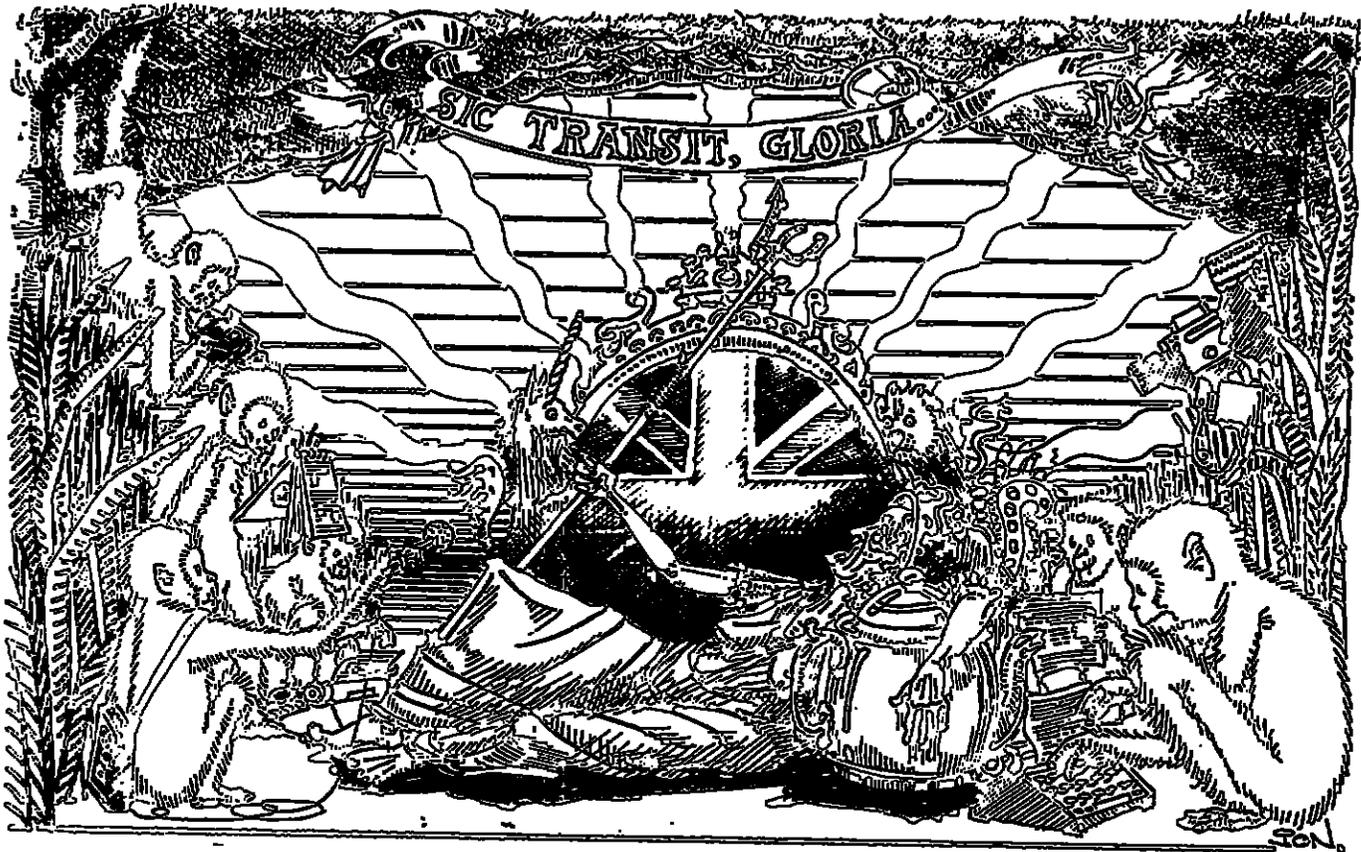


BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 8

AUGUST, 1975



GATHERING of the GIBBONS

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—that was

A PRAIRIE SHEAF

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on Gray's
Roar of the Twenties

Ruth Brouwer
on the Indians
and the fur trade

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on the Grits
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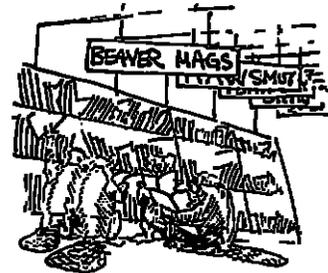
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BOOKS in CANADA

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IMPERIAL ANATOMY CLASS

As the Gibbons gather over the British Empire, the first post-mortems come from two Canadians

By DONALD CREIGHTON

NOW THAT BRITAIN has become a permanent member of the European Economic Community, and the new nations of the Third World have taken over what remains of the British Commonwealth, in somewhat the same way as the Goths, Huns, and Vandals once took over the Roman Empire, it is obvious that another great imperial drama has reached its conclusion, and another great subject has become available for historians. Rome had to wait for centuries before she found, in Edward Gibbon, a suitable chronicler of her decline and fall; but it seems certain that the British Empire will not have to face a comparable delay. Max Beloff and Ian Morris have begun ambitious attempts to portray the empire at its height and in its decline; George Woodcock's *Who Killed the British Empire? An Inquest* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 335 pages, \$12.50) and *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Unity* by John E. Kendle (U of T Press, 332 pages, \$17.50) are strong evidence that Canadian historians are not likely to let the British monopolize a story in which Canada played such a decisive part.

Woodcock's and Kendle's books are roughly equal in length but radically different in subject matter. Woodcock has undertaken a general historical investigation into the main causes of the decline and fall of the Second British Empire. Kendle is concerned with the organized attempt of a group of early 20th-century imperial enthusiasts to reorganize the empire and thus prevent its disruption. Woodcock's book deals mainly in generalities and grows out of travel and general reading; Kendle's purpose is more limited and his study is the product of detailed research in original authorities. Obviously his subject is much less spacious than Woodcock's; but the Round Table movement is a kind of microcosm of the British Empire, and its struggles and inward contradictions have symbolic significance. It had its start in the activities of a group of young men, the "Milner Kindergarten," who gathered about Lord Milner, British Commissioner to South Africa, during and after the South African War. The original group, which numbered about 10, with Lionel Curtis and Philip Kerr (later Lord Lothian) as perhaps its most distinguished members, took an active part in promoting the Union of South Africa, and from there pressed on to the still more absorbing question of reorganizing the British Empire as a whole. The Round Table movement, which they founded in England in 1909, quickly established itself in the Dominions.

The original British members took the initiative and retained the leadership throughout; but Canada, as the senior Dominion, was vital to their plans, and a number of Canadians were active and prominent in the movement. Professedly, the Round Table stood for the study and discussion of the imperial problem, without committing its members to any particular solution, and without attempting to exercise any direct political influence. This cautious neutrality proved unsatisfactory in the end to the movement's most ardent

apostle, Lionel Curtis, who published his own scheme of organic federal union and thereby inevitably alienated the Canadians. After this, although the organization continued for a long time, it gradually lost its cohesion and force. The Round Table exerted little positive influence, but it amply fulfilled its original purpose of arousing interest in, and concern for, the future of the empire. It was an important manifestation of the revival of the imperial question in the thought and politics of Britain and the Dominions during the first quarter of the 20th century. Kendle has recorded its divided aims, rival personalities, and shifting interests with careful thoroughness and considerable analytic skill. His conclusion, although it reflects a little too obviously today's fashionable disapproval of Anglo-Saxon "racism," is discerning and just, on the whole.

Oddly enough, the Round Table movement is not even mentioned in Woodcock's *Who Killed the British Empire?* He doesn't seem greatly interested in the theorists who either defended or attacked the empire, although these theoretical enemies must surely be counted among the influences that helped to undermine the British conviction in the justice and value of imperial rule. He has something to say about such novelists as Leonard Woolf, B. M. Forster, and George Orwell, who wrote about life in British Ceylon and India; but he makes only one incidental reference to Goldwin Smith and does not discuss John Hobson's economic interpretation of imperialism or the federal proposals of the Canadian George Parkin and the Englishman Lionel Curtis. He is less interested in ideas than he is in personalities, places, and events, in imperial strategy and tactics, in the broad general forces that were the making and undoing of the empire; and here he shows keen insight and generalizing power. The British Empire, he believes, collapsed under the pressure of four chief factors: the urge of colonial or subject peoples to

Woodcock] is less interested in ideas than he is in personalities, places, and events, in imperial strategy and tactics, in the broad general forces that were the making and undoing of the empire.

achieve self-government; the antagonism, either overt or concealed, of rival imperial systems, including the covert hostility of the United States; the decline of the will and the ability to rule in the people of the imperial power; and, finally, the vast impersonal forces, the "faceless power," as Woodcock calls it, of changing economic circumstances.

The book is somewhat curiously organized. The author says that he has chosen to "centre" it in the year 1930, the year that saw Gandhi's "salt march" to the sea, the abandonment of the leased Chinese port of Weihaiwei, and the drafting of the Statute of Westminster — three ominous events that foreshadowed the subsequent and rapid imperial decline. This puts "the year of omens" rather far forward.

and it might have been better to **centre** the book in 1917, a year that witnessed equally portentous decisions about India, the Middle East, and the constitution of the **Commonwealth**. In any case, it is not until page 291, when more than **two** thirds of the book is finished, that Woodcock begins his analysis of the events of 1930. He has **already** provided in the lengthy Part I a brilliant panoramic survey of the empire at its greatest extent, omitting Canada. Canada **comes** into its own in Part II, where it gets the **lion's share** of the space devoted to the long struggle waged by, the settlement colonies for responsible government and Dominion status.

LAND OF THEIR FATHERS

Just who did what and to whom when Indians and whites first met?

Canadian Indians and The Law: Selected Documents, 1663-1972, edited by Derek G. Smith, McClelland & Stewart (Carleton Library Series), 214 pages, \$4.95 paper.

Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870, by Arthur J. Ray, University of Toronto Press, 231 pages, \$4.50 paper.

by RUTH BROUWRR

THE **CREATION OF** Indian Studies **courses** in several universities in recent years and the growing importance of **ab-**original **land claims** are two developments that have **estab-**lished the need for a convenient collection of documents dealing with Canadian Indians and the law. Smith's **collec-**tion seems to be the first of its kind and while it is unsatis- factory in several ways, by its mere existence it goes some of the way toward **meeting this** need.

The documents have been organized into four categories: the early British colonial **period, 1760-1826 (mainly proclamations, treaty extracts, and formal instructions from the Colonial Office); pre-Confederation** colonial legislation (acts passed by the colonial governments, among **them** five French-regime decrees); post-Confederation legislation (the Indian Acts and related documents): and land-cession treaties.

Two aspects of the legislation **seem** particularly significant. The first has to do with the **change** that took **place** in the **concept** of Indian **sovereignty**. While the "**sev-**eral Nations and Tribes" of Indians inhabiting North America were described **from** the beginning of **Anglo-**Saxon contact as being under Royal **protection**, at the same time they were acknowledged to be independent peoples **with** laws and institutions of their own, and there was **re-**peated recognition that lands occupied **or** claimed by them must not be alienated except by Royal purchase. **Follow-**ing the defeat of the French in North America this recognition was made precise in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. In- structions to the new Quebec governor the **same** year urged him to cultivate **the** Indians' friendship "**so** that they may be induced by Degrees, **not** only to be good **Neighbours** to Our Subjects, but likewise to become good Subjects to Us."

Undoubtedly, Canada took the lead in this protracted **affair**, and deserves preeminence in the narrative; but it is an **oft-told and well-worn tale**, and to **retell most of it in 50 pages** results in what is, at times, a rather tedious recital. The book regains its interest in the last three parts, when Woodcock's interpretative and generalizing powers come into **play again**. Who **Killed the British Empire?** is a daring attempt to explain **one** of the greatest dramas of our age, in a bold straightfor- ward fashion. It **provides** as much **enlightenment** and **awakens more interest than many larger academic studies** are likely to do. □

Despite these conciliatory beginnings, **post-Revolutionary** colonial legislation **assumed that the Indians were** British subjects; detailed laws were passed affecting **them**, and the notion of **Indian** sovereignty was generally diminished. The other **striking** aspect of Imperial, colonial, and federal In- dian legislation in Canada is the long continuity in basic policies. While various changes in **emphases** and adminis- trative **procedures** were introduced after 1867, the **post-**Confederation Indian Acts can by and large be described as a consolidation and **elaboration** of existing legislation.

Smith points out in his preface that only a small portion of the relevant historic materials have been **included** in his collection and indicates that his aim has been to provide a reasonably fair representation of all the main types of documents. **Without** knowing what all the existing materials **are**, one can form only a limited judgment of **the** **appropriateness** of his selections. Nevertheless, certain omissions **and** inclusions **stand** out as unfortunate. For example, with the exception of the Royal Proclamation there are no documents at **all** to indicate how Indians, in what **are** now **the Maritime provinces**, were dealt **with** under **the** law. At the same time, he includes in **their** entirety the three major versions of the Indian Act (1876, **1880**, 1951). Together **these** take up almost half the book, **and** yet the **first** two, especially, are identical in most sections. Smith **ex-**plains that he has included all **three** "to facilitate **compari-**

From the beginning. . . they were acknowledged to be independent peoples with laws and institutions of their own, and there was repeated recognition that lands occupied or claimed by them must not be alienated except by Royal purchase.

son for the reader." In fact, comparison would have been made easier — and space saved for other more important documents — if only revised or new sections of the **1880** and 1951 Acts had been **reproduced**.

