island is not a literary community.

It's not that the various writers don't socialize — just that forming a community is not the reason they're there. "I saw it as a place where I wouldn't necessarily need anyone outside my family," says Audrey Thomas, though eventually she did join two groups: French conversation — whose participants would meet once a month to feast on elaborate French cuisine — and the drama group, which staged amateur theatre.

Daily life on the island was simple but demanding. "I'd get up very early to light the wood fire and then go back to bed until the house got warm. I used to have a dog and a cat, so the dog would have to be walked to the end of the island. I had hens too, chores that were proof that I was living in the real world. Somebody once said, 'Why do you never have a supply of wood?' I used to chop wood every day because that was a real thing that I was doing, as opposed to the unreal act of writing — which is such bullshit, but I used to believe it. Living on a day-to-day basis can be very real, but it can also take a day to live a day in the country. By the time you've chopped the wood, gotten the water, and on and on, you're too exhausted by it all. People can get carried away by vegetable gardens."

Still, Galiano Island is where Thomas wrote most of her books. (The distractions dimmed, and "you work or go nuts.") But until recently only the novella *Prospero on the Island* (Bobbs-Merrill) and a few of her short stories had Galiano as their setting. "It's a curious displacement. It's as if I don't want to look at the real landscape while I'm writing. I want my own perceptions to prevail. I don't want to be confronted with the facts of the truth or reality."

Twenty-five years after her arrival in British Columbia, Thomas's latest novel, *Intertidal Life* (Stoddart), is her first to be based on an island and "use all the metaphorical weight that carries. It's a great landscape to work with: rocks, trees, tidal pools, the sea. Writers write with their eyes. And it's extraordinarily beautiful, so you can either play that off against what's happening or make it a corroboration." The landscape, or "land-escape," as Thomas observes, is so exotic that she wonders why anyone would bother to write surreal stories there. It's already the dreamland that she fantasized about during her childhood.

"The West Coast was where people went who had *gump-tion*, as my mother said. To make new lives. The East — New York state — seemed very settled, battened down. It made you feel that everything had been said; it's all been done and done. I escaped to Europe because that's where people went then, but the West Coast was always this land of enchantment. And it's exciting to be out here as a writer, because there is no tradi-

tion to live up to. Perhaps we're creating our own."

ON SALTSRING ISLAND poet Phyllis Webb's journey has come almost full circle. Growing up in Victoria, Webb's one ambition as an adolescent was to get off Vancouver Island. "Montreal, London, and Paris were very important to me, and I did have a sense of imprisonment on Vancouver Island. I needed a bigger world, a bigger reference, so I moved out. I seem to have done a circuit; I definitely turned from being a very urban person to a rural one — in the sense that I cannot bear the sounds of cities now. I've become habituated to the quiet of islands, and that is very good for my personal psyche and work."

Islands have always held an aesthetic appeal for Webb. "Growing up by the water, they were always out there — beautiful little rocks — and I always wanted to get to them. They've always represented in some way something unknown that is within manageable distance. Not a goal that is unreachable."

For Webb the coastal paradox is that west faces east — the snake that eats its tail. "We are kind of edge people. We are edgier in terms of being flakier, freakier, and maybe more delighted in playing with that water-land dichotomy. That's a risky generalization, but I am very aware of the edge of the world here, or at least the end of the continent. I'm reminded of my poem that ends, 'All the big animals turn towards the great wall of China.' It's a line that amazes me every time I read it — that it comes out of my consciousness of looking westward to the east."

The seductive coastal madness is depicted by P.K. Page in a 1946 short story, "West Coast":

Extraordinary place. To them, of course, it is home and usual as everyday or your own face in the morning mirror. But extraordinary, none the less to me. Another week here and I fear the whole place would shift and be viewed by that unseeing area of the eye. Contagion.

Born in England, but in Canada since she was three, P.K. Page first came to the West Coast just before V-J Day. She left soon after, returning to Montreal where she was active among the rising young English poets at the time, the *Preview* crowd. The year she won the Governor



Jane Rule

General's Award for *The Metal and the Flower* (McClelland & Stewart) marked the beginning of a decade abroad, in Australia, Brazil, and Mexico, as the wife of Canadian ambassador W. Arthur Irwin. Then, 20 years ago, they returned home and settled in Victoria.

Page's neighbourhood — large mock-Tudor homes on vast green lawns — resembles embassy enclaves abroad. Her simple exposed cedar house is unpretentious by comparison, though set on an acre of garden, landscaped by her husband. The large

Dorothy Livesay



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rooms are filled with the exotic objects one might expect to find in a retired diplomat's residence — especially a diplomat who is married to an artist.

When Page went to Latin America she switched from writing poetry to painting. She was so immersed in studying Portuguese and Spanish that "I really became distanced from my own tongue. I hadn't the vocabulary for Brazil — for its baroque — and it wasn't English I was concentrating on." After she returned to Canada and began writing again, the images she'd been focusing on in her drawings infused the poetry.

Page's apocalyptic prose piece, "Unless the eye catch fire. . ." (in *Evening Dance of the Grey Flies*, Oxford), is recognizably set in Victoria, but the city serves as a backdrop, to ground the story in reality. "I don't think that place has ever affected me directly. There seem to be certain landscapes in my head that are entirely imaginary. One is a white landscape that appears in a lot of the poems where I talk about snow. I grew up in Winnipeg and Calgary, and you have pretty polar winters there — so that gave me an abstract white landscape that has nothing to do with either Winnipeg or Calgary. At the same time, from living in the tropics I have somewhere in my head an abstract green and tropical landscape, with palms and things, which is also not literal. And they are two poles into which a lot of my poems fit.

"I don't know how to talk about the West Coast. I haven't got all this great sense of Raven and shamans and Indians and Douglas firs that so dominated the poetry of the West Coast for a time that you thought you'd go blind if you ever read another poem like that. I wrote one poem, 'Shaman,' just to show I could use the word. I thought it might give me honorary membership in the club. But I haven't got this sense of this coast; I see it much more as mountains and gardens."

I try out a few theories.

. . . A frontier?

"That's outdated. The north maybe."

. . . Too civilized?

"Yes, very urban — all the conveniences. Roads end north of Toronto, too. There's bush that's just as wild. If you want wilderness in Canada, you can get it within a few hours' driving away from almost any city."

. . . The search for a home?

"This is the nature of man, isn't it? I've tried to make a home everywhere I've gone. Victoria is now probably a prairie town anyway — full of an enormous number of ex-prairie people."

. . . An offshoot of the romantic movement?

"I don't think there's any lunacy in this country. We're all pretty sober people. Not particularly hedonistic here. Marian Engel's *Bear* [set in northern Ontario] is surely a celebration of nature."

But she adds: "Certain people resonate to certain magic elements in the West Coast that are created by the combination of mountains and sea, or the fact that Indians lived here for a long time, integrated with their environment. These things, if the persons are sensitively tuned, influence them profoundly. I have a sensitivity to other places — Brazil, or the busyness of a Mexican landscape compared to the unbusyness of a Canadian one. The stipple of vegetation is different there, a smaller stipple, in some funny way, a pattern repeated on designs on tile — repeated the way they put bricks in buildings. There's something in me that resonates to that particular physical pattern. But it can't be the pattern itself: it must be something behind it."

ANOTHER 20-YEAR resident of Victoria — but one who has a strong sense of spiritual affinity to his environment — is the poet and editor Robin Skelton, who met me in the lounge of the University of Victoria faculty club, a modern wooden



building tucked into a small forest. A year after he arrived in Victoria to teach English ("and get the hell out of Manchester, where my children and I were dying of bronchitis"), Skelton edited *Five Poets of the Pacific Northwest*. Five years ago, it was *Six Poets of B.C.* In between, in the late 1970s, he published two special issues of the *Malahat Review* (which he co-founded) on the West Coast "renaissance." In these he concluded that B.C. writing is characterized by internationalism, because of its ports and immigrants; that the regional impulse is informed by natural beauty and native culture; and that poets rather than prose writers relate directly to "the obsessive quality of the territory and its man-made and natural symbolism."

For Skelton, Victoria was immediately home. Its landscape had all the qualities he enjoys. "I was born by the sea. I'm devoted to rocks and trees.

This is more home to me than the village I was born in." The landscape also produces powerful imagery. "It's been said that West Coast poetry is full of rain and totem poles, but on Vancouver Island it's difficult to travel without seeing any totem poles. They are *there!* You can't avoid working in terms of this whole extraordinary environment — a stack of archetypes — trees, rocks, the sea."

As Skelton shambles off to his class, I reflect on how his appearance — bushy grey hair and beard, rings on every finger, medallion on his chest, ornate walking stick and tweed hat — prompts another generalization about West Coast writers: their individualism, engaging eccentricity, marked free form.

ANNE CAMERON was born and raised around Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. A few years ago, she moved across the Strait of Georgia (or "trench," as Jack Hodgins would have it) to Powell River, an island town in everything but fact — though it is on the mainland, one has to take two ferries to get there. "Powell River is about 20 years behind Vancouver Island," says Cameron. "Other than the fact that the mountains face the wrong way, it's what I grew up with: rednecks, people who couldn't survive in 'civilization.' This is one of the last mental and emotional frontiers. Sometimes I refer to it as the world's largest open-air loony bin. That's what Nanaimo was like before



Phyllis Webb

everyone from Saskatchewan moved there."

Cameron's books — *Dreamspeaker* (Irwin), *Daughters of Copper Woman* (Press Gang), *Earth Witch* (Harbour), *The Journey* (Avon) — are firmly rooted in B.C. Much of her writing is informed by Indian stories she heard as a child and collected more consciously later on. On the other hand, most of her film (*Ticket to Heaven*) and television work (*Drying Up the Streets*) deals with urban issues. Moving to Powell River was a conscious withdrawal from the pressures of continually

P.K. Page



# MEDIA WOMEN

SUSAN CREAM

Media women are often seen as the superstars who have it all — exciting careers, high pay, fame and glamorous lifestyles. They're the privileged ones who have made it through the twin barriers of discrimination and self-doubt — or have they? With sympathy and insight, Susan Cream explores the personalities and career paths of media women from across the country. May

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trying to write hard-hitting journalistic drama. She lives outside the town, off a dirt road, the turn-off marked by a purple macramé hanging. The log house, smoke rising, and fenced-off garden are the hallmarks of rural living.

Cameron denies she's from B.C. — she's a Vancouver Islander. "People who live on islands stay grounded in reality because they know the limits of their universe. You find that out quickly because if you go beyond them, you get wet." It's something like Jack Hodgins's comment that he always knows where his island characters are, because if they try to get away from him they'll get stuck in a ferry line-up.

Growing up on Vancouver Island "was either all sugar or all shit," says Cameron, "either like a sentimental, Walton-like movie or it was an absolute nightmare. I think that everything on the coast is exaggerated, and Vancouver Island is the exaggeration of that. It was incredibly beautiful, gentle; you could grow anything in your garden. It was a great place to be a child because you got the benefit of stories from different ethnic groups and immigrants who would talk to kids because they were lonely. Every second Friday night was payday, and men went to the beer parlours and cashed their cheques and got drunk and went home and beat up everyone who couldn't fight back. But it was also a place where you could walk through the bush for hours, and it was quiet and peaceful, with clean water. Now, of course, it's blacktop from Victoria to Campbell River."

Even so, to a writer like W.D. Valgardson, who grew up in the Interlake district of Manitoba (the setting for his books, *Bloodflowers*, *God Is Not a Fish Inspector*, *Red Dust*, and *Gentle Sinners*, Oberon), Vancouver Island still invites a "voluntary relationship" with the landscape. "Vancouver Island means mountains and rocks and water. I would never think of just going for a hike on the prairies — there's nowhere to hike to — but here I climb mountains and jog along beaches."

Valgardson came to the University of Victoria a decade ago, after six years of graduate work and teaching in the U.S. Midwest. When he first arrived, "everything was too large. The trees were impossible to believe. For a couple of years, I didn't think that Victoria was real; it felt like something constructed by Disney. The people in the little stores couldn't actually be earning a living — they must be paid to stand there and pretend. That's Victoria — so overridden with tourists I couldn't get past that mask into people's real lives."

It wasn't until five years ago, when he enrolled in rock-climbing courses, that he started to get beyond that surface, to "create a new imprint. It's a strange experience for a prairie boy to hang from ropes, where everything is up and down. It required a tremendous change in attitude just to be able to see again, or see in a new way."

The landscape is so important to how a writer perceives reality that Valgardson's characters have changed too. They have a different attitude out on the coast. "The harshness in my Manitoba writing comes out of the weather, out of the land. The Interlake area is almost like Appalachia in the U.S. There is tremendous poverty; the winter is endlessly long; people die every winter in Manitoba a mile from their farmhouse, lost in a blizzard." Living in Victoria, walking to work all year round, Valgardson is struck not only by the gentleness of the city but also by how the land has receded in importance to him. In stories like "A Matter of Balance" — about a man who goes rock climbing — the protagonist *chooses* danger, rather than being consumed by it.

All the same, Valgardson feels an irrevocable outsider on the coast. "I envy Jack Hodgins, because he's able to reach back all the way to birth and write about what he knows in intimate detail, whereas no matter how long I live on the coast — if I live and die here — I'll always be an outsider. Not a tourist, but someone who doesn't know things."

I FEEL LIKE an outsider too, asking extrinsic questions. But home in Vancouver I'm soothed by Sharon Thesen's poem:

*The west coast poem  
hitchhikes beside the island highway  
back-pack & sleeping bag  
laid to rest  
on a stone.*

The poem (whose first line is its title) ends:

*And the sudden shower  
it gets, rainwater  
sliding off a fir tree  
when the wind hits it —  
caesura —  
or benison.*

□

## REPORT

# Neighbourhood gossip

Once a garrison for the rich, Toronto's multicultural Annex district now provides a wealth of material for the city's writers

By Sherle Posorski

**T**OWERING OVER the Edwardian residences of Toronto's Annex district, the turrets of Casa Loma — the ostentatious re-creation of a medieval castle, completed for Sir Henry Pellatt in 1914 — casts a Disneyland shadow on a neighbourhood of miniature castle homes, with their own lookouts, gables, gargoyles, and ghosts.

Once a garrison of privilege for its Family Compact and merchant-prince residents — the Russells, Masseys, Eatons, and Gooderhams — the Annex (so named for its annexation to the city in 1887) gradually deteriorated following the First World War and throughout the Depression as family fortunes declined. Too large and expensive for single families, many of its houses were divided into rental flats and rooms. By the 1950s some city politicians deemed it fit only for roomers and recluses.

But they were mistaken. Throughout the 1930s, '40s, and '50s pockets of the Annex had been revitalized by the settlement of Jewish, Hungarian, Italian, and German immigrants, students and academics from the nearby University of Toronto, and an influx of writers, artists, and film-makers into the rectangle bounded by Avenue Road, Bloor and Bathurst Streets, and the CPR tracks. Today its residents span the spectrum from rubbies to yuppies, blue-stockings to blue-rinse ladies.

The human, historical, and architectural eclecticism of the Annex has made it a popular landscape for such writers as Hugh Garner, Margaret Atwood, Eric Wright, David Helwig, Katherine Govier, Dennis Lee, Joan Fern Shaw, and Richard Wright. Their stories and novels document the Annex's changing physical and social character from the '40s to the present day.

In two stories — "Transfer" and

"Red Sequins on Markham Street" — in her collection *Raspberry Vinegar* (Oberon) Joan Fern Shaw describes the changing character of the Annex through the eyes of a young girl, growing up in the 1940s. As a WASP, she now is in the minority. On Jewish holidays, she is the only member of her class present, and the horrors of Nazi Germany are transmitted to her by her classmates and by her encounter with a woman victim of a concentration camp. In "Red Sequins on Markham Street" she recalls her fascination with a Jewish junkman, as she wanders through her old neighbourhood:

I sat waiting for him, there on the cold concrete steps of the old house where we lived. The house might have belonged to a fairly well-to-do family once. But the area had deteriorated, and the house had become four apartments. Now it has been replaced by the Markham Street entrance to the Bathurst Street subway. . . . I walked around the area recently. . . . The Markham Street tabernacle is gone. . . . And the magnificent archway through which I used to thunder on rollerskates is narrower and

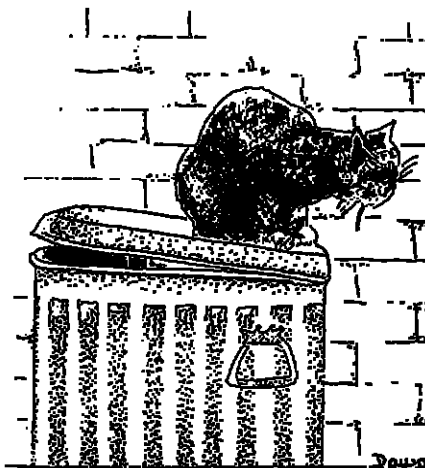
quieter. . . . The feeling is gone.

Rooming-house life in the '50s, is the subject of Hugh Garner's novel, *Silence on the Shore* (Simon & Schuster). The residents of 120 Adford [Bedford] choose the Annex address because it still sustains the vestige of middle-class respectability. The roomers are a mixture of immigrants and young people climbing up the social ladder and those declining in status.

Adford Road was a tree bordered segment of the past. . . . It was a social way station, devoid of nostalgia for those who lived in it, on their way up, and without sentiment for those who tried to remain in it on their way down. . . . [The house] was a detached three storey building. Its Victorian gingerbread gone from its wooden porch, but its age and former social position still apparent in its dingy lace curtains, old fashioned looking on a street that had long ago embraced the genteel drape. . . . It was a house grown too big for the families of the present, and too private in its shouldered intimacy with those beside it for the modern suburbanite.

For decades these rooming houses have provided University of Toronto students with cheap housing. The title story in David Helwig's *The Streets of Summer* (Oberon) focuses on the unrequited lust of one student resident, John Morris. Morris cynically views the Annex homes as "relics of an age where homes were as ponderous as the fat, black queen, deeply rooted into the group, built to crush the family into unity." His summer project involves working on his thesis and falling in love.

Only the cockroaches in his rooming house have an active sex life, so Morris walks the streets looking for a new place. When he sees a beautiful girl walk out of one rooming house, he rents a room there, initiating a summer romance. They share countless grilled-



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For Fred Landon, the hero of Richard Wright's *In the Middle of a Life* (Macmillan) the Annex was the site of his youthful dreams of glory as a radio playwright and novelist. His brief success and marriage led to a move to Forest Hill, the enclave of the very rich, then a return to a dilapidated apartment in the Annex when his fortunes fell. Landon, an unemployed greeting-card salesman, is a witness to the social and physical transformation of the area:

Down Spadina Avenue . . . buses stopped to pick up Italian labourers . . . Kneibel [a grocer] prepared for his day's trade, hefting his crock of eggs and pickles. The Research Library rose, dark and sheer across the sky. He disliked it. . . The neighbourhood bully, tearing down the neighbourhood.

In her novel *Life Before Man* (McClelland & Stewart) Margaret Atwood creates characters who exemplify the essence of 1970s Annex sensibility. A mood of nuclear winter radiates from the novel, as her characters move through the Annex, regarding its structures as testament to their failure. They live in ramshackle homes, still go to cheap student restaurants. Its boundaries define and cage them. The emblem of their lifeless existence is the Royal Ontario Museum, where several of them work.

Atwood's specific descriptions of her characters' movements through the Annex read like directions from the Toronto Transit Commission. "Nate is going to his house, his former house. . . Up Shaw Street. Past Yarmouth, past Dupont, the railway tracks." Their Annex *angst* is rooted, as Atwood writes, in the knowledge that "organisms adapt to their environment, of necessity." As Lesje, one of the main characters, acknowledges, "There's nowhere else she wants to be. . . She knows the terrain too well."

If knowing the terrain too well depresses Atwood's characters, for those in Katherine Govier's *Fables of Brunswick Avenue* (Penguin) knowing the terrain gives them a sense of solidarity and community. Her title story captures the exuberance and heady optimism of those who move to the Annex, imagining it to be an artistic commune. The neighbours of the narrator of the story are:

striving photographers, potters, filmmakers and graduate students in English, or biology. Livings were put together from part-time teaching, grants, odd jobbing. Everyone was involved in rounds of submissions, auditions, applications; there were never any openings. . . The haphazard division of Victorian houses into flats

had created, on this block, a self-addressing world which had the feeling of a camp, struck each night on the same spot. . . We were in and out of each other's apartments, for tea bags and money and records. We loved our tacky camp and its possibilities. The street belonged to us.

When streets are parked with sandblasters' trucks instead of exterminators' vans (the Annex is notoriously cockroach-ridden), the ascent of the yuppies is signalled. The commercial and residential transformation of the Annex into trendy territory is scrutinized by Eric Wright's Inspector Charlie Salter in *Smoke Detector* (Collins). Investigating the death of an Annex antique dealer, Salter rummages through the Annex, interviewing suspects and noting the details of the area with a precise, introspective eye:

Bloor Street's character changes as the street becomes the "Main Street" of the local district, changing continuously with the economic and racial character of the area. . . Bloor Street is a pleasant muddle of small stores and restaurants, housed in the same two-and-three-storey buildings that were erected in the early years of the century when the district was largely Anglo Saxon. . . Now the travel agents have signs in Greek and Portuguese, and mangoes and red bananas sell as briskly as carrots and Brussels sprouts.

If Casa Loma is the symbol of Wasp success, its Annex counterbalance is Honest Ed's, Ed Mirvish's thriving, garish department store that dominates the district's commercial area. As Salter sees it, the store is "a giant bargain mart decorated like a cross between a circus and an amusement arcade, covered in coloured lights and hung with revolving balls, a discount store that attracts huge crowds with daily specials like chickens at one cent each."

Only minutes away from Honest Ed's is the tranquillity of Sibelius Park. In the poem "Sibelius Park" in Dennis Lee's *Civil Elegies* (Anansi) the narrator

*drifting north to the three-storey  
turrets & gables, the squiggles and  
arches and  
baleful asymmetric glare of the houses  
he loves*

*Toronto gothic*

*comes to the park, where  
the sun is filling the  
rinsed air till the green goes luminous  
and it does it*

*does it comes clear. . .*

For its diverse residents, the Annex is the place where their unfocused dreams come clear — whether it be the castle dreams of Sir Henry Pellatt, the mercantile dreams of Ed Mirvish, the new world dreams of immigrants, or artists' dreams of glory. And writers will be there to record those dreams. □

## IN MEMORIAM

### A literary education

D.M. Fraser was determined to live his own life and have a good time doing it. Until his death at 38, he did just that

By Fraser Sutherland

**A**BOUT 10 YEARS ago when I was involved in a public imbroglio someone named D.M. Fraser wrote me a letter that ended, "More power to your right elbow."

He had no particular reason to take my side, and at least one good reason to resent me. For years his mother — my high school English teacher — had held me up as an example for him to emulate. The most sympathetic teacher I've ever had, Mrs. Murray Y. in this instance was wrong (she seldom was), and it became a running joke between us, one of many pleasures that attended the too-few times we got together in Vancouver and Nova Scotia.

Once after celebrations that followed a public reading Don and I gave in Antigonish, N.S., I dragged him back late to my mother's farm in Scotsburn. Our mutual friends Greg Cook and his wife Miriam were staying with us. As the rest of the household slumbered, Don was given the doubtful comfort of the chesterfield. In the morning my mother was startled to find an apparent extra-terrestrial wobbling into her kitchen. In moments she was captivated — as anyone who met Don invariably was.

He was a small dark man, his most conspicuous facial features the eyes and lips discernible through a salt-and-pepper beard. From the brown eyes issued intelligence, shrewd and humorous; from the lips a kind of mellifluous mumble that was always worth paying strict attention to. Stooped, frail, downright sickly-looking, Don had something in him that cried out for every woman to be a mother, every man to be a big brother. But he would tolerate no coddling. He was determined to live his own life and have a good time doing it. And he did.

Now D.M. Fraser is dead at the age of 38.

A Presbyterian minister's son, he grew up in Nova Scotia, spending four years in the tough Cape Breton mining town of Glace Bay. (He loved it and later fantasized about setting up there a branch of his publisher, Pulp Press.) As a child he was given free rein to read not only the English romantic poets but also

Freud and Marx. As he said later, "There was no genteel censorship going on when it came to ideas."

At first he put ideas to conventional use, enrolling in the University of British Columbia Ph.D. program on a study-where-you-like scholarship. "I was a coward," he told the Vancouver journalist Alan Twigg, "This was the furthest away I could get and still stay in Canada."

In graduate school he met Steve Osborne and with him, Greg Enright, Tom Osborne, and Jon Furberg founded Pulp Press in 1972. By the time the press's remarkable magazine *3¢ Pulp* (newstand price: 3¢) was being sold, Pulp had moved off the street into an office behind the Marble Arch beer parlour.

Don liked beer; he also liked publishing much better than academe. Dropping out of UBC he "made a conscious choice to do the things I like doing." The first of his stories *3¢ Pulp* published was "The Sweetness of Life."

As a partner in Pulp's co-op, he edited manuscripts, typeset copy, and (reluctantly) handled financial matters. At Pulp he will always be remembered for his mammoth rejection letters, the most extensive of which was four and a half feet long.

He also wrote. First, a column, "Manners," in the *Georgia Straight*, then *Class Warfare* (1974, reprinted in 1976) and *The Voice of Emma Sachs* (1983), a "suite of stories." The fiction was brilliantly innovative, sold well, and even gained him a cult following on the U.S. West Coast.

Yet he was anything but a careerist, and was thoroughly bemused by a tour he took to promote his last book. The stops included Toronto — a city he didn't like much. There he talked to Judith Fitzgerald about his hard-drinking low-living public image: ". . . I suppose it would help the image if I did drink the way my mythology says I do. Frankly, I can't afford it. If critics want to say I write upside down hanging from a chandelier, that's fine with me. Just as long as they don't expect me to demonstrate it."

By the same token, he had no patience for cultural flag-waving or branch-plant thinking or a whole coterie of public-isms and -ologies. He was too busy melding ideas with the private voices he heard in his head. What politics he had went into books that he regarded as circular letters to friends, and action only authentically began when he sat at the typewriter — "about the only action I know of that I'm any good at."

In the three weeks before he died he hadn't been into Pulp Press but assured his worried friends that he was being

D.M. Fraser



taken care of. Up to the time he died of a lung infection he had been working on stories, essays that included "A Literary Education," and a novel. □

## REVIEW

# Continental drifters

By Douglas Glover

*Digging Up the Mountains*, by Neil Bissoondath, Macmillan, 224 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9836 1).

IN HIS FIRST story collection, *Digging Up the Mountains*, Neil Bissoondath reveals an impressive gift for writing prose that is precise and vivid, full of striking turns of phrase and exciting, many-fingered images.

Take, for example, the opening of his story "An Arrangement Of Shadows":

The clock struck once and it was eight o'clock.

Two pigeons, symmetrical slices of black on the blue sky, swooped and touched down abruptly on the red roof of the clock tower. The hands of the clock — broadsword of a brass long tarnished — were locked as always at four seventeen.

"All fine prose," in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald, "is based on the verbs carrying the sentences." These lines of Bissoondath's are so alive that you race through them, scarcely noticing their technical virtuosity, yet they have coloured the whole story — the striking, slicing, swooping, tarnishing, and locking is going on before your eyes.

Born in Trinidad in 1955, Bissoondath came to Canada 12 years ago as a university student. While his style bespeaks a sound British colonial school education, his stories reflect what one assumes is a personal sense of uprootedness and betrayal at the economic decline and social and ideological turmoil of post-independence Trinidad.

In "There Are a Lot of Ways to Die" Joseph Heaven, a successful immigrant with a rug installation business in Toronto, returns to Port of Spain expecting "a kind of fame, a continual welcome, the prodigal son having made good, having acquired skills, returning home to share the wealth." Instead, he finds that the shantytown workers don't want regular employment, that the new politics have endowed a class of insufferable nouveau bureaucrats, that old friends have died or lapsed into despair, that even the humid, rainy climate gives

the lie to his memories of an idyllic island paradise.

"Might it not," thinks Joseph, referring to the story's central image, a dilapidated mansion symbolic of Trinidad itself, "have been always a big, open, empty house, with rooms destined to no purpose, with a façade that promised mystery but an interior that took away all hope." Finally, he decides to return to Canada, fearing that, in his absence, his memories of Toronto's civility may have turned into lies as well.

Joseph Heaven is the quintessential Bissoondath protagonist, with a foot in two continents, two worlds, each shifting subtly away from him as time passes, as memory becomes hallucination. In lesser souls, this alienation can cause bitterness, a theme that Bissoondath explores in several stories: "The Revolutionary" with its shambling, scarecrow ideologue; "A Short Visit to a Failed Artist," a savage caricature of a woman-hating ("Women are shit") self-styled artist (who photocopies his face) living in a crowded, subsidized Toronto apartment; and "Dancing," which ends in an explosion of anti-white, anti-Canadian racism.

Fearlessly, Bissoondath moves off his own turf, trying his themes on other nationalities — Japanese, Russian, Anglo-Canadian — but with less success than in his Trinidad stories. In "Continental Drift" a young Canadian hitchhiking in Europe meets two Spanish migrant labourers in a hostel and feels "life suddenly electrified." Although the author's craftsmanship is evident, it seems wasted here on a trivial cliché about "real" experience and the noble working man. (This tepid effort is balanced by a couple of striking Central American atrocity stories "In The Kingdom Of The Golden Dust" and "Counting The Wind" which, though thematically unrelated, are among the best in the book.)

Sometimes, too, a certain stridency or one-sidedness invades Bissoondath's prevailing tone of bewildered fatalism. This is especially evident when he lapses into the old authorial lie of the uninvolved narrator. In "Christmas Lunch" the "I" narrator watches an immigrant man basely torment an unwitting white woman from Newfoundland. The "I" doesn't protest, doesn't attempt to intervene; he flees as soon as politeness permits.

The strength of this fiction (and others like it) trades on the narrator's supposed detachment, his objectivity. Appalled by the cruelty, yet secure in his superior courtesy (smug, bourgeois) and narrative neutrality, he makes a subtly insidious pact with the reader that, yes, man, these are awful degenerate people,

not like us. Yet this easy verdict betrays a moral ambiguity, a failure on the part of the "I" to engage his own demons. Silence is complicity.

These reservations aside, however, the publication of *Digging Up the Mountains* ushers in a ripe, new talent, a welcome addition to the CanLit émigré pantheon. Bissoondath combines deft prose, major themes, exotic peoples and locales to create a work of surpassing emotional impact. □

## REVIEW

# Between the covers

By Tony Aspler

*Hidden Agenda*, by Anna Porter, Irwin Publishing, 352 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7725 1513 1).

FOR A PUBLISHER to write a novel is either an act of ultimate desperation or one of supreme confidence. Either publishers feel that they have ploughed through enough manuscripts to understand the genre — what works and what doesn't — or they have an urge to write a book even knowing they present a larger target than the rest of us. (Magistrates are tougher on gamekeepers-turned-poacher than vice versa.) I suspect that *Hidden Agenda* belongs to the latter sub-genre.

Anna Porter, who has impeccable testimonials as a publisher (Key Porter, Seal, McClelland & Stewart), has written her first crime novel, and wisely she's opted to stay on familiar turf. The background is the world of publishing, and the opening gambit is pulled off very well: George Harris, the owner of a financially-troubled Toronto publishing house (remind you of anyone?) falls in front of a train at the Rosedale subway stop. Did he jump or was he pushed? And where is the briefcase he was carrying?

Now it is every writer's fantasy to push his or her publisher under a train, but for Judith Hayes, a 38-year-old divorcee with two kids who ekes out her living as a magazine journalist, Harris's death is as inopportune as it is sad. Judith was in the middle of preparing a profile on the man for *Saturday Night* and she is convinced he was murdered. "Would a man about to kill himself make a dental appointment?" she reasons.

If this sounds terribly parochial, the plot does fan out when a New York

publisher up for the funeral is murdered on his return home, apparently by a mugger. This draws Judith's schoolgirl buddy Marsha Hillier into the action and soon a third publisher is dispatched.

It would be a disservice to the reader to say more than that the reason for all this literary mayhem is a dynamite manuscript. The hunt to secure it involves a host of interested parties on both sides of the Atlantic with some melodramatic meetings and men watching from cars and barstools.

The main problem with the book is the two women characters who solve the crime between them. They are interesting enough, especially the wealthy Marsha, but we learn too much about them (Marsha's first bra, for instance, and Judith's inconsequential conversations with her children). This smacks more of Margaret Drabble than Ruth Rendell, though maybe this is the author's intention. However, the personal histories of the two women dotted through the action slows the narrative.

Judith begins the investigation and then Marsha takes it up. This change of gears midway through the plot tends further to dissipate the tension, though the kidnapping of Judith's children and its effect on her is well handled.

All the violence — apart from the death in the opening scene and Marsha

flattening a gunman in her London hotel room — is off-stage, while the sex is full-frontal. Judith falls for a cop and beds him while Marsha just falls. In this genre violence is preferable. What is missing is a sense of menace, which does not surface until the global implications of the manuscript become apparent. It's not so much a whodunit as a "what-the-hell's-going on?" Even now I'm not sure who the real villain was.

Where Anna Porter is strongest is in her behind-the-scenes look at the publishing world in Toronto, New York and London. For this alone *Hidden Agenda* should be required reading for all writers. Fascinating insider gossip, how covers are chosen, how deals are made and rights sold. Riveting stuff. And she aptly sums up the condition of publishing in Canada today. The words are those of the New York publisher: "Not enough people, too many American books. The Swedes have it easy. So do we. One best-seller on the list in the States, that's 200,000 copies hardcover and maybe a million in subsidiary rights — paperback, bookclub, excerpts. And movies . . . we option more books in a month than the Canadian movie industry would in its lifetime."

Porter obviously has great faith in the power of the written word to change the way we think. I would like to believe she

is right, but ours is the last generation to put so much store by a testament between hard covers. □

## REVIEW

### Frozen assets

By Mark Abley

**Arctic Ordeal: The Journal of John Richardson, Surgeon-Naturalist with Franklin, 1820-1822**, edited by C. Stuart Houston, McGill-Queen's University Press, illustrated, 349 pages \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7735 0418 4).

**A Gentleman Adventurer: The Arctic Diaries of Richard Bonnycastle**, edited by Heather Robertson, Lester & Orpen Dennys, illustrated, 218 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88619 074 6).

AS THE DECADES pass, the Arctic expeditions led by Sir John Franklin lose none of their fascination. Much of the enduring interest in Franklin must be the result of the terrible fate met by his third expedition, trapped in the Arctic Ocean in 1846; it's as if the horror experienced

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by those men has become archetypal for Canadians. Their deaths bear witness to the eternal power of ice, space, and wind on this weather-beaten continent, and to the smallness of human endeavour. The land can be mined and explored, flown above and built upon, but it never becomes *ours*. Franklin's bones are somewhere in the north, and the north is in our bones.

On his first trip to the north in 1820-21, Franklin came within a few days of death by starvation in the barren lands north of Great Slave Lake. This expedition — undertaken with the aim of mapping out the coastline of the Arctic Ocean — has been thoroughly chronicled before. Franklin's own narrative, first printed in London in 1823, was republished by Hurtig 15 years ago, and the journals of midshipman Robert Hood appeared from McGill-Queen's University Press in 1974 under the title *To the Arctic by Canoe*. The editor of that volume, Stuart Houston, now has compiled and annotated the journals of a third officer, John Richardson, the Scottish medical officer/naturalist/geologist of the party.

Though Richardson's account is full of fresh details, his diaries make few important changes to our understanding of the trip. The title that Houston has given the journal, *Arctic Ordeal*, conjures up a host of B-movies, yet it is a fair phrase to sum up the experiences that Richardson meticulously recorded. He and Franklin were two of the nine survivors; Hood was among the 11 men who died.

Richardson's diaries begin tersely in the summer of 1820, not long before Hood's journal leaves off. In strictly literary terms, the midshipman's writings are a good deal more lively, varied and speculative than the surgeon's; moreover, *To the Arctic by Canoe* contained fine reproductions of Hood's watercolour paintings of the north and its wildlife. Richardson was not an artist (nonetheless, *Arctic Ordeal* is greatly enlivened by the evocative line-drawings by H. Albert Hochbaum), nor was he a natural writer. Typically, his sole comment on Christmas Day, 1820 was: "The male Rein-deer are now shedding their horns."

In the best (?) tradition of British reticence, Richardson refrained from venting his own emotions except under great provocation: "The fears of our voyageurs have now entirely mastered their prudence," he noted with rare vehemence in August, 1821, "and they are not restrained by the presence of their officers from giving loose to a free and sufficiently rude expression of their feelings." The voyageurs were right to be scared. They sensed that Franklin's

dogged quest to map the shoreline was endangering the lives of the entire party.

Already the expedition had been cursed with bitter weather. The men passed the winter of 1820-21 at Fort Enterprise, north of present-day Yellowknife, where the temperature was still minus-32 in the middle of April. Eventually they moved by boat down the Coppermine River — encountering ice even in mid-July — and reached the ocean too late for both a successful session of cartography and a safe return to Fort Enterprise before the next onset of winter. On August 20 the snow began again; the food soon ran out; and the number of travellers began to decline.

Hardship produced in Richardson a calm, almost grudging eloquence: "... the men found some pieces of the skin and a few bones of a deer that had been devoured by the wolves in the spring. They halted and lighted a fire, and rendering the bones friable by burning, devoured them with avidity. They also eat several of their old shoes." But soon the supply of shoes and carcasses ran out. The survivors owed their lives to the kindness and fortitude of the Copper Indians.

The fatalities have aroused a certain degree of controversy. It is clear that Robert Hood, lagging behind most of the party and unable to digest the lichen that kept the other men alive, was murdered by an Iroquois voyageur by the name of Michel. It seems likely that Michel had already resorted to cannibalism, an act in which other members of the expedition had joined. For these reasons, John Richardson shot and killed Michel. At least one of Franklin's original party, W.-F. Wentzel, accused Richardson of cold-blooded murder and thought that he "richly merited to be punished." But Houston defends Richardson, alluding to his lifelong reputation for compassion and refusing to blame him for a necessary execution.

Buttressed by notes and commentaries, *Arctic Ordeal* becomes a sterling tribute to Richardson by an editor who is himself a distinguished naturalist and doctor. John Richardson's manifold contributions to botany and geology, geography and zoology form the subject of some lengthy appendices; he was not an important scientific thinker, but he was an astute, acute observer. With justice, his name has become attached to species of milk-vetch and anemone, ground-squirrel and lichen.

To historians, furthermore, his journal may have an added value. It shows — or so Houston believes — that "Franklin's reputation depended more on the quality of the men under his command than on his own abilities." Nonetheless, he was enough of a leader to

retain Richardson's devoted loyalty. At the age of 60, the surgeon returned to Canada to spend an arduous half-year searching for his lost commander.

When Richardson and Franklin encountered Inuit families along the Coppermine River, the natives were living in completely traditional ways. When Richard Bonnycastle, a young manager for the Hudson's Bay Company, visited Coppermine in 1930, he found the Inuit gradually adapting themselves to a society rich in tobacco, tea, and ammunition. Yet most of the Inuit's traditional way of life remained intact; Bonnycastle praised "the extraordinary efficiency of their snow houses, mud sleds and seal oil lamps." His diaries, edited by Heather Robertson under the title *A Gentleman Adventurer*, provide a portrait of life in the Arctic at a time when enormous and irreversible changes were just beginning to take effect.

In 1929, the year in which uranium was discovered near Great Bear Lake, the airplane became a common sight in the north. But, temporarily, old and new could co-exist in harmony. One of Bonnycastle's most revealing photographs shows an Inuit summer home on Baillie Island in the Arctic Ocean: on its outer wall hangs a sack that bears the clear legend, INGENIO SAN ANTONIO, NICARAGUA. Strange indeed are the ways of international trade.

The frustration that overtakes a reader of *A Gentleman Adventurer* arises largely from the character of its author, a bluff, ebullient, hard-working young man with little desire to brood about the significance of what he saw. His strength as a Bay manager was his weakness as a diarist: cheerful, common-sensical normality. Likewise, his photographs usually have an air of posed bonhomie; the intensity and power of Robert Flaherty's pictures of the Inuit (taken only a few years before) are missing here. Robertson exaggerates in the preface by talking of Bonnycastle's "keen ear" and his "sharp eye for significant detail." He was not writing for posterity, and often he omits precisely the kind of details that a later reader might wish he had included.

Indeed, the best things about *A Gentleman Adventurer* tend to be the work of its editor and publisher, not of Bonnycastle himself. Cleverly compiled and handsomely designed, the book includes excerpts from other works about the north that complement and enhance the diaries of a man whose adventures were physical, not mental. The book will be a useful source for a volume that remains unwritten: a comprehensive, critical history of the activities of white traders in the Arctic. □



# The outside world

Three new collections by Ralph Gustafson reveal a poet more at home with exterior images than writing about his inner landscape

By George Woodcock

*At the Ocean's Verge: Selected Poems*, by Ralph Gustafson, Black Swan Books, 155 pages, \$20.00 (U.S.) cloth (ISBN 0 933806 16 7).

*Directives of Autumn*, by Ralph Gustafson, McClelland & Stewart, 96 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 3709 0).

*Impromptus*, by Ralph Gustafson, Oolichan Books, 61 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88982 066 X).

RALPH GUSTAFSON is surely one of the least provincial of Canadian poets, yet he is also one of the most locally rooted. His poetic stance has always been the cosmopolitan one of classic modernism. I would not call Gustafson an unpolitical poet, but his politics insofar as his poetry expresses them are those of broad humanity, of indignation aroused by injustice, cruelty, and offences against nature wherever they happen, rather than the narrow politics that in Canada have often accompanied literary nationalism. Yet there are deep Canadian sources to his creativity, and it is significant that his return to Canada in 1960, and his resettling in the Eastern Townships region of his childhood and youth, should have started off his second and major period of writing poetry.

Gustafson had published four books of verse in the 1930s and the early 1940s, but there was a gap of 16 years between the last of these and the appearance in 1960 of two volumes, *Rivers Among Rocks* and *Rocky Mountain Poems*, that initiated the new Gustafson era. Since then new volumes have been appearing regularly and with undiminished vitality, building a body of work so impressive that now, with the appearance of three books in the poet's 75th year, one cannot fail to recognize how solidly in the centre of Canadian poetry he stands, for his own work: even more than for the anthologies, like *The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse*, that originally made him a name in our literary world.

*Directives of Autumn* is a volume entirely of new poems. *Impromptus* is a group of new and old poems united by

their susceptibility to musical analogies. *At the Ocean's Verge* is an extensive selection from the whole of Gustafson's poetic career, and on the whole a good sampling, showing the poet at his varied best. The arrangement, it is true, will be a little bewildering to anyone who comes new to his work, since it is ordered in thematically oriented sections rather than chronologically, and only a few of the early poems are dated. Yet it is possible that Gustafson wants his poetry to be seen as a timeless continuum, and in fact there is a rare consistency to it, especially during the period since 1960 to which most of it belongs.

As his friend Leon Edel once suggested, Gustafson is more comfortable dealing with the external world than exploring his inner landscape. A sharp, ironic intellect, an intense and always watchful eye, serve everything he writes, but they are directed mostly to the world outside. "Je suis un homme pour qui le monde extérieur existe," said the French poet Théophile Gautier, and Gustafson might well echo him. Indeed, one of the most immediately attractive aspects of his poetry is the way he can evoke a scene by vivid, exact touches, putting imagism to splendid use in poems whose



implications, getting involved with memory, are broader than imagism. "Of Green Steps and Laundry" is a good example:

*The man will put a large-headed nail,  
Shiny as silver, into the green step,*

*Straightening winter's bias and spring  
Thaw and his hammer will knock it  
crooked,  
The bird come unobtrusively to the  
bough above,  
And it will have to be done again, and  
that  
Will be important; and she will hang  
Blue and white shirts and a patched  
quilt  
On the laundry line that runs from the  
kitchen  
Step to the yard telephone pole and  
sheets  
That smell of winter's cold, and the  
pulley  
Each time the line is launched will  
squeak,  
And that will be important; and neither  
She nor the man pounding the clear air  
Fixing the green step with another nail  
Will be aware of the importance, twenty  
Years later thought of by him  
Who drove nails and saw laundry,  
Who thought little of cardinals and  
clothespins  
And now loves life, loves life.*

If Gustafson is not greatly given to introspection and rarely gets entangled in the oblique expression of tortuous feelings, he is not given either to experimentation for its own sake. Indeed, in the quiet sanity of his preface to *At the Ocean's Verge* he tends to equate the two, attacking the solipsism of the poet who "cuts up useful words into jots and syllables, scatters empty spaces around . . . praises silence . . . draws pictures with his typewriter."

As the alternative to such varieties of solipsism he offers "irony and clarity," and when he is not boldly celebrating the visible world he tends to use the ironist's devices of parody and pastiche, rather like the Canadian contemporaries who were probably nearest to him: his fellow Quebec English, A.J.M. Smith, F.R. Scott and John Glassco. But unnecessary innovation is so little a part of his approach that in the whole of *At the Ocean's Verge* there is not a single line that does not start with a capital letter.

It interests me, however, that the newest volume, *Directives of Autumn*, does contain a number of poems in which capitals are dispensed with except

where sentences begin. Casting about for a reason (and the poet giving none), it struck me that the pieces where this occurred — principally in a section called "Brief Sequences" — were in fact not poems developed as narrative or as statement, but poems as simple imagist notations, such as "The Blade of Grass":

*Straight up  
nothing near it*

*the one blade of grass  
green in the sun  
lucent  
green in the sunlight  
which it sought  
one blade twelve inches straight up*

*nothing  
supporting it*

*amongst stones  
nothing supported it*

In other words, a departure from orthodox justified by reason as much as by instinct.

And reason plays a leading role in Gustafson's poems; indeed, their strength comes from their peculiar mingling of immediate sense response with rational structure and a canny mind. Here, one is soon aware, is a man of vast and varied learning, whose grasp of cultural history enables him to pick bright vignettes from all continents and centuries, yet who can also engage us closely, without erudite allusions, in the here and now of a winter's day at North Hatley or a mountain walk in the Rockies, and can do so by recording with such recollective magic the data trapped by the senses. In "A Fall of Snow":

*The world in this dusk is again blue,  
Blue snow, snow covers everything,  
A thick heavy snow in great flakes  
Covers intervention — roof, boughs,  
ground,*

*Air, existence is blue snow.  
The falling catches — only the patch of  
a boulder,*

*The under-ridge of a buried boulder  
Shows in the landscape.*

In his preface to *At the Ocean's Verge* and in the very existence of a volume called *Impromptus*, Gustafson shows a considerable concern with his role as poet-musician. "A poem is superior to the extent that the verbal music is heard in the meaning; otherwise, it is prose." Granted — and perhaps the sureness of Gustafson's music is to be heard in the fact that one notices it by absence only, when it flags in such unfortunate lines as: "puberal, still with bended bow did shoot/Heroic arrows tipped at the fabulous sky. . ."

But clearer than the unobtrusive adequacy of the music to most perceptive

readers must be Gustafson's success in crossing another boundary of the arts and asserting himself as a poet-colourist, handling the chromatic clues as vividly as any imagist or Chinese poet. "The Bucket had not really been meant for Flowers," in *Directives of Autumn*, seems to me an excellent example of how the drama of being, locked in ordinary things, can be liberated by the poet with a strongly visualizing imagination:

*Blood-red petals fell,  
Two and three on the slate,  
Each side.*

*The lowest iron hoop  
Around the wooden bucket  
Was broken,*

*The bucket with a mass  
Of red impatiens, plants  
Long*

*Lasting. It stood on the slate  
Near the kitchen door.  
All summer*

*It was colour against  
The grey stone and rain  
And sun,*

*The renewal of petals falling  
So rich was  
The force —*

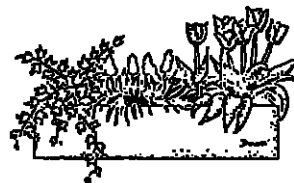
*Near the door window  
Where you looked out  
From sadness,*

*The bucket of weathered wood,  
The hoop rusted, the petals  
Blood-red.*

Gustafson is a true poet, clear in mind's ear and eye, and one of the best we have had up to now in Canada. □

lady looking for a place to spend the night. Then the camera enters the bar, a mirror of the world, a meeting-place of judges and whores, would-be writers and would-be men of adventure. The main characters are focused: Gil, the intellectual bartender; Dubuque, the sentimental gangster-turned businessman; Ilona, the whore, Our Lady of the Snows.

Quickly it becomes clear that the story is that of Dubuque's involvement with Ilona: a man with a deep knowledge of the streets dazzled by a woman on whom he cannot fix a label. Dubuque is a Toulouse Lautrec figure: club-footed, vi-



sionary (he sometimes has second sight), a pimp who reads the dictionary for pleasure, and who in a sentimental fit sends \$200 to a destitute family in the neighbourhood. Ilona is a mystery: too graceful, too understanding to fit the common rough image of a whore — a kind of Florence Nightingale hooker. Dubuque keeps repeating to himself: "I don't understand the woman. Why couldn't she see that she could be a fabulous whore, a natural with a strange gift for creating the great illusion that makes a man feel that no matter what he has done, if she touched him he would feel excused and comforted, and interesting, too." Dubuque is a wishful thinker in search of a pampering mother.

Ilona, Dubuque, and Gil are only samples of the host of lower Toronto characters that Morley Callaghan brings into his novel. In fact it is startling to realize that the book spans barely more than 200 pages. The characters, like crowds at rush hour, seem too numerous to remember, their lives too intricate, their histories flung too far back into the past. The wealth of detail is distracting. Though in parts it adds reality to the novel's world, it ultimately becomes irrelevant to the story itself. The many lives brought onto the page give the impression of belonging to several plots running their separate courses at the same time. Each seems to belong to a different story; together they compete loudly for the reader's attention.

Several of these underworld characters have literary inclinations and are familiar with the great literatures of the world. The bartender reads the Russian novelists, Ilona and Dubuque are fairly familiar with Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Emile Zola defended the

## REVIEW

### Harlot's web

By Alberto Manguel

*Our Lady of the Snows*, by Morley Callaghan, Macmillan, 224 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9837 8).

IT BEGINS LIKE a film, from the large to the small, zooming down from the first Christmas snowfall on Toronto's lakeshore to the towers on Front Street, and on to "an old dilapidated neighbourhood" where we see, dusted in snow, Bradley House, a four-storey hotel with its rear-entrance bar. Now the characters appear, criss-crossing the scene, the writer's camera panning from the doorman holding open a taxi door, to the bag

cultural side of his hoodlums by explaining that, especially in the underworld, certain intellectual expressions add to a man's prestige, and that his whores always lifted their little fingers when drinking out of a glass. In Callaghan's novel, however, these traits reflect less a concern for reality than a belief in the romantic spirit of the streets, in men and women who redeem each other from the safeguard of their traditional roles in society. Ilona and Dubuque are roughed-up versions of the Sleeping Beauty and her rescuing Prince. *Our Lady of the Snows* is an urban fairy tale.

This romantic view of the world allows for certain scenes of trite sentimentality. At one point Ilona, pursued by an Irish wolfhound, falls to her knees by the closed garden gate while the beast, much like Androcles's lion, turns from savage to meek, wags his tail "and with an awkward, almost apologetic shake of his big body" comes "brushing against her, licking at her face." The scene ends with Ilona entering a church and lighting a candle, convinced that her life is not wrong "because she was as she was, because of what she could do for a man, because of a hidden wonder in her." The romantic heroine becomes a first-aid kit.

The blurb on the cover advises that

the title comes from Kipling's celebrated 1897 poem on Canada that so infuriated Canadians and adds: "Yet Kipling would not be pleased by this strikingly contemporary tale." Though it is hazardous to guess what would please a writer who died in 1936, it seems correct to surmise that Kipling would not have approved of *Our Lady of the Snows*. Not because of its "strikingly contemporary" features (few writers were more "strikingly contemporary" than Kipling) but because its structure lacks the tightness, the meticulous linking of parts that Kipling demanded of fiction.

The rambling narration, the impossibly romantic protagonists, become, however, at times coherent and appealing, and remind the reader of the crisp style that Callaghan began to explore in his very early *Strange Fugitive* (1928). Scenes such as the meeting between Dubuque and Ilona's parents (the gentle, wary father; the faded, aristocratic mother) show how wisely Callaghan can portray complex human relationships, making no judgements and allowing his characters to seek their own redemption. Unfortunately, *Our Lady of the Snows* has few passages of this excellence, and the novel's initial objective film-like quality wanes and quickly disappears. □

## REVIEW

# Beyond flatulence

By Richard Sherbanluk

*More Saskatchewan Gold*, edited by Geoffrey Ursell, Coteau Books, 428 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 919926 38 X).

*Ken Mitchell Country*, edited by Robert Currie, Coteau Books, 429 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 919926 34 7).

IT IS FASHIONABLE in some circles to disdain the "prairie anecdotal" tradition of Canadian writing, and often with good reason. At its worst, prairie writing's focus on dirt farmers, the Depression, immigrants, curling, outdoor privies, small-town pool halls, and beer parlours has a cracker-barrel flatulence that is eerily awful. But at its best, this kind of writing has a gritty, hard-edged if narrow integrity, much like small-town prairie inhabitants themselves, and it can be very good indeed.

One of the most prolific publishers of prairie literature in recent years has been

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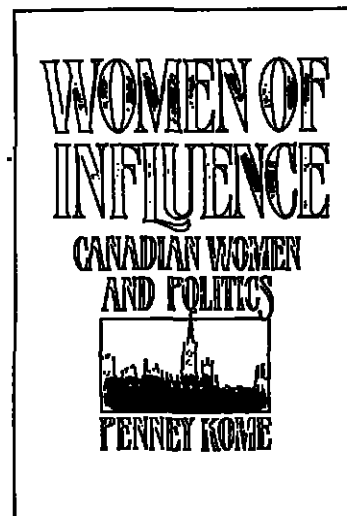
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Moose Jaw's Thunder Creek Publishing Cooperative. An oddity in the world of Canadian publishing (Saskatchewan has special legislation encouraging the formation of co-ops), Thunder Creek has produced a line of paperbacks (Coteau Books) featuring the prose, poetry, plays, and songs of Saskatchewan writers. The idea of mass-marketing books inside the province in small-town grocery stores and drug marts is an unusual one, with the laudable goal of helping writers reach readers through wide distribution. Each branch of Thunder Creek's operation is named after natural prairie features — Thunder Creek winds through Moose Jaw; Caragana (their record label) is a common hedge; a coteau is a hilly bump or the side of a ravine; Wood Mountain (new poetry) is, well, a hill with trees. As this self-conscious imitation of prairie geographical characteristics indicates, Thunder Creek's writers focus on the exterior and interior landscapes.

Two recent Coteau Books contain some of the best and the worst of prairie writing. *More Saskatchewan Gold* is a successor to 1982's *Saskatchewan Gold* and contains 31 stories, 11 by authors never before published. *Ken Mitchell Country* is a selection of works by actor, playwright, poet, screenwriter, and short-story writer Ken Mitchell.

The stories in *More Saskatchewan Gold* are wildly uneven in quality. "Dan's Car," by A.O. Smith, is about a young homesteader who acquires from bootleggers a fancy wooden-wheeled sedan, complete with bullet holes. Dan has run the car into Saskatchewan at night — it has no licence, and no duty has been paid. When Dan tries to take his new bride into the city he's nabbed by the provincial police and gets into trouble. This story is the "prairie anecdotal" tradition at its most tedious. The story is nothing more than an anecdote fleshed out with arcana about farm life in the 1920s (cream separators, summer haircuts) as a substitute for plot and characterization. It is full of "sure as guns," "young whipper-snappers," "by jingo," and the like.

A more ambitious story is Lee Gowan's "Sunbirds," about a farm family with a retarded son named Jesus. A cow has cancer of the face, the local slut has disappeared, and Jesus wanders into the kitchen covered with blood. But Gowan has a problem: try treating a nicely Gothic theme while remaining true to the blunt way farm people talk and you end up with passages like this:

When they found her they came and told us and Vern just sat there a long time staring at the fucking wall saying, "It was the sun. It was the sun," over and over like a fucking mental case. I'm

in a family of fucking sickos. I should ask him if it was the fucking sun that knocked her up too. The fucking bastard. The goddamn fucking bastard!

By contrast, the collection also contains such stories as Ven Begamudre's "Mosaic." Told in the form of a series of transcribed interviews, it is the story of Ramesh, a proud recent immigrant who undergoes a series of barely comprehended humiliations that culminate in a beating by a pimp. The dialogue is convincing, the characterizations are good, a real sense of tragedy is quietly communicated, and an interesting insight is obtained into that much mouthed but little-considered phrase, the Canadian mosaic. Other excellent stories, like Pat Krause's "Best Kept Secrets," show that good stories about prairie life don't necessarily have to be about mucking out the barn.

*Ken Mitchell Country* contains bits and pieces of plays, screenplays, stories, and poems by the prolific Mitchell. There isn't much to say about Mitchell's work that hasn't been said before — he writes well, with tight narrative skills and a wonderful sense of timing. "The Meadowlark Connection" alone is worth the price of the book. A lunatic combination of Nelson Eddy Mountie movie and Ludlum-like thriller, it is fast-paced and hilarious. The contrast between Mitchell's work and many of the stories in *More Saskatchewan Gold* is instructive: a particular tradition or regional focus in writing is not inherently valuable and does not necessarily make for stories that are good or even interesting. As always, the talent of the teller is what counts. Perhaps Coteau should approach the prairie genre with less veneration and more discrimination.

I am obliged to mention that both of these books, attractive though they are, started to fall apart at second reading and are now a collection of loose leaves. *Caveat emptor.* □

## REVIEW

# More than meets the eye

By Paul Stuewe

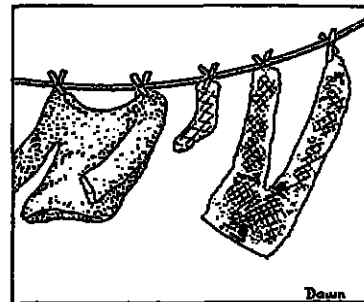
*A Bolt of White Cloth*, by Leon Rooke, Stoddart, 176 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7737 5011 8).

THESE NINE short stories will make additional friends for Leon Rooke, whose emergence as one of our finest writers is one of the less-publicized events of the last decade. Consummate craft and sure-

ty of touch are so subtly conveyed that they can seem artlessly simple, although this impression is quickly dispelled by an examination of the means by which Rooke achieves such surprising effects.

The title story is a good example of Rooke's ability to make something new out of a familiar fictional situation. The purveyor of the white cloth is a mysterious stranger who gives away his wondrous wares to those capable of love. When he calls upon a happily married rural couple the results resonate with overtones of both the mythical and the mundane.

The point of view is that of the husband, whose bemused admiration of his



wife's spunk in answering the stranger's questions tends to limit his awareness of just how strange the latter is. The husband is a type often encountered in Rooke's fiction, a decent, quintessentially average, just-folks sort of person who sees much more than he understands. His narration acts as a filter for our expectations concerning mysterious strangers and their equivocal gifts.

This narrative ambiguity isn't used to mystify or befuddle us, but rather in a manner that might best be described as playful: the effect is that of a basic myth or folk-tale recounted from the standpoint of a participant who sees part of it, senses that there is more there than meets the eye, but fails to grasp the full significance of the situation. In Rooke's hands this becomes the basis for an amusing, touching and quite unpredictable story that succeeds on its own resolutely original terms.

One of the many delights one can expect to find in all of Rooke's short stories is a surprising variety of literary genres. The second story here, "The Only Daughter," is a moody piece of Southern Gothic à la Cormac McCarthy or Madison Jones, and its chilling evocation of barren emotional and natural landscapes is the polar opposite of its predecessor. Its protagonist is a resentful young woman who has had a harsh life with her mother and is now preparing to inflict it upon her long-absent father. It ends at exactly the right and pivotal point in this transition: to take it any further would require another story, and

## Shacking up

By Helen Porter

*The Boughwollen and Other Stories*, by Al Pittman, Breakwater Books, 114 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919519 66 0).

*This Guest of Summer*, by Jeff Doran, Pulp Press, 114 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88978 151 6).

*Out on the Plain*, by Frankie Finn, Ragweed Press, 154 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 920304 37 0).

"IT WAS TOUGH being a Catholic on Buckingham Road," says Newfoundland poet and playwright Al Pittman in the title story of his first collection. "Almost everyone else who lived there was Protestant. They never had to say the rosary after supper and they could commit all the sins they wanted to without ever a thought of purgatory or hell." The main preoccupations of the book are summed up in that short paragraph. It deals almost exclusively with the Roman Catholic religion and adolescent sex, with a smattering of baseball and neighbourhood idiosyncrasies thrown in for good measure.

Boughwollen was what Pittman and his friends on the west coast of Newfoundland called a bough house. When his young protagonist takes Margo ("the finest shortstop on the West Side . . . everything you'd burn in hell for if you were bad enough to") into the woods to show her his secret boughwollen, he barely escapes the temptation of her lightly offered body. "I got to go home for the rosary" is his excuse.

Many of the other stories, all told with the mixture of humour and rue that runs through Pittman's poetry, are in the same vein. One that varies unexpectedly from the female-as-temptress theme is "Summer Trade," in which Jerome and Marjorie come across as truly believable human beings. "Evelyn," with its vivid depiction of the cruelty often exhibited by boys in groups, and "Mr. Blake," which begins: "Everyone on the road has someone in the San dying of TB" and more effective than most of the others, some of which tend to be repetitious.

Although Pittman's style is consistent and his prose, like his poetry, readable and memorable, a few of the stories read like drawn-out anecdotes. He has the talent to give his work more depth and substance.

A house of another sort occupies a prominent place in Jeff Doran's first

novel *This Guest of Summer*. Jack Milford, 28, who wants to be a millionaire, buys a ramshackle old farmhouse in a quietly sinister part of rural Nova Scotia. He and his wife Thérèse, a dancer, travel from Montreal to look the place over. Each time the reader feels on top of the situation the story takes a weird or macabre turn, reminiscent of those in Ira Levin's comic-horror play *Deathtrap*.

Eccentric characters abound, from Mr. Forrest, the former owner of the house, through Max Mayfair, the local very English doctor with his gruesome tales of local goings-on, to Pastor Loomer and his Sidonites whose water baptism service is interrupted by the sight of a very naked Jack. Against this backdrop Jack and Tres are often lifeless figures, in spite of their athletic and innovative sexual encounters. Near the end, though, we see them as flesh-and-blood people with human feelings.

Grand winner of Pulp Press's sixth international three-day novel-writing contest, *This Guest of Summer* is for the most part well-crafted and readable. At times the reader's credibility is stretched too far, even for a work of this type. Doran's saving grace is his skill with telling detail: "The wall was shingled with a tin Seven-up sign and an Orange Crush bottle and an ice cream cone as big as a cheerleader's megaphone." And, explaining a kitchen chair with the legs sawed off: "Mr. Forrest's mother had been dropsical in her last years . . . The only way she had been able to sit was with her legs straight, so she ate sitting on the floor. . . like a dog, until she died." I found this book whetted my appetite for more by Jeff Doran.

Frankie Finn's ambitious first novel *Out on the Plain* has as its centre the houseboat on the Thames where Finn lived for a year when solitude was very important to her. The author is part of the action, along with her characters Rebecca, an artist; Jane, a mental patient; Elsie, a cleaning woman; and Helen, a university student. There's also the pitifully mysterious Ruby, who turns out to be — but no, I shouldn't tell you.

A 16-page introduction is too long for a work of this length, and I would have preferred to plunge into the action sooner. The novel is an example of new-wave feminist writing, where women find solace and support in each other's company. They have no place in their lives for the forever-interfering male.

Although I have a great deal of sympathy for this attitude, there's something about it that irritates me. I feel somewhat the same as I do when I read about Indians with no faults or poor people whose lives are always above reproach. Still, a novel like this is

we've already been given all the information we need to compose our own version of what happens next.

The lighter side of Rooke's talents is on display in "The Women's Guide to Home Companionship," where narrator Violet Witherspoon displays a more than passing familiarity with the likes of Ring Lardner and Damon Runyan:

I shall now describe Mrs. Vee Beaver-deck to the degree I am able, so that there shall be no mistaking her for another person or persons and in order to assist the authorities. Vee is forty-six years old, two full years and three full months older than I am, though I think I can guarantee she has never acted funny about it. She is close to my own height and with a disposition similar to mine and on the issue of slenderness we both come in with identical high marks, though this was not always the case.

The story's deft skewering of various male idiocies makes it a kind of contemporary update of Lardner's "You Know Me Al," with the male characters now the victims rather than merely the uncomprehending witnesses of the whims of the opposite sex. It's an extremely accomplished and deeply humorous piece of writing, which demonstrates that Rooke's capabilities as a parodist are on a par with his other literary skills.

Two other stories that struck me as particularly successful were "Dirty Heels of the Fine Young Children," an alternately sadistic and surreal account of a father's attempts to manage his young children, and "Saloam Frigid With Time's Legacy While Mrs. Willoughby Bight-Davies Sits Naked Through the Night on a Tree Stump Awaiting the Lizard That Will Make Her Loins Go Boom-Boom." With a moniker like that, as Violet Witherspoon might observe, any tale of your garden variety would be what you could call anticlimactic, but Rooke's painstaking exposition of a bus passenger's domination by a garrulous seatmate fully lives up to the promise of its title. Both stories exhibit an enviable ability to make engrossingly complex and often profoundly comic fiction out of what begin as conventional slices from everyday life.

Rooke is capable of an occasional miscalculation, as in an excessively coy version of the fairy-godmother fantasy in "Dream Lady" or the much too abrupt reversal of moods in "Why the Heathens Are No More." But in just about every other respect this collection is state-of-the-art story-telling. If for any reason you've been holding back from experiencing the world of Leon Rooke, this is as good a place as any to begin getting acquainted with a master craftsman of Canadian literature. □

a natural reaction to centuries of male domination of the literary, artistic, and almost all other fields.

Finn, an Englishwoman who lived in Canada for some years during which time she wrote and appeared in a number of plays, has a sure pen and a deep commitment to what she's writing about. Her colour imagery is especially effective. Although at times her writing is marred by the cause that shows through a bit too plainly, she has dared to be different. *Out on the Plain* is not an easy book to read, but its characters and its voice will stay with me for a long time. □

## REVIEW

# Thinking small

By Bernice Lever

The Little Magazine in Canada 1925-90: Its Role in the Development of Modernism and Post-Modernism in Canadian Poetry, by Ken Norris, ECW Press, 203 pages, \$16.00 paper (ISBN 0 920802 53 2).

THIS BOOK SHOULD more honestly be titled *Some Little Poetry Magazines 1925-1980*. For as the subtitle emphasizes, no one will read this Ph.D. thesis for information on how our internationally acclaimed fiction writers were discovered and/or nurtured by what little magazines. Similarly, *Tamarack Review* and *The Fiddlehead* are dismissed with a sentence each as Norris does not consider them to have been radical enough in their poetics or editorial stances.

What Norris does attempt to do is to define modernism and post-modernism in the English-speaking world of letters, and then to trace some elements of his broad definitions (like intent and technique) as they develop in some Canadian little magazines. In his bibliography, he lists 65 poetry newsletters and magazines, and his secondary sources and background reading list are very useful for the researcher and student. But why did his publisher not insist on an index? Without such access, the usefulness of such a cataloguing of who and what were published in which issue is chiefly lost.

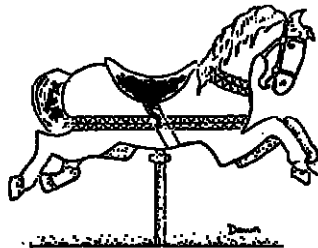
About 10 per cent of this book is made up of a telephone-book-like listing of names appearing in certain magazines, and 40 per cent is comprised of large quotations from secondary

sources. These are often connected by vague, flippant, hackneyed, or plain funny *double-entendre* remarks by Norris. Some examples are: "The time and the country were ripe for poetry"; "Davey provides a tidy breakdown of the contents"; "... and continued the mythic articles"; "... McGill University, which has always been a valuable breeding ground for young writers."; and "The polemics ran hot and heavy in the east-west debate."

This combination of dull lists with off-hand connecting comments provides difficult reading for anyone trying to follow Norris's argument that certain magazines run by poet-editors, especially in Montreal, strongly influenced the development of modernism and post-modernism in Canadian poetry. The question is raised: do magazines develop writers' philosophies, or do writers write as they must and market later?

Norris defines "modernism" by quoting from several sources as the freedom to reject the "old" and explore the "new" in content and technique. This type of literary upheaval seems to occur every 50 to 100 years in English literature, (and most probably in all literatures) centred on a major writer like Shakespeare or Wordsworth. Are not such definitions and patterns something imposed by academics afterward to simplify the complexity of writers and their individual creativities? Do we need lists of Walt Whitman begat W.C. Williams begat Charles Olson begat Frank Davey? Why then is Irving Layton (and not Louis Dudek, to whom this book is dedicated) nominated by three countries — South Korea, Italy, and Canada — for a Nobel Prize? Why then does Earle Birney fill auditoriums with loving fans, although he has a mere mention in this book?

Norris documents the Black Mountain approach to the clean line, each poet's



breath line, with an emphasis on the concrete world as experienced and not in playing intellectual games with myths and archetypes. Yet he fails to mention that Miriam Waddington has written some of the finest poems of this type in Canada.

In writing of the Black Mountain writers — all men — who influenced the Tish group, Norris fails to record that

the only woman, the only Canadian, and probably the only committed Christian at that famous UBC writing workshop, summer of 1963, was Margaret Avison. The quality of her poetry and her own integrity were more influential than the headline antics of Allen Ginsberg, chanting and strutting about in Indian robes. Throughout this book, Norris seems more comfortable in describing feuds between editors of magazines with opposing sensibilities, than he is in discussing actual poems.

Norris defines the little magazine as one that has only a few hundred subscribers, and that attacks conventional poetic practice while printing unorthodox alternatives. Still, when Norris writes of alternative poetry magazines of the late 1970s, he fails to note any of the women's journals, not even *Branching Out*. Surely, little women's magazines have altered post-modernist poetry in Canada?

Such oversights are frequent. When Norris repeats the railings of A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott against the Canadian Authors' Association, he also fails to credit some fine poems published in its *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, whose first editor, E.J. Pratt, published Dorothy Livesay's long socialist, innovative poem, "Day and Night" in March, 1936 — a courageous act for Pratt. Thus Norris seems to repeat the black-and-white evaluative arguments of previous writers on Canadian little magazines without seeking first-hand evidence.

Norris's credibility is also undercut by many contradictory statements. He says, "After 500 years of print poetry, Olson is attempting to align modern poetry with the oral tradition." Really? Later he says that "The use of sound as sound has been a part of poetry for as long as poetry has existed." He takes a solemn approach to all his quoted material, seemingly unaware that 20th-century poets often write with ironic send-ups of both the form and content of earlier poems. A Jay Macpherson poem he quotes pejoratively is only one example of his obtuseness.

In explaining why little magazines get started, Al Purdy is honest about the publication of *Moment* with Milton Acorn in 1959. "The reasons for *Moment* were both egotistic and altruistic." Beyond getting our little magazines to an inner circle of readers, all we poet-editors harbour a strong desire to be read by a bigger audience. Norris's book about ourselves raises more questions than it answers. All history writing is revisionist. Canada still needs a definitive, annotated history of its talent-laden, varied little magazines. □

## CRITICAL NOTICES

### ARTS & CRAFTS

*Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*, by Marla Tippett, University of Toronto Press, illustrated, 136 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2541 2).

By Brad Adams

IN 1916, LORD BEAVERBROOK — the young ambitious plutocrat from New Brunswick: then scrambling his way to the top in London — set up the Canadian War Memorials Fund. Its mandate was to commission an art record of the young nation's war effort. Soon, dozens of British and Canadian artists sketched and painted the landscapes of battle as they stood and slipped in French mud. Exhibited at war's end in Britain, and then toured in the United States and Canada, the work of the CWMF was hailed as the largest and most impressive collection to come out of the Great War. Hopes for a permanent home faded quickly, and the collection was relegated to the basements of the National Gallery and later the Canadian War Museum.

Tippett, author of the award-winning biography of Emily Carr, traces the history and legacy of the CWMF with authority and detail. It is above all the story of how Beaverbrook — philistine turned art patron — bullied and cajoled Ottawa. But Tippett's perspective is at once larger and more subtle. Here, as in so many other areas of Canadian life, the Great War was a jolt and a catalyst: the CWMF, its huge budget dwarfed that of the National Gallery, shook up Canada's timid, priggish art establishment and laid the groundwork for a mature and nationalist cultural community.

Tippett's essay is unexpectedly less imaginative and energetic when she turns to the art itself. To be sure, her treatment is solid and skilful: she shows how artists like Jackson and Lismer learned and matured in the studio of war. And, in a broader sense, pre-war dogmas were revised: "traditionalists" saw that No Man's Land was not a romanticist Elysia; modernists like Wyndham Lewis discovered a new and

brutal human dimension. But the reader begs for more — nowhere, for instance, does the author draw upon studies like Paul Fussell's brilliant *Great War and Modern Memory*. It does not help that photo reproductions are all in black and white. Still, Tippett's prime emphasis is on Beaverbrook's brainchild as an institutional process in relation to art, and in this task her book very ably succeeds. □

*Edmund Morris: Frontier Artist*, by Jean S. McGill, Dundurn Press, 208 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919670 79 2) and \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 919670 78 4).

By Sandy Greer

MCGILL METICULOUSLY chronicles the travels and causes of frontier artist and amateur ethnographer Edmund Morris (1871-1913). By describing the vision of the compassionate and gifted artist, persistent in confronting the prevailing cultural attitudes of his day, she provides insights of a society oblivious almost as much to its artistically creative members as to the culture of our native peoples.

Canadian-born Morris benefited from his family's social position, enabling him to pursue art training in New York and Paris, and travel to Great Britain and Holland. Among the founders of the Canadian Art Club in 1907, Morris defined its objectives: "to war against the indifference and prejudice which has existed in Canada regarding the higher arts." Aside from his own paintings, photographs and writings, he organized several exhibitions. His activities also included efforts to get support both for Canadian histories and for timely acquisitions of traditional native arts.

When first asked by the Ontario government in 1906 to paint Indian leaders involved in the important Treaty No. 9, Morris changed his focus from landscape to portraits. On similar projects in western Canada, he observed how treaties, honourably negotiated by his late father Alexander, a government commissioner, already were being broken by governments. Furthermore, he recognized the value of the Indians' traditional religion and arts, and criticized the intrusion of Christian missions.

In capturing the likeness of the individual member of a specific Indian nation, his portrayals were confined to the government's preference for the pure-blood chiefs, and fed the racist

sentiments of critics and viewers only interested in the aesthetic and historical value of disappearing "specimens." This view, inexcusable in 1985, is unwittingly perpetuated by the author's recital of outdated historical assumptions, including comments and photographs that respectively depict a native person as fearsomely warlike or romantically noble. By extending her diligent research further, to correct erroneous assumptions that still exist, McGill could have provided a greater service to Morris's vision of our Canadian legacy. □

### BALANCE SHEETS

*The Next Canadian Economy*, by Dian Cohen and Kristan Shannon, Eden Press, 204 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 920792 44 8).

By Kevin Barker

LIKE MEGATRENDS and other soulmates, this book is likely to reap as much skepticism as praise. Along with a roadmap of Canada's economic past and troubled present, the authors have provided some brave problem-solving theories for the future; not the least of which is the idea of applying a game-like approach to the "lack of fit" between our evolving economy and the obsolete tools we use to manipulate it.

If what we need are new tools, as Cohen suggests, then a fresh approach is vital. Of equal interest is the *modus operandi* of the authors. Apparently the book was brewed rather than composed; "cross-fertilized," to borrow a phrase from the lexicon of high tech, by a forward-thinking assortment of like-minded business writers and economic tea-leaf readers. Based on selected interviews and the findings of the Canadian Trend Report, *The Next Canadian Economy* coalesced during what Cohen describes as "a pretty intensive five or six week period" in which she bashed it out non-stop.

In spite of that, it's a good read. A columnist for *Maclean's* and *Canadian Living* magazines, Cohen rates full marks for the diverse manner in which the information is massaged into political cartoons, mini profiles, and the occasional foray into metaphor. Apart from some blatantly political statements from B.C. Federation of Labour President Art Kube, however, the blue-collar view is conspicuously absent. But

#### NOTE

Particularly positive critical notices are marked at the end with a star ✱

whether you agree with what the book calls a consensus is secondary to the fact that it gets your creative juices flowing. This above all is the objective, and it succeeds admirably. □

## COMEDY & SATIRE

**Laughter-Silvered Wings: Remembering the Air Force II**, by J. Douglas Harvey, McClelland & Stewart, illustrated, 277 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 4047 4) and \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 4045 8).

### By Erad Adams

"A FIRST CLASS military service lives on spirit, excels on spirit, and succeeds on spirit," writes Harvey in his introductory lament for the heyday of the RCAF — before unification tore the wings off its pride and identity. This book, he hopes, will relay some of the esprit of the fly-boys and support staffs who served in war and peace. Harvey trots out the formula that made his autobiographical *Boys, Bombs, and Brussels Sprouts* and the collection *The Tumbling Mirth* good and entertaining romps. We are given again a pastiche of pranks, pratfalls, and predicaments. In the best of these anecdotes, there is a dash of Joseph Heller, James Herriot, "Humour in Uniform," and even — at times — *Animal House*. Now, however, the material wears a bit thin, and chortles and guffaws do not roll so frequently. Some of the stories hit a more sensitive chord — it was a good idea to include a sampling of life in the Women's Division of the RCAF. No doubt there are lots more funny memories out there, of the kind swapped over reunion banquets by silver-haired veterans who want to embellish youthful adventures. But enough's enough. J. Douglas Harvey should quit while he's ahead. □

**Life's Odd Moments**, by Stuart Trueman, McClelland & Stewart, 173 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 8599 0) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 8596 6).

### By Louise Edmonds

HAVE YOU EVER moved the scales around the bathroom floor to get the lightest reading? Have you ever tried to give a gracious compliment like "You know, Mrs. Jones, you really don't look much older than your son," only to receive a fixed-smile reply of "THAT is my husband"? The "rollicking misadventures" presented by New Brunswick humorist Stuart Trueman in *Life's Odd Moments* are sometimes funny, sometimes not — yet always disarmingly recognizable.

Accompanied by the author's own entertainingly silly line drawings, Trueman's 13th book is a mix of light and humorous poems, short anecdotes, homilies, and verse. Their subjects include advice on how not to sell your favourite raincoat at a yard sale, getting rid of raccoons, renting out respectable maiden great-aunties to take on family trips, eating for free in Florida by not buying condominiums, and giving the perfect wedding toast: "And so, rise and drink the bride with me."

Trueman's characters are all convincing and more than vaguely familiar. Freddie Smivett is forever boasting of how he *almost* punched out so-and-so while Horace Bivins is notorious for covering your eyes from behind and demanding "Three guesses who." And of course there is the Mervie Briskett type who, if you told him you'd been sick and your doctor had to call in a specialist, would say the last time he was sick he had three.

The book is labeled "an hilarious antidote to life's odd moments." An admission of guilt? At times Trueman's embarrassing situations are overly contrived and overly stated, producing what he describes in one story as "a real bang-in-the-belly series." Trueman has provided some glimpses into true and revealing "that's life" situations but not all measure up to the mark of hilarious. Some of life's odd, awkward, embarrassing moments are best left forgotten. □

## CRIME & PUNISHMENT

**Emma: Canada's Unlikely Spy**, by June Callwood, Stoddart, 277 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 2026 X).

### By Sherie Posesorstki

IN EMMA WOIKIN, June Callwood has a subject that, as Joan Didion has written elsewhere, would make any journalist vibrate with "professional exhilaration." The story of Emma Woikin blends a John Le Carré plot-line with the characters and mood of a Sinclair Ross novel. Emma, a plain, hard-working Doukhobor woman of 24, worked in Ottawa as an external affairs cipher clerk in the 1940s. Raised in a farm community in Saskatchewan, she was married at 16, gave birth to a stillborn son, and was left a widow by the suicide of her 27-year-old husband. Lonely and naive, she was verbally seduced by a Russian clerk into reproducing government cables passed between London and Ottawa.

When Igor Gouzenko defected from the Russian embassy, he revealed, among other documents, her cables. She

was arrested and readily confessed. In an appalling denial of her rights, she was held three weeks without access to a lawyer, and was not informed that her statements to the RCMP could be used against her in court nor that she could claim protection under the Canada Evidence Act. Her case was heard in secret, and she was sentenced to prison. After her release, she married and obtained a good position as a legal secretary. She died at the age of 53 from the effects of alcoholism and anorexia.

Despite its appearance as a book-length biography, Callwood's account reads like a series of newspaper features. Instead of integrating the interviews she conducted into a flowing narrative, they are strung together jarringly, and in newspaper fashion she indiscriminately includes any person who was a witness to the event. Either Callwood should have used them as background information or selected those people who were a direct part of the story.

A good biography re-animates the subject. Each time it is read, the subject is momentarily reborn. Callwood's *Emma* has the shelf life of a yellowing, grainy newspaper clipping. □

**The Price of Power: A Biography of Charles Eugene Bedaux**, by Jim Christy, Doubleday, illustrated, 342 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 18909 5).

### By Cary Fagan

"WHO WAS Bedaux?" the dust-jacket asks, and a good question too, since Charles Bedaux — adventurer, millionaire, and accused traitor — has been all but forgotten. Christy is something of an adventurer himself, and it's easy to see why Bedaux's story, which Christy came across while working in the Yukon, led to an 11-year quest of ferreting out the truth about the French-born American who committed suicide in 1944. Most of the writings about Bedaux have been negative, and Christy attempts to discredit the two major accusations against him.

Bedaux was a self-taught efficiency engineer who made his fortune streamlining the operations of such companies as Eastman Kodak and Campbell's Soup. The marriage of Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson at his château made him famous, but his main connection to Canada was a failed attempt to cross the Rockies in a convoy of Citroëns.

The first charge against Bedaux, made by the unions, was that his efficiency system was a "stretch-out," squeezing more effort out of the workers. Christy claims that Bedaux actually had workers' interests in mind, but as the system is never fully explained the reader



cannot judge for himself. The second charge — of treason against the U.S. government — was based on Bedaux's wartime obsession with building a pipeline for peanut oil across the Sahara which required dealing with the Nazis. If Bedaux really didn't believe the pipeline would ever aid the Nazis, and had the good of postwar Europe in mind, as Christy contends, then he was a political idiot. But Christy does show how Bedaux helped some Jewish friends escape persecution and received no credit for it, while certain high-profile resisters like Jean-Paul Sartre managed to further their careers quite nicely during the occupation.

Christy has dug hard to gather the scanty evidence to produce a lively and readable story. Incidental detail sometimes bogs down the narrative, and Christy doesn't always have a sure historical grasp. But if Christy must admit he still doesn't know Charles Bedaux, the reader at least can be thankful for his honesty. □

## FICTION: LONG & SHORT

*Bitter Sweet Taste of Maple*, by Teca Werbowski, Williams-Wallace, 70 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88795 029 9).

By Cary Fagan

THIS IS not a first novel, as advertised, nor is it a collection of stories. Instead, it is a series of vignettes describing the lives of 12 women, all immigrants to Montreal, all social workers. Vaguely feminist, the book seems more like an exercise in imagining other people's lives than the result of any strong artistic impulse.

Here is the French Jacqueline who wishes to forget her troubles in a sleepy haze, and the Czech Milada who is caught having an affair with a married man. Swiss Thérèse adopts her dead sister's boy and the Viennese Joan commits suicide after her husband dies. Werbowski feels an admirable sympathy for her characters, but the revelation that social workers can screw up their own lives while they solve other people's problems is hardly startling.

Two or three chapters do have a spark of life that the others lack. Unlike most of the book, "Teresa" is told in the first person, and the voice brings some energy and passion to the telling. "Mutti's Daughter," in which the Russian-born Laura perceives her saintly mother differently from how her friends do, shows the author capable of more subtle irony. But most of the tales sound flat to the reader's inner ear, as if the vitality had been squeezed out of them.

Werbowski may have had more of a sociological than an aesthetic interest in writing this book, but shrewder writers have documented the immigrant's struggle to adapt to this cold country. If *Bitter Sweet Taste of Maple* (surely one of the worst titles in recent memory) prevents even one reader from telling an immigrant that if she doesn't like it here she can go back to where she came from, it will have done some good. □

*The Circus Performer's Bar*, by David Arnason, Talonbooks, 157 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88922 218 5).

By Theresa Moritz

THIS BOOK is an exuberant unleashing of Arnason's considerable prose gift. The 23 pieces collected take deliberate, delightful aim at traditional stories and the story form, much as did Arnason's 1982 book, *Fifty Stories and a Piece of Advice*. He possesses a technique altogether modern, as he moves through a multitude of prose forms: the flood of questions in "Do Astronauts Have Sex Fantasies?"; the rambling anecdote of "Sons and Fathers, Fathers and Sons"; the snippets of monologue from many voices in "The Economic Crisis"; and the list of definitions in "The Unmarried Sister." Even where the sketches most closely resemble conventional stories, Arnason throws in unexpected curves: the remarkable underground official, the Marriage Inspector, for example, with his revelations about the secret function of asparagus in modern society.

Although Arnason's special skill lies in the creation of a narrative voice endowed with an insightful, zany point of view, he asks sometimes for sympathy that his narrator does not merit. In "Square Dancers" the narrator is someone who admits he is outside the world of square dancing. Perhaps he should then have allowed to the square dancers he satirizes the possibility of the same, inexplicable secret life that he knows his friends the golfers have. "The Unmarried Sister" hovers uncomfortably between brilliant commentary and complete irrelevancy as the reader tries to decide whether Arnason is creating a unique character or attempting an authoritative definition of type. One depiction of a sexually voracious Goldilocks turning a wolf into a 9 to 5 man once she has him in thrall is certainly neither new nor compassionate to either male or female. □



*The Father*, by F.G. Paci, Oberon, 193 pages, \$27.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 510 4) and \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 511 2).

By Lorraine Johnson

PACI HAS COMBINED the concerns of his two earlier books (religion and immigrant life in *The Italians* and religion and death in *Black Madonna*) into a stronger, unified novel.

The father of the title is both God — the possibility of redemption through religious embrace — and "father" as the human, biological embodiment of one's heritage and culture. Both God and parent are forms of inherited authority that the protagonist, Stephen/Stephano, must embrace or reject within himself. This choice carries with it larger issues of cultural identity, language, and spirituality.

Yet *The Father* remains a highly personal vision of self within the world. Although the emotional confusion often translates into a kind of sterility that infuses and paralyzes the prose, the basic story is strong and the characterization clear. The reader is involved in Stephen's struggles, but retains a degree of ironic distance, possible because Stephen is so emotionally barren. The refuge he seeks in the intellectual world of philosophy is so obviously inadequate that the reader feels sympathy but is not overpowered by it. And this narrative balance testifies to Paci's fine achievement. □

## THE PAST

*The Empire of the Seas: A Biography of Rear Admiral Robert Wilson Shufeldt*, by Frederick C. Drake, University of Hawaii Press, 468 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8248 0846 0).

By Derek Suchard

SOME MEN are born to greatness, some have greatness thrust upon them. And some, like Rear Admiral Robert Wilson Shufeldt, USN (1822-1895), struggle mightily to grasp what greatness they can from a life of otherwise overwhelming mediocrity.

Such is the life we observe through this incredibly detailed biography of a man who, imbued with the sense of Anglo-Saxon American superiority and Manifest Destiny that characterized the United States through the greater part of the 19th century, and to a certain extent to our own times, sought to tie his fortunes to the major events of his day — whether by pulling political strings to obtain consular appointments, negotiating without authority with foreign heads of state, or merely aspir-

ing, without foundation, to command of foreign forces.

Drake chronicles the trials of Shufeldt through three major *idées fixes* — Mexico, Cuba and Korea — at a time of major U.S. expansionism, and his view of the role of the United States in shaping their fortunes, to the time of his singular triumph, the opening of the Korean Hermit Kingdom in 1882 to western trade, rivalling the similar achievement of Admiral Perry in Japan. And then to have the glory of this diplomatic/military victory diminished by political machinations back home.

Making no pretence at writing a popular history, Drake spends much time in detailed analyses of the personalities, negotiations and power plays involved in Shufeldt's dealings, in one of the clearest expositions one is likely to find. This biography is destined to find its way into the libraries of all who are interested in a more complete understanding of the forces at work in the crucial period of 1840-1890 in United States expansionism — if not for the man who is its subject, then for the times he mirrors so well. ☆

**The Horses of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police: A Pictorial History**, by William and Nora Kelly, Doubleday, illustrated, 288 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 19544 3).

*By Frank Rasky*

THE PROSE IS pedestrian and the history is hagiography, but the pictures in this pictorial history are excellent. The co-authors are patently more interested in horses than in people, and dedicated to presenting an absurdly simplistic, institutionalized view of the past. Kelly, a former director of security and intelligence of the RCMP, and his wife, Nora, a former Saskatchewan school-teacher, have collaborated in writing two previous authorized Mountie books.

This one begins with several ludicrous bloopers concerning Fort Whoop-Up, the trading post straddling the Montana-Alberta border, whose American whisky peddlers stimulated the new Dominion of Canada in 1873 to dispatch 300 very raw mounted police recruits westward to *maintiens le Droit*. The Kellys naively write: "The Indians, who had never before experienced alcohol, ran wild . . . They burned the legitimate trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company . . . that had successfully maintained law and order in areas under its influence." The fact is that the HBC had been liquoring up the Indians since its founding in 1670, and it's ridiculous to claim that Hudson's Bay rum was less inflammatory than Yankee whisky.

Equally preposterous is the Kellys' hero-worshipful portrayal of the Mounties' role as strikebreakers during the Winnipeg Strike of 1918. The authors acknowledge that the Mounties were summoned to break up a parade because the local police were too sympathetic to interfere with the underpaid workers but contend the Mounties fired on the crowd in self-defence, only after sinister "revolutionaries" began "jabbing the horses' flanks with pocket knives and broken glass." Though several workers were wounded and one killed, the Kellys conclude: "The horses of the RNWMP had helped directly in restoring order to Winnipeg. Indirectly, they had also helped defeat the plans of the revolutionaries. . . ." Despite their flat-footed attempt at history-writing, the Kellys have amassed 178 superb colour and black-and-white photos. □

**Journal of the Margaret Rait 1840-1844: The Journal of a Whaling Cruise from Barrington, N.S.**, by Captain James Doane Coffin, introduced by Marion Robertson, Lancelot Press, 84 pages, \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 88999 246 0).

*By Greg Gatenby*

HAD THE *Pequod* not been captained by a mad Quaker, its voyage might have been much as this one, divertingly described by an experienced hand at killing whales. The *Margaret Rait*, a sturdy, three-masted barque of just over 300 tons, was built in New Brunswick in 1831, and as early as 1835 was roaming the south seas in search of the mighty sperm whale and that doomed creature's valuable oil.

This particular Journal, of a single whaling voyage (1840-1844) to the South Pacific, is far more articulate and better written than the average ship's log, in large part because the captain, James Doane Coffin of Barrington, N.S., in alleviating his boredom by explaining the nature of his job to his new wife, expounded upon details of ship life that his contemporaries would have ignored.

Coffin was also more tolerant and curious about the strange worlds he encountered than other 19th-century whaling captains, and his perspicacity regarding native religions and customs especially is in stark contrast to the intolerance or contempt of other log-writers. The *Journal*, if not compelling, is adroitly written. Ours is his excitement at the beginning of such a voyage, and Coffin, though no threat to Melville or even Forester, does convey the crew's depression when a struck whale shakes loose a broken harpoon, or his own fear when an enraged bull attacks the ship.

More important, Coffin had the wit to write interestingly about boredom. (Even by this time, whales had been so overhunted that there were six-week stretches when not a single whale was seen.) He breaks these languid spells with realistic descriptions of stove boats, men overboard and drowned, seedy ports, floggings, attempted mutinies, deserters, and contact with other vessels, some away from home for more than five years.

His love of his new wife is genuine and fetching, even when he describes for her the temptations he met at the hands of bare-breasted maidens on southern isles. His anxiety to return to Canada reminds current readers that the alleged romance of pelagic whaling is as much a part of this nation's history as that of Nantucket. Coffin would have been better served had the publishers taken the time to edit the *Journal* more carefully. The most annoying peccadillo, apart from the many typos, is the lack of indication whether long stretches without entries are the lacunae of Coffin or the current editor. Such sins aside, this is a book easy to recommend to anyone interested in the sea, whaling, or good yarns. □

**Shadow and Substance in British Foreign Policy 1895-1939: Memorial Essays honouring C.J. Lowe**, edited by B.J.C. McKercher and D.J. Moss, University of Alberta Press, \$30.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88864 046 3) and \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 88864 090 0).

*By David Stafford*

CEDRIC LOWE was a professor of history at the University of Alberta and about to take up an appointment at the University of Victoria when he was killed in a car crash in April, 1975. The Canadian historical community thereby lost a distinguished member whose work in the history of international relations, and more specifically that of British and Imperial foreign policy, is celebrated in this volume by former colleagues and students. Lowe himself had been trained under Sir Charles Webster at the London School of Economics, and these essays reflect not only Lowe's own influence but that of the LSE tradition in international history — a historical approach to international affairs far more widely conceived than narrow diplomatic history that focuses on what one Foreign Office clerk wrote to another.

Lowe was particularly interested in perception in foreign policy, a theme he brought to all his studies of Great Power politics in the decades after 1870. It was an approach with its own limitations. The editors have had the courage to con-

clude the volume with a stimulating critical essay by Michael Fry calling for greater interaction between the historians and the theorists of international relations. International history is out of fashion in Canada perhaps even more than elsewhere. It is encouraging to find through a volume like this that it has practitioners who can do it well and make it important. This makes it even more regrettable that the book contains neither an index nor a bibliography of Cedric Lowe's own works. □

**A Viceroy's India: Leaves from Lord Curzon's Notebook**, edited by Peter King, Sidgwick & Jackson (Methuen), 192 pages, illustrated, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 283 99166 6).

*By Roy MacLaren*

SUDDENLY, AND AT long last, the Raj appears to have captured the imagination of the western world. One wonders why it took so long. A richly caparisoned and endlessly complex relationship of British and Indians, it is nevertheless one that produced surprisingly little literature. Macaulay, Kipling, and Forster contribute to our understanding of that unique confluence of two great civilizations in what is now loosely called the Raj, but it is to travel books and memoirs that one must turn to savour the full and vivid flavour of British imperialism at its most exotic. Both the reader seeking pleasure and the student seeking information will not do better than to begin with that most accomplished of viceroys and travel writers, Lord Curzon.

The great viceroy left two volumes of Indian essays, *Tales of Travel* (1923) and *Leaves from a Viceroy's Notebook* (published posthumously in 1926), among a cornucopia of other writings. Peter King, the knowledgeable editor of this anthology, offers in *A Viceroy's India* a judicious selection of the more amusing, provocative, and bizarre accounts by Curzon of his travels throughout the Indian sub-continent, along with a splendid selection of pictures assembled from Curzon's own collection.

As in the best of travel books, one learns as much about Curzon himself as one does about the *galère* of Indian maharajas, officials, soldiers, and box wallahs whom the Viceroy encountered in his tireless travels. Encased in a steel spine brace from youth, Curzon nevertheless constantly moved about India, listening, learning and reforming what he saw. Serving at the very apogee of imperial India (1899-1905), he clearly relished every moment of his viceregal wanderings, even into mountainous frontiers where not many years before a

British official was the sure target of an assassin's bullet. Nowhere, perhaps, does Curzon's irrepressible sense of humour show up better than in his slightly astonished account of his visit to the Amir of Afghanistan, a comic yet ferocious absolute ruler. Curzon's description of Afghanistan is also a perceptive analysis of its recurring dilemma of living on the borders of an imperial Russia, whether that of 80 years ago or today's version.

Curzon, in a lively style that is a constant delight, shares with us his love affair with India in a way that is both compelling and charming. *A Viceroy's India* deserves the ultimate accolade: one wants more. ☆

**POETRY**

**Cankerville**, by Diane Dawber, Borealis Press, 100 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88887 951 2) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88886 953 9).

*By Colline Caulder*

THIS SLIM accessible collection of poems describes rural life in Ontario — or anywhere in Canada for that matter. Written by a teacher, creative writer, and resident of Amherstview, Ont., it may exist as a composite in the poet's imagination, but rings authentically in lines such as, "A place to grow older/but not necessary wise."

In a quasi-narrative style, Dawber creates a tragic population. In a section titled "Repercussions," a mother and wife, Lily, "Took down the Sunday rifle/used on spring days to pot woodchucks/went away out of the sunlight/down to the cellar's tomb." When the ambulance was called, "Thirty-one telephones rang/pairs of ears, eyes, bored hands/lifted receivers and gasped at the drop of blood/glistening on the earpiece." The lack of compassion is echoed in the concluding lines, "The body of the suicide/the woman, their neighbour/was laid out along the humming wires/and they hung up." Dawber's "Cankerville," with simple lyric imagery, possesses memorable lines and insights. □

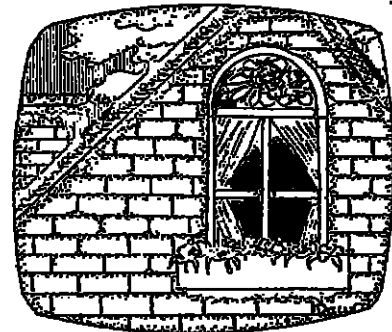
**The Mulgrave Road: Selected Poems of Charles Bruce**, edited by Andy Wainwright and Lesley Choyce, Pottersfield Press, 80 pages, \$30.00 cloth (ISBN 0 919001 24 6) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 919001 23 8).

*By Doug Fetherling*

IT WOULD BE churlish to dislike this selection of verse by Charles Bruce (1907-1971), the father of the journalist

Harry Bruce (who contributes a nicely turned foreword) and for many years the general superintendent of the Canadian Press. Bruce's journalistic career in some ways seems to have shaped his literary one. It took him away from his native Nova Scotia, for instance, where his other self always dwelt in fiction (*The Channel Shore*, *The Township of Time*) and in verse. The absence could only heighten his affection for the sailors, farmers, and sailor-farmers he wrote about with such understanding. And though his poetry was sometimes suggested by the sort of large events with which his job was connected as in "Grey Ship Moving," a long poem about a Second-World-War troop transport, it was more often, and on a deeper level, a refutation of the timely and the worldly. Such is the case most obviously and memorably in "Cornerstone," listing objects that might be put in a time capsule to summarize our civilization: "Let us choose now the samples of our time/To fill this crevice in the polished granite . . ."

Then, too, a life in journalism perhaps cut him off somehow from literary progress. His poetry certainly benefited from a certain Atlantic tradition, but read today it often seems bound by ancient conventions, a slave to clockwork rhythms. Yet much that is good still comes through forcefully, especially his Purdy-like understanding of history,



within the context of his love for a particular piece of geography.

As seen in this collection, Bruce was not a poet who grew remarkably or quickly, but he did continue to change. He was surprisingly ambitious, in fact, going from short lyrics to long narrative poems and back again.

The title poem begins: "If they stay they stay, if they go they go;/On the Mulgrave Road it's a choice you make." The echo of Robert Frost and of Kenneth Leslie is not usually so obvious; Bruce had his own distinctive diction. *The Mulgrave Road* was also the title of a 1951 collection for which Bruce won the Governor General's Award. The actual Mulgrave Road, he pointed out at

the time, is "a dirt-and-gravel road running from Boylston to Mulgrave along the north shore of Chedebucto Bay and the western shore of the Strait of Canso."

In an afterword Andy Wainwright argues that Bruce merits a higher place among Canadian poets. □

*Smoke Without Exit*, by Brian Brett, Sono Nis Press, 68 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 919203 25 6).

### *By Sparkling Mills*

MOST OF THE action takes place in the darkness with only the occasional star for relief. Because dark/light imagery pervades the book, it is almost inevitable that the pivotal word in nearly every poem is "eye." In "The Premonition (Eyes and Grindstones)", Brett uses the word "eye" 12 times — very much overdone. However, in some other poems his use of repetition is technically successful. Such is the case in "Insomnia," where he repeats the phrase "The axe-murderer and the insomniac" to begin four stanzas.

It seems when the poet finally does get to sleep, he has nightmares. The dreamer is a lone hitch-hiker in a storm, with the raindrops like "silver nails." Or slowly his ribs are filling up with snow. Or he is "walking to the dry creek for water." Yet when he exclaims in "Crossfire" that "The great hive of the night/is buried in a coffin of skull," the reader suspects that the poet embraces these nightmares with enthusiasm because they feed his inspiration.

The most inventive poem is "The Crabs Under Second Narrows Bridge": "The scaffolding of the bridge/collapsed like a tinkertoy." The crabs below were waiting to feast on the dead men. "Now the men inhabit the crabs" and "build under water/a whispering bridge of claws." A nightmare has become a legend. Brett again has written an excellent ending to a poem. Often he seems to throw in too many code words in the body of his poems, but as the end comes near, he focuses on the exact feeling he's wanted all along. □

*The Terracotta Army*, by Gary Geddes, Oberon Press, 55 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 529 5).

### *By Theresa Moritz*

IN THE MANNER of his award-winning poem, "The Letter of the Master of Horse," Gary Geddes's *The Terracotta Army* uses dramatic monologue to revivify the past. The 24 poems collected in Oberon's elegantly produced edition were inspired by the author's visit in

China to a remarkable archaeological find, a collection of 8,000 life-size pottery figures of soldiers created in the third century B.C. as an honour guard for the tomb of China's first emperor.

Each poem appears with its title repeated in Chinese characters on the opposite page. Most of the speakers are soldiers or government functionaries, and their poems reveal as much about the limitations of each character's understanding as they convey about the historical moment that saw the statues' creation. From their different accounts, certain events and characters take more distinct shape through repeated allusions, especially the creator of the figures, Bi the potter, who becomes for Geddes an important image of the artist, appreciated and also feared without ever being truly understood. The poems are brief and colloquial, relying on familiar diction to narrow the gap between past and present, imperial China and contemporary Canada; only rarely does a turn of phrase seem to hinder, rather than help, this enterprise.

The book excites wonder at the mystery of the statues that inspired it and the process of history that lies between their creation and our time. It offers important reflections on the uses to which any society puts its artists, about the absurdity of war, and on the fragility of individual genius in the crushing forces of national struggle. In the end, more questions are raised than answered, and the reader may be left wishing that Geddes himself had joined the cast of characters to speak about the art he himself was creating and its place in the process of history and the unfolding of culture. □

## POLITICS & POLITICS

*Mulroney: The Making of the Prime Minister*, by L. Ian MacDonald, McClelland & Stewart, 332 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 5469 6) and \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 5468 8).

### *By Brad Adams*

BIOGRAPHIES OF political leaders come in all kinds of disguise: journalist MacDonald's life of Mulroney is honeymoon hagiography. To be sure, much of what he gives us is of value. The broad sketches of Mulroney's childhood, education, professional career, and political ambition are welcome — until someone writes a better book. But MacDonald's real aim is to cut through the suspicions that float around the Prime Minister: he is not slick, glib, and superficial; there is depth, thoughtfulness, continuity, and growth. How much real substance there is here is

another matter — and the reader may wonder if too much is made of too little.

Again to dispel some doubts, MacDonald shows Mulroney to be a committed, loyal Tory, faithfully slogging it out on his party's behalf during the long years of banishment. There are only a few, oblique references to the "offshore money" used to dump Joe Clark, an affair in which Mulroney's coterie has been implicated by other authors. And in an even more disconcerting fashion, MacDonald flies over issues — such as the infamous comments about Tory patronage or the unrealistic, pie-in-the-sky election platform — that might hint at a darker side to Mulroney's promise of national deliverance.

The same sort of problem is found in MacDonald's lengthy, sometimes insightful character study: Mulroney's beguiling Irish charm, folksy manner, and desire to be liked may hail a new era of national consensus; the same traits could well lead to vacillation and paralysis once the honeymoon's over. In relying almost exclusively on interviews with Mulroney and his vast network of friends and allies, MacDonald fails to provide any convincing critical context to win the reader's confidence. Like New Testament story-tellers, Mulroney's acolytes have more than a little interest in shrouding their master in myth — and the author is too content to be their unerring scribe. □

*PQ: René Lévesque and the Party Québécois in Power*, by Graham Fraser, Macmillan, 434 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9793 2).

### *By Brad Adams*

AS LUCK would have it, Fraser's account of the PQ in power appears just when its very future seems in doubt: hemorrhaging at the polls, shaken by defections, and Lévesque's leadership suspect, the party of separatism is destined for defeat and more dissension. In that sense, it's too bad Fraser did not wait to write this last chapter. But — unlike the bookish efforts of most journalists — Fraser's study is enhanced, not eclipsed, by the flow of events.

The great strength of this book is the author's thorough and sensitive understanding of Quebec politics and nationalism. There is much to admire here: the thumbnail sketches of the PQ's movers and shakers are superb; so too are the accounts of its legislative achievements, especially Bill 101. But the central focus is René Lévesque's relation to the party and its separatist mission.

From the beginning, the PQ was a loose nationalist coalition of hotheads

and moderates, harmonized by Lévesque's charismatic appeal and tough-it-out leadership. Fraser dissects how Lévesque repeatedly tacked along the moderate course of "sovereignty-association," altering its timetable and squaring ideal with harsh reality. He shows as well how these twists and turns of strategy carried the PQ down a cul-de-sac.

The referendum loss stripped Lévesque of his claim to national leadership in Quebec and reduced him to a humbled provincial premier. His tactics during the constitutional negotiations backfired: he failed even to protect, let alone nourish, Quebec's traditional claim to autonomy and special status. That Lévesque may now try to bargain his way back into the constitutional accord is but a further instalment of that ironic process and paradox traced here so ably. Perhaps Fraser will update the story; until memoirs are written and archives opened, his account will remain the best survey of this turbulent era in Quebec's history. ☆

## SACRED & SECULAR

*Canadian Churches and Social Justice*, edited by John R. Williams, James Lorimer (ISBN 0 88862 755 6) and the Anglican Book Centre (ISBN 0 919391 13 7), 293 pages, \$14.95 paper.

By Sandy Greer

A CALL FOR social justice is a call for us to recognize our relationships and responsibility to each other, and to make choices of social goals and human values. This book, an overview on poverty, capitalism and corporations, nuclear energy, northern development and native rights, Quebec and the constitution, immigration and the Third World, illustrates some key areas of our churches' concern.

Presented at forums on public policy, these documents give us insight into how our social structures are causes of inequity and injustice that continue to widen the gap between rich and poor. The editor points out: "Because the media constantly project an image of Canada as a middle-class country where there is widespread affluency and equality of opportunity, . . . the myth that the system works for all is maintained." Native peoples are viewed as among those who may direct society's growth from materialism and consumerism to a more fundamentally human concept. Rather than as partisan religious institutions, churches act as ethical messengers in a selfish society, here warning us: "There is growing frustration and anger

. . . that our traditional institutions of parliament and 'free market' are insufficient instruments for democratically dealing with such increasingly complex, high technology, heavy social impact issues as uranium, nuclear energy and major-development projects."

The church groups' well-researched facts raise our awareness about public policy and social institutions, impel us to assess them critically, and call us to work toward alternatives. The economist Barbara Ward notes: "To live simply, to love greatly, to give without stinting, to see a brother in all mankind — this is no longer a remote theory of social behaviour. It is the inescapable recipe for planetary survival." □

## SOCIETY

*The Kept Woman: Mistresses in the 80s*, by Edna Salamon, Orbis Books (Academic), 181 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 85613 606 9).

By Kristy Eldridge

SALAMON'S OSTENSIBLE purpose in writing a book about kept women is to challenge what she sees as a tidal wave of unfair press that the kept woman gets from the authors of pulp fiction. Salamon is concerned that the popular image of the kept woman is of someone exotic lolling on a chaise longue near a pool — this is not true, and the book makes a strong case for the view that kept women can be as dull as the next person.

The book is a modified doctoral paper, but Salamon doesn't have much of a thesis beyond disproving the chaise longue myth and emphasizing that sex is not the main aspect of kept relationships. She finds that many kept women maintain the sentimental customs of a regular love affair, and that, with some, companionship or status-seeking is what fuels the relationship. None of this is surprising — what would have been more interesting is a detailed examination of the financial arrangements, and a study of the economic backgrounds of the various women who find being kept attractive or necessary.

Because they are presented at face value, the kept women Salamon writes about do not emerge as a sympathetic group, which raises the question of whether the stigma they bear isn't justified. In the chapter "Career Women," Salamon's subject is women who make a practice of sleeping with people to advance their professional standing. (This is not sexual harassment, she explains solemnly, because the women choose to do it.) People who don't operate that way aren't going to

care whether people who do feel they are portrayed unfairly in pulp fiction. As for the image of the kept woman zipping around in furs and a flashy sports car — that kind of ostentation seems more honest than the pseudo-respectable kept women who learn to disguise their status in the quietest of expensive clothes.

Although Salamon pretends to be combating the titillating aspect of her subject by treating it in the shallowest way possible, she creates the same sleazy effect. She would have done better to write a steamy exposé than this prim, pseudo-academic offering. □

*Small Expectations: Society's Betrayal of Older Women*, by Leah Cohen, McClelland & Stewart, 228 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 2167 4) and \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 2191 7).

By Kristy Eldridge

TO BE OLD and a woman today is to have two strikes against you, as Cohen's thorough study makes clear. Not only do women suffer from a financial system that leaves them precariously equipped for old age; they must also deal with the attitudes of a society that regards aging with distaste and even hostility. What emerges from the book's examination of such things as neglect and cruelty toward older women is that society feels betrayed by the strong, nurturing figure of mother and wife becoming weak and in need of support and protection.

Women now are outliving men by an average of seven years, but the rewards are few from a system that does not value the unpaid labour many women perform. The Canada Pension Plan is inadequate for many women, depending as it does on the amount contributed over the years in the work force. Even women who have been in the work force for many years do not accumulate the kind of savings that their male counterparts do. Cohen suggests that the pension plan be restructured and not based on earnings-related benefits.

Finances aside, the biggest problem facing older women is the sense of powerlessness that accompanies aging. Most of the women quoted stress the importance of having one's own home — all of them dread the prospect of the nursing home, with its enforced inactivity and patronizing care. But they almost equally dislike the idea of living with their children, which suggests that this notoriously difficult arrangement is just as stressful for the aged parent as it is for the put-upon family. Cohen maintains that alternatives, such as support-based communities for older people, or more and better volunteer services like Meals on Wheels, should and will be im-

portant future considerations when the older population is greater than ever.

Cohen's book is impressively researched and often heart-wrenching, though a lot of what she says about older women could apply to older people in general. The older women who are quoted extensively throughout the book speak eloquently on their behalf, showing an intelligence and courage that society would do well to acknowledge. ☆

## SPORTS & ADVENTURE

**Ballard: A Portrait of Canada's Most Outstanding Sports Figure**, by William Houston, Collier Macmillan, 256 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920197 05 1).

By *Brian Fawcett*

SPORTSWRITER HOUSTON had a golden opportunity to write a sports book that was actually overdue in coming. Harold Ballard owns, and clearly runs, hockey's most inept sports franchise, the Toronto Maple Leafs. He also operates the nation's most lucrative public facility, Maple Leaf Gardens. He does it with what polite folks call "elan," feuding publicly with the media, his players, the hockey establishment, and occasionally even with Russia. Houston, who has recently been a target of Ballard's ongoing feud with the *Globe and Mail*, was in an ideal position to give us the goods on this interesting if unpleasant man, even though Ballard pointedly refused to cooperate on the biography.

Ballard comes off, variously, as a buffoon, an incompetent manager, a man of brutal and even criminal habits. (He has served time in prison.) But at other points Houston depicts Ballard as a philanthropist, bon vivant, and a likeable, rough-hewn type.

We never do see Ballard clearly. Houston might have spent too much time talking to Ballard's cronies, and he might have been distracted by his own cronies in the Toronto press, for whom Ballard has been a motherlode of stories for two decades. In the end, one suspects, Houston ended up liking Ballard. The result is that the reader never does get the goods. Maybe we'll get Harold Ballard straight one day, but not this time. □

**The Golden Age of Canadian Figure Skating**, by David Young, Summerhill Press, 200 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920197 04 3).

By *Kristy Eldridge*

CANADIANS HAVE always been good at figure skating, and the golden age that Young talks about in his book is every-

thing up to Karen Magnussen's world gold medal in 1973, after which no one won a gold until 1984. The story of Canada's many champions is surprisingly moving, perhaps especially because the Canadian public has shown a strange indifference to the achievements of these athletes, who have often won the hearts of European audiences. Young writes with sympathy and enthusiasm about the intense world of competitive figure skating, where years of training can lead to an all-too-brief glory.

It's the people who end up involved in the disciplined, gruelling world of competitive sports that are of interest to the average reader, rather than details about the sport itself. The greater part of this book is about skating personalities, and these parts are interesting, occasionally thrilling. Early chapters deal with the success of Cecil Smith, a dashing Toronto socialite who charmed European audiences with her delicacy and poise. If Cecil Smith embodied the ostensibly carefree 1920s, Barbara Ann Scott was appropriate for the war years; courageous and determined, she took skating very seriously and triumphed. Unfortunately, the book does not go into depth about many later skaters, especially Toller Cranston, and this is a flaw. However, Young's purpose is to give an account of a rather extensive golden age and with a minimum of dull chronicling he does it proficiently. □

**Trials: Canada 1 and the 1983 America's Cup**, by Jeff Boyd and Doug Hunter, Macmillan, illustrated, 330 pages, \$34.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9805 X).

By *Brad Adams*

THE REAL STORY of the America's Cup race in 1983 was the stunning Aussie victory. The Canadians gave it their best, but failed, and only stirred up some interest when they broke the secret of the victor's wing-like keel. It's a mixed blessing, then, to find a book commemorating such a spirited, but still average, performance on the seas.

In a way, the Canadian challenge was doomed from the beginning: the idea was hatched by Marvin Gill, a landlocked Albertan, as a means to spark national pride during the dark years of Trudeau liberalism. But Canadians didn't care; only a last minute bailout by a brewery — how Canadian — kept the challenge afloat.

Nor at the outset did anyone — organizers or sailors — have much experience with 12-metre racing. Confusion and squabbling were chronic. Still, there is something appealing about this arcane and complex competition, and even readers who last raced a sail-

boat at summer camp can't help but be caught up in this enthusiastic, bouncy, and authoritative account.

The authors — Boyd was a crew member on *Canada 1* — give a rich behind-the-scenes look at boat design, training, and the marvellous world of rules and tactics at the America's Cup. Only in the later stages, as inevitable defeat looms closer, does the reader start to yawn during a litany of tacks and protests.

It is the human dimension and detail that keep this book going: there is much on the psychology of competition and the fraternity of sail. The America's Cup is a shamefully expensive and irrelevant event; but it brings out something of human skill, ingenuity, and character under duress. That's the universal appeal of sport, and its essence is nicely captured in the Canadian *Trials*. □

## REVIEW

### The shock of the old

By *Roger Hall*

**The Ontario Collection**, by Fern Bayer, Ontario Heritage Foundation/Fitzhenry & Whiteside, illustrated, 388 pages, \$65.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88902 070 2).

ONTARIO'S BICENTENNIAL last year was marked by the usual government hype and hoopla. Cynics warned an election would follow before the euphoria was forgotten, and they have been proved right. But some of their skeptical outrage was ill-founded. And although historians debated the appropriateness of the date — some saying it should have been 1983 (200 years after the American Revolutionary war ended) and others arguing for 1991 (two centuries after the province of Upper Canada was created) — much of the commemorative splash, especially for smaller communities, was of considerable value and conducted with good 18th-century taste. Anyway, no historian should ever be entirely critical of an event that causes interest in his or her livelihood.

One of the bicentennial's more enduring features was the publication of a vast number of books — some good, some bad, most indifferent. An unofficial tally places the number at more than 100, not counting the plethora unleashed simultaneously by the Toronto sesquicentennial. A good number of these books were, at least in part, funded by the Ontario government.

Probably the most impressive title of the year was the magnificent compilation *Ontario's History in Maps*, by geographers Louis Gentilcore and Grant Head. Without massive government aid this extraordinary, full-colour tribute to cartographers and book-makers simply would not have been possible — especially at the low price of \$65.00. It went very quickly out of print — and sadly remains there. Another good title was *The Best Gift*, a fascinating chronicle of the twisted histories of Ontario's many Carnegie libraries. Yet another was *A Fast and Magnificent Land*, an illustrated portrait of the history of Ontario's north.

*The Ontario Collection* would never have seen the light of book catalogues without government support. Of all the "grant-aided" efforts of last year, this book — which is, after all, a trumpeting of the province's own collection of art — initially causes the most distrust in a reviewer. As it turns out, however, it is quite a good book, one that directly and indirectly chronicles the cultural history of central Canada.

The book at core is an annotated listing of the more than 1,000 works of art owned by the Ontario government. What sets it apart from being just another dreary catalogue is four sweeping historical chapters that deal with the collection's unique provenance.

The first — and the most interesting — focuses on works of art collected by Egerton Ryerson in the mid-19th century.

Ryerson was chief superintendent of education for Canada West and later served a similar function for the Province of Ontario. During the 1850s and 1860s, "with a view to encourage the Fine Arts in Upper Canada," he bought 236 copies of paintings by Old Masters and nearly 1,000 plaster casts, ranging from copies of antique Greek and Roman statuary to "famous men from all ages" to ornamental architectural decorations. These "objects of taste" served to set a standard for cultural appreciation in the howling wilderness of British North America and were exhibited in Ontario's first public museum — the Educational Museum of Upper Canada — which occupied part of the old Toronto Normal School.

Bayer feels that "such institutions as the Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the National Gallery of Canada owe their existence, in a curious way, to Ryerson's . . . vision . . ." For this reader the connection remains "curious," since Bayer never directly explores the links. Egerton Ryerson may indeed, as Nathaniel Burwash eulogized, have "sowed the seeds of that aesthetic life," but decades

passed before there was any substantial growth.

A firmer base for explaining the foundation of a visual arts tradition comes in Bayer's second chapter, which outlines the provincial education department's efforts, starting in 1875, to acquire "contemporary" works of art with the collaboration of the freshly-minted Ontario Society of Artists. Several hundred works were purchased and, although one could certainly not argue that Ontarians formed the cutting edge of artistic achievement, some fine work was represented from painters such as F.M. Bell-Smith, R.F. Gagen, C.W. Jefferys, Arthur Lismer, and J.E.H. MacDonald.

The tragedy is that so few of these works of art — either Ryerson's purchases, or the OSA materials — are retained by the government. Fewer than 30 of the Ryerson pieces are extant and only 40 of the OSA works. Evidently in 1912, for reasons that Bayer has not uncovered, the education department shut up the picture galleries of the Educational Museum and decentralized the collection, with paintings and other works being dispersed to normal schools all over the province.

What followed was what one senior government figure has recently called an

"irresponsible trusteeship that resulted in the effective destruction of the collection. . . . A lot of people," he lamented, "probably took home a little retirement gift." Informally I have been told that the Ontario College of Art, as late as the 1960s and 1970s, decreed Ryerson's plaster busts irrelevant to their needs and had them broken up. The "shock of the old" was apparently too much for our provincial guardians of visual aesthetic innovation.

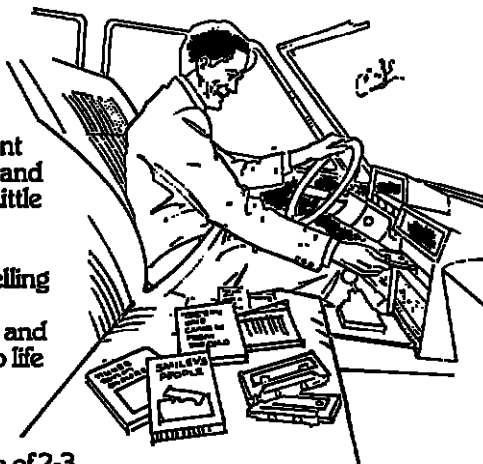
A third element of the Ontario collection is less surprising — and a lot less interesting. This is the large collection of portraits of fat-bellied Ontario worthies, past and present, commissioned to hang in the Ontario legislature and lieutenant governor's quarters. Bayer tells the story well, providing details of artists known and unknown and delving into some of the more celebrated pieces, such as the mysterious portrait of an aged Laura Secord. Premier Mitch Hepburn had it X-rayed in the 1930s to discover that underneath the scrappy lady was a previously painted and very severe turn-of-the-century oil of Premier Sir George Ross. The overpainter: Mildred Peel who, two years after the government acquired the painting, married Ross. Someone had evidently commented that

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Laura's hands looked awfully masculine.

The final section of the book outlines the resurgence of artistic interest and government purchase under the Robarts regime in the 1960s. The purpose: decoration or, more grandly, "art-in-architecture." The idea was (and remains) to buy and support Ontario art through commissioning paintings, murals, and sculpture to adorn, or even comprise, the walls of new government buildings. The result has been a credible

collection of contemporary art — not everyone's "objects of taste," but a robust, broad-based collection numbering more than 500 works.

This book, then, has considerable scope. Since the author attempts, doubtless drawing from Ryerson's enthusiasms, to educate us as well, she frequently provides substantial comments on the classic works and considerable biographical details of subjects. This exposes her to committing some oversimplification of complex issues and

introduces a good many slips of spellings, dates, and so forth. There is also some unnecessary repetition between her historical chapters and information presented in her catalogue sections. And, for God's sake, paintings are lent, not "loaned."

But these are largely quibbles. The Ontario Collection, of which Bayer is the curator, is, in fact as well as in book form, a good government investment. Let's hope such enthusiasm hasn't passed with the bicentennial. □

## FEATURE REVIEW

### Littoral truths

There is not much that is mutinous in Audrey Thomas's story of a broken marriage, but her superb control produces a novel of quiet, warm intensity

By Wayne Grady

*Intertidal Life*, by Audrey Thomas, Stoddart, 282 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 2028 6).

THERE ARE textual reverberations, what Baudelaire might have called correspondences, among Audrey Thomas's four novels. She often plunders her own earlier work in order to supply images and details for the new. Thus an episode from the 1970 novel *Mrs. Blood* turns up again, altered and inflated, as "Degrees," a short story published two years ago in *Saturday Night*. The epilogue to Part I of *Mrs. Blood* — the passage in *Alice's Adventures in Won-*

*derland* in which the Cheshire Cat observes that Alice must be mad, otherwise she wouldn't be in Wonderland — is echoed now in *Intertidal Life*, where it is given emphasis by the fact that the main character is named Alice:

Alice thought of her namesake:  
" 'I see nothing on the road,'  
said Alice.

'Oh, said the King, 'I wish I had your eyes.' "

Both Isobel in *Blown Figures* (1975) and Alice in *Intertidal Life* recall fathers who used to sing:

*Oh, the only girl I ever loved  
had a face like a horse and Bug-gy.*

Audrey Thomas



And both Alice and Rachel (in *Latakia*, 1979) are writers who are trying to come to terms in their books with the fact that they have been rejected by men who have loved them.

The form of *Intertidal Life* is itself a borrowing from two earlier books. The present work is part novel, written in the third person, and part commonplace book, written in the first person; and the book alternates between "she" and "I" in much the same way that *Mrs. Blood* alternated between passages by Mrs. Blood and Mrs. Thing. There is also the echo of Thomas's 1971 book, *Munchmeyer and Prospero on the Island*, in which the second novella is a diary kept by Miranda, who is writing the first novella.

Alice's commonplace book is meant, we learn early on, as a place where Alice "would finally bring all the words and definitions and phrases I have copied out for years on scraps of paper. But I need it now for something else. I need it to stay sane." At one point, when Alice is buying jigsaw puzzles for her daughters, she imagines herself as one of the boxes: "Alice Hoyle: 1,000 Interlocking Pieces." The commonplace book is Alice's attempt to put all those interlocking pieces together.

The threat to her sanity is the desertion by her husband Peter, one of those vaguely depressing trendies who after 14 years of marriage has decided that a trial separation, during which he could learn not to be "uptight" (this is in 1979) and "locked into the Protestant work ethic," would be worth the physical and financial suffering it inflicts on his wife and three daughters. Alice is conse-

PHOTOGRAPH BY SAM YATA



quently living with two of her daughters in a small cabin on Galiano Island, off the coast of British Columbia, where Audrey Thomas has owned a cabin since 1969.

Section I of the novel is a long wail, a prolonged venting of Alice's grief, which takes the simultaneous forms of despair and anger: "How dare he walk away," she rages in the commonplace book. "I'll call you during the week." I vowed I wouldn't talk to him but of course I did. And cried. 'Hello, old friend,' he said in his soft, *caring* voice. But I'm not stupid, I could hear the 'end' in 'friend' . . ."

Alice shares her island with a group of superannuated hippies who have taken over a clutter of abandoned cabins in Coon Bay. At first she feels no great antipathy toward them — two of them have become her friends, and her husband has, in a sense, gone over to them — but her real friends are two women, Stella and Trudi, and it is this triad or sisterhood that is the real focus of the novel.

Stella's husband has died, and Trudi has left hers, and so the three women share at least one common bond. (Alice and Stella also share Peter, but Alice doesn't discover that until later.) The hippies, Alice realizes, are "takers," uninterested in anything outside their own self-absorption. "They were all about 10 years younger than she was and they seemed older, defeated, like people who had been in prison for a long time or deprived of some essential food." Alice's new orientation is with the women, the "givers"; and by the end of Section I she has accepted the fact that her husband has gone over to the "takers."

In Section II, Alice's acceptance assuages her grief: "When I'm not full of rage I'm sad," she notes in her commonplace book, and the dominant note of this section is sadness, with occasional dips into resignation tempered by anguished cries of rebellion. She is moon-driven, up and down with the tides.

Water imagery is an important element throughout the book: in Section I Alice is "struggling in the icy waters of Peter's rejection"; now she can almost joke about it ("Your honour, we drifted apart"). The book's title identifies the metaphor — "intertidal life" is a biological reference to the myriad crusty creatures that live in trapped puddles of water when the tide has receded, an idea Cyril Connolly used in his novel *The Rock Pool*. Alice and her children observe the pile worms and limpets, the starfish, mussels, and hermit crabs, and admire their ability to survive. "We could all learn a lesson from limpets,"

Alice writes. "They really know how to hang on."

By the end of the book, though, Alice is off limpets, just as she has gone off hippies. Intertidal creatures "just go about eating each other." She has come to see all life as intertidal, a lunatic frenzy of directionless activity between the overwhelming oceans of birth and death, and we are reminded of the world of difference that exists between Miranda's association with water and Ophelia's.

Further water imagery is provided by the journals of Captain George Vancouver, which Alice is reading in preparation for her new novel. Quotes from Vancouver's reports open each section and float like driftwood throughout the text: "We immediately realized the danger which we should be in among these islands, the channels between which we did not know and which we had no interest in exploring."

The plunge into early maritime exploration has given Alice (and us) a hint at the true nature of her own plight. "Women have been shanghaied," she tells Stella, "and now we are waking up and rubbing our eyes and murmuring, 'Where are we?'" Women's response, she says, is to incite "some kind of mutiny," but not one intended to regain freedom. "We don't want to be let out at the nearest port or unceremoniously tossed overboard . . . what we really want is to be officers and captains ourselves."

This is all fairly orthodox feminism, and there is not much that is mutinous in *Intertidal Life*. Peter is such a wimpy piece of asparagus that his passage from Alice's life ought to have been an occasion for joy rather than the 280 pages of *angst* it engenders. The commonplace-book motif gives the action of the novel, such as it is, a certain distance, a lack of immediacy: events and even emotions are reported rather than experienced, and the difference between high and low tide never seems to be more than a few inches.

But the positive side of distance — control — is also here. Thomas is a superbly controlled writer, and her prose is tight and unflawed. As the exploration of the emotional state of a woman approaching middle age who has suddenly to come to terms with a New World (not necessarily a real one), *Intertidal Life* has a warm, quiet intensity. It is a novel about freedom — some of Thomas's characters are born free, some achieve freedom, and some, like Alice, have had freedom thrust upon them — and a surfeit of freedom may be said to be the most toxic carcinogen of the 20th century. *Intertidal Life* is undoubtedly Thomas's best novel to date. □

## REVIEW

# Labours of love

By Ray Filip

*The Mysteries of Montreal: Memoirs of a Midwife*, by Charlotte Führer, edited by W. Peter Ward, University of British Columbia Press, 170 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7748 02081).

LIKE DIRTY Victorian underwear preserved in potpourri, Charlotte Führer's memoirs of a midwife is a collection of mild pornography set in Montreal. The introduction by Peter Ward is more revealing than the text. After 1800, with the growing professional status of doctors, midwives gained an ill reputation as "abortionists, keepers of clandestine lying-in homes, and unscrupulous baby farmers." Illegitimate children who were not dumped into the river, or a nunnery, found shelter with their "repentant" mothers in Magdalen asylums or private maternity boarding houses operated by midwives or "wise women."

It was in this atmosphere that Führer catered to the bastard offspring of Montreal's *bon ton*. The beaver trade was never as big a game. *The Mysteries of Montreal* whirls with paramours, gallants, and fancy skaters. Most of the women are society belles who attend the fashionable churches before and after being banged up. No subterfuge is too low to save face trapped in the Victorian-Vatican vise of high civility.

A case in point is Alfred Grandison, who lives for sex, snuff, and hymns. An unhappily married Episcopalian organist, he has an affair with Mary Sedley, 17-year-old daughter of a prominent businessman. They make beautiful music together at a grand concert, return to her father's home, where Grandison then makes love to the sweet innocent "leader of Psalmody and sacred lays." To quash ugly rumours, Mary marries her boring suitor Mr. Hazelton. However, Grandison gets Mary pregnant while both are coincidentally holidaying in Cacouna.

Mary plots to have the child in Boston, deceiving Hazelton with an adulterated story about her miscarriage. A dry goods merchant in Montreal adopts the bantling and arranges for the little one's music lessons with none other than Alfred Grandison! The organ master again falls into the good graces of the Sedley-Hazelton household, and again Mary becomes *enceinte* with his child. This time Hazelton is led to

believe that the baby is his, and even has "its father's nose."

Years later, when Grandison's wife dies, Mary absconds to Chicago to reunite with her old lover. Much to her shock, Grandison jilts her. Mary faints at his feet after screaming like a mad-woman. The police carry her away to a mental institution. Mysterious ways of Love? Or brutal male chauvinism?

As we tra-la-la down memory lane, we notice that the French fact does not enter Führer's "fiction," originally self-published. There is brief mention of a French maid who says to her mistress: "Ah, Madame, Monsieur Fairfield he come back *riche, riche*, with plentee nice thing for you!" This is colonial Montreal, with financiers jingling down St. James street in phaetons pushed by bay ponies. Führer is not a political animal. She is blind to the Old Rouges romanticism around her, but doesn't miss a blushing bonnet. Only in the chapter "Among the Fenians" do we receive a quick glimpse of the Griffintown and Point St. Charles shanties. The obscenity of poverty merely inspires a "shudder."

Mount Royal was then private property owned mostly by Sir Hugh Allen. Special permission by the proprietors along the way was required for mates who wished to continue their courtship dance to the summit. While down below, Sherbrooke and St. Denis in the east end sound like a primrose path.

It had been their custom to go for a stroll together on the long summer evenings, and together they might have been seen, fondly looking into each other's faces, as, arm-in-arm, they perambulated the more remote portions of Sherbrooke and St. Denis streets, which at that time were scarcely built upon.

Editor Ward compares these outpourings of a midwife with the *succès de scandale* literary genre popular in 19th-century Quebec. He cites *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, "a lurid tale of priestly fornication and infanticide in a Montreal nunnery," and *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional* by a renegade Father Chiniquy, whose kinky confessions enjoyed wide commercial appeal throughout the material world for over half a century.

Both books were written expressly as anti-Catholic hate literature. Führer's memoirs have no sinister bend. Her midwife's tales bear the pontificating tone of a Syllabus of Errors. Her arcana is more akin to *Les Mystères de Montréal*, by Quebec novelist Henri-Émile Chevalier, who based his work on Eugène Sue's serial *Les Mystères de Paris*. Ward fails to name these more likely sources of pop melodrama, which

the masses were then swallowing faster than maple sugar.

*The Mysteries of Montreal* is a rare book-room sleeper. As gaslight gossip from the past, it is illuminating. But as a mirror of the times, this black book of ruined maidens is as reliable as the Maggy Trudeau papers today. Führer's black or white, bald or hairy, notions about morality offer small comfort to the post-permissive mess of contemporary relationships; when a rose is no longer a rose and a bastard is no longer a bastard. □

## REVIEW

### Loose threads

By Lesley Choyce

*The Summer Tree*, by Guy Gavriel Kay, McClelland & Stewart, 324 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 4472 0).

THIS IS THE first book in the trilogy of what the author calls "The Fionovar Tapestry." The project is an ambitious effort in the genre of fantasy, and it is certainly encouraging to see that McClelland & Stewart is willing to undertake such a daring endeavour. With such a book as this, a publisher hopes to break into a new market but also to introduce mainstream readers to a literary sphere usually read only by hard-core fans.

Unfortunately, I'm not convinced that any but the most ardent fantasy readers will cling to *The Summer Tree*. It's a very tempting book to anyone hoping to divert himself from fellow passengers on a subway or anxious to escape from all the mundane tasks that we suffer in the name of civilization. The weaver of this tale, however, is very demanding. Kay requires a patient audience with a predilection for mnemonics. The reader must be able to keep track of no less than 70 characters if he is really to follow the story closely. Maybe that's not a literary crisis in itself. I'm reminded of the time I saw the Rockettes dancing on stage at Radio City Music Hall in New York; I certainly couldn't keep them all straight as they flashed their thighs around the stage. But I did enjoy the spectacle. And while the Rockettes all had names like Lucy, Viva, Cindy, and Connie, *The Summer Tree* is populated with beings sporting such monickers as Flidais, Torc, Mabon, and Diarmuid.

As the novel opens, five Torontonians are taking in a Celtic lecture at the U of

T. Academics should enjoy the fact that the crowd is "bustling like a rock audience with pre-concert excitement." Soon, however, the young Canadians are given their metaphysical visas to the land of Brennin, high kingdom of Fionovar. Kay makes short business of how they get there or why Kimberly, Kevin, Jennifer, Dave, and Paul are so easily persuaded to give up the ambience of Upper Canada for Brennin. But their presence there is necessary if Brennin is to be saved from some terrible force. Hence the trek and the beginning of adventure; and that's what good fantasy writing is about.

The thought of other worlds is comforting to those of us who find this one so corrupted by the masochistic buffoonery of international politics. Guy's other world, however, has more than its share of problems and in place of Ronald Reagan and a septuagenarian Soviet hierarchy we find a "good" kingdom trying to sort out agricultural and power consolidation problems but up against a brutal god who is breaking out of a 1,000-year-old prison.

The central conflict is between Dark and Light, an ancient duality that even contemporary fantasy writers seem to be unable to free themselves from. Yet, if I allow myself to forget about the oversimplified morality inherent in so much of this genre and read on for pure adventure, I'm much more satisfied. There is, after all, something captivating about reading a book about water spirits, wolves, wizards, sorcerers, seers, a giant black swan, and dwarfs — both dark and light, known as the svart alfar and lios alfar. If that's not enough, there's also a unicorn that figures more prominently on the cover than in the story. (Recently the manager of Bakka, a science fiction-and-fantasy book store in Toronto told me that this year he could sell any book that had a unicorn on the cover. No doubt, the M & S designers had been talking to the same chap.)

Much of the archaic dialogue is excellent, and some passages draw the reader into the minds of the characters very effectively. When Paul finds himself on the sacrificial Summer Tree trying to free himself of a nagging guilt and hoping to help save the people of Brennin, the author writes:

The trunk of the tree seemed to have grown fingers, rough like bark, that wrapped themselves around him. He was touching the tree everywhere now. Once, for a long spell, he thought he was inside it, looking out, not bound upon it. He thought he was the Summer Tree.

A lot is here for someone accepting the genre. Kay's is a controlled imagina-

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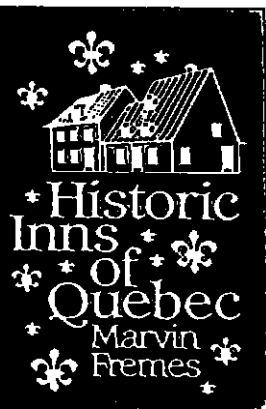
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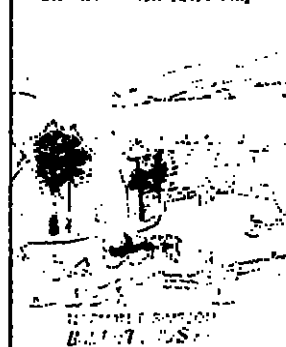
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tion: he works with mythology, master-texts of fantasy, and archetypes. I would have been keenly interested to see what would have happened if he had not limited himself to fantasy tradition. One of the major differences between science fiction and fantasy is that the first emphasizes scientific reasoning; the fantasy writer, on the other hand, is completely free to create any world without need for reason. Clearly there is no explanation for the world of Fionovar but the author does borrow heavily from sword and sorcery and previous writings in the genre. Perhaps this is accountable from the fact that Kay, a Canadian by birth, spent a year at Oxford, where he acted as an editor in the publication of J.R.R. Tolkien's posthumously published *The Silmarillion*.

Undoubtedly my ambivalence is showing. I wanted to like this book. So little science fiction and fantasy has been produced here in Canada, and *The Summer Tree* is a brave step forward. The ending of the first volume in the trilogy leaves a reader wanting something more final. The rest, we are promised, is forthcoming: *The Wandering Fire* in 1985 and a third volume after that. Even one book of a trilogy, though, should have the effect of a completed narrative and this one falls short of that. A story can end . . . and then begin again with a fresh continuation of the larger plot. This one simply leaves the dangling threads of the tapestry.

If Kay's publisher fails to produce volumes two and three, we will be left with a very incomplete story; for those of us who enjoyed the needlework so far, we can only hope that it has the fortitude to complete the weaving so that the whole epic can be judged on its merits. □

## REVIEW

### Golden girl

By *Mary Ainslie Smith*

*Kate Rice, Prospector*, by Helen Duncan, Simon & Pierre, 200 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88924 134 1).

BORN IN THE small town of St. Marys, Ont., in 1882, Kathleen Rice was one of many young people at the turn of the century who were too restless to stay in the settled parts of eastern Canada where they had been brought up. Land available for farming, unexplored territory, and the added lure of gold and

other minerals to be discovered enticed them westward by the thousands. Kathleen was noteworthy among these migrants in that she was well-educated and beautiful, a strong-minded, independent woman who chose to live in isolation and to make trapping and prospecting her life's work.

Toronto writer Helen Duncan, who also grew up in St. Marys, tells how, when she was a little girl, she caught a glimpse of Kathleen Rice paying a visit to her home town from northern Manitoba where she then lived. Kathleen was so unusual in appearance and bearing that Duncan, the child, was intrigued, and her fascination continued into adulthood. She spent years researching Kathleen Rice's story, and *Kate Rice, Prospector* is the result.

Kathleen was born into a family who had gained wealth and prominence in St. Marys as mill owners. She went to the University of Toronto on a scholarship, and after graduating in 1906 taught high school in Ontario and in Yorkton, Sask. Then she moved to the lake country around The Pas in Manitoba, where she began to make her living trapping, prospecting, and homesteading. Her life there and her relationship with her business partner, Dick Woosey, form the major part of Duncan's story.

Duncan describes at length the competition and cooperation among the prospectors and their struggles with promoters and with mining engineers sent out from large companies in the East to do explorations and to negotiate options on promising claims. She relates how Kathleen became a legend in her own time, her unconventional way of life described in newspaper articles and periodicals back East and as far away as England.

Kathleen Rice and Dick Woosey had some success as prospectors but never became rich. Duncan believes that they were probably cheated out of their rightful profits by an unscrupulous promoter. Woosey died in 1940, almost penniless. Kathleen continued to live alone in their island cabin on Herb Lake for a number of years longer. She died in 1963.

Duncan had a difficult time tracking down her story. In her introduction she recounts her problems in separating fact and legend. She read archives, interviewed old prospectors, and sought first-person recollections through a mining periodical, but ran into many impasses, gaps, and contradictions. At last she came to this decision:

After my exhaustive research, I worked and weaved my way among arguable facts, conflicting opinions and an almost total eclipse of dates until like a good judge I was forced to drop some

so-called facts and "accept what the evidence obliged me to accept." And where even evidence failed, to stitch and sew, to make my own judgments, to use my own imagination, according to my conception of Kate and her partner Dick Woosy.

This compromise is understandable to a degree. Research probably never tells any biographer all he would like to know about his subject, and eventually intuition and empathy must be called upon to fill in some of the blanks. Still, when a story is presented as biography, the reader has a right to believe that the factual information is as sound as the biographer could possibly make it. In the course of her story, Duncan comes to rely too much on her imagination and

confuses or chooses to ignore facts that were easily available for her use.

For example, there are a number of small, annoying errors in the St. Marys portion of the story. It is Trout Creek, not Fish Creek, that meets the Thames River in the centre of the town at the site of the family mill. Kathleen's grandfather founded the business, not her great-grandfather as Duncan states. Kathleen was born on December 22, 1882, not in 1883, and was christened Kathleen Creighton Starr Rice, not Kathleen Lincoln Rice.

The name Lincoln was given to her younger brother, a person Duncan consciously chooses to leave out of the story as having no bearing on the important parts of Kathleen's life. But since Dun-

can takes pains to build the case that much of Kathleen's motivation comes from her relationship with her family, it seems wrong to disregard her only sibling. Lincoln Rice spent part of 1913 homesteading with his sister in Manitoba. Duncan doesn't mention this. These complaints may seem trivial, but such easily discovered errors and omissions can only make a reader distrustful of other facts in what is supposed to be biography, not fiction.

Kathleen Rice is remembered in The Pas as one of the true old-timers who helped to explore the region and open it for development. Duncan is right to believe that her story is worth attention. More attention to the facts would have helped. □

## INTERVIEW

### Ken Mitchell

'I think I'm just a clown. I like to make people laugh. That's just as important as making them think'

By Geoff Hancock

**B**ORN IN Moose Jaw in 1940, Ken Mitchell began writing short stories and radio plays as a student. Since then his work has appeared in more than 100 journals and more than 20 anthologies. He is the author of such plays as *This Train* (1973), *Heroes* (1975), and *Cruel Tears* (1975), three novels — *Wandering Rafferty* (Macmillan, 1972), *The Meadowlark Connection* (Pile of Bones Publishing, 1975), and *The Con Man* (Talonbooks, 1979) — and a collection of short

stories, *Everybody Gets Something Here* (Macmillan, 1977). His most recent collection is *Ken Mitchell Country*, edited by Robert Currie (Coteau Books). Now a professor of English at the University of Regina, Mitchell was interviewed by Geoff Hancock:

**Books in Canada: How do you manage to balance everything you do — poetry, fiction, drama, film, teaching, traveling?**

**Ken Mitchell:** I try not to think about it too much. I like to keep busy. My best

work seems to be done under the pressure of deadlines. It inhibits the longer works, but for fiction, screenplays, poetry, it helps to work under pressure. If I've got a film script with a heavy production schedule and deadline, I work 12 hours a day until it's done. I like to work fast, getting through a draft, then leaving it as long as possible. Perhaps in the meantime I work on another project. Then I come back absolutely fresh and go through it quickly to maintain the narrative flow. I try not to chip away at it.

**BiC: Do you start with a character?**

**Mitchell:** Usually, though sometimes it's an idea or a plot. The film I did a few years ago, *The Hounds of Notre Dame*, was a story built around a character. In fiction, character interests me most. What motivates me in writing is to create an interesting character.

**BiC: Do you try to let every aspect of the story bring out elements of that character?**

**Mitchell:** I don't try so much as I find a way to let it happen. I'm not inclined to invent plots. I usually have characters more or less fully formed in my imagination, and I set them into motion to do what they will in a certain set of circumstances or against certain antagonistic forces. I like to test them against what exists rather than manipulate things into place. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Ken Mitchell



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICARDO GUSTIZI

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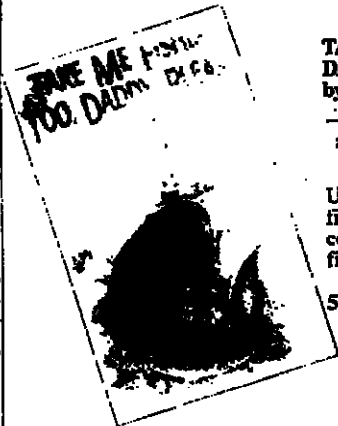
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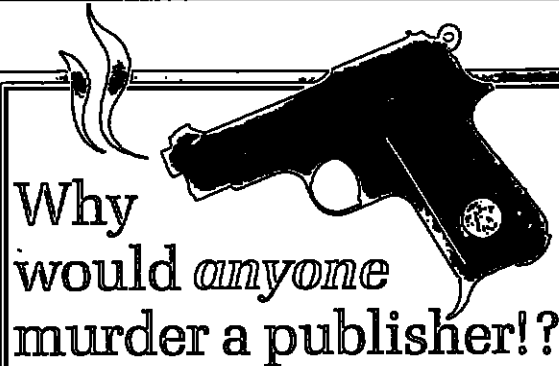
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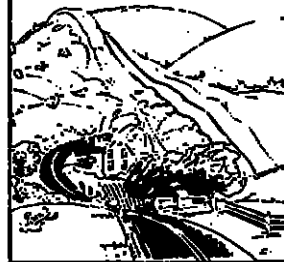
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**BIC:** *Your situations have a broad comic appeal. Is that your vision of the world? Are you an optimistic writer?*

**Mitchell:** I think I'm an optimistic person. I'm not sure that a comic approach equates with optimism. Many comic writers — Mark Twain, for example — are notoriously misanthropic in their view of the world. But I do believe the world is becoming a better place. People are generally easier to deal with, and it's more possible to go to other cultures and find sympathy and understanding than it has ever been in the past. But that's not entirely related to my comic interest. I think I'm just a clown. I like to make people laugh. That's just as important as making them think.

**BIC:** *Your fiction relies heavily on prairie slang, pub humour. As they say in creative writing class, "You've got a great ear for dialogue."*

**Mitchell:** I hope not to sound immodest, but I think that's one of my skills. I may have deficiencies in other areas, but I do know how to reproduce the patterns of speech. That's brought me more to dramatic writing and less and less to prose constructions. I deal in voices. Not only the patterns of individual and idiomatic speech, but also the silences, the way people talk, explain, or express themselves to each other. That's a necessary component of dramatic writing.

**BIC:** *Do you listen all the time?*

**Mitchell:** Not consciously. I don't take notes, or work with a tape recorder. It's unconscious. I don't know where it comes from. It's a mimic capability of listening naturally. A story-teller — and I think of myself as that rather than a literary artist — has to listen. The only way to know stories is to hear stories. Very little of my writing is autobio-

graphical. Even a story like "The Great Electrical Revolution" which seems autobiographical, is a fiction, created from a story I heard in Moose Jaw. In the Prairies — and this is almost a truism of Canadian literature now — there is a greater reliance on oral transmission of culture and idea through stories. People in rural regions explain themselves. They indicate their philosophies, their attitudes through the stories they tell. It's not abstract or intellectual.

**BIC:** *Why is there such an outpouring of creative writing from Saskatchewan right now?*

**Mitchell:** A number of factors in confluence contribute to this phenomenon. First, there's always been a lot of writing from the Prairies and Saskatchewan — from Grove, Nellie McLung, Ross, Laurence, W.O. Mitchell, and other literary antecedents. It seems to me there has been a disproportionate strength from the Prairies. But now, with the improved communications network and magazines that disseminate literary information from one end of Canada to the other, it's no longer necessary for writers to leave their region and material behind them. Now people interested in writing about the Prairies can stay. That's what my generation of writers has done.

Staying there caused a critical mass, a nuclear explosion. The development of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild in 1969 allowed it to happen on the Prairies at the same time literary activities took place elsewhere in Canada. We now have a strong literary publishing program with half a dozen presses. The more it seems natural and possible for young writers to find a market and the more their own people are interested the more this will happen.

**BIC:** *Where do your energies come from?*

**Mitchell:** I've always been an energetic person. A lot of energy that I've dissipated in my life through the usual frantic forms of activity I now place directly at the service of story-telling. Second, I have a good family relationship. That's necessary for me to do my work. I need to maintain a balance between writing and looking after my family and children's needs. It feeds my creative work in a positive way and allows me to maintain an optimistic attitude. It's a complementary relationship. Third, I meditate. I took a TM course about 10 years ago, and while the philosophy of transcendental meditation never really took hold, the technique of meditation is important to my life. I meditate on a daily basis and on the short term it's absolutely necessary to keep my batteries charged. I can maintain concentration for up to 14 hours a day working on something. I get a lot done. Also, I control things like alcohol and other personal abuses of the body. □

## LETTERS

### Twisting the facts

I READ WITH great interest Wayne Grady's review of recent Canadian crime fiction (March), but I wish he had resisted the urge to generalize about the "direction" of the genre, especially as his categorization involved a twisting of the facts to suit the theory: a procedure no detective would countenance. Surely it is also premature to set about defining

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SAURDAY NIGHT

the typical Canadian detective. He should be allowed to develop over the years and to cover as broad and interesting a spectrum as his counterparts abroad.

We certainly have two fine crime writers in Howard Engel and Eric Wright — both of whom can stand alongside any of their American or English colleagues — but why compare them to the European model? There is nothing of Van der Wetering's zen craziness (more evident in his recent books, *Streetbird* and *The Mind Murders*) about either Charlie Salter or Benny Cooperman, and both Wright and Engel surpass the turgid self-indulgence Nicholas Freeling has wallowed in since he killed off Van der Valk.

It is also extremely misleading to say that "when other detective writers want to write character novels, they generally leave their detectives out of the book altogether." The more recent English detectives, including P.D. James's Adam Dalgliesh and Reginald Hill's Dalziel and Pascoe, certainly exist as three-dimensional characters and do develop through conflict and reflection. To cite Lord Peter Wimsey and Albert Campion as representative examples of the English detective novel is to deny the evolution of the genre. Of course the crime is important, but these days character development and sense of place are among the most essential ingredients of all detective fiction. After all, there are only a limited number of plots.

Grady has also given the Americans short shrift. Certainly "the detective is often indistinguishable from the criminals," even in the work of writers as good as Elmore Leonard and Richard Stark. Nonetheless, Americans reign supreme in the private detective novel. Benny Cooperman, for example, is much closer to American counterparts such as Michael Z. Lewin's "soft-boiled" hero, Albert Samson, or even to Robert B. Parker's tough but sensitive Spenser, than he is to Henri Castang or Martin Beck, and the "solid" and domestic Charlie Salter is closer to English models like Rendell's Wexford and June Thomson's Finch. Yes, the American private detective sometimes "acts outside the law" — but that's his prerogative; it comes with the territory. Even Benny Cooperman withholds information when it suits him.

It is encouraging to see such praise for Canada's contemporary mystery writers, but disturbing to find their creations typecast so soon. Also, I fail to see why it is necessary to misrepresent English and American achievements in order to place Engel and Wright in a tradition to which they do not belong. Crime fiction, like any other kind of writing, develops

from what writers do, and too much critical pigeon-holing at such an early stage, particularly if it is based on inaccurate premises, can become prescriptive and inhibitive.

Peter Robinson  
Toronto

*Wayne Grady replies:* I had no intention of telling future detective novelists what they could and could not write: the discernment of patterns and "directions" within a genre is the critic's job, whether Robinson likes it or not, and calling that process "typecasting" and "pigeon-holing" won't make it go away. As for misrepresenting English and American traditions, surely Robinson is not seriously suggesting that Dalgliesh, *et al.* are "three-dimensional characters" and that Van der Valk, Castang, and Beck are not? Turgid though Freeling's prose since *Arlette* and *Castang's City* may be, Freeling is certainly taking more pains to explore his environment, both social and psychological, than anyone since Simenon: try Simenon's autobiographical novel *Pedigree* for turgidity.

I fail to make sense of Robinson's objections when he says I give the Americans short shrift, but then proceeds to agree with everything I said. I made it quite clear that Benny Cooperman's literary antecedents were American rather than English or European (Jack Batten, in the current issue of the *Imperial Oil Review*, quotes with approval the *New York Times* observation that Engel "has the tough, cynical private-eye novel, as developed by Chandler and Hammett, down pat"), and surely my reference to Cooperman's development as a character over the years was a clear enough warning against pigeon-holing.

#### CHILDREN AND CANCER

I WAS TAKEN aback by Lorraine Johnson's review of Judylyne Fine's book *Afraid to Ask: A Book About Cancer* (March) not because it was a "bad" review of a very good and important book, but because the review was begrudging and imperceptive.

This is a unique book — indeed, it is probably the first book on the subject directed to adolescents. It has garnered unconditional praise from many sources. When then, if the reviewer thought the book was good, couldn't she say so simply and openly? The review reminded me that it is always easier to criticize than to praise. But criticism must be substantiated. The reviewer's suggestion that the author is caught in a trap where she waivers between an encouragement for life and



acceptance of death is meaningless. So too the opening sentence, which states that the book's intent is to "demystify fear." How, exactly, does one demystify fear?

Fine has written a book to help educate the intended reader to the facts about cancer. She believes that through knowledge comes understanding and with understanding comes the ability to more effectively deal with fear, pain and . . . cancer.

The author's decision to include a chapter on prevention was well reasoned. Along with feelings of anger and resentment that children of cancer patients feel, as noted by the reviewer, there is also a fear of whether they will get cancer too. A discussion of prevention is just one more way to address the fears and provide information about the more than 100 diseases known collectively as cancer.

Valerie Hussey  
 Publisher, Kids Can Press  
 Toronto

*Lorraine Johnson replies:* I, too, am taken aback. I did not write or imply that Fine's approach was wrong; I simply questioned a few areas I felt were problematic. From the overall tone,

the review it is obvious that I think the book very good, but to give unconditional praise is to imply perfection.

I question the cliché that it is easier to criticize than to praise. What is important, however, is that it is not only more difficult but also more useful to criticize parts within the framework of praise for the whole.

How does one "demystify fear"? By writing a book called *Afraid to Ask*, which encourages people to discuss their problems and concerns and then provides facts and information for that discussion. But tone remains a problem when talking about illness and death to a young audience.

I did not suggest that the author's decision to include the prevention chapter was *not* well-reasoned. I questioned its placement near the beginning and suggested that parents who give this book to their children might want to know of possible reactions in advance. And is this not one of the roles of the reviewer?

#### THE FEMINIST MYSTIQUE

IGNORING THE well-advertised fact that *Women and Words: The Anthology/Les Femmes et les Mots: Une Antologie* is nothing more or less than a literary com-

plement to the 1983 Women and Words conference in Vancouver — a watershed event in the Canadian women's movement that everyone but her must know about — Lorraine Johnson's review (March) leaps from a brief contemplation of the French/English title to an assumption the contents will be a philosophically rigorous exercise in French post modernism using psychoanalysis to substantiate feminist theories of linguistic and ontological difference. Having thus missed the point that the title is bilingual simply because the book is, with fully one third of the entries in the French language, some of them reflecting post modern linguistic theory and some not, your intrepid (and unilingual?) reviewer proceeds to test her assumption against English examples only. Realizing they don't bear her out, she undertakes to denounce the editors and contributors alike — the broadest range and greatest number of contemporary Canadian women writers ever brought together in one book — for *their* error.

Finding many of these contributors concerned not with the philosophical rigour of French post modernism but instead with such feminist "side issues" as child abuse, sexual harassment, single-parent survival, manifold paternalism, and the power of solidarity, Johnson dismisses them one and all for "gutless feminism." Nicole Brossard, Dorothy Livesay, Suniti Namjoshi, Betsy Warland, Jaqueline Pelletier, Daphne Marlatt, Mary Meigs, Gay Allison, Jane Rule, Helene Rosenthal, Louky Bersianik, Phyllis Webb, Marian Engel and 67 others — each represented by the piece they themselves submitted — gutless feminists?

Howard White  
 Harbour Publishing  
 Madeira Park, B.C.

*Lorraine Johnson replies:* Most of White's letter deserves no reply, but one point should be made. In speaking of "gutless feminism" I was criticizing the lack of coherent theory in the anthology and not attacking individual contributors or their ideas.

#### SOCIAL STUDIES

SINCE IT CAN'T be demonstrated that universities act as agents of large-scale social mobility, discussion as to who should go to them (see Michiel Horn's review of *The Great Brain Robbery*, January-February) might best be confined to pointing out that it is best for both students and society if supply and demand for grads are about equal. And that it may be the case that the university is a more civilized place if the percentage

## CANWIT NO. 102

Richly illustrated with evocative full-colour photographs, for those readers whose appreciation of the butcher's art reaches beyond the merely nostalgic, *Lambs to the Slaughter* is a feast for the eyes.

A LETTER to the editor in this issue reminds us that it is easier to write a negative review than a favourable one. But in the case of some books, it's almost impossible to say *anything* nice. Contestants are invited to compose closing sentences for wildly enthusiastic reviews of the most tasteless, boring, loathsome books imaginable. The prize is \$25. Deadline: August 1. Address: CanWit No. 102, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

**Results of CanWit No. 100**  
 EVEN DESPITE our generous doubling of the prize — from \$25 to \$50 — the response to our request for sly oxymorons was not exactly a landslide. The reason? Well, we wouldn't want to point fingers, but one of the commonest duplications among the entries was "postal service" (followed by "open secret" and "civil servant"). The most mystifying entry

was "French kiss" (go figure *that* one; we're not sure we want to know). At any rate, the winner is an old standby, Barry Baldwin of Calgary, for a list that includes:

- Canadian culture
- Fresh frozen
- Original copy
- Optional requirement
- Small fortune
- Moral turpitude
- Factually untrue

#### Honourable mentions:

- Riot control
  - Single mothers
  - Student teachers
  - Historical fiction
  - Rounded corners
  - Standard deviation
- Joanne Donahue, London, Ont.

- Canadian economy
  - Friendly fire
  - Wonderbra panties
- Margo Murley, Liverpool, N.S.

- Soft rock
  - Grim joke
  - Lightweight
  - Spendthrift
  - Working holiday
  - Dirty wash
  - A case full of empties
- David J. Paul, Lucan, Ont.

of grossly underqualified undergraduates is low and the percentage of Pabulum courses even lower.

G. Hendry  
Highland Creek, Ont.

## GROWING PAINS

WITH GREAT INTEREST I read the feature review discussing Canadian young adult novels (January-February). I was, however, disappointed with Mary Ainslie Smith's unwillingness to define young adult literature.

While YA literature is a relatively new phenomenon particularly in Canada (*Catcher in the Rye* is generally considered the earliest example of a YA novel), it has quickly, firmly established itself as a unique and respectable area in the field of literature. Published titles deal with a wide variety of subject areas and literary genres (adventure, romance, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, realistic fiction), all with varying levels of complexity and difficulty. A recent trend is indeed the slick packaging and marketing of formula books, this however, is just part of YA literature and, while popular, is not necessarily the standard YA novel. Many quality titles

are in high demand and widely read by adolescents. Reading interests of this age group cannot be overlooked; many young adults read titles usually considered adult.

Young adult literature should not then be considered a genre "stuck somewhere between adult fiction and stories written for people who are clearly still children." Young adult literature (and as Smith equated it with the state of adolescence so will I) should not be underestimated or alienated by being "stuck" somewhere in no man's land. Instead, it should be accepted as an important part of all literature; as natural as the growth and development of a person going through adolescence.

Nancy E. Black  
Young Adult Librarian  
Saskatoon Public Library System  
Saskatoon

## OUR MISTAKE

AS ONE who has done a good deal of paste-up in my day I know the evil that gremlins do. I am not Mark Gerson and remain the reviewer of *Country You Can't Walk In* by M.T. Kelly (April). I only hope my own byline will not return to haunt you.

Cary Fagan  
Toronto

ALTHOUGH I LIKE the idea of short "critical notices," I would like to point out an error resulting from the editorial shortening of my review of *Paradise Siding*, by Allan Donaldson (January-February). "Moose" is a story in *The Promise*, by Wanda Blynn Campbell. The story discussed in the review is "The Refugee."

Debra Martens  
Montreal

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to communicate it to others." The documentation, design, and production of her book confirm that it, like amateur photography, is a labour of love.

## POETRY

*Veiled Countries/Lives*, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated by Michael Harris, Véhicule Press. Powerful, evocative, often exhilarating, Blais's collected poems (originally published in French, in two volumes, in the 1960s) are exactly what one would expect from the author of such accomplished prose as *Mad Shadows* and *St. Lawrence Blues*.

## 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:

*Billy Botzweiler's Last Dance and Other Stories*, by Lesley Choyce, blowout press.  
*The Birth of Greek Civilization*, by Pavel Otiva, Pica Pica Press.  
*Bless me, Father, For I Have Sinned: Catholics Speak Out About Confession*, by Quentin Donoghue and Linda Shapiro, M & S.  
*Bloody Jack*, by Dennis Cooley, Turnstone.  
*A Book of Orchids*, by Carl Withner, illustrated by Juan Luis G. Vela, Prentice-Hall Canada.  
*Canada and the World: An Atlas Resource*, by Geoffrey J. Matthews and Robert Morrow, Jr., Prentice-Hall.  
*Death is Relative*, by Edward Phillips, Avon.  
*Dicamus et Labyrinthos: A Philologist's Notebook*, by R. Murray Schafer, Arcana Editions.  
*Disappearances*, by Howard Frank Mosher, M & S.  
*Doctors*, by Martin O'Malley, Macmillan.  
*Don't You Know Anybody Else?*, by Ted Allan, M & S.  
*An Essential Greece: Funding Canada's Health Care, Education, Welfare, Religion and Culture*, by Samuel A. Martin, M & S.  
*Evidence of the Avant Garde Since 1957: Selected Works from the Collection of Art Metropole, Art Metropole.*  
*A Fairly Conventional Woman*, by Carol Shields, Macmillan.  
*Forty Nights to Freedom*, by Gladys E. Smith, Queenston House.  
*Ghost Stories of Canada*, by Val Clery, Hounslow Press.  
*The Graphic Macintosh Book*, by Richard Maran, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.  
*Grasshopper*, by Helen Hawley, Turnstone.  
*Home Brew*, by Angus Brown, Beat Raven Publishers.  
*The Hug*, by Lesley Simpson, Annick.  
*I Belong to Me*, by Lynne Atkinson et al, Whortleberry Books.  
*I Remember Sunnyside*, by Mike Filey, M & S.  
*In the Name of Progress: The Underside of Foreign Aid*, by Patricia Adams and Lawrence Solomon, Doubleday.  
*In the second person*, by Smaro Kambourell, Longspoon Press.  
*The Intelligent Man's Guide to Hair Replacement*, by Walter P. Unger and Sidney Katz, Culbert Productions.  
*Loving & Leaving: Why Women are Walking Out on Marriage*, by Brenda Rabkin, M & S.  
*The Magic Trumpet*, by Victor Cowie and Victor Davis, Turnstone.  
*The Man from Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister*, by P.B. Waite, U of T Press.  
*Mariposa Forever*, by Isaac Bickerstaff, Stoddart.  
*The Mirror at the Auction*, by Robert Eady, Golden Dog.  
*The New Canadian Oxford Atlas*, edited by Walter G. Kennell, Oxford.  
*Ontario's Niagara Parks: 100 Years*, by George A. Seibel, Niagara Parks Commission.  
*The Optic Heart*, by Diane Keating and Ingrid Style, Exile Editions.  
*Police: Urban Policing in Canada*, by John Sewell, James Lorimer.  
*The Prince of Wales*, by R.L. Fisher, Carroll & Graf (U.S.)  
*The Proceedings of the Joseph Howe Symposium, Mount Allison University*, edited by Wayne A. Hunt.  
*Redney: A Life of Sara Jeannette Duncan*, by Marian Fowler, Penguin.  
*The Ribs of Dragonfly*, by Rod Willmot, Black Moss Press.  
*Room For All*, by Robert Augustus Masters, Metanoia Press. Section 34, 2nd Set, 1983, by Ian Wilson, Art Metropole.  
*The Sourdough and the Queen: The Many Lives of Klondike Joe Boyle*, by Leonard W. Taylor, Methuen.  
*Strappado*, by Karl Jürgens, Coach House.  
*Understanding Cancer*, by Marilyn Dunlop, Irwin.  
*Vanished in Darkness: An Auschwitz Memoir*, by Eva Brewster, NewWest Press.  
*Winning the Life Insurance Game*, by J.J. Brown, Macmillan.

## RECOMMENDED

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

## FICTION

*A Long Way to Oregon*, by Anne Marriott, Mosaic Press. Though death is the spectre in many of these stories, they are not gloomy. Sometimes lyrical, often delicate, always wise and careful, Marriott talks to us in a practised voice about what we have always feared and known.

## NON-FICTION

*Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada 1839-1940*, edited by Lilly Koltun, Fitzhenry & Whiteside. "It is seldom that researchers discover a rich and unknown field of study." Koltun writes in her preface. "When they do, the zeal to explore it is matched only by an enthusiasm

# COMING UP IN THE JUNE/JULY ISSUE OF

## BOOKS IN CANADA

### BOOKS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

A special issue on recreational and summer reading

### A PASSAGE TO CANADA

An excerpt from Clark Blaise's forthcoming autobiography

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

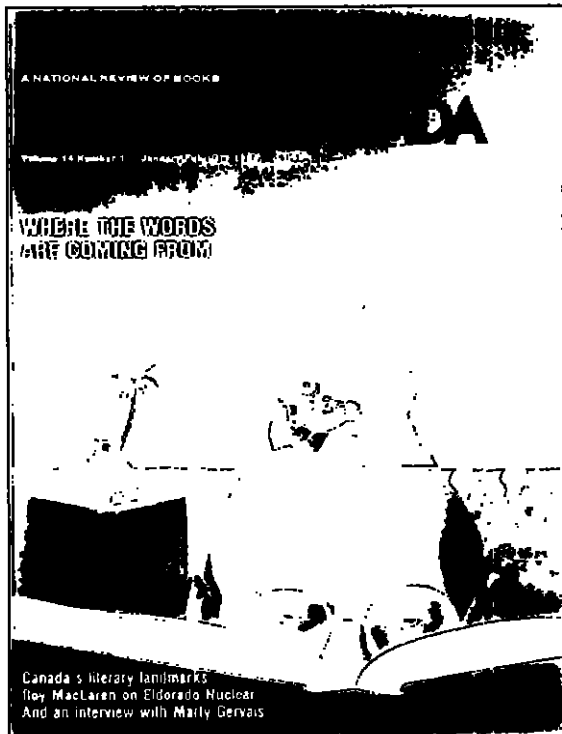
Clara Thomas on writing and reading about other people's lives

### A LIFE OF CRIME

The exotic world of mystery writer John Reeves

*By Fraser Sutherland*

Reviews of new books by Roo Borson, Graham Greene,  
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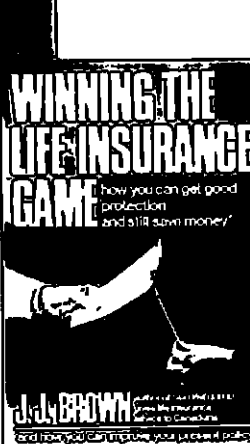
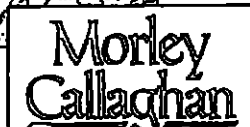
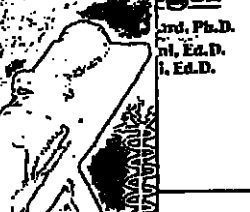
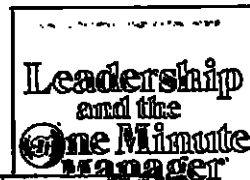
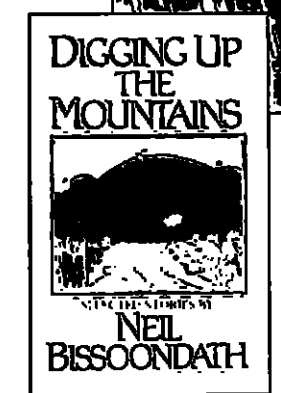
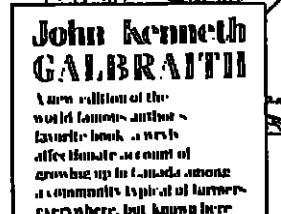
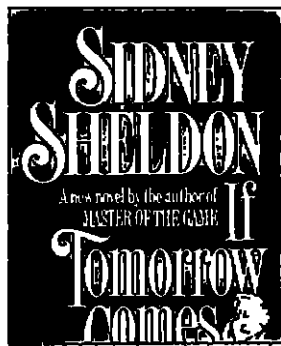
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