

BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4

APRIL, 1976

THE 1975 GEEGEEES

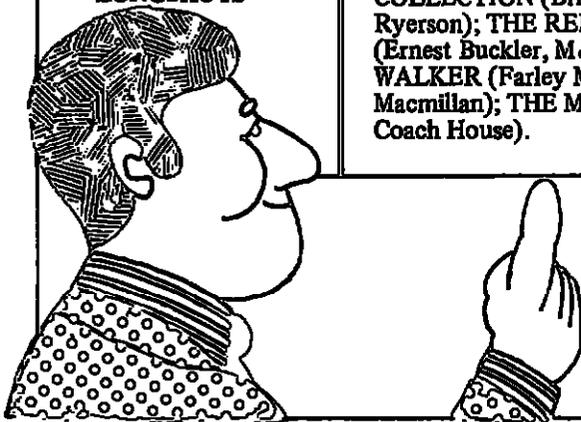
ODDS

ENGLISH FICTION STAKES
\$2500 purse

2-1	THE SWING IN THE GARDEN Rider - Hugh Hood Stable - Oberon	Strong performances on other tracks. Thinks he's too good for this field. Favoured anyway.
5-2	WORLD OF WONDERS Rider - Robertson Davies Stable - Macmillan	Old favourite but may fade in stretch against new blood. Took purse in '72.
3-1	WIFE Rider - Bharati Mukherjee Stable - Thomas Allen & Son	Newcomer carrying weight of foreign colours. But could break from pack.
7-2	A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE Rider - Morley Callaghan Stable - M&S	Same old stride but the sentimental favourite; 24 years out of the money.
4-1	WOODEN HUNTERS Rider - Matt Cohen Stable - M&S	Future stakes pick but may be off his form in fast field.
9-2	THEME FOR DIVERSE INSTRUMENTS Rider - Jane Rule Stable - Talonbooks	Best filly running. May break fast in IWY. Full of surprises.
5-1	BADLANDS Rider - Robert Kroetsch Stable - General (TrendSetters)	Sired by stud horse but not up to form of '69 winner.
11-2	GOD IS NOT A FISH INSPECTOR Rider - W. D. Valgardson Stable - Oberon	Tempestuous spurt runner untested at this distance. Norse of a different colour.

LONGSHOTS

THE BIGGER LIGHT (Austin Clarke, M&S); THE GREAT VICTORIAN COLLECTION (Brian Moore, M&S); GABRIEL (Harry Pollock, McGraw Hill Ryerson); THE REBELLION OF YOUNG DAVID AND OTHER STORIES (Ernest Buckler, M&S); FRIGATE (Martin Myers, General); THE SNOW WALKER (Farley Mowat, M&S); THE LUCK OF THE IRISH (Harry Boyle, Macmillan); THE MAN WHO LIVED NEAR NELLIGAN (Lazar Sarna, Coach House).



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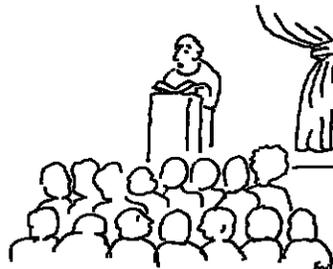
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BOOKS CANADA

Vol. 5 No. 4

April, 1976

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A NAGGING QUESTION

Who's going to win the GeeGees this year? A tip sheet straight from the horse's mouth

By LINDA SANDLER

WILL HISTORY vindicate the Governor General's Literary Awards? Some of them, yes. Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* was an obvious bet last year, and so was Dave Godfrey's *The New Ancestors* in 1970, despite fierce competition from Robertson Davies' *Fifth Business*. But history is a hanging judge, and the race is not always to the swift. Meanwhile, the GeeGees would serve their purpose admirably by honouring and rewarding some of our best authors, and publicizing the best of their books.

This year, for the first time in the checkered history of the GeeGees, the winners were to be announced at a public event, the Montreal International Book Fair. This would have been the first step towards freeing the awards from their closet ceremony at Government House, where they have been "conducted" with all the guilty secrecy of an

The judges are not crooks, they are not fixers, but they are subject to certain ideological pressures.

illicit system of patronage; it would have been the first move towards turning the ceremony into a literary and sales event, rather than the virtuous and official sanctioning of literature it has been since the inception of the awards in 1937.

But now we hear that the officials have changed their minds. The awards will be announced, as always, within the cloisters of Government House. The identity of the judges, as always, will be protected until after the race, the short list of authors likewise, and the principle of selection will be mysterious and sudden. What the public has done to merit this mistrust, this cruel and unusual punishment, is uncertain.

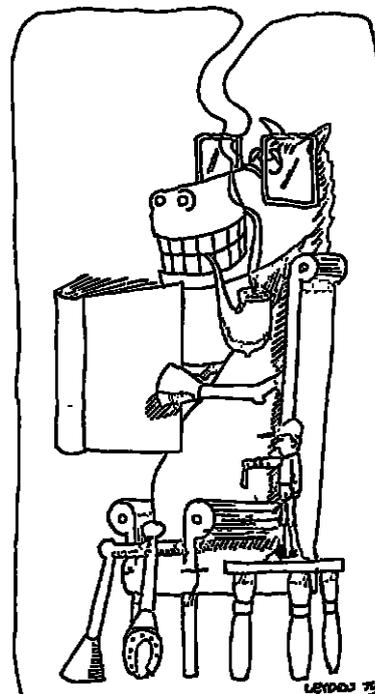
Given the sullen aura of secrecy surrounding the GeeGees, and assuming the race is open and not subject to the manoeuvres of fixers, it's interesting to speculate on the outcome. Who is the best horse? In the non-fiction race, the odds are strongly in favour of Peter Newman's *The Canadian Establishment*. In the poetry and drama division, if James Reaney's *Sticks and Stones* doesn't carry away the prize (\$2,500) it should go to one of the younger contenders like Florence McNeill's *Emily*. Will the best horse win? Few poets will forgive the poetry judges for spurring Miriam Mandel's horse to victory in 1973. Folklore has it that the judges, being divided, settled for a dark horse who offended no one. An admirable case of democratic compromise, but hardly calculated to maintain the credibility of the Racing and Wagering Board.

The judges are not crooks, they are not fixers, but they are subject to certain ideological pressures. They want a Western winner one year, and a woman the next. They want to be fair, and so their decisions aren't easy to calculate in advance.

I was not one of the pundits who predicted Joe Clark's sprint to victory on the last stretch of the recent PC Leadership Convention, so I advance the following assessments cautiously, confining myself to the fiction candidates, and offering no certain bets. We have no polls, no official ratings — although sales figures, reviews and packaging will play some part in the outcome of the race. It's unlikely, for example, that an excellent dark horse like Lazar Sarna's *The Man Who Lived Near Nelligan* will win, because he's had insufficient publicity, he's a newcomer, and he's even younger than Joe Clark.