Readers who take a historical rather **than** a sociological or anthropological approach to the documents are apt to find parts of **Smith's introduction** **distracting or irrelevant**. I found other parts confusing and had to **turn** to the excellent

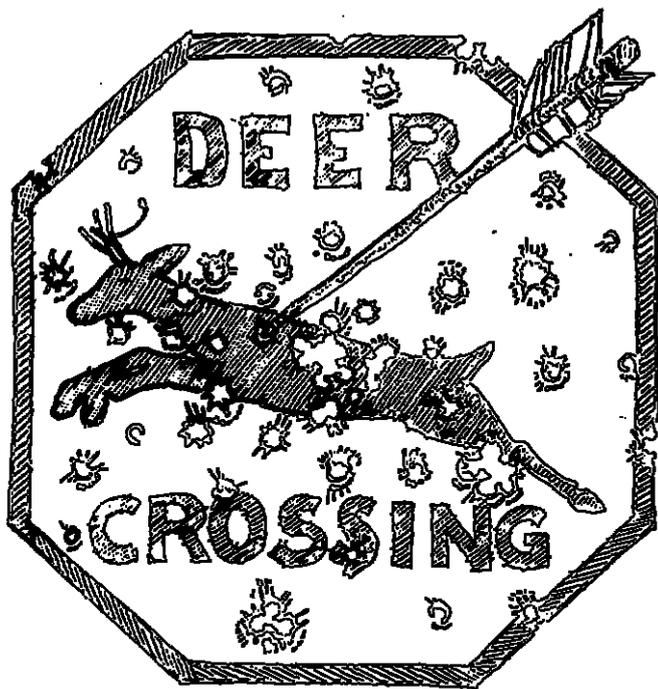
Native Rights in Canada (edited by lawyers Peter Cumming and Neil Mickenberg) for clarification of the issues raised. For example, Smith's statement that in the early British colonial period Indians were considered to have *absolute title* in land and territory seems not to be supported by legal analysis or indeed by the documents he himself includes.

My final quarrel is with the blurb's claim that "many of these documents have been inaccessible." It's not a valid claim, as Smith's list of sources shows: eight of the 10 documents in the first section are already in two existing documents collections, and virtually all those in section three are in various years of *Statutes of Canada*.

The redeeming merit of *Canadian Indians and the Law* is the simple convenience it provides by having a number of important documents collected together. It is a convenience for which students of native studies courses are likely to be particularly grateful.

WHILE SMITH'S book reflects the way Europeans reacted in law to the North American aborigines, in *Indians in the Fur Trade* Arthur Ray shows how the Indians themselves responded to one particular European institution. The main focus of Ray's study is the Cree and Assiniboine Indians of south and central Manitoba and Saskatchewan and their changing roles in the fur-trading operations of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Ray is an assistant professor of geography and, not surprisingly, his approach to his subject is as much geographic



as it is historic. In examining the impact of the fur trade on the Indians' way of life, he is particularly interested in the varying responses of bands and tribes according to their geographic location and in the impact of the trade on seasonal and long-term migration patterns: When English traders began operating on the bay in 1670 the Cree and Assiniboine were strategically located to benefit. With the acquisition of firearms they exploited this initial advantage by expanding their trading and trapping territory to the northwest, forced other tribes to trade with them, and generally built up a profitable role as middlemen. By 1720 this phase of expansion had virtually ceased and in the more peaceful era

that followed the two tribes consolidated their intermediary role. Bartering used European trade goods for the furs of neighbouring tribes, they made annual expeditions to posts on the bay, stopping off, during the height of French competition in the 1740s and 1750s, at French posts along the route.

When in the 1770s the Hudson's Bay Company began opening up posts in the interior to counter competition from the Montreal traders, the Cree and Assiniboine role as

After more than 200 years of the fur trade, the Indians' options were all but gone. When reserves and annuities were offered in exchange for land surrenders, there was really no question of saying no.

middlemen was largely eliminated. While some woodland bands reverted to trapping their own furs, large numbers of the two tribes adapted to this new phase in the trade by concentrating on the bison and becoming provisioners to the various posts. In conjunction with other factors, the new trade opportunity gave a southerly orientation to Cree and Assiniboine migration patterns, and as the Cree abandoned the woodlands of eastern Manitoba, their place was taken by bands of Ojibwa.

If the period 1760-1821 was in many ways the golden age of the fur trade for the Indians of Ray's study, it also involved them in what was to be an irreversible economic dependency on white culture and contact. The fierce competition that brought extravagant gift-giving, varied trade goods and extended lines of credit also destroyed the fur and game resources on which they had depended. The fur-trapping Indians of the eastern woodlands were the first to feel the effects. As the resources of their environment diminished, they looked to the traders for trapping aids and clothing, and eventually even for food. The era of Hudson's Bay monopoly after 1821 only served to narrow their options. For the bison-hunting Indians of the parklands and plains the state of dependency was longer in coming, but no less inevitable. After the 1830s as the M&Is became competitors in provisioning the posts, the bison population was rapidly decimated. In any case, the presence of a growing agricultural community on the Red River gradually reduced the traders' (if not the Indians') need for this staple. After more than 200 years of the fur trade, the Indians' options were all but gone. When reserves and annuities were offered in exchange for land surrenders, then was really no question of saying no.

Ray's writing is characterized by careful scholarship and precise detail rather than by fluid prose. It is in his detailed attention to Indian responses that Ray's work is most distinctive from earlier, more general studies of the fur trade such as those by E. E. Rich and Harold Innis. One result of so detailed a study is that it undermines certain long-held generalizations. For example, the Indian demand for European goods, described by Innis as "insatiable," is shown to be neither indiscriminate nor insatiable, nor uniformly spread among all the tribes. One other result of so detailed an approach, of course, is that it produces a wealth of statistics and textual qualifications the combined effect of which may be to drive off the general reader. If this happens it will be a pity; for anyone genuinely interested in the subject, *Indians in the Fur Trade* is fascinating rather than dutiful reading. 0

Ten years that chinook the West

The Roar of the Twenties, by James A. Gray, Macmillan, 320 pages, \$12.50 cloth.

By NEVILLE THOMPSON

JAMES GRAY'S mellow remembrance of things past on the Canadian Prairies in the 1920s is the perfect book for a summer day. It's a crackling, anecdotal style he presents a social history of the period according to the prescription of O. M. Trevelyan: history with the politics left out.

On the face of it, the Prairies between the First World War and the Depression do not seem the most likely source for a series of entertaining stories. You had to be there, as they say. Gray was there, exercising race horses, working at the Winnipeg Grain Exchange and as a margin clerk in a brokerage house, and experiencing and reacting to events he now recollects in good-humoured, though not dispassionate, tranquility. The rush of developments in the recently settled West made the 1920s its most exciting decade, "which," Gray adds with staunch regional loyalty, "almost by definition, made it more exciting than anything that happened anywhere else in the country."

As was true elsewhere, the 1920s on the Prairies were a time when the rich got richer and even those lower down the scale enjoyed a perceptible improvement in their standard of living. The car supplemented and to some extent superseded the church in rescuing farmers from what Karl Marx called the idiocy of rural life, freeing them to go "neighbouring" further afield on Sunday afternoons, at least on dry days during the summer. Radios and sensational newspapers brought them into touch with a wider unreal world. Washing machines and electric stoves reduced the endless drudgery for some women; bobbed hair, shorter skirts and less restricting underwear gave them greater freedom of movement; while elaborate ballroom dancing became a kind of opiate for both sexes.

This modest affluence and liberty bred a desire for more and the Prairies were swept by speculative fever like the rest of the Western world. People gam-

bled on hones, football pools, the number of peas in a jar, stocks, grain futures, oil and gas. Tycoons such as the Bronfmans made fortunes selling liquor across the border when U.S. Prohibition began in 1920. Bank robbers, generally American, had little trouble knocking off small branches. The largest debt adjustment in the history of Saskatchewan occurred when the robbers in one town also carried off the mortgages, promissory notes, and other securities. No wonder people took the attitude that it was only the bank's money, at least until flying bullets raised the possibility that someone might get hurt.

In a more sombre vein, Gray reminds his readers that the jazz age did little to lessen the prejudice and discrimination of the Wasp elite. Despite the immigration from East Europe before the war, few of these ethnic minorities found their way into positions of power or social prestige. Only Scots, for example, were accepted into the Winnipeg police force, which supplied the other forces on the Prairies. Few Jews; Slavs,



or women managed to get into the Manitoba Medical College; that any managed to survive and graduate was a tribute to the intellectual-hothouse atmosphere of North Winnipeg.

The Roaring Twenties ended abruptly with the fall of grain prices on Oct. 24, 1929, and the Wall Street crash five days later. The rich lost their fortunes or abandoned their mansions for Montreal. As the earth dried out in the next 10 years, many of the houses collapsed. The poor remained, to endure the Winter Years Gray has chronicled so well in another book.

Having written about so many aspects of the social history of the region, perhaps Gray will mm now, to the post-1945 impact of oil and gas, briefly mentioned here, which stood the West on its head, making the have-not province of the 1920s, Alberta, the chief sheik&m of all Canada. □

Lib's Labour Lost

Prairie Liberalism: The Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, 1905-71, by David E. Smith, University of Toronto Press, 352 pages, \$17.50 cloth.

By DONALD SWAINSON

THE PROVINCE of Saskatchewan was organized in 1905. It was created by the federal Liberal regime of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. As with all of her sisters, Saskatchewan has never been a province like the others; provincial distinctiveness is so great that regions such as the Prairies or the Maritimes cannot really be studied as entities. Saskatchewan is our pm-eminent example of a "area that produces staple products for export. This, of course, results in a vulnerable economy. Whether it is wheat or potash, the Saskatchewan economy is unusually subject to national and international circumstances that cannot be controlled from Regina. Saskatchewan was also settled with unusual speed. Within a couple of decades of its establishment, its population had been transformed radically. The province became a multi-cultural society before such concepts were current, as tens of thousands of immigrants from Eastern Europe flooded into its vacant areas. Large European minority groups created strains within the province's social structure; the Depression, however, came close to destroying the social fabric as drought mined countless numbers of farmers and as per-capita income plummeted.

The Liberal Party of Saskatchewan was intimately involved with these developments. The province was created by a federal Liberal government, which obligingly installed a Liberal regime in Regina. Under a series of leaders, that government held elected power until it was dislodged in 1929 by a curious alliance of Independents, Progressives, Conservatives and the Ku Klux Klan. The Liberals regained power in 1934, only to be defeated in 1944 by T. C. Douglas and the CCF. Since then the fate of the provincial Liberal Party has been unhappy. It was in opposition until 1964, when the demagogic Ross Thatcher was able to defeat a "old and weakened CCF-NDP government led by Woodrow Lloyd. The Thatcher government was in turn defeated in

1971, and Saskatchewan's Liberals seem destined to spend many more years roaming the wilderness of opposition politics.

David E. Smith has performed a major service in giving us a first-rate history of Saskatchewan's Liberal Party. His work is based on a massive quantity of research, and is especially interesting for the early period of Liberal domination. Smith recounts the history of the Scott, Martin, and Dunning years with sympathy and perception. During that period the history of the Liberal Party was the political history of Saskatchewan.

The rise to power of J. G. Gardiner in 1926 modified the nature of Saskatchewan's politics. Liberal leaders in Saskatchewan had been highly partisan since 1905. Under Gardiner, partisanship intensified to a degree that can only be described as mindless. At the same time the Liberal machine encountered serious opposition for the first time. Thus from the Gardiner period on, the political history of the province is no longer the history of the Liberal Party. This change is reflected in the book, as more and more space is devoted to party conflict. The reader is



treated to excellent accounts of the ill-fated Anderson regime, the procrastinating Patterson government, and the sad fate of the men who led the Liberal Party during the years of Tommy Douglas's ascendancy. Not much is made of the Thatcher years, but then there is not all that much to be made of a bleak and unpleasant interlude in the province's history.

Saskatchewan's Liberal Party has been in deep trouble since 1944. Smith comments in his discussion of the de-

feat of the Patterson government by the CCF: "Until there was general agreement upon what the party stood for (a requirement which could be ignored as long as they were in power) the Liberals were condemned to remain in opposition." Thatcher's success in 1964 was based upon blind partisanship and the medicare issue that galvanized opposition to the CCP behind the noisiest opponent of that regime. The Liberals continue to be partisan, but they still have "no general agreement upon what the party [stands] for" and have no unifying policies to exploit. The result in the 1975 provincial election was a defeat for the Liberals, in spite of a major set-back for the NDP. The Blakeney government dropped 16 per cent of the popular vote it had garnered in 1971. The Liberals also dropped in their share of the vote. A resurgent Conservative Party picked up both Liberal and NDP votes. The Liberal Party will have to unify opposition groups if it can realistically expect to form another government in Saskatchewan. In Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia provincial Liberal Parties are all but dead. Saskatchewan's party is still alive, but just barely. □

A TIMELY THRILLER



SPOIL!

by E.G. PERRAULT

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Carminatives for the body politic

The **Public Right to Know: Accountability In the Secretive Society**, by John **Crispo**, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 395 pages, \$12.95 cloth.

Pressure Group **Behaviour In Canadian Politics**, edited by A. Paul **Pross**, McGraw-Will Ryerson (Series in Canadian Politics), 196 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$5.95 paper.

by GUY STANLEY

JOHN CRISPO'S BOOK is indifferently written, mostly a collage of articles and reviews culled from newspapers and magazines, and produced with a greater eye to economy than appearance. Nevertheless, *The Public Right to Know* could turn out to be the political book of the decade if the right people read it. It might, for instance, just do for the Tories what the New Deal did for the Democrats.

Crispo, first dean of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Management Studies, argues that North American society is sick but, perhaps **surprisingly**, not beyond cure. He believes comparatively mild reforms, which a courageously led party would have the capacity to deliver, can still clean up most of the system's abuses and **preserve** and strengthen political freedom.

A seasoned **labour** negotiator, a **veteran** research director for several royal commissions and select committees, and a member of the Prime Minister's Task Force on **Labour** Relations, 1967-69, **Crispo** has conducted a sort of one-man royal commission on contemporary public affairs. His study quotes at length from a wide variety of printed material, ranging from **Richard C. Goodwin** (*The American Condition*) to **Business Week**, the *Globe & Mail*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*, using them as briefs on every facet of North American public life. Political parties and politicians, the relationship between business, government, and society, the social **responsibility of big business**, the media, and professional associations, all fall within his terms of reference. Lest **Crispo** be dismissed as excessively pro-labour, trade unions too come in for their sham of flak.

His findings are sometimes extremely detailed, but here they are in summary:

□ There is a real question whether serious commitment to equity, fairness or justice any longer exists in North America.

□ As loss of confidence in this commitment spreads, it intensifies a disruptive **process** whereby big business, **big labour**, and big government settle their conflicts at the expense of an inadequately informed and protected public. Unless the existing order succeeds in halting this process and **renewing** itself, he warns, the end result could be totalitarianism of the Left or Right. As antidotes, **Crispo** recommends:

□ A revitalized system of checks and balances across North America.

□ Within this system, sweeping disclosure and exposure to public scrutiny of the operations of North America's leading institutions. Only in this way can political patronage, shoddy **corporate** practices, and restrictive practices of professional associations and trade unions be **curbed**.

□ A powerful income and cost **review board to circumscribe the bargaining power of unrestrained power blocs, whether in labour, management, professions, government, or elsewhere.**

Crispo no doubt will be criticized by some for lumping Canada in with the United States. He tightly replies that in his areas of concern **the** available information suggests little distinction in standards of conduct. Doubters should read the section called, "Canada's Watergates," which points out that the 22 members of the Canadian Senate

The 22 members of the Canadian Senate watchdog committee on banking, trade, and commerce hold 75 per cent of the company directorates reported by senators.

watchdog committee on banking, trade, and commerce hold **75** per cent of the company directorates reported by **senators**. Surely that's scoring pretty high in anyone's conflict-of-interest league tables.

Others may criticize **Crispo's** proposals as being overly concerned with process at the expense of substance — in other words, that no significant shift in power to the public would follow and institutional accountability would turn

out in **practice** to be merely formal. Perhaps so in a different, more complacent mood. But in today's climate of general suspicion and anxiety, **Crispo's** proposals could form the practical basis of a minimal program for restoring confidence—an essential **first** step toward any additional goals. Crispo has given the political leader who wants it a way of saying: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." As **Crispo** himself points out, the public is ready. It's the politicians who are lagging behind.

Could the Canadian public itself bypass political parties and organize a pressure group (such as Common Cause in the U.S.) to push for these or similar proposals? Judging from the studies in *Pressure Group Behaviour in Canadian Politics*, the results probably would be **meagre**.

This valuable **work collects papers of** a uniformly **high** quality from seven academics. They shed **light** on the activities of particular pressure groups. Some, such as Pollution Probe and those **associated** with the mining industry and the **Biafran** issue, **are** cases of considerable importance.

Yet as editor A. Paul Pms **recognizes**, what we need is not so much pocket penlights of detail, but the sweeping searchlight of more general analysis. In a carefully qualified attempt **to sketch** one, **Pross** argues that pressure groups rely on mobilized **public** opinion mainly when they are **organized around** specific issues and that such groups peter out once their aims are more or less realized. Other, more institutionalized groups on the other hand, such as the Canadian **Manufacturers** Association, depend for their effectiveness on good relations with government ministries. They are **reluctant** to risk embarrassing their contacts in the decision-making apparatus by resorting to publicity. As a rule they prefer consensus to conflict. In general, **Pross** concludes, the Canadian Policy-making system is more accommodating toward groups of this type. Thus institutionalized groups **are** more effective than **pressure groups**, except in short-run instances of high drama.

Only national political **parties**, these conclusions imply, have the power to gather demands for any general modifications of the system and to **bring** them to bear on policy. "Could" in other words must await upon our politicians "would." But as **Crispo** states in an important caveat to his case, that's a slender straw to cling to, given the recent record of North American **political** leadership. □

Dark incontinent

Blown **Figures**, by **Audrey Thomas**, Talonbooks, 547 pages, \$5.95 paper.

By **JOAN HARCOURT**

AUDREY THOMAS HAS given us an old subject in new garb in Blown **Figures** — the story of the journey into one's past to face the dragons, to bury the dead. The resemblance to its literary predecessors goes no further, however. As the jacket blurb so rightly says: "It is a novel about chaos. It is chaos." We never know how much of the journey takes place in reality, how much in fantasy, or, in fact, whether it all transpires on the couch. The journey is undertaken not so much in the hope of self-discovery as in the desire to be rid of pain. The story is told to a mysterious Miss Miller, the one person in the book toward whom feelings are neutral. She herself never speaks, has no function other than to listen.

Isobel is (perhaps, and only sometimes) the narrator. The book has a dedication to her with teasing echoes of a similar dedication in a Victorian children's book, "because you are fond of fairy tales, and have been ill ...". She travels back to Africa where, five years previously, she had suffered a traumatic miscarriage. Since then she has lived in the shadows, in the increasingly spooky corners of her own mind. (She can see the skeletons of people as they eat.) When she broods on her dead infant, cannibalistic images spill onto the page: "I ate the child in my womb;" "Cut into slices with vinaigrette sauce, to which you have added the diced, cooked brains;" "I, myself, Miss Miller, ate the victim's foot." But **Isobel's** troubles don't spring simply from the loss of the child. (She has other children, in any case.) Her entire history has been a disaster—a mother who used her as a sounding-board for her own mean discontents; a failed love (he had said, "There is no nice way of saying this"); a marriage mbed early of its sexuality by an inhibiting mother-in-law. **Isobel's** retreats are total, her guilt boundless. In painful detail we are told how, in panic, she had abandoned her little girl after an accident. She cannot cope with stress, and only feels safe when in a state of

suspension, preferably travelling between one place and another (though not by air). Her husband's words, "Isobel doesn't live, you know, she exists" (later "exits"), run like a dirge through the book.

Africa is the psychic battleground, the place where she had finally disintegrated. The journey is undertaken in rigid fear, not apparent to onlookers. She travels by native bus, an object of curiosity to the African peasants. Along the way she meets another white woman, and the two join forces. **Isobel** doesn't like Delilah, she resents her presence. Her resentment turns to rage when she learns that Delilah is pregnant and wants to have an abortion. She recognizes the dramatic situation as being ironically appropriate. Delilah is **Isobel's** mirror image. When Delilah unexpectedly miscarries, Isobel wonders if Delilah will flee from her as Isobel did from her own daughter. She does. We leave her in an African village, taking part in a solemn ritual of expiation: "Isobel knew that she was about to confess to the crime of witchcraft, and yet she also knew that there were no such things as witches." If the journey was begun in the expectation of

releasing herself from fear and guilt, she has failed. All she has achieved is an overwhelming *mea culpa*, a plea for annihilation. under any pretext: "By confessing to being that which is not you are confessing to being nothing."

The narrative of Blown Figures comes in fits and starts, marvellously evoking the African scene and **Isobel's** affinity with its darker gods. Abruptly it ceases, and we catch the story up again later. It's a little further along the way, as if **Isobel** had carried on without us. Interspersed with the journey are pages

The thing about Audrey Thomas is that, if you stick with it, even the mambo-jumbo makes sense.

of seemingly random snippets: cartoons, nursery rhymes, advice to the lovelorn, advertisements and items from African newspapers, horoscopes, dictionary definitions of words, literal and distorted. We are looking at the map of **Isobel's** mind. These interpolations are her memories, transmuted by pain into nightmare images, and im-



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pressions picked up along the way that have a surreal relevance to her own anguish. They are often funny, and cumulatively, have a quite extraordinary shock value of their own. At first I felt that they interfered with the relatively straight account of the journey. But, increasingly, I came to see them as the centre of the book and of Isobel's fractured world.

Reading *Blown Figures* is hard work, but worth it. We ask many questions and are given few answers, often obscure, or disguised as conundrums of one sort or another. Isobel is feeling her way in the dark and so must we. The thing about Audrey Thomas is that, if you stick with it, even the mumbo-jumbo makes sense.

Muh troo-veh voo sahn-pah-ilk?

Poo-rehzh voo vwahr du-mahng?

Poo-rehzh voo vwahr suh swahr?

Kawng poo-rehzh voo ruh-vwahr?

See what I mean? □

Having to say you're sari

Wife, by Bharati Mukherjee,
Houghton Mifflin (Thomas Allen
& Son) 224 pages, \$9.50 cloth.

by MYRNA KOSTASH

BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *Wife* is one of those books that makes you ask yourself what, in the end, you really identify with. Canada? Feminism? Anti-imperialism? Good writing? The only Canadian thing about the novel is that it was written by a woman who now lives in Montreal. So I suspect that whatever appeal it will have to Canadian readers will come from its themes — racism, neo-colonialism, the oppression of women, madness, violence — which we can apply, by extension to our own experience.

The "wife" of the title is Dimple Dasgupta, a middle-class emigrant from Calcutta to New York, married by family fiat to a rather revolting, tententious, smug engineer whose selling point was that he would go to America and make a fortune. The novel describes the first few months of the couple's experience in the Bengal ghetto of New York from Dimple's point of view. It isn't the happiest of perspectives.

She had been a girl raised on the typical, middleclass feminine mythologies of Romance and Marriage, a

girl who threw away her schoolbooks, thinking she had been promised a hero at the centre of her life and, on its edges, garden parties, a fancy apartment and nylon saris. What she got instead was a fussy, self-centred mediocrity of a husband, sofa-beds in other people's apartments, fear, depression, and murder.

New York terrifies her. She hides inside the apartment watering plants to death, making tea and watching television. New Yorkers humiliate her and the Bengali immigrants with their newly acquired American manners intimidate her. She retreats from them one by one, as frightened by their show of success as by the self-service elevator in her apartment building. From her husband she retreats into fantasies of the Seven Ways in which to commit suicide.

The problem Mukherjee has, by confining herself to Dimple's perspective, is to somehow make the connections between the heroine's claustrophobic, paranoid, and monotonous world and the larger, more complex world of American social structures, Indian domestic politics, racist, sexist, and imperialist attitudes, psychologies of subjection, and so forth. All these themes hover like shadows in the narrative but are never really made substantial for the simple reason that Dimple's story can't bear the weight.

There is a story here of Bengali training in femininity, of the price that women pay to stay in families, of the insanity impending in housewifery, of the loss of will and self and desire within the confines of marriage, of the relationship between American materialism and the exploitation of whole classes of people in the neo-colonial world. But this story gets lost somewhere in *Wife*. maddeningly



dribbled away in dialogues that go nowhere, in characterizations of people who don't have any real part in the movement of the plot, in repetitions of Dimple's daily routine (her situation is, by definition, hopeless and endless), which is basically undramatic, and in reports from Dimple's subconscious that often don't seem to have a point. There is a story here, but Mukherjee has yet to tell it and *Wife* is only a hint of what is to be told. □

Programming the hereafter

North by 2000: A Collection of Canadian Science Fiction, by H. A. Hargreaves, Peter Martin Associates, 160 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By DOUGLAS MARSHALL

LIKE THE PAST, the future is a different country and we are strangers in it. The country H. A. Hargreaves issues intellectual visas for is a sterile meritocracy called **Americanada**. While it is **certainly different**, it is **not** utterly exotic. Norway, say, rather than Outer Mongolia. The **commercial** and social currency of this realm is the All Purpose Card, which is regulated by the **infallible (even when it's fallible) Continental Computer**. The majority of the citizens lead lives of docile urban concentration. cooped like poultry in **Efficiency Living Spaces**, pecking away at their jobs in the hopes of earning **higher** skill credits, keeping body together by feeding in the push-button troughs of the local **autoteria** and soul by watching the latest educational epic on **TriVid** or by

consulting a licensed **spiritual** advisor (*sic*) such as Benjamin **Scroop**, B.A., M.A., B.D., Ph.D., D.D.

Scroop looms in two of the six stories in this collection. all but one of which have been previously published in British **sci-fi anthologies**. He is an anachronism, a Christian man of **conscience** in a world that knows no creed but the computer print-out. And anachronisms are the time-honoured warps through which **sci-fi** writers weave situation ethics into their speculative plots. What would happen, for example, if the Continental **Computer erroneously** but adamantly declared a person dead? Or how does one untangle a web of anti-pollution ordinances to arrange a ritual cremation in a **smoke-free** closed environment?

Thanks to the monthly pulps and the plethora of paperback anthologies, science fiction remains one of the few genres in which short-story writers can **practise** their **craft** with a reasonable expectation of financial reward. **Hargreaves**, a professor of English at the University of Alberta, is a dilettante **practitioner** on the verge of becoming a **first-class** professional. The early stories read like academic exercises — **competent** experiments with the for-

mula but unremarkable save for their Canadian settings. (In one flawed tour de force, in which he **parades** his Shakespearian scholarship **across** an ESP stage, Westerner **Hargreaves** even works in a couple of gratuitous digs at the U of T; nothing could be more indulgently Canadian than that.)

But in the later stories **Hargreaves** leaves the conventional shallows and ventures confidently into deeper, more **sophisticated** waters. We begin to see **Americanada** as a land where raw nature, particularly in the North, has become "a great **white** beast" protected by **but** increasingly intolerant of machinecoddled man. And **man** alienated **from nature** is alienated **from** himself. The best story by far, a subtle teasing out of various complex implications in the theoretical model, traces the psychiatric rehabilitation of a renegade youth. Here **Hargreaves** hits creative high gear, combining the old-fashioned virtues of sound **structure** and compelling narrative with **that eerie** sense of otherness that is the hallmark of the best science fiction. As a footnote, it is a pleasure **to report** that **considerable care** has gone into the design of **this** book. The credit belongs to Tim Wynne-Jones. □

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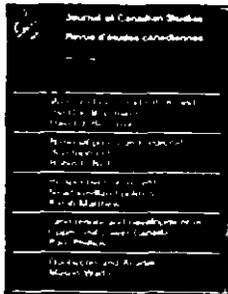
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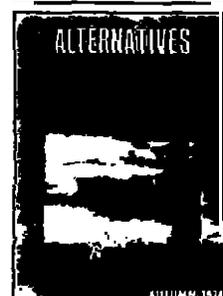
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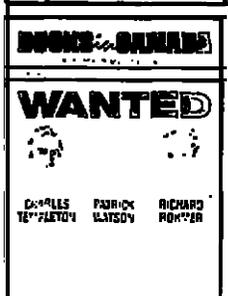
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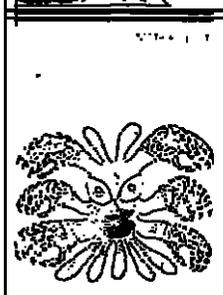
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From acne to the ovens, via Ma and GBS

Memories are made of this, by Melinda McCracken, James Lorimer & Company, 118 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

A Very Ordinary Life, as told to Rolf Knight, New Star Books, unpaginated, paper unpriced.

... and the children played, by Patricia Joudry, Tundra Books, 174 pages, \$6.95 cloth.

I'm Still Living, by Chava Kwinta, Simon and Pierre Publishing, 279 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

by ELEANOR STATON

NOW THAT THE question, "What did you do in the war, Daddy?" has been so successfully answered in Barry Bmadfoot's *Six War Years*. We must deal with the question. "What did you do in the 1950s, Mommy?"

Memories are made of this by Melinda McCracken is a kind of black-and-white "Canadian Graffiti"-replete with details about the dress, music and not-quite-mating habits of the teenagers of the 1950s.

But where is the abrasive "new" journalist who bearded Adrienne Clarkson in her Rosedale den? In the words of that immortal 1950s cartoon character, "I taught I taw apuddy tat."

In writing of the place where she grew up, (the Riverview section of Winnipeg), McCracken adopts the scholarly technique of maintaining a distance between herself and the people of whom she writes. Her preoccupation with the minute details of the material aspects of middle-class life in the 1950s reflects her view of the acquisitive culture in which she grew up. Security was the enemy of freedom here, "the security of prairie uneventfulness. . . tilled the air around you like cotton batting." The author's gift of total recall makes one wonder, "How does she do it?" (and then, occasionally, "Why?"). Had the title not already been used, this book could have been called *A Very Ordinary Life*.

The book that does bear this title was written, or rather dictated, by an elderly German-Canadian woman to Rolf Knight. Knight states in his preface that

he has not injected his own understanding of history into the book, but he does use this opportunity to attack several other writers who have attempted to write about the working classes: "It has recently become fashionable for certain writers to discover and portray Canadian working-class life. Two of the more fashionable have been [James] Lorimer's *Working People* and [Heather] Robertson's *Grass Roofs*. Here, tricked out in the latest styles of social concern, are the old hackneyed views of ordinary people by hucksters on the make. . . . Apart from being scurrilous and patronizing, these caricatures are nothing more than a version of the noble savage by writers who are contemptuous of the lives of real people."

The preface may be political, but the body of the book is amazingly apolitical. This is an autobiography of a woman who was born in a Berlin tenement in 1901, and who spent her teenage years during the First World War attempting to find enough food to keep her family alive. Her brother Fritz became an avowed Communist, and she was constantly surrounded by the political ferment of post-war Germany. But aside from her involvement in the Wandervoegel movement, a pacifist, back-to-nature organization, her main preoccupation was in attempting to save something out of her salary as a factory girl during a time of severe inflation.

Of this period she says: "What histories of Germany I've read that deal with my own times are very different to what we lived and knew and felt. Maybe what the writers talk about is what the leaders knew and felt, but not us. Often that history is just baloney."

After her marriage in 1926, she and her husband Aii launched an ill-fated venture in chicken farming. He emigrated to Canada in 1928 and she arrived the next year. There follows a description of their experience as migrant labourers and then the grinding poverty of Depression Vancouver. The hard-working Ali seemed unable to maintain an interest in the same job for more than a few months. She found work as a lumber-camp cook and as a sausage stuffer; she panned for gold and operated a hot-dog stand at rodeos.

Her most unhappy experience came when they opened a bakery shop in Lillooet. B.C. Lillooet, she found, was run by a "high and mighty" clique headed by Ma Murray and her husband. The Lillooet News, she says, "was always an inane and empty little sheet. If



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Text by Ross Terrill

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saying 'Damnsbur' at every conceivable place makes one an edmir then I suppose she was one. but all that homespun wisdom that she's touted for always struck me as simple-minded, at best."

The many "careers" of this writer would be a natural for the jacket-copy writer of some large publishing house. But thii book is neither a mass-market paperback with nation-wide distribution. nor, in terms of production, a "quality" paperback. It is the story of a survivor. of one who could say. "There's no purpose to suffering or dying just for the pride of not giving in. That's just stupidity. The first thing is to stay alive." And that, we are told, is about as Canadian as you can get.

Melinda McCracken wrote of the parents of the 1950s: "The control and possession of objects transferred itself to the control and possession of children." Patricia Joudry in her recent book .. and the children played describes how she set about preventing the school system fmm possessing her children.

Joudry was a successful playwright in Canada and the U.S. during the 1950s. She and her husband, photographer John Steele, left Canada for England in the late 1950s. and lived in London until a spirit told Patricia one day that she must move to the country. Thus, in 1961, Patricia and John, a daughter Gay by Patricia's first marriage. and their two young daughters Stephanie and Melanie moved to Shornhill, a large and decrepit house in the Cotswolds.

This book is ostensibly about the educational experiment undertaken by these parents who did not want to send their children to school. True, some of the book does deal with the various methods they used to allow the children freedom to develop their own unique personalities. It is not, however, a "how-to" book about alternative education. For that, A. S. Neill is still a better bet.

Joudry is beat when writing of herself (her writing technique was dictated by the spirit of George Bernard Shaw) and the many characters to whom she gave shelter, people almost as charmingly eccentric as she herself.

It would probably be too earthbound to observe that the freedom here was achieved at some expense to others. Gay was virtually turned into a skivvy, washing, cleaning, and looking after her half-sisters, while her mother closeted herself writing plays that were

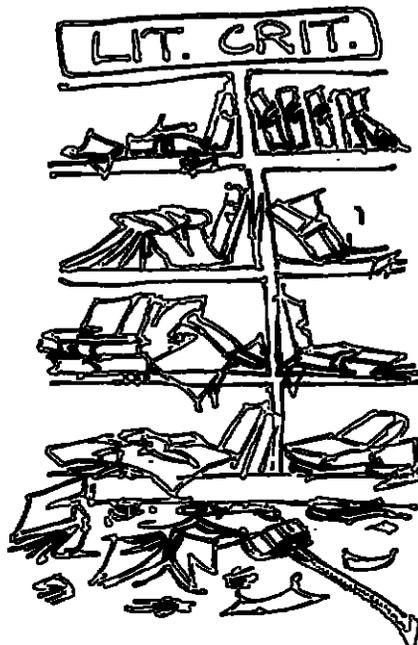
never produced. John worked as a labourer to try to support his family. And then there was the contractor who invested months of work and many thousands of pounds into making old Shornhill a showplace, when the owners knew quite well there was no money with which to pay him.

Any discussion of freedom se-ems frivolous when viewed against the background of Chava Kwinta's formative years. In her book, I'm Still Living, she chronicles her life in the Jewish Ghetto of Sosnowiec in Poland during the Second World War.

At the age of 12 she was herded into a stadium along with 21,000 other Jews who thought they were to have their identification certificates stamped. She found instead that she and most of her friends and family were slated for extermination. This is hardly comparable to having more acne than anyone else at the sock-hop or even having to learn mathematics and spelling sitting at a hard, uncomfortable desk.

The duplicity of the Poles who had been her friends. the extreme hunger, and the Nazi torture all had to be endured. She survived it all, and was rescued from the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, a frail little "musselman." a living cadaver.

Chava Kwinta is not Anne Frank. Her story was written many years after the tragic events took place and 12 years after she emigrated to Canada fimm Israel. According to the publisher; blurb, the book is available in Cole's bookstores in the Toronto area. It's to be hoped that by now it is mote widely available. □



When you wish upon a star.

The Great Victorian Collection, by Brian Moore, McClelland & Stewart, 213 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By SANDRA MARTIN

IN HIS NATIVE Montreal. where he was an assistant professor of history at McGill University, Anthony Maloney dreamed of assembling a collection of Victorian memorabilia. He had wanted to ask the Canada Council — those latter-day dream merchants — for funds, but had been warned off. "Impractical." Theo. on a working-vacation in California. his wish came true. The world's greatest collection of Victoriana appeared in the parking lot outside the window of his motel bedroom, apparently the concrete product of his imagination.

Fmm the opening words of his new novel, Brian Moore has created a tension between the true and the false. the real and the unreal, that often leaves the poor reader stumbling around vainly trying to find a way out of the maze.

Once Maloney has conjured up the collection-pieces from the Great Exhibition of 1851, objects that exist only as descriptions in books, secret hordes of pornography, a correction chamber replete with instruments of flagellation, bondage, and other sorts of sexual torture — his role becomes insignificant. The media (principally Brewster of the New York Times), the experts (Sir Alfred Mannings, Director General of British Imperial Collections, art historian Prof. H.F. Clews of Yale University, and psychiatrist Dr. I. S. Spector of the Vanderbilt University Research Group), and the businessmen (notably Bernard Byron Hickman of Management Incorporated) take over, arranging interviews, teats, and promotions.

In the same way that a rich man is bound by his possessions, Maloney is a prisoner of the collection; his job, his estranged wife, his home, his friends, and even his sleep are forfeit. Having realized his first dream, Maloney desperately tries to create another. But he cannot. Every night he dreams the same dream, that he is patrolling his collection, examining, and admiring his treasures. Eventually, in the juxtaposition of original and imitation that recurs

so frequently, Maloney's dream alters and he finds himself watching a dream monitor, similar to the close-circuit television units in stores.

Maloney returns to **Montreal** in desperation. He hopes to destroy the collection **through** his absence and so rid himself of the dream. But, several sleepless nights later he accepts the inevitable and meekly **returns** to his creation and what is now **his** nightmare. The collection has suffered some damage because of Maloney's neglect and it continues to deteriorate, but at a pace that is many times slower than Maloney's own decline.

Management Incorporated assumes control of Tony Maloney (rhymes with baloney) and **his** collection. They build a Disneyland-type playground, The Great Victorian Village, situated **conveniently** near the freeway and only three miles from the site of The Great Victorian **Collection**. The village contains **all** manner of tourist attractions **including** a large supermarket **filled** with shoddy reproductions of Victorians **that** is dubbed The Great **Victorian** Collection. It is a cheap imitation of an imitation. Not surprisingly, the tourists flock in hordes, ignoring the **original replica**.

The **two** people closest to Maloney are **Fred X. Vatterman**, the local deputy-stringer for the New York Times, and his girlfriend, Mary Ann **McKelvey**. (Throughout, the names are wonderfully ironic.) **Vatterman** comes from Oberammergau where three generations of his family had leading roles in the Passion Play. **Unlike** them, Vatterman **struck out** for **California** hoping to **become** a great

The Great Victorian Collection represents the apogee of British Imperialism. The pieces date from a period when "the sun never set. . ." Yet, here they are recreated in the land of **manufactured dreams**.

newspaperman. He immediately latches on to **Maloney** and his dream as the vehicle of his own journalistic **success**. Unlike the dreamers **Vatterman** and Maloney, Mary Ann **McKelvey** is Miss America — the embodiment of men's dreams. To Vatterman she is a damsel in distress and he her protector, to Maloney she is a Victorian maid ripe for sexual plucking, and to her father she is the perennial little girl. That she

succeeds in escaping from all these dreams only serves to make her seem less real:

The Great Victorian Collection represents the apogee of British Imperialism. The pieces date from a period when "the sun never set. . . ." Yet, here they are recreated in the land of **manufactured** dreams, arranged not in **splendour** but in a **parking** lot in **Carmel-by-the-Sea**, California, where they are baking under a "metal" sun. **Carmel** is reputedly an "artist's **paradise**," but in fact, "it occurred to Maloney that a true artist could hardly fail to be appalled by the **values** evidenced in this place." Whether Moore is despairing over the demise of the British Empire, or pointing out that Imperialism is a **shoddy theory** based on false premises, I won't hazard a guess.

It is a **measure** of Brian Moore's skill as a writer that he has created a fantasy that the reader accepts so **implicitly**. The novel is itself a **collection** that invites study. **allows** mom to pause and puzzle over a character or a theme, or simply provides a few **hours'** diversion on a **rainy afternoon**. Unlike a museum, however, your feet won't get **tired** and you pay the admission price only once. □

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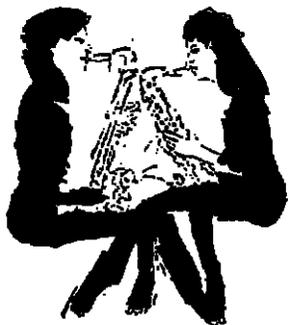
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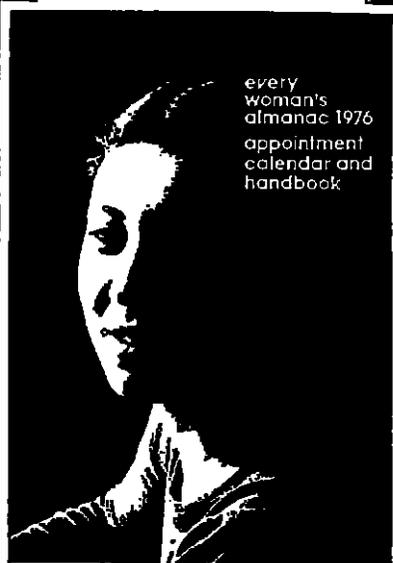
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Victims and busier bodies

A Private Place, by Joyce Marshall, Oberon Press, 135 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.50 paper.

The Teeth of My Father, by John Metcalf, Oberon Press, 146 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.50 paper.

By MICHAEL SMITH

ANYBODY WHO HAS heard anything about Margaret Atwood's *Survival* must know it has something to do with victims. And after reading the seven stories in *A Private Place*, it seemed a safe bet Joyce Marshall should be mentioned by Atwood. She is, and it wasn't any great surprise. She's included in *Survival* because she *had* to be. (It's not that everybody got into Atwood's study — Robertson Davies didn't nor did Stephen Leacock. And this, after all, is Marshall's first collection.)

In story after story she writes of separated or adulterous adults, isolated children, drawing in each the tension between indifference — sometimes outright cruelty and caring, until the one depends on the other and every budding sadist ("as a victim she was precious") needs a masochistic friend.

In the tide story a young man is forced through his failing marriage to take the apartment of a physician, recently dead. Mail arrives from the doctor's overseas mistress, who evidently hasn't been told. At first the new tenant does nothing. But as his own anxiety builds he reads the woman's innocent notes. He constructs his stilted reply only after her fears break into the letters, and she becomes as vulnerable as he.

In "The Old Woman," likely Marshall's best-known story, an engineer forsakes his bride for the hypnotic spell of a hydym plant. In "Salvage" a woman saves a teen-aged girl from suicide and finds the girl bent now on mutilating her protector's life. The final story, "So Many Have Died," mums to the physician and his mistress — revealing that she was as much his victim as the young man who takes over his digs.

Marshall and John Metcalf each include one story about an ancient professional (hers, a woman doctor; his, a male writer) crawling toward death. But unlike Marshall — whose charac-

ters often find an awful threat in hippy-youth — Metcalf harks back to an innocent, though frequently mischievous, English adolescence.

In "Beryl," a university boy fumbles his manhood rites with a saucy Leicester bakery lass. In "A Thing They Wear," two boys discover the mysteries of sanitary pads. The black humour of "The Strange Aberration of Mr. Ken Smythe," an account of how a German youth band gets hectored by post-war Brits, is about as sinister as Metcalf gets.

It's easy to admire Metcalf's economy, which bolsters the immy in stories such as these. He seldom comments; characters are built on snatches of dialogue; situations on the actions of a handful in a crowd. In "Beryl" the poor boy's predicament-about to be deflowered, having to pee — stands in contrast to a trio of vicars, arguing miracles on a blaring TV set.

For readers intrigued by marginalia, the tide story, "The Teeth of My Father," is dedicated to Alice Munro, and forms a sort of companion-piece to one written by her and dedicated to Metcalf in 1973. In some ways similar to the Munro story ("Home" in 74: *New Canadian Stories*), Metcalf's memoir analyzes his reaction to his father's death, complete with scraps and comments that tell us what is fiction and what is true.

Of Metcalf's more "Canadian" stories, one is merely a portion — unacknowledged in this book — from his early novel, *Going Down Slow*. My impression is that he has failed to deliver the material he once promised to produce. Joyce Marshall has been slow to produce too, but her collection seemed worth the wait. □



Undertows and Ovid tones

Double-Header, by Raymond Souster, Oberon Press, unpaginated, \$3.95 paper.

The Unwavering Eye: Selected Poems, by Irving Layton, McClelland & Stewart, 161 pages, \$4.95 paper.

By J.A.S. EVANS

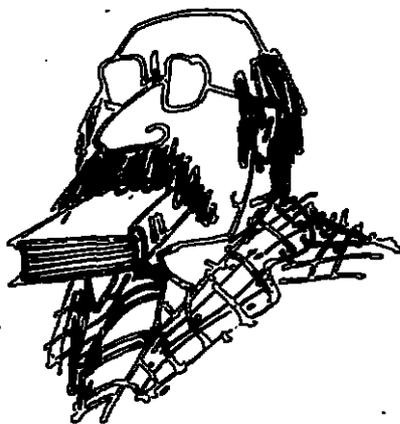
IT IS GOOD to see two old friends on the publishers' lists of poets this summer. Nor old friends in any literal sense, for I have laid eyes on Souster and Layton only once each: Souster at a poetry reading in the old Bohemian Embassy in Toronto, where *litterati* used to gather to drink cider and arouse the suspicions of the Toronto police force; and Layton at a Learned Societies meeting in Kingston, Ont., where he made an entrance into a somewhat sedate session on the problems of editors and publishers, clad in a leather jacket and attended by two well-groomed women. Time has passed. Layton now writes of his six-year-old son, and Eli Mandel, who contributes a brief foreword, speaks of him as raging "like an old prophet, and like an old pmphet he strikes fire out of rock . . ." Souster harks back again and again to the Second World War, which has receded into the fastnesses of history even for those, who, like me, were boys when our parents lived through it. Tucked away in Souster's collection is a poem on the death of Anne Wilkinson, a powerful piece evoking Souster's reaction as he learned of her death through William Arthur Deacon's weekly column. Anne Wilkinson was a line poet, who helped found *The Tamarack Review*, and whose last poems (published in the first issue of the *Waterloo Review*) are as lovely as any written by a Canadian author. William Arthur Deacon was once upon a time book editor of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. So much for historical commentary.

But neither book is a collection of new poems. Souster's *Double-Header* is so called because it reprints the pieces in his *As Is* and *lost and Found*. Layton's is a selection from five publications produced since the completion of *The Collected Poems of Irving Layton*, which appeared in 1971. Souster is, as always, evocative in a slightly

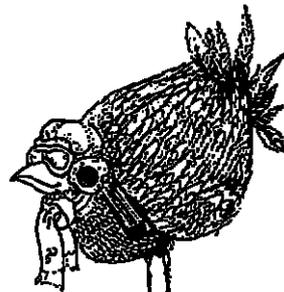
prosaic way. He makes his point, etches his sentiment with economy and precision, and stops. Take, for instance, "The First Scarlet Tanager," which appears unobtrusively at the bottom of one of the unnumbered pages in his volume. "Lightning's wildest flash/tamed to flame-flutter-fires today/the murmurous/green of my/poplar tree." Eight short lines, two stanzas, and all hauntingly lovely. Souster's poems are the literary fragments of a quiet, sensitive, observant man.

Not so Layton. Middle age may be creeping upon him, but he writes as one who still participates hugely in life. Yet there is a reflective note that often appears: of how, for instance, he memorized. Rupert Bmoke's First World War sonnet, beginning "If I should die, think only this of me." at Baron Byng high school in Montreal, and bow, in the heat of a Greek afternoon, he climbed to Bmoke's grave on the island of Scyros to see his stame. Indeed Greece and the classics appear strongly among the last poems in this volume. Layton is even moved to adorn one poem, more philosophic than most, with a Latin title: "Fortuna et Cupiditas." The Latin is misspelt in my copy, but let us attribute that to the printer and not the Latin instruction at Baron Byng. Another piece has the title, "I Think of Ovid."

Indeed, Layton does think of Ovid, but it is still the Ovid who wrote *The*



Art of Love in the Rome of Augustus Caesar, and thereby won the dislike of that moralistic emperor. It is not the Ovid who died in exile writing his poetry of sadness on the edge of the civilized world, not far from Layton's own birthplace, Roumania. These last poems of Layton's are not quite an old prophet's roarings. There is a great deal of life in our middle-aged Layton yet. □



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Handsprings and flops

A Knight in Dried Plums, by David McFadden, McClelland & Stewart, 95 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Name, by Seymour Mayne, Press Porcépic, 95 pages, \$3.50 paper.

Daisies on a whale's Back, by Carol Leckner, Fiddlehead, 60 pages, \$2.50 paper.

By LEN GASPARINI

THERE HAS ALWAYS been something of the vaudeville in the poetry of David McFadden; and the title of his latest collection. *A Knight in Dried Plums*, portends just such a program of madcap antics and slapstick satire. McFadden not only **parodies** the **sacred** corns and divests the civic-minded of their fig leaves, but he also has a knack for investing the most blandly **ordinary** incident with a sense of the grotesquely **surreal**. And he usually **succeeds** in this **transmogrification of manners** because (unlike other poets) he **refuses** to take himself too seriously. Laughter is his metaphor; but it is the laughter of one who perceives the comic element in the least comical, the **incongruities** rather than the canned effect.

Most of the poems in this **volume** teeter **ambivalently** between **reason** and **instinct**; consequently, a kind of **healthy**, honest schizophrenia underlies the **real** meaning of the poem, as **typified** in "The Saint":

*Last night I dreamt I was reading
obituaries,*

my wife's, my children's.

*Only when I came to my own
did I wake up in a cold sweat.*

Other poems such as "The Spoiled Brat," "A Typical Canadian Family Visits Disney World," "House plants," "Nature," "Death of a Man Who Owned a Swimming Pool," and perhaps a dozen more stress this dichotomy to the extreme. The **unexpected** is always present, but **never predictable** in McFadden's poetry. There are some pieces, however, that don't quite make it. They start off with a loud noise and end with a bubble of inert ideas — a symbolic bubble at that. "Sex Organs" is one of them; "Grey Flute September" another. McFadden sometimes overloads his poems with

images, and when that happens, all we get is a test signal.

A Knight in Dried Plums is **undoubtedly** his best book to date, and even though its absurd title makes me want to **dmp** a pun, the wit and beauty of **such** poems as "Impotence," "Moose Jaw," and "The Golden Treasury of Knowledge" add to his growing **reputation**, and administer a badly needed shot in the **arm** to the content of **contemporary** Canadian poetry:

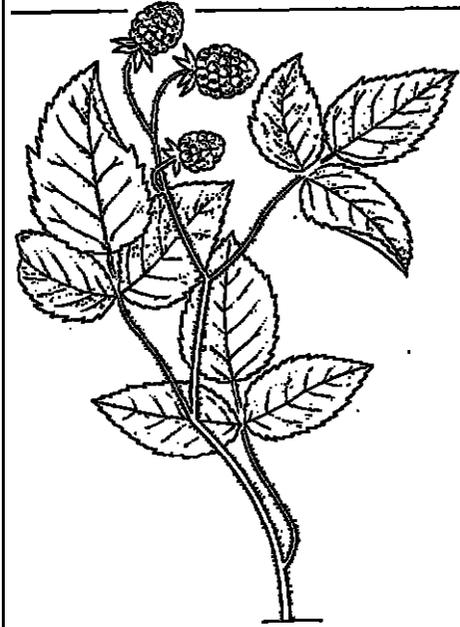
Name. Seymour Mayne's ninth collection of poetry, is sadly disappointing. Too much **esoterica** and mythical fluff mar whatever subject he **writes** about. **His** Klein-Layton-Zionistic sensibilities **seem** embarrassingly **derivative**, and his diction often suffers from a **zealousness** that is poetically at variance with his purpose. The energy is there, but the poems **are** limp in comparison. They bite with a tortoise-like tenacity, but move in **prosy, rhythmless** lines that **plop** like rocks in **water**: "The stones of Baka shone that night/Your eyes held me and let go rapidly." It's obvious that Mayne needs to renovate **his phrases**, do a bit of dusting here and there.

Of course, the trouble with Mayne's **poetry** is that it exists (I suspect) only for a **claque** of academic critics and poets. If this is the case, it is no longer **art** but the cipher language of a secret society for the propagation of **meaningless** individuality. The **poems** become shibboleths, totally **remote** from the experiences of "a dishwasher, worm-picker, **drummer** .. or milkman." If it is **true**, as **Lautreamont** said, that "poetry must be made by all," then we must find a new language in which one heart will speak to another without **intermediation**. **Mayne is more concerned** with the poem's performance than with the poem's appeal. One **cancels out** the other.

But then, there a few good poems in **Name**. "Soft Leaves Spread . ." and "Vancouver **Night Drips Gently**" ate both evocative of the **sensuousness** and mystery of life. "Bocce" (an Italian variety of lawn bowling played in a small **court**) and "Vernal Equinox" are likewise **lyrical** and interesting. But .. Mayne's **Name** will fail to satisfy **even** the most benignly patient **reader**.

Daisies on a Whale's Back is Carol **Leckner's** first book of poems. **Unfortunately**, her poetry is flat, mawkish, **cliché-choked**, and completely without style. Most of her work is **paraphrastically cut up** to resemble stanzas, but even this poetical **moulding** is **awkward** because of careless **enjambments** and

A Taste of the Wild



Blanche **Pownall** Garrett

Poliowing the **success** of her last book, *Canadian Country Preserves and Wines*, Blanche Garrett now presents us with a wide assortment of unthought of recipes for soups, salads, **butters, preserves, desserts**, candy; wines **and** vinegars, using wild **plants and** fruits found all **over Canada**. Consider: white clover cream, pate with watercress, **milkweed pod soup, raspberry syllabub-sumac gin!**

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static **caesuras**. For example: "Cooking over a hot **stove/(like my mother)/I** suddenly worried about you/and rushed to the phone —". This is not even good prose. Leckner would do best to revise all that she has written. As it is, the title poem is not only short, but &void of anything that could be called lyrical. **Fiddlehead** should have its **wrist** slapped for publishing this volume. □

Coming from a long line of versifiers

The Poet's Record: Verses on Canadian History, edited by Keith Wilson and **Elva Motheral, Peguis (462 Hargrave St., Winnipeg)**, 132 pages, \$7.50 cloth and \$3.25 paper.

Mirrors: Recent Canadian Verse, selected by Jon **Pearce, Gage**, 182 pages, \$2.95 paper.

Borderlands, by Don **Gutteridge**, Oberon, **unpaginated**, 55.95 cloth and \$2.95 **paper**.

By DOUG **BEARDSLEY**

nvo **EDUCATION TEACHERS** at the University of Manitoba have combined their editing talents to give us **The Poet's Record** and they have done a good job. These poems should appeal to everyone, though the book's primary purpose is to encourage the correlation of poetry and history and to **introduce** secondary-school and college students of Canadian **history** to some of the poetry that reflects their rich and diversified heritage. For teachers, there is also a supplemental guide available for 51.25, which directs the student to further reading and leads the reader to see the relevance of each poem to contemporary life. Without this guide, the layman is still on sure ground since each poem is prefaced by a **brief introductory** note placing the poem in its historical context.

The book is arranged in five sections or historical periods, according to theme. There **are** many high moments, though for me the verse far outweighs the poetry — an imbalance **that** suggests that **perhaps** the book has come to **us** several years too soon. I've only to think of **the** most recent work of young poets such as Don **Gutteridge**, David **Helwig**, and Gary **Geddes**, in the field of what I like to call "the documentary

narrative," to feel certain **that** this is so.

The Poet's Record opens with **D'Arcy McGee's** spirited oration on Carder, in the section "Exploration. And The French Period." The second part, entitled "**Cession** To Confederation," is the strongest: John **Newlove's** wonderful poem "Samuel **Hearne** In Wintertime" and the verses of **McLachlan, O'Grady**, and Howe **are** outstanding; and the anonymous verse from Newfoundland. "**Her face turns** to Britain, her back to the Gulf/Come **here** at your peril, Canadian **Wolf!**," and the cry of the **Fenians**, "**Many** battles we've won along with the boys **in blue,/And** we'll go and capture Canada, for we've nothing else **to** do" are the stuff out of which nations **are** made. This section **confirms** that we had some **first-rate versifiers** in this **country** in the last century, if not great poets. The middle part is Canada "Developing Nationhood And The Second World War," highlighted by E. J. Pratt's **moving** "**The Pacific Scandal**" speech of that mysterious man, Edward Blake. This is "history as **poetry**" at its best, in one of the **first** documentary narratives written in Canada. There is fine verse again in the anonymous "The Alberta Homesteader" and Robert Service describes the Gold rush **in** his "The Trail Of **Ninety-Eight**." (What a fine tradition of good popular verse we **have!**) "The **Troubled Years 1919-1945**" contains some good socialist poems (especially the one by Mona Gould), but it is the final section of "Post-War Events And Problems" that **contains** many minor

poems. This is where the anthology is weakest, and where it should be strongest. Maybe a revised edition **five** years from now would **serve** to **overcome** my criticism. Till then, this is a good anthology and a great idea.

Mirrors is an anthology of recent Canadian poetry taken from work **written** since **1955**. It attempts to chart the various distinctive **contours** of the contemporary Canadian landscape **through** poems **grouped** thematically in nine sections: poems about growing up, nature, love, poetry, alienation, city life, social criticism, people, and growing old. Pearce has tried his best not to include what he refers to as "any **of the** old war-horses that **are** regularly **and** **monotonously** anthologized" and to a great extent he has succeeded. All too infrequently, excellent poems by **Acorn, Wayman, Zieroth, Ondaatje**, and **Musgrave**, intrude on what I feel to be an uninspired selection. **The** only interesting aspect of the selection is that the **editor** has chosen a substantial representation of poems by Quebec poets in translation, but **even** these fail to represent the most recent and best work of **Hébert, Giguère, Pilon**, Renault, and **Brault**, among others. And yet who am I to complain? So many Canadian anthologies. Such a joyful noise!

More than a century ago, John Jewitt, son of an English blacksmith, was **taken** prisoner by **Maquina**, chief of the **Nootkas**, who massacred the entire **crew** of a ship **save two**, near what is now Vancouver. For three **years** **Jewitt** lived **with** the Indians, taking a native **wife** (though extracts from his

A SUMMER DREAM

*Once in a dream, between two troubled slips
Of sleep, I saw you in your brightest guise.
Methought you stood, but tears were in your eyes,
Softer than rain or any dew that drips.
On my cold hand you laid your finger tips
And I touched by a sudden sweet surprise,
Caught you in both mine arms with sobs and sighs
And kissed your brow, beloved, and your lips.*

*And you — ah yes! even you, upon my breast
Leaned for a moment, with cheeks wet and wan,
Then smiled and vanished: but for many hours
I wondered in a speechless dream, caressed
By winds from such a magic summer dream
As never wanted over earthly flowers.*

(From **Lampman's Kate: Late Love Poems of Archibald Lampman**, edited by Margaret **Coulby** Whitridge, Borealis Press, 52 pages, 53.95 paper.)

or historical periods according to

resists that perhaps the book has come to

Henry, and Gary Gouges, in the field

A NEW HISTORY OF CANADA



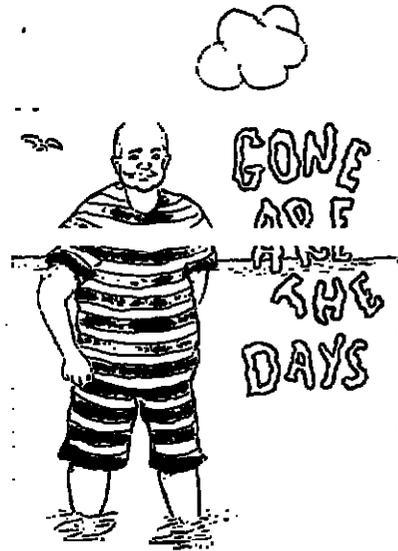
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journal make it clear he had intended to leave from the first), and finally abandoning his newly born son when the chance came to escape. The poet visited the northwest coast of British Columbia to document the narrative of Maquina and his selected slave, John Jewitt. More drama than poem, Gutteridge's *Borderlands* fuses prose extracts from journals with poetry in a powerful language of place and situation both real and imagined:

Maquina: *Language is the way we define a coastline for our skin*

Jewitt: *My body will become a coast of bones*

Don Gutteridge's previous works in this form on *Louis Riel* and *The Quest for North Coppermine* were interesting, but neither of them has the formal tightness and clarity that makes *Borderlands* so compelling. What a marvelous way to come to grips with our historical past, seeing it, as if for the first time, through the imaginative eye of contemporary poetry. □

Hello Colombo

The Sad Truths: New Poems, by John Robert Colombo, Peter Martin Associates, 99 pages, \$8.95 cloth end \$3.95 paper.

Translations from the English: Found Poems, by John Robert Colombo, Peter Martin Associates, 118 pages, \$8.95 cloth and \$3.95 paper.

Under the Eaves of a Forgotten Village: Sixty Poems from Contemporary Bulgaria, translated by John Robert Colombo and Nikola Roussanoff, Hounslow Press, 70 pages, \$1.95 paper.

By DONNA DUNLOP

JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO, author and editor of nearly 20 books of poetry since 1959, now brings us *The Sad Truths*, a new selection of original poems, and *Translations from the English*, a lively montage of found poetry. He has also co-translated with Nikola Roussanoff *Under the Eaves of a Forgotten Village: Sixty Poems from Contemporary Bulgaria*, the first anthology of this kind to appear in English.

In *The Sad Truths* Colombo examines experience with the zeal of an encyclopedist and the wisdom of a capricious Buddha. What people do, say, feel, write, or imagine seems to be the stuff of reality. And one of the qualities of Colombo's poetry is that it explores human feeling and activity without relying on purely emotive language. Colombo's use of distance tends to focus and balance what otherwise would amount to sensory overload.

Being a Canadian does not disinherit one from the rest of the world. In "My Genealogy" Colombo writes: "Blood flows through my veins/at different speeds:/Italian, German, Greek, French-Canadian. I Sometimes it mixes." This fluency runs through the poems, so that all manner of things are seen from alternate points of view. In "Canadian Images," 13 ways of looking at the Canadian mosaic are presented from west to east to north as seen from the author's psychical and geographic vantage points. He writes: "4. Twenty miles apart, CBC transmitting towers, metallic monsters working their way across the prairies. From the windows of a CNR parlour car./12. Immense saucers circling above tiny igloos lost in the frozen/North. By imagination."

Many of the poems in this collection are composed of fragments that, when considered collectively, effect an organic unity—a sort of moveable feast of fact and fancy. Colombo explores a variety of subjects in both phenomenal and chronological time, and while all the poems could be defined as personal, in the sense that they are individual, they also reflect a sensibility that transcends but does not abandon the strictly personal and does so with some charm.

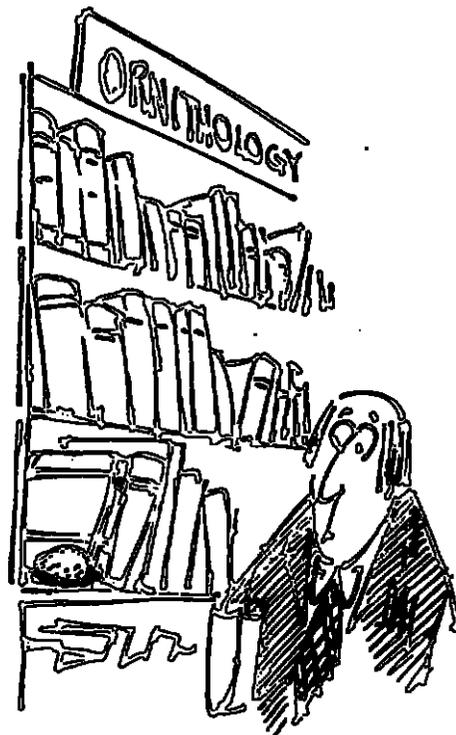
Translations from the English is a book of multi-dimensional surprises and assorted literary lore. Each poem is accompanied by a few lines, either anecdotal or proverbial, touching with informative humour on the source of the poem, found poetry, and art in general. Following "Our Canada" Colombo writes: "I agree with the French actress Arletty who once said: 'Tears are just a trick. It is more difficult to make people laugh.' And I agree with Colombo, who succeeds.

Although many of the poems are lifted from sources as direct as the mail, books, advertisements, and indexes; Colombo has gone beyond himself; that is, he has found the already found. He has taken and modulated lines from dictionaries of quotations and such sources

as *The Omnibus Believe It or Not* and *A Graveyard Reader*. The difference, of course, lies in what has been selected. Colombo's finds have been arranged in such a way that there is a perceptual about-face from page to page. Though most of the poems will amuse and inform you, there are exceptions. One such is "Fragments Of A Life: Norman Bethune," which is a realistic, un sentimental found tribute to Bethune. More typical of the volume are the assembled snippets in "Idols of The Silver Screen." For example, here's Marlene Dietrich: "When I die, I'd like to be buried in Paris./But I'd also like to leave my heart in England./ And in Germany-nothing."

Under the Eaves of a Forgotten Village includes the works of 10 Bulgarian poets in translation. The poetry is serious-minded and the sentiments sincere. A national state of mind is evident but beyond this the poets are each individually concerned with universals. In the poem "Meditation" Vladimir Bashev writes: "We simply must have/the tenderness/of that little unknown woman/who first wove the charm/of our land into her embroidery."

These are also poems of struggle, and they often express tenacity which seems to have been arrived at both through necessity and by nature. Danyan Damyanov writes in "Freedom," which is a definition poem: "If is a shin with a bullet hole/through which you can see the sun." □



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IN BRIEF

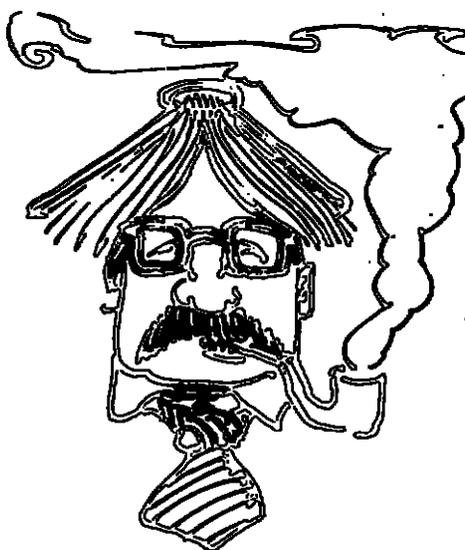
SIR EDMUND WALKER (1848-1924), Resident of the Bank of Commerce and supporter of cultural institutions throughout Canada, collected, among other noble items, Japanese prints; he appears to have been one of the first North Americans to delve into that delightful aesthetic realm. His ample collection of more than 1,000 items was bequeathed to the Royal Ontario Museum, an institution that has been recently publishing its hitherto hidden holdings in many valuable and handsome volumes. Now, *connoisseurship* in Japanese prints admits no dilettantes; it requires the utmost expertise in sorting out spurious editions, overprintings, and the small but important alterations in successive printings of original editions. In Professor David Waterhouse of the East Asian Studies Department at the University of Toronto, the ROM found a scholar with previous experience in Japanese prints, with a meticulous temperament, and with a deep knowledge of "things Japanese." Waterhouse shares with us in *Images of Eighteenth-Century Japan* (ROM, 514.95 cloth and \$9.95 paper), a catalogue of 171 prints from the Walker Collection, his love of minutiae, his awareness of other prints in other collections, his sensitivity to Japanese literature, his knowledge of *Yoshiwara* fashion, and his reverence for bibliographic protocol. Even an experienced scholar will respect the fastidiousness of this catalogue and will learn many facts from Waterhouse. What Waterhouse does not share with the reader is an appreciation of style — that is, an appreciation of these prints as art capturing and transmitting a certain

élan vital specific to their fascinating time and peculiar hand. The book is decently printed and bound but will inspire no special awe on either count; of the 171 illustrations, only seven are presented in colour.

RICHARD A. PERRY

"IT IS NO more acceptable for [mummy] to strike him than it is for him to strike her." So say Norma McDiar-mid, Mari A. Peterson, and James R. Sutherland, authors of *Loving and Learning: Interacting with Your Child from Birth to Three* (Longman \$8.95), as they underline their adherence to the current permissive philosophy of child-rearing. As the statistics on child battering are released in the press, child specialists cringe from the merest whisper of the word "spanking." One suspects they fear that spanking necessarily leads to beating as night follows day. Too bad. This short-sighted worrying almost totally destroys a young parent's intuitive approach to a child and renders him or her incapable of taking incisive action on the smallest points of discipline. And this book, whose authors are all connected with the Canadian Mothercraft Society in Toronto, also shows the trend is more and more toward a cerebral approach to parent-child interaction with less observance of our natural animal instincts. The games and learning activities, albeit useful, sound more like military exercises than a natural responsive interplay between parent and offspring. In this very approach, the authors exhibit the overriding influence we're receiving from current American theoreticians. Unhappily, the book does not present a much-needed counterbalance.

CAROL FINLAY



WILLIAM a. WATSON was a genuine Canadian pioneer, not one who hewed a farm out of virgin bush or founded a town in the wilderness, but one of the first art dealers to specialize in the work of Canadian artists. He arrived in Montreal in 1905 and found a job with John Ogilvy, the only exclusive art dealer in town, who concentrated on furnishing the homes of wealthy merchants with traditional Dutch, French, and English landscapes: "quiet" paintings they were called. In 1908 he established his own gallery in the back of his father's antique store and began to display, and slowly sell, paintings by F. S. Coburn, J. C. Franchère, Henri Julien,

Maurice Cullen, Suzor COFe, Paul caron. Clarence Gagnon, and J. W. Morrice. He also became enthralled with the work of Cornelius Kriehoff and conducted international searches for his paintings. The highlight of his Kriehoff scouting was his purchase in a London auction room of five Kriehoff paintings for five guineas. *Retro-spective: Recollections of a Montreal Art Dealer* (U of T Press, \$8.50) was written by Watson in his 85th year (he died in 1973). It is rambling, anecdotal, and charming. His friendships with the artists he promoted are lovingly delineated and some unusual anecdotes about their methods of work are included. He also discusses the collectors he sold paintings to and describes with some relish the collection of William Van Home whose taste and artistic talent he greatly admired. Watson's "recollections" are a significant contribution to an aspect of Canadian art history that is often neglected: the process that brings together the artist and the collector and ensures the development and preservation of art. Watson, by his own account, lived a life of happy fulfillment doing exactly what he wanted. He also had the satisfaction of seeing his "guinea Kriehoffs" sell for \$25,000 and more, and thus seeing a partial justification of his life's work.

RICHARD LONDON

THE GAMES DOCTORS (and patients) play is the angle in William Gifford-Jones's *The Doctor Game* (McClelland & Stewart, \$7.95), and the first few chapters give the inside track on modern medical routines in "how to" fashion, with a winning combination of pop language, technical case histories, and the quoted wisdom of the ages. Ignorance of the relative costs and benefits in the bewildering polymorphous state of modern medicine is the anxious consumer-vi&m's greatest weakness. Gifford-Jones tips the reader on how to get the most out of the system and the right doctor, touching on the medical and ethical questions of VD, sex problems, diets, acupuncture, and smoking and cancer. This cunningly leads to a lively argument on more serious and controversial issues — abortion, sterilization, and state-supported medical care — emphasizing that medicine is increasingly becoming a fierce political game of individual freedom, life, and death.

CHRISTINE FORSYTH

SCRIPT & FILM

Crisis in the clearing house

Leaving Home, by David French, New Press, 105 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Of the Fields, Lately, by David French, New Press, 112 pages, \$4.95 paper.

By FORSTER FREED

THE RECENT OPENING of David French's *One Crack Out* at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre is of special significance to anyone concerned with Canada's burgeoning theatrical scene. By reuniting this popular playwright with the theatre that helped give birth to his previous successes (*Leaving Home* and *Of The Fields. Lately*) and by serving as Tarragon's final production before a one-year sabbatical for artistic director Bill Glassco, 'One Crack Out brings Tarragon's history to a climax.

Nor is it presumptuous to claim that this history is of more than local interest. Since its founding, Tarragon has become a kind of clearing house for new Canadian scripts. One need cite but a few examples. In terms of productions, there are the recent CBGTV presentations of French's *Leaving Home* and David Freeman's *You're Gonna Be Alright Jamie-Boy* as well as the formation of Keith Turnbull's new touring company that hopes to bring James Reaney's *The Donnellys* to a nation-wide audience. And in publications, this pattern is reflected by New Press editions of *Leaving Home* and *Of The Fields. Lately, not to mention* the publication by Talonbooks of Michel Tremblay's plays in their "Tarragon translations." In short, Tarragon has become a national concern.

It has also become a unique kind of success story. And while folk wisdom asserts that nothing succeeds like success, Tarragon's experience suggests otherwise. Tarragon has paid an artistic price for its popular acclaim.

The key to the success of more recent Tarragon productions is the ease with which audience% identify with their respective protagonists: each of whom is funny, friendly, and above all, earnest. For all their differences in theatrical technique, Freeman's *You're Gonna*

Be Alright Jamie-Boy, Tremblay's *Hosanna* and *Bonjour, Là, Bonjour*, Reaney's *The Donnellys*, and now French's *One Crack Out* are celebrations of their heroes' moral and spiritual rectitude. Far from confronting its audience, Tarragon has, of late, offered a frankly narcissistic experience.

In those terms, *One Crack Out* is a fitting conclusion to Tarragon's first four years — not because it typifies the problems or the achievements of this theatre but because it presents the problems in exaggerated form. At the outset it must be stressed that *One Crack Out* is below the level of writing one expects of the Tarragon, or of David French.

One Crack Out concerns an assortment of Toronto low-lives: hustlers and their victims, pimps and their whores, gamblers and their collectors. The play's central character is Charlie Evans, a pool shark down on his luck in the bedroom as well as in the poolhall. At the mot of his problems is Bulldog, a vicious black collector with whom Charlie refuses to play pool on ostensibly moral grounds. Seeking revenge, Bulldog seduces Charlie's stripper wife, Helen — an act that undermines

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IT HAPPENED IN CANADA by Gordon Johnston

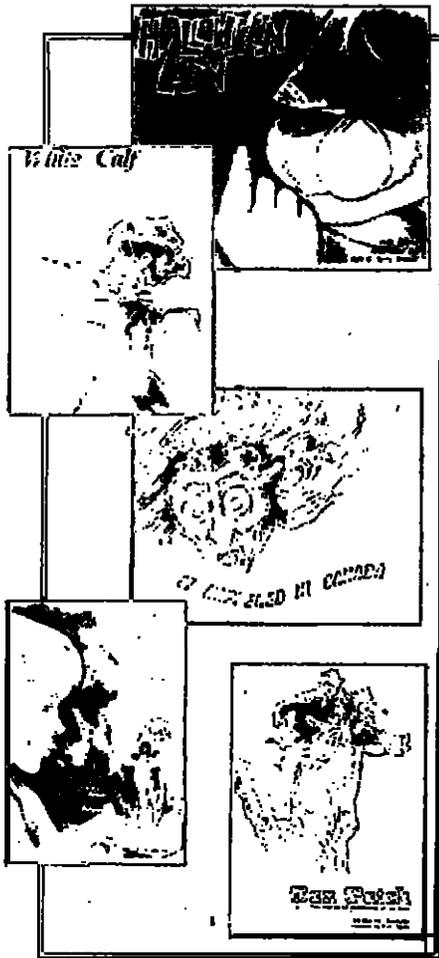
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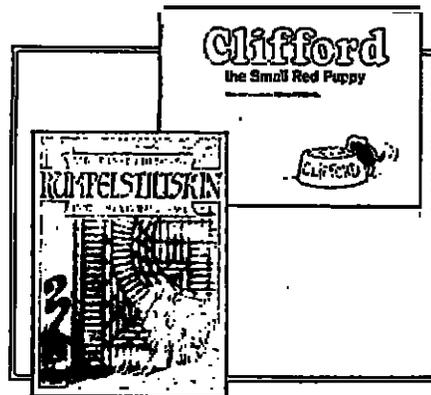
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RUMPELSTILTSKIN by the Grimm Brothers, retold by Edith H. Tarcov

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Charlie's confidence and forms the background to the difficulties that hound him during the play. Carved to its essentials. One *Crack Out* is nothing more than a struggle between these two men.

Not that one could wish for anything more. Had French been content to develop the core conflict as a character study, One *Crack Out* might have proved a stunning play. Instead, French has produced a poolhall pot-boiler. a cross between Scribean drama and *The Hostler*. The result is disappointing, because with this play French fails in areas that have previously been his strengths.

Before *One Crack Out*, the chief feature of French's writing has been its simplicity. and consequently its honesty. Taking advantage of the opportunity provided by New Press, one finds that both *Leaving Home* and *Of The Fields, Lately* (the latter marred only by excessive sentimentality) manage to stand up to closer scrutiny. Moreover, one senses that it is their very lack of pretence that makes this possible. Both of these early plays are sparsely plotted dramas, their action flowing logically from the volition of the characters. And by providing a series of finely sketched and well-balanced confrontations, both plays illuminate the characters involved as well as segments of one's own experience.

With *One Crock Out*, French has discarded these simple virtues. replacing them with an ingeniously detailed plot. By way of summary, suffice it to say that Charlie Evans manages to accumulate a \$3,000 debt — payable to none other than his arch enemy. Bulldog. The balance of the play concerns his frantic efforts to raise the money. To claim that this is devoid of tension and humour would be unfair, but in the long run both the tension and the humour are pointless, serving no higher aim than to show what a wonderful loser Charlie is. arid what an awful louse Bulldog happens to be.

These latter aims are not incidental to the structure of *One Crack Out*, for they work hand and hand with French's efforts to give his play a "message." By turning Charlie into an Everyman whose quest for \$3,004 is, in torn. a quest for his manhood, French transforms this script into a "Tarragon script." The result is alarmingly sexist (pool-cue as substitute penis) and even racist (black man as super stud but a flop at the poolhall) in its tone. Yet, one

fears that *One Crack Out* is the kind of reassuring escapism that Canadians may be yearning for.

This poses major problems to a populist playwright no less than to a popular theatre. For while there is nothing inherently wrong with popularity, it remains a fact that major theatre artists (particularly since Ibsen) have rarely given the public what it has wanted. In short, the challenge to both David French and Tarragon in the coming years will be the necessity to confront their audience with as much energy as they have previously expended in cultivating that same audience. The extent to which they are equal to that challenge should go a long way toward determining their long-run contribution to this country's growing body of dramatic literature. And in an art form where popular and artistic success have so often been equated, meeting this challenge should indeed prove a Herculean task. □

TRADE & UNION

Preview of the fall harvest

By SANDRA MARTIN

HALIFAX was the site of this year's convention of the Canadian Bookseller's Association. The annual meeting is an occasion for seminars, awards, parties, and, more importantly, sales and book previews. About 250 delegates registered — 85 publishers and 150 booksellers — but to our cynical eye the publishers (sellers) were much more visible than the booksellers (buyers).

It's a symbiotic arrangement. The publishers push their backlists, offering additional (usually 5% to 10%) discounts to delegates, and preview their fall titles. So they move the old stock and do a little market research at the same time. Many publishers wouldn't think of setting prices or print runs on fall titles until after gauging reaction among CBA delegates. The deals attract booksellers and assure the CBA hierarchy of a good turnout.

'Like most industries, publishing works on a seasonal, basis (spring and

fall are for harvesting and summer and winter for reproduction and germination). It's becoming quite common for publishers to release heavy fiction lists in the spring and big non-fiction books in the fall. The same is true this year, with some notable exceptions.

Robertson Davies is bringing out *World of Wonders*, the third volume of the trilogy that began with *Fifth Business* and continued with *The Manticore*. Harry Boyle's new novel *The Lock Of the Irish* will be available, and Richard Rohmer has written his third thriller in as many years. Entitled *Exodus: UK*, Rohmer's latest offering involves a "tension-wracked globe as Arab blackmail precipitates the falling apart of Great Britain."

The reliables will be much in evidence. *Madame Benoit's Microwave Cook Book* promises 350 recipes all tested and developed by Mme Benoit herself. Pierre Berton has a new book (*Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization Of the National Image*) as do Farley Mowat (*The Snow Walker* — "capturing the essence of the Arctic and of Eskimo lore") and Peter C. Newman (*The Canadian Establishment, Vol. 1: The Great Dynasties*). Of course, there will be the usual number of selected or collected poems leading off with Irving Layton.

But the really big books are the biographies. The memoirs of the late Lester Pearson (*Mike: Volume III*). John Diefenbaker (*One Canada: The Crusading Years 1895-1956*), and Gordon Sinclair (*Will Gordon Sinclair Please Sit Down*) are all scheduled for the Christmas market. *Strangely enough*, the same person, John Munro, has worked on both the Pearson and Diefenbaker books. That's like Gladstone and Disraeli sharing the same editor.

There seem to be fewer art books this year, but included among the number are: Roloff Beny's *Persia: Bridge of Turquoise*; Ron Woodall's *Magnificent Derelicts*; Lorraine Monk's *Canadian Women's Photography*; a new William Kurelek entitled *Kurelek's Canada*. and Andy Russell's *The Rockies*.

The booksellers gave the CBA Book Award to Adele Wiseman, author of *Crackpot*, and voted Mel Hurtig trade publisher of the year. Elsie Fisher, manager of the University of Waterloo Book Store was named bookseller of the year. Many delegates we're saddened by the sodden death of bookseller Binky Marks. Marks, who was the

subject of a profile. in our June issue, was **honoured** at the convention for his contribution to bookselling.

The topic that caused the most talk among both booksellers and publishers was F.O.B. Canada. This is a pilot scheme **organized** by Vancouver bookseller Helene Hogg in an attempt to equalize shipping charges throughout the country. Since most publishers are located in Tomato, local booksellers have a decided advantage in **that** they don't have to include **transport** costs in their overheads. The choice for booksellers on either coast is to absorb the cost **or** charge more for books. They ate loath to do either.

The CBA's solution is for the publishers to absorb the costs. in **the process reorganizing and streamlining** their shipping and billing departments. **This view is not shared by the publishers.** No doubt the topic will be discussed again next year when the CBA meets in Vancouver and where Helene Hogg will be the convention organizer. □

NOTES & COMMENTS

IN OUR JUNE issue we suggested something should be done to make the Governor General's Awards (or GeeGees) less of a vice-regal bore and more of a horse race. Since then **the gem of an i&a** has been floating **around** the industry **that** we would like to endorse. **The catch** is it involves a concept that the Canadian book trade, with its sometimes neurotic secretiveness, has hitherto tended to **regard with distaste** -advance publicity.

Essentially, the idea is to emulate the Oscar or ACTRA presentations by mounting a carefully orchestrated promotion campaign. The titles of the books **nominated** in- the various categories would be announced a month or so before **the award** dinner. The **GeeGee** selection committee, which now is a branch of the Canada Council, would issue bookstores with gold-medal nomination stickers for dust-jackets and the bookstores would feature the nominated titles in window displays. (As an inducement, **the committee** might offer a separate award for the best display.) Meanwhile the publishers would also be promoting the books, either with individual announcements or through national co-operative advenising. As the campaign gathered steam, the press at **large**

would soon sense a legitimate news story and the resulting coverage would **turn** the awards dinner into an event of some importance. Finally, the **committee** could distribute gold-medal winning **stickers** to the relevant publishers to keep the momentum of the campaign going throughout the season.

We realize such **razzle-dazzle** may disturb **the** shmy-and-biscuit breed of publisher. We also realize **the** scheme depends on co-operation and money, both ingredients that **are** in **short** supply in **the** Canadian book industry. But we **think the** investment would repay itself tenfold. Moreover the readers of Canada, who **through** various **direct** and indirect subsidies have been forking out a great deal of money to keep the industry **alive**, deserve a little circus for their bread.

* * *

MORRIS WOLFE, who joined the staff of *Books in Canada* a year ago, leaves the masthead with this issue. His invaluable contributions will be missed. Morris intends to devote more time to writing, including occasional reviews for this magazine. As well, he was recently appointed **general** editor of a one volume encyclopedia of Canada to be published by **Hurtig**.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LIKE UNTO LIKE

Sir:

In **your** June issue you published my review of Sheila Egoff's, *The Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English*. I was delighted by the invitation to **review** in *Books in Canada* and happy to **have** been given so much space **since** children's books in this country seem to be **generating great interest** just now.

I **have** one **argument** with **you** about my review. **You** cut a paragraph making a point I feel is **important**. Dr. Egoff said in her **book** that she **tried** to "resist the **unconscious urge** to magnify the importance" of the books she was examining. **You** used that quotation and my **remark** that she did succumb to that **urge** but you cut the details **that** followed.

The point I was making was that **Egoff**, in her eagerness to see **ours** as a hdl-fledged literature, was **comparing**, for example, the books of Catherine Anthony Clark **unfavourably** with those of I. R. R. Tolkein and Lyn Cook's to those of E. Nesbit. This is rather like **comparing** Nellie McClung to W. M. Thackeray or Alice Munro to Joseph Conrad. It isn't that **our** books shouldn't be **compared** to those in **other** countries. We **need** to fit **ourselves** into the wider literature. **Otherwise** we become **provincial**, if now downright insular. But we **need** to keep a

reasonable perspective. Rather, shouldn't we **compare** Alice Munro to Grace Paley or Flannery O'Connor and Catherine Anthony Clark to, say, Mollie Hunter or even Alan Gamer?

I think **literary** comparisons of **Egoff's** kind are made **too** often in **Canada** and that they tend **first** to "magnify the importance" of **our** books **enormously** and then to **flatten** them utterly — a **disastrously self-defeating exercise** for **us** all.

Janet Lunn Hillier, Ont.

A MODEST DISCLAIMER

Sir:

Clare MacCulloch, in his review of *The Collected Poems of Earle Birney* (April issue), has been misled by the **dedication** in **Volume I**. **Both** his **reference** to me and the **dedication overestimate** my influence on the virtues of the collection. **You** see, **Earle Birney can** be a very generous person **indeed**.

John Newlove
Montreal

AS WE WERE SAYING

Sir

I feel that if a survey were made, **Powell's Book Store in Ottawa** would find a very low percentage of readers buy their books through membership in a book club. **The** ratio of mir takes-including over-charges, unfilled orders, and **wrong** billings — by **many** book clubs has made the **reader wary** of this method of buying reading material.

I know many book stores in Ottawa, yet do not remember seeing **Powell's**. But I might remind the manager that **competition** is the life of trade. I sat down in a bookstore not long ago in Ottawa at a convenient table where such papers and magazines as *Books in Canada* were placed for the convenience of customers. As a result of leafing through a copy of *Books in Canada* I bought two books and will buy more. So who will be the loser? Need I say more?

Ethel L. Sullivan
Renfrew, Ont.

CanWit No. 2

SOME HYPOTHETICAL titles from the Canadian best-seller list of 1980: *Renegade Back in Power*, by Peter C. Newman; *My Nights Wirh Idi Amin*, by Xaviera Hollander; *How to Survive and Keep Fir on Only \$100 a Day; Why I Became a Canadian*, by Richard M. Nixon; *The Ordination of Duddy Kravitz*, by Mordecai Richler. Readers ate invited to submit three titles of their own. Book prizes will be awarded for the best entries. Address: CanWit No. 2, Books in Canada, 501 Yonge Street, Suite 23, Toronto M4Y 1Y4.

The first correct solution opened for Acrostic No. 6 was from Louise Stewart and Lynne Balcom of Ottawa. They will receive a copy of Sylvia Fraser's *The Candy Factory*.

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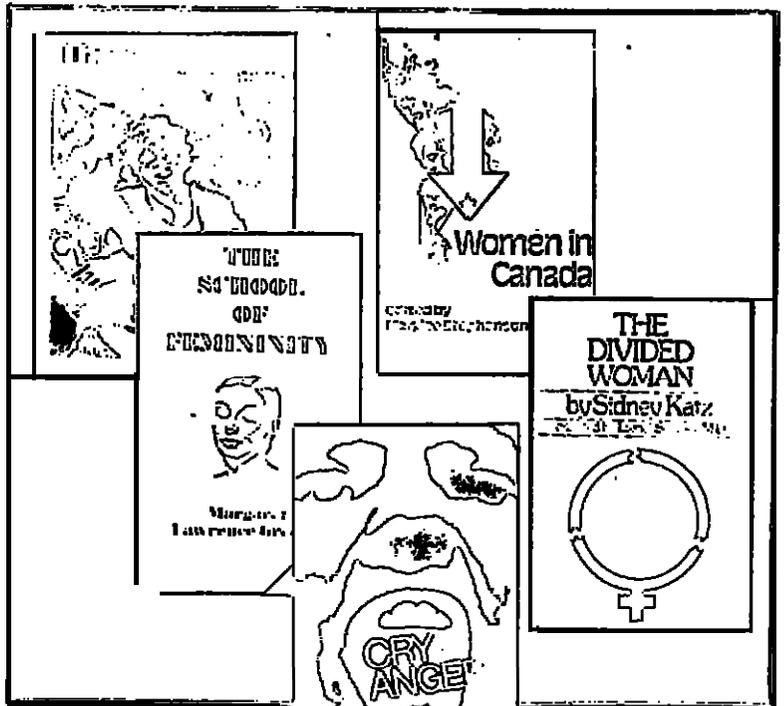
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