Robertson Davies' *World of Wonders* is clearly a winner. He may be eliminated on the first stretch — if for no other reason than Davies' 1972 victory, when *The Manticore* crossed the finishing line a neck ahead of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. So Davies' *Time* cover story, his cross-country rave reviews, and the fine condition of his horse, may not help him this time. But I think they will.

Hugh Hood's *The Swing in the Garden* is one of the swiftest and most audacious runners in the field. Hood has consistently performed well in the face of fierce competition, and his victory is long overdue. *The Swing in the Garden* is a horse to watch, and we hope that the judges will not withhold the purse from Hood until the year 2000, when



he hopes to enter the last of 12 horses in this bloodline. (Hood says wryly: "If you want my opinion, I'm too good to be awarded a GeeGee." He may be right about his handicap.)

If you're the kind of bettor who backs straight quality, you couldn't do better than Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* — an extraordinarily powerful and stylish runner, raised in an American stable. The latter may count against her, even though 1975 was declared International Women's Year.

If the Board is on the lookout for a filly in honour of IWY, two other favourites are books of stories by Jane Rule and Joyce Marshall. Short fiction is a strong, independent Canadian breed, and it should have its own race track. As it is, books of stories are seldom winners (with the notable exception of books by Hugh Garner and Alice Munro). Word has it that Joyce Marshall is a member of the panel of judges, so we must eliminate her swift horse, *A Private Place*. Marian Engel's *Inside the Easter Egg* will be running, but it's not her best. And besides, Engel will be entering a stronger contender this year. (*Bear*, alas, will have to contend with Margaret Atwood's *A Lady Oracle* in the 1976 GeeGee stakes.)

Still in the short-fiction category, aside from Jane Rule's very appealing *Theme for Diverse Instruments*, we have Ernest Buckler, an old favourite who enters this year with *The Rebellion of Young David and Other Stories* — a horse of pastoral breed, a farmhorse, ill-disposed to take on the thoroughbreds. Farley Mowat's *The Snow Walker*, accustomed to Arctic temperatures, will probably melt in the heat of the race, but W. D. Valgardson's finely tuned colt, *God Is Not a Fish Inspector*, may surprise everyone.

Morley Callaghan is an old pro, fonder of pugilistic sports than of the track, but he hasn't won a GeeGee since

1951 and *A Fine and Private Place* might just take the purse. Matt Cohen's *Wooden Hunters* and Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands* are two dynamic stallions, pre-urban in temperament, who are expected to perform well. Kroetsch, however, had a GeeGee in 1969, so he may not have his heart in the race this year.

Austin Clarke, had he not defected to Barbados, might have streaked to victory with *The Bigger Light*, the last of three related horses raised in Upper Canada. Brian Moore's *The Great Victorian Collection* is a horse of a similar colour, since the rider is no longer domiciled in Canada. And his horse, one might add, is not up to the form of *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, which took the prize in 1960.

With Jan Drabek's *Whatever Happened to Wenceslas* (published simultaneously in Canada and Czech) we enter the realm of exotic betting. Drabek rides a high-powered

Don't put too much money on Martin Myer's Frigate, which is a gelding, or on Harry Pollock's Gabriel, a horse of the Depressing Thirties.

horse, but *Wenceslas* is a newcomer who hasn't been tried on the Ottawa track. Don't put too much money on Martin Myers' *Frigate*, which is a gelding, or on Harry Pollock's *Gabriel*, a horse of the Depressing Thirties — or for that matter on Harry Boyle's *The Luck of the Irish*, which is reputed to be more of a myth than a horse.

Finally, there are the longest shots of all — horses like Richard Rohmer's *Exodus UK*, which don't stand a mule's chance of winning, but which deserve an accolade because they are pioneers of popular literary sport in Canada.

May the swiftest horse win! □

A HARD YEAR TO SCAN

New modernism or old humanism? If 1975 is any guide, Canadian poetry is riding off in all directions

By ELI MANDEL

TO REVIEW THE poetry of 1975 turns out to be an unpleasantly complicated task for a number of reasons, most of which tell us something about the odd state of publishing, distributing, finding books in Canada today. First of all, in the publishing world the correspondence between the date of copyright and the appearance of a book is often askew. In other words, 1974 sometimes means 1975. A nice question in our contemporary world: When was 1975 anyhow? September 1974? Then too, our publishers still like to keep their best books out of the hands of readers and reviewers for as long as possible, say until at least 1977, for a good book of poetry published in 1974 and distributed (so to speak) in 1975. And anyhow since, courtesy of the Canada Council book publishing grants, our publishers exist mainly underground, all sorts of fascinating work by new "little" presses remains unavailable. Where is Golden Dog Press and when will it let me see Douglas Barbour's *He & She*? And how many of you know where to find Blew Ointment's publication of Gerry Gilbert's *Journal to the East*? Or Blackfish Press's *Text by Okira* by Alan Safarik? What happened to Oberon's version of Don Gutteridge's

Borderlands or Brunswick Books' publication of Alden Nowlan?

So there is a problem in attempting to talk about trends, developments, achievements, characteristics — whatever — of the poetry of 1975. We don't even know the real boundaries. Gilbert, to judge from his *Skies*, for example (Talonbooks, undated!), is an extraordinarily intelligent experimentalist in inter-media form, worth looking at any time, and Doug Barbour's continuing consolidation of modernist metrics, rhythms, and poetics (witness his "Poetics 18-23" especially in *Boundary2*, Fall, 1974) should convince anyone that it would be worth seeking out *He & She*, if you can find it. But how can you say what happened if you didn't even hear the sound of a page being turned?

What is available for this review does suggest that the latest and important critical formulations about modernism in Canadian writing, fascinating though they may be in themselves, have little to do with the diverse and continuing energies of contemporary poetry. Both Warren Tallman and Frank Davey argue brilliantly for new directions, some sort of anti-humanistic stance that enables new relations between self, world, and word to shape themselves in poetry. Lots of names are bandied about, from Daphne Marlatt (whose *Stevenson* still seems both extraordinarily achieved

and problematical) to Bowering, Coleman, and Nichol. Boundaries blur, but in Tallman's version, at least, the line is drawn clearly: modernism as opposed to Earle Birney's eclecticism and Layton's humanism. The issue appears to be between structures of the will and structures of place or between a profound individualism and an unassertive but musical perceptiveness, perhaps between "Poet" and language.

The difficulty with the theory is in the continuing energies and presence of those wicked old humanists and eclectics.

Except for McFadden's and Wayman's ironic handling of personal and narrative or causal sequences, little of genuine experimental or perceptual interest seems to be happening here or elsewhere.

Layton's presence in 1975 is undiminished; vigorous and challenging and accomplished as ever, he continues to publish. The new versions of his selected poems, *The Unwavering Eye* (1969-1975) and *The Darkening Fire* (1945-1968) serve to remind us of 30 years in which he moulded the lines and images and forged the forms of contemporary writing in Canada. And Earle Birney's handsome bound and boxed *Collected Poems* (two volumes) simply plays havoc with categories and theories. Anyone who heard Earle read his poems — a kind of snap review of the range and concerns of his work — at the International Poetry Festival at University of Toronto recently will recall what a moving and enormously impressive poetic experience that was. I think of the Chinese sages in Yeats's "Lapis Lazuli": "Their eyes . . . Their eyes/Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay." Wisdom and intelligence, mimicry and mockery, name it: it is there in superbly balanced and finely wrought work, an achievement like no other in this country, as varied, as complex, as humane, as penetrating as any other poetry we have had. If for no other reason than Birney's poems, '75 becomes the year not of the moderns but of the eclectics, whatever that might mean.

So the list of interesting and important books disposes itself in a way that suggests the diminishing energy might not be in humanism but in the new modernism — or at least the need for reconsidering the terms. It was a year, after all, in which Margaret Atwood's *You are Happy* restated brilliantly, if with a more impatient and insistent tone than her earlier work, the motifs of her personal mythology and morality. True, a rat in one of her transformation poems bares his or her teeth at "you stupid humanists," and the beasts have their say, but an expiation occurs. Maybe, we'll be human — yet: "So much for art. So much for prophecy."

There are bestiaries in Rosenblatt's *Virgins and Vampires*, his best work to date, and in Robin Skelton's *Twilight*, a book by a vigorous and always interesting poet who ignores our feuds and fashion for another, and still effective, idiom. Milton Acorn pretends to be both an Islander and revolutionary in *The Island Means Minago* but his real toughness is lyric, his command — language. There too, to consider is Gwen McEwen's selected poems, *Magic Animals*, another variation on the developing book of imaginary Canadian beasts and a retrospective, reminding us of her Jungian and mythic obsessions, a night of the soul no easy colloquialism conceals. And most surprising and welcome, two volumes, one by Jay MacPherson and one by Don Coles, reconfirm the vitality of a tradition supposedly

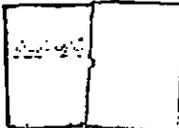
written off. *Welcoming Disaster* by Jay MacPherson turns *The Boatman* inside out in a *tour de force* of gothic horrors about a teddy bear and lifelessness, a kind of mid-Toronto guide to the underworld. Don Coles's first book, *Sometimes All Over*, caused a considerable stir, in my view justified, with its appearance. Unyielding in its commitment to the shape of a life in time, it seeks and confirms values in language too easily dismissed in the name of the experimental or — and even the harshness of term gives it away — "proprioceptiveness"; whatever *that* may be, neither Don Coles nor any of the above would have anything to do with it.

The list could go on — Seymour Mayne's *Name*, for example; Alden Nowlen's *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*; Tom Wayman's *Money and Rain: Tom Wayman Live!*; David McFadden's *A Knight in Dried Plums*; and Chris Dewdney's *Foeva Centralis*, all deserve to be mentioned. But except for McFadden's and Wayman's ironic handling of personal and narrative or causal sequences, little of genuine experimental or perceptual interest seems to be happening here or elsewhere. By all odds, the most radically new and genuinely provocative poems or prose published in this country in 1975 (at least in so far as our reticent publishers let us know) is George Johnston's translation of *The Faroe Islanders Saga*, known in its original in the 19th Century from 14th Century materials. Translation may very well be our best art. After all, along with Johnston's saga, we do have this year Alan Brown's translation of Anne Hebert's *Poems*. It is that book and George Johnston's I intend to re-read. And yes, Birney's *Collected Poems*. □

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POOH AT PUBERTY

Engel's fabulous shaggy bear story carries ursophilia to a new plateau

By ADELE WISEMAN

OCCASIONALLY, though not often, one finds a work of fiction that unfolds like a passion, impelling the reader along the driving, perfectly focused, obsessively single-minded arc of its action. Usually, it leaves one a little shocked, a little shaken, and, if one can bring oneself to relinquish the safety of familiar absolutes, more than a little enriched. Will I ever forget Kafka's Gregor Samsa, awakening one morning to find himself transformed to the perfect metaphor of his state, and going on from there? And will I ever forget Marian Engel's Lou, grovelling before the hairy, asymmetrical balls of her decrepit old bear, yearning for his godhead to arise and define her at last in some ultimate consummation? No, nor will I forget the paradoxical benediction of that raking claw that seals the mysteries of their separate identities and enables her to return renewed as a human being.

Bear, by Marian Engel (McClelland & Stewart, 144 pages, \$7.95 cloth), is the enactment of a passion, the passion of a desolate woman for a long-captive and shabby bear, in whose condition she recognizes a denatured state as helplessly degraded as her own. It is a story that, apparently flatly realistic and determinedly physical in its detail, is nevertheless shot through with premonitions of magical transformations and obsessed with spiritual regeneration through reconciliation with the animal realities, the body's

It explores dramatically and in some explicit detail a corner of that most fecund of artistic territory, the area where the humanly possible transgresses . . . the boundaries of the socially permissible.

joys. Of course, because it explores dramatically and in some explicit detail a corner of that most fecund of artistic territory, the area where the humanly possible transgresses, with the logic of inner necessity, the boundaries of the socially permissible, it is bound to set the alarm system of taboos ajangling. But if we were to limit ourselves to what the nice people of the world at any given time find immediately acceptable, we would have no literature. The alarm bells of the present ring in the insights of the future.

An extended animal simile, characteristic of the imagery throughout, introduces us to Lou, and to the matter-of-fact though far from colourless quality of Ms. Engel's prose:

In the winter, she lived like a mole, buried deep in her office, digging among maps and manuscripts. She lived close to her work and shopped on the way between her apartment and the Institute, scurrying hastily through the tube of winter from refuge to refuge, wasting no time. She did not like cold air on her skin.

A lover of language, Lou had nevertheless long ago run away from newspaper work because it brought her too directly into contact with the pointless suffering human beings impose on themselves and each other. The incident that precipitates her flight from the newspaper world, interestingly enough, involves the breaking of a taboo that's in fact moribund. Her refuge, and it is no accident that the word is twice repeated in the opening paragraph, is the Historical Institute, where, at a safe remove from life, she collates and tabulates the detritus of other people's lives and thoughts, which will someday, she hopes, be reconstructed into painless and useful history. She had come to the Institute originally, we are told, to replace a certain Miss Bliss, and "miss bliss" is the psychic space in which she now finds herself.

The journey that draws her forth from her burrow this particular spring is undertaken ostensibly on behalf of the Institute, which has inherited an estate in the lake and bush country of Northern Ontario. But we very quickly recognize in it the classical pattern of the journey in search of self, of roots, of meaning, of reconciliation with the immanent unknown.

We learn that Lou already knows this country. It is biographical territory. Her journey is in some sense a necessary return as well as a moving forward:

She had sharp memories of being here before. She remembered a beach, a lake the colour of silver, something sad happening. Something, yes, that happened when she was very young, some loss.

But we are not to dwell, except for the occasional telling glimpse, on the specifics of her past. It is the blind and desperate clawing through darkness to rebirth that this spring and summer will record.

"I have an odd sense," she wrote on a postcard to the Director, "of being reborn."

However, with birth comes responsibility, and Lou finds herself saddled with the responsibility of looking after the estate bear. He is a pathetically reduced specimen of bearhood indeed, and Lou is impelled, in the first positive gesture of her own regeneration, to reach out and try to raise him from his fallen state. As she has emerged from her burrow, so she must draw him from his dark and filthy lair, and bring him back to selfhood. It is a measure of the great skill with which this story is handled, that while adhering strictly to a simple and compelling story line, and never losing credibility on the naturalistic level, Ms. Engel manages to suggest such a wealth of allusive implication, on so many other levels. All the allusions work together to build an atmosphere of urgency and intensity, an atmosphere she nevertheless refuses to exploit by in any way artificially heightening her prose. Her writing retains its beautifully balanced and compellingly objective tone, though laced throughout with a kind of dry drollery.

Who is this bear? As she becomes increasingly absorbed in him, Lou tries to comprehend some essential core of bear that, like the shape of his tongue and the shape of his body, seems constantly to elude her, as it is constantly in flux in her own mind. It is obvious, of course, that in one sense bear is her own chained and repressed inner drives, her over-controlled and therefore crippled animal nature. Her

Her awakened and unleashed need drives her beyond innocence, to accept a sexual rebirth through him. . . . The bear, in fact, by licking her all over with his gifted and assiduous tongue, completes her sexual reawakening. . . .

liberation is thus contingent on his own. Considering the physical locale of the story we cannot fail, also, to see him in the context of human violation of outer as well as inner nature. Lou invests him, as well, with attributes, fragments of her own fantasies and longings: "For she has discovered she could paint any face on him that she wanted, while his actual range of expression was a mystery." He is the shaggy bear of childhood comfort, layer on layer of musky fur to dig into with her toes. He is the lumbering mystery of the male animal, "not handsome," "looking bashfully at her," with all the potential for transformation into a Prince Charming of fairy story. He shifts from an "it" to a "her" in her mind, a woman suspiciously like herself:

An unprepossessing creature, this bear, she decided. Not at all menacing. Not a creature of the wild, but a middle-aged woman defeated to the point of being daft, who had sat night after night

waiting for her husband for so long that time had ceased to exist and there was only waiting.

It is interesting that at this point bear shifts to a "him": "I can manage him," she decided, and went inside."

Through a device both logical and magical, the books Lou is examining drop erudite scraps of information, culled by the original ursophile of the house, about bear's biological makeup, his physical attributes, his history in myth and folklore, his significance to the human mind as a totemic figure, and even — and this increasingly so for Lou — as a form of divinity. An ancient Indian crone, recognizable to the Canadian imagination of our day as the necessary repository of wisdom about things natural now lost to us, instructs Lou on how to establish communication with the animal in its own terms. "Shit with the bear," she said. "He like you, then. Morning, you shit, he shit. Bear lives by smell. He like you." Lou, though in her human arrogance humiliated, humbles herself to take this step toward rapprochement with the animal. She leads him to a period of mutual innocence in which they learn to play together in the water and woods. But her awakened and unleashed need drives her beyond innocence to accept a sexual rebirth through him, her first total sexual ecstasy. The bear, in fact, by licking her all over with his gifted and assiduous tongue, completes her sexual reawakening as the mother animal completes the bringing to life of a newborn cub, by licking away its cawl. It is notable, by the way, that the acts of bestiality that take place occur within that magic circle, the mandalah of the house of Pennarth, which is Fowler's octagon in shape.

But Lou is not so simply satisfied. She demands a total mutual relationship that will transcend limitations. She wants bear-god to want her too. She wants connection,



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completion, transformation, perhaps even issue. She craves the legitimacy that Leda knew. In a dream she recognizes her greed as a self-destructive indulgence, but cannot by herself control the inner forces she has unleashed. She is saved by the bear's gesture, which is at once the benediction she has craved from beyond, and the absolution she requires to be able to confront the future. It allows her to comprehend the reality beyond the taboo she has violated, the natural law that spells out without guilt the limitations of the possibilities of communication between kinds of being.

It seems to me that the discerning reader of this book must find himself examining what Ms. Engel is really say-

ing about socially imposed patterns: sterile, loveless living; the lack of meaningful contact among human beings and between human and other beings; the body's loneliness; all of those things that can drive the human being to seek some sort of total, meaningful consummation beyond the human, with another fleshly, natural force. In her journey Lou travels beyond the accepted pale, incidentally challenging and forcing a new look at the boundaries. She returns cleansed and renewed, and brings with her hope for the possibility of renewal and reconciliation to us all. Let no one say that we are not peopling the particular wilderness of our time and place with the unique spirits of our age. □

DEDICATION—OF SORTS

A preface to the second edition reprinted
by kind permission of a heroic author

By GORDON DONALDSON

THIS WORK, originally entitled *The Origins of Suburbia in Upper Canada, 1784-1841*, had its inspiration in a chance remark by the late Professor G. McG. McLurg of Napanee who wondered aloud, as was his wont, why nobody had yet attempted a scholarly treatise on the subject.

It has taken me 22 years to provide the answer. The rewards of this toil, so far, have taken the form of priceless advice and criticism, lavished upon me by previous col-

I could never have embarked upon the second draft without the occasional tolerance and forbearance of my wives.

leagues and former friends. If there are further rewards to come only McLurg, from his present vantage point, will know for sure.

I cannot begin to thank the patient staffs of the Smithsonian Institution and Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., the National Archives, Ottawa, and the Napanee Public Library for their unanimous response to my requests for material on the subject. I have tried, but I cannot begin.

The Canada Council has been generous of its valuable time in considering my constant appeals for financial succour over these many years. Its attitude has been impressive in its consistency — a quality often lacking in these times of sudden change and drastic upset.

The first draft would have been the poorer but for the contributions of the faculty of the University of Napanee — the coffee stains on pages 34-37, the cigarette burns on page 34 and, of course, the spilt mickey of bonded stock that flavoured the entire work.

These authorities and others presented an opinion of the manuscript that was both forceful and concise; and added useful suggestions as to its future.

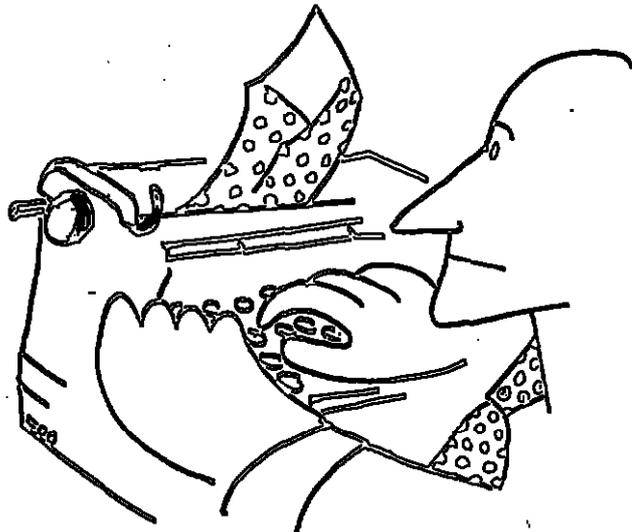
Undoubtedly, the greatest contribution to the first draft came from my editor. My feelings toward him deepened that evening in 1968 when he revealed that he had left it in

some Toronto beverage room and didn't really care which.

I could never have embarked upon the second draft without the occasional tolerance and forbearance of my wives. It would be invidious to single out any one of them as my prime fount of balm and solace, but it may be of statistical interest to note that the first lasted longest.

Dear Mary stayed with me from pages 1-284 ("The Impact of the War of 1812 Upon Rexdale Shopping Plaza"), reading a page every night. She was a slight, quiet-spoken woman who got slighter and quieter as the pages went by. I had the impression she was fading gently into history and at times no longer truly with me. One morning this impression was confirmed. She had slipped away in the night — by Greyhound bus. Her note said she had gone to enlist in the War of 1812 but I have since learned that she found employment in a body-rub establishment on Yonge Street.

Mere words cannot adequately convey my feelings towards Yvette, whose boundless energy shaped pages 305-318 ("The Family Compact, or Incest in Etobicoke"). As a *Canadienne* she had a fierce, almost physical appreciation of the story of Upper Canada. She viewed the principal



characters not merely as faded historical figures but as living, breathing men or, as she put it, filthy fucking Anglos; and the violence with which she struck me with pages 1-318 was obviously a *trait* preserved through 10 generations of *habitant* stock. An unfortunate *trait*, as she was to discover.

I am indebted to Priscilla, my third wife, for pointing out several errors of omission in pages 40-151 of the third draft ("Old Aspects of the New Morality").

From the start, Priscilla displayed a lively, personal interest in my research. After the irretrievable loss of pages

I must add a tribute to my publisher. . . . He earned my undying gratitude by never carping about facts, never criticizing style; in fact, never reading the book.

1-318, incurred when Yvette was forcibly induced to swallow them, the work took a new direction. ("Further Up Upper Canada, or Where Suburbia Went From There"). I decided to investigate certain current suburban practices and this involved the invaluable, yet moderately priced, research assistance of Ms. A. B. of Don Mills, Ont., and the observant staff of the Nooner Motel.

Since Priscilla had knowingly undertaken the taxing role of author's wife, she accepted the long evenings of silent companionship in which the author, though physically present, communes only with his Muse. She could even withstand the intense cold, primitive illumination and absence of telephonic communication caused by the unco-operative attitude of the excellent Napanee public utilities. But she

was so intrigued by the nature of my work at the Nooner Motel that she determined to assist me in it.

Her own original research uncovered the said errors in my account of events there. These errors are mine alone and I take full responsibility for them. I have allowed them to stand, even though Priscilla has now left me, the damage to the motel has been repaired and the pain of my dismissal from my post somewhat alleviated by the news of the university's closing and subsequent sale for taxes.

I must add a tribute to my publisher who remained, so far as I know, loyal to this project for 22 years. He earned my undying gratitude by never carping about facts, never criticizing style; in fact, never reading the book. I have never met him but picture him as a staunch, somewhat miserly pillar of Canadian literary life. I understand he lives in Florida and had never heard of Upper Canada, which is why he changed the final title. I agreed to the change out of respect for the late McLurg, who had heard of Upper Canada but wasn't sure where it was.

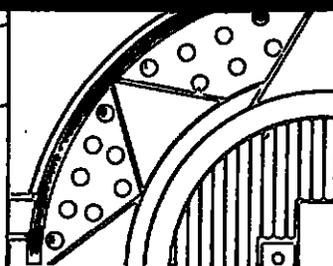
I cannot conclude this preface to the second edition without explaining what happened to the first. It went to the bottom of Lake Ontario when a truck accidentally rolled off a Toronto pier. I am mildly grateful that there was no loss of life. Subsequent litigation between my publisher, the haulier, and the insurance company delayed republication for four years.

My final hope, gentle reader, is that time has mellowed this work as sweetly as it has mellowed Ms. A. B., to whom *Sex and Sadism in Don Mills* is lovingly dedicated.

G.D.

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CLARKE IRWIN

Hay naughty naughty

The Bicycle Tree, by Robert Olver, McClelland & Stewart, 237 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By PETER THOMAS

REMEMBER *Cold Comfort Farm*? It was a groaningly accurate parody of a certain kind of "rural tragedy" novel in which inarticulate, muck-smearred yokels, often related by blood, albeit incestuously, grunt and fornicate and occasionally dock turnips. The weather tends to assist the general broodiness, and Something Nasty is associated with the woodshed.

Type-situations are to be avoided in any kind of narrative unless they are transfigured from within. Unfortunately, *The Bicycle Tree* seems to be within hollering distance of *Cold Comfort Farm* in setting and characterization while at the same time burdened by a symbolism so "brooding" that it stifles.

Set in rural Ontario during the 1930s, it concerns Handy, son of Elijah and Martha, who returns "home to the ridge country where three generations of Rices had coaxed their living from the ground." Leaving his soft job at the bank, Handy marries Leslie, daughter of Etta and Angus, and they set up farming on their own until they are, in the fullness of time, able to buy the old homestead from Elijah and Martha. Unhappily, a shadow is cast on the marriage from the beginning:

Dry-mouthed, his hard belly churning with the sweet warmth of a decision that had taken a year to make, Angus followed the girl into the hay passage in front of the cows. There, during an hour in which the cows munched indifferently on their cuds, Angus McGowan raped his stepdaughter.

Leslie was then 14 (though Etta says 15 on page 193) and Keith is the outcome of the act. Handy at first "forgives" Leslie then grows resentful of her barrenness (a consequence of Keith's birth), making him unable to show adequate affection to Mathew, the orphan boy they adopt.

Intimations bristle like a hog's back. Mathew is the main sufferer, but Handy also takes his knocks, while Leslie suffers for them all. Angered by Mathew's fears of the dark, Handy cuts off "a pig's tit" for him (which he *does* suck); Leslie asks Mathew if he wishes to

chop off the head of the rooster which attacks him, and he performs the deed; Mathew's dog kills a groundhog in another portentous scene — and finally, with elephantine emphasis, Mathew releases a rabbit caught after mowing. Along with these rituals of violence we have Handy teaching Mathew to play baseball (unsuccessfully) and fishing (he has been beaten to it). The problem with these scenes is that while credible taken singly and, in a mechanical sense, written competently, they have a dreary predictable quality taken together.

But the major element of tension in the plot is also too familiar. Leslie loved Dickie before she met Handy, and he left for Detroit to save enough money for them to marry. While working there he just happens to write a letter enquiring after his long-lost unlamented whorish mother, who providentially has just died, leaving him more than 500 bucks. Enough for a farm and everything Leslie could dream of.

In Detroit, however, Dickie has also discovered Art — specifically "Old Gawgin," "that crazy Franchman," about whom he has bought a book:

The look on the painter's face, especially around the eyes, reminded him of the way he himself looked, especially on dark and lonely mornings when his weakened defences allowed the truth to seep from behind his eyes.

Suffering, artistic Dickie returns to claim Leslie, but she simply cannot



Robert Olver

comprehend his notion of trying to live by the skill as a sketcher he has developed. He feels desperate and leaves. Whereupon trusty Handy arrives on the

scene and Leslie takes him on the rebound.

What follows justifies the "sense of foreboding" Leslie feels on page 25 and again on page 169. Dickie turns up at the homestead and signs on as hired-hand. Leslie has further intimations:

There was something dark — yes, the word sprang to her mind — something evil about that spring. . . . She sensed a threat but was helpless to do anything about it. She did not know where it was going or who it would finally consume.

We have been warned. Readers of Prairie novels will feel at ease with what follows. First there are "omens" that Handy agonizes about, and then a drought threatens the crops. In his ageing wisdom, Elijah sniffs hail in the gathering storm, and the old homestead pulls together heroically to save what they can of the grain. Thoughts of God flood in. "Whenever Elijah glanced at the thunderclouds he thought of God" — but in this respect matters come to a head somewhat later, when Handy decides he is "tired of being kicked around by God." This is a reasonable sentiment, in some ways, but risky, since Etta (thinking mainly about Angus, it's true), quoted "Vengeance is mine, said the Lord" much earlier.

The hail comes, but the tension rises. Handy has, in fact, been combatting the lack of cheer by building an irrigation dam on the sly, in an attempt to moonlight his own fate. He will fertilize 10 acres of sand as a symbolic gift to the infertile Leslie. The inarticulate Handy has his dream, too — as real as Dickie's "pitchers."

In the final scenes of the novel coincidences crowd like mourners at a flat wake (say Angus's). Handy gets up in the early morning to blast the final channel for his dam; meanwhile, Dickie has decided to leave the farm and allow calm to return. But on the previous evening Handy saw Dickie kissing Leslie. This puts him in a bad frame of mind. As Dickie leaves his bedroom in the morning he notices that Handy has left and runs after him (perhaps suspecting suicide). Leslie, at this point, also arises, and watches Dickie running after Handy "as if to call him from the blackest reaches of hell."

What *none* of them knew was that Mathew got up before *all* of them and went fishing. I will not reveal the ending. Though if it remains unsuspected at this stage, I fear for us.

Doom-laden, predictable, slow-paced, and lacking variety of tone and

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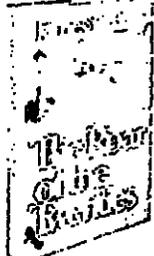


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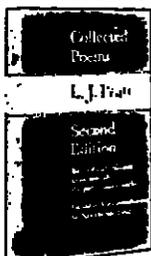


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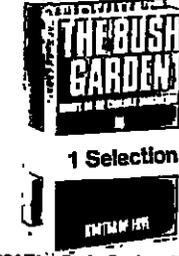
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focus: only once did I find myself startled into a silent hope for abrupt action. It was on the occasion when Elijah encountered Dickie and Leslie canoodling at the door of the farm truck:

Elijah's first instinct was to give them both a stiff clout over the head with something — a length of two by four would do it. . . .

His hand, alas, was stilled. But I must protest at the sloppy editing which let the following grotesque pun pass:

A direct and sometimes simple man, Angus had gratified his long-standing desire in the only way he could fathom.

Or is this supposed to illustrate country humour? Cold comfort, indeed. □

Complete with
the Big F and
#%\$*#@ too

Turvey: A Military Picaresque, revised edition, by Earle Birney, McClelland & Stewart, 288 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By ALASTAIR SWEENEY

ALTHOUGH carefully subtitled "A Military Picaresque," Earle Birney's *Turvey* is about as picaresque as a weekend in Camp Borden. Perhaps a clue to what the book is all about can be found in Birney's poem "The Road to Nijmegen," which he wrote in Holland in 1945. It has virtually the same imagery as one section of *Turvey*, but is wrought in a different, more sombre tone:

*Numbed on the long road to mangled
Nijmegen
I thought that only the living of others assures us
the gentle and true we remember as trees
walking
Their arms reach down from the light of
kindness
into this Lazarus tomb.*

By 1949, with the first publication of *Turvey*, Birney had apparently softened the despair he showed in his war poems. But in spite of its sometimes hilarious moments, *Turvey* is no Canadian *Catch 22*. It is essentially a sad book, neither tragic nor comic, but rather gently satiric — a tale told by Chaucer's Pardoner on the road to Canterbury, a tale told not by an idiot but by a nice guy.

The novel is not, as some Lit-Lion desperately wrote, "superbly Rabelasian." *Turvey* himself is no

rogue, no worldly wise picaresco. He is an acquiescent, good-natured dolt caught behind the lines in the triplicates and quadruplicates of an awesome obstacle course laid out by the army paper-shufflers. All the poor man really wants to do is serve with his dream regiment, the Kootenay Highlanders, get shot at, and run back to the arms of lovely Peggy.

Turvey is about men caught in a stifling series of traps — Basic Training, Detention Camp, Military Hospital — and being almost bored to death. At the "Number Three Canadian Testing Panel," somewhere in the wilds of Buckinghamshire, *Turvey* and his buddy Mac are worked over to see if they are officer material. Mac's got it all figured out:

Look, fellows, we got it cold. It's a nut house, a loony bin. First, this colonel. Hut Orderly says he's all the way from South America. Most of that chest fruit's from revolutions in Nicotina or somewhere. Came up with the rations. Never heard an angry shot in this man's army. Next, place is crawling with psychologists, psychiatrists, every other kind of psychic. They all have a bang at you first few days. Then they hold a powwow, a Panel, pool scores, pick the winnah.

A Canadian Army sergeant who has been over since December, 1939, being shunted back and forth all over Britain, fighting off boredom, growls:

And now it's June 1943, and I'm fighting Hitler from a Buckingham castle. What kinda shiteheels runnin this army? Dont tell me they aint got a saw-off with the Krauts. Last year they didnt even send us to Dieppe — took the Second Div boys hadnt been overseas a year. You know what's wrong with those cunts back in Ottawa?

These men — most of whom can hit a gopher with a .22 from 100 yards — have basic picaresque tendencies, but because of the red tape and forms that hem them in, they can't even get on with their job, which should be plugging Nazis.

The new, improved *Turvey* now has all the necessary barrack-room obscenities, and positively reeks of army life. The publishers have done us a good service in picking up all the little expurgations somebody dropped on the cutting-room floor 27 years ago. Although now a little dusty and shop-soiled, they do make the narrative, if anything, mote pungent. Consider, for example, this view of the local "bims":

"Yeah," Leacock chipped in. "they tell yuh they gotta crock and all you get is the smell off their puss."

This is the real thing, and essential to Birney's art. In addition, he demon-

strates the finest mastery of Canajan dialect I have ever seen. To his credit, he does show admirable restraint in his use of the Big F, but I really wish the editors could have gone all out and disexpunged the following at the same time as they disexpurgated it:

"Rip . . . ping . . . smack," went the bullets; "#%\$*#@&" went Ballard, before the pellet had plopped to the floor. "We coulda been in Bufflo now, *Turvey*," he whined reproachfully, after the fifth bullet struck. "Yuh see what happens wen you stick around the cocksuckin army, I dint join up ta git drilled by some fuckin stir-crazy Scotchman."

However — come to think of it — it's nice to know that something is still sacred in the world of words, that good old "#%\$*#@&" has not yet been sacrificed on the altar of disobscenism. Let's hear it for restraint, and for the definitive *Turvey* at last. □

To know her
was a corporal
education

Harriet Marwood, Governess, by John Glassco, TrendSetter series (General Publishing), 232 pages, \$5.95 cloth.

By CHRIS SCOTT

LONDON 188-, Harriet Marwood, engaged by Mr. Lovell, "the man of business," after his wife's decease, to govern "the boy" Richard, arrives at the house in Great Portland Street — "the third past Langham Street, to be precise" — where her pubertoid charge (he is just 14) glimpses her, "radiant" and emportalled, "dressed in a long india-rubber cape, wet and shining." The birch rod and waxed cane arrive later, presumably by penny post.

When the cook reports the loss of two pieces of chocolate and their subsequent discovery in the young master's bed (one of them bearing his teeth marks, forensic evidence, if needed, of his culpability), Miss Marwood wastes no time in getting to the bottom of things with the implements



of her calling. An ordinary boy, of course, would have consumed the chocolate entirely, but Richard, his appetite already whetted by lascivious lashings to the buttocks, is no ordinary boy, nor Miss Marwood any ordinary governess.

One stroke, inevitably, leads to another. In Christchurch, scene of a summer-long punitive tryst, Harriet purchases a whipping harness for her refractory dunce, and, thus bound, he is birched. Alas (but in the course of nature), "the man of business" dies; Richard loses his head and virginity to a common streetwalker, and Miss Marwood is appointed his legal guardian. Thence to Paris and Brittany, where, to atone for his sordid amours, Richard is flogged upon "a mysterious engine of wheels and cords."

Miss Marwood's impedimenta (whips, whips, and more whips) and the constant refrain of "Down with your trousers," would soon cease to titillate, were it not for the author's ingenious *fouettés* in the service of Muse Flagella, before whom he may stand erect or grovel, as the case may be. No nerve or sinew is spared, and among the many diverting caprices one deserves especial mention: the humilia-

tion of Richard Lovell before his neighbourhood inamorata, Alicia Barrington, in a bathing machine on the beach at Bournemouth. In "snow white wool trunks," striped jersey and white rubber bathing cap, "of the style which fastens under the chin," he is (you guessed it) whipped, while the incredulous — and tearful — Alicia listens outside.

Mr. Glassco has also given to the language a line worthy of inclusion in *Bartlett's* or any dictionary of quotations: "Have you martinetts in whipcord, ready made?" Thus Harriet at the ropemakers.

It is a harsh moral requirement of romance to have an edifying conclusion. Miss Marwood and Richard are eventually married, he taking her name (*Women's Libbers, notate bene*), and Mr. Glassco spares no pains to assure us that they lived whackily ever after.

Had these violet and yellow pages appeared in Krafft-Ebing's day, they would perhaps have merited a footnote in the *Psychopathia Sexualis*. They were crystallised, their author avows, from a reading of Albert Eulenburg's *Sadismus und Masochismus* (1898), wherein the younger Glassco lit on a reference to "the heroines of the En-

glish masochistic 'educational' novel, those proud Victorian women who brought up the youths entrusted to them with the most humiliating service and homage in order finally to let the sun of their highest favour shine upon (or rather under) them." Failing in his feverish quest to find such fictions, the author decided to write one. The book was completed, after four months' labour, in March, 1955, sold to an American publisher, printed but not brought out, rebought in 1958, and resold to Olympia Press in a "humorously pornographic version" in 1960. The novel now appears, in its pristine form, under the wrappers of General Publishing's TrendSetter series — something that is worth a moment's reflection in itself.

Harriet Marwood, Governess reads as if it might have been written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, had he not been too busy with other things. Jesuits, slipper sniffers, and the compilers of Ontario's Circular 14 will find it entrancing. A masterpiece of the genre from the same eloquent pen that finished Aubrey Beardsley's *Under the Hill*, it is rivalled as a handbook in corporal punishment only by the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. □

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What's dung is well dung

The Bulls of Ronda, by Eugene P. Benson, Methuen, 224 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By MICHAEL SMITH

A WILY OLD journalist once told me that the four elements essential to a good news story are conflict, success, sex, and animals. It's fair to argue, I think, that the same formula might hatch a popular novel (consider *Jaws*), especially where conflict becomes a synonym for gore. In Eugene P. Benson's *The Bulls of Ronda* the sex starts on page 19; there's carnage among the animals by page 26, and various human victims are shot, bludgeoned, and otherwise mangled throughout the book with great success.

Benson's hero is Mark Gibson, a young Canadian writer partly known for his translations of a Spanish poet recently deceased. Still brooding over a brush with the Irish Republican Army, Gibson now is on the trail of the Spaniard's unpublished poems, which apparently are held by a Nazi war criminal hiding in the neighbourhood. The go-between is a beautiful model (or whore) whose relatives performed unspeakable atrocities with scythes and clubs during the Spanish Civil War. Gibson's search leads him into a murderous cadre of Basque separatists, not to mention negotiations with two Jewish agents bound on killing the Nazi.

As a writer, Gibson seems as improbable as the hard-boiled fictional private dicks who never have to handle cases for divorce. As a Canadian, the clichés fit him better. After all, people keep mistaking him for a Yank. He gets nostalgic for soft snowfalls and camping "north of Sudbury [where] some of the lakes had never been fished by white men." Superman he isn't. For one thing, there's his epilepsy. Then there are the broken childhood, his Oedipal tendencies, and the unrequited college romance. If I tell you he's always surrounded by castrating women, well, you don't need any more clues about his physical disposition at the end.

Benson's writing, you may have guessed, is not exactly, uh, subtle. Some pearls of dialogue: "Life is so

rotten" "If only we could only reach out and make time stand still" "We haven't known each other long enough." Two fugitives sneak off "like thieves in the night." A girl's thigh is "unbared" (he means bared). The two agents blow their cover because — get this — one's got "Jewish money" in his wallet. Benson dubs a bullfighter El Zorro, which set me thinking constantly of that guy in the mask on the Walt Disney show who's always carving his initial in things.

By the way, the title's supposed to remind you that there's still the odd bright moment in the bull ring — amid all the hacked up bulls and writhing horses — when somebody shows a little finesse. That's a quality Benson must know something about. Despite all that makes this book so trite, he did keep me turning the pages from beginning to end all one day. It's his first novel, so it seems a shame to tell everybody it's crap. The thing is, it's popular crap, like television and disaster flicks. If you buy it, wait for the paperback, and read it at the cottage. □

Dotage and antidotage

The Man Who Lived Near Nelligan, by Lazar Sarna, Coach House Press, 167 pages, \$5.50 paper.

By DOUGLAS HILL

THE FIRST impression made by this novel from a young Montreal lawyer and poet is almost wholly of atmosphere, of mood. The prose is stiff and spiky, slightly old-fashioned and formal; its effects are gloom and chill, permeated by a vague, elusive sense of failure and loss, something less than tragic, more than pathetic.

Sarna's narrator is one Walter Burton, a Montreal businessman and crypto-poet born in 1860. He talks of his early life and his three disappointing marriages, his commitment (for advanced senility) to a mental institution in the late 1920s, and the tentative friendship he begins there with the Québécois poet Emile Nelligan. The story unfolds in a series of chapters made up of short sections of prose interspersed with even shorter poems.

The poetry offers sharp but disturbing images; they belong to the lucid surreal landscape of dream-symbols.

Compared to it, the prose seems flat, oddly humourless, at times awkward and unsure in its gathering of detail. But I think this is intentional: Sarna is trying to project a distinctly personal narrative voice, and through it to present a unique sensibility.

Walter Burton's curse is a sort of emotional unsteadiness or under-confidence. He can summon no feelings when he expects them to appear, but cannot banish them when they threaten to overwhelm him. He is a character whose most frequent perception is of his own spiritual emptiness; the void is all the more terrifying for his awareness of it, and for the indications he has from his subconscious that there may be a fuller emotional life just beyond his reach. These intimations come to him in dreams when he is young, in delusions when he is old; here the connections between narrative and poems are strongest, as the hallucinatory images bleed from one mode into the other.

The creation through a self-consistent idiom of a complex and shadowy personality is in itself a substantial accomplishment. But Sarna doesn't stop there. This is more than just another novel about a loser, an anti-hero contemplating his own insignificance; its deepest meanings are ultimately political. These centre on the interplay of cultural attitudes between English and French in the Quebec of 50 to 100 years ago, and by implication on their present conflict. Burton's relation with Nelligan is the focus: he envies the poet's survival of will — institutionalized for nearly 30 years, Nelligan still believes in himself and his art — and Burton fears the strength and integrity it reveals while at the same time feeling superior to the man and his race.

The situation echoes the confusion Burton feels as a boy in the presence of his family's servant George. The aged peasant and the neurotic poet begin to merge in Burton's mind as he approaches his own death, and there is intense sadness in his lack of understanding and his painful realization of it. For Burton it has been a lifetime of dream-like guilt, a chronic paralysis of the soul, and it has isolated him emotionally, morally, and socially from his fellow man and from his homeland.

The Man Who Lived Near Nelligan, Sarna's first novel, is a demanding book. The shifts from prose to verse, from fictional narrator to fictionalized (but basically historical) poet compel deliberate and analytic reading.

Though it's not finally a great work, a shattering breakthrough into Canada's sense of its past and present troubles, it digs deep and takes the willing reader far. It's a demanding book, and an important one.

A couple of complaints: there are too many typographical errors; and the irregularities of punctuation don't seem to enhance the rhythm and style in any systematic way that I can figure out. In this regard the book is not up to Coach House standards. But it's a limited edition of 750; if it goes into another printing, as it emphatically should, these disturbances can be tidied up. □

Lend us your ears, already

The Last Collection, by Seymour Blicker, McClelland & Stewart, 272 pages, \$10 cloth.

By MARK WITTEN

BUSINESS PARTNERS for some 22 years, Solly "the Hawk" Weisskopf and big Moishie Mandelberg are Montreal's best at what they do. What *can* they do? Lend money. What *will* they do? Collect. *The Last Collection* is the latest look inside another island of Montreal Jewry — with little sentimentality, even less nostalgia, and lots of laughs.

What happens when a seasoned shylock finds that his work no longer challenges him? Solly reluctantly confesses this to his partner and proposes that they go legit together — with one proviso. Solly wants one last gaff to prove to himself that he's still got his nerve and imagination. And herein lies the mystery. Who's going to be the mooch?

It's a game of musical suckers as the intended victim shifts from Marvin Saltpeter, the American who's looking just a little too hard for the big shmear, to Artie Kerner, a man with a very strange addiction and an even stranger psychiatrist, to Morrie Hankelman, the amateur who steps too fast and too far when he jumps blindly into the treacherous world of shylocking reserved for professionals only.

Professionals like Solly "the Hawk" and big Moishie rarely have to rely on physical violence, in part because of some simple but effective audiovisual techniques they have devised. Solly carries with him in a leather folder five

eight-by-two-inch glossies that follow one another in a carefully orchestrated sequence: first photograph, caption reads "Before" (showing a man sitting at a desk with a smile on his face); second photograph (showing the same man with only one ear); third photograph (a shot of Solly and big Moishie pointing to a solitary ear on the table); fourth photograph, caption reads "After, Second Visit" (showing the same man with no ears); and fifth photograph, caption reads "Final Visit" (showing the man handing over a fistful of bills to Solly, who hands back two ears). But unfortunately, these traditional techniques don't work with a man like Artie Kerner.

Way *can't* Artie pay off his \$12,000 debt to Morrie Hankelman? He owns a business; he lives in a luxurious apartment containing more than \$50,000 worth of valuable art objects and knickknacks. He has no one but himself to support. Hankelman has no doubt that he's simply being burned by Artie.

But Solly suspects that perhaps it's something a little different, especially after making a visit to the apartment where, after first refusing to let him in and then finding it impossible to explain the outrageously valuable contents of the place, Artie finally exclaims in a panic: "Look, I have to get out of here right away. If you have to beat me up, could you please do it right away? ... I've got to make a buy!"

Even the great psychiatrist, Dr. Lehman, has difficulty getting at the root of Artie's strange problem. "Suddenly Kerner went rigid in his seat as Dr. Lehman came out of the hut wearing a red speedo swim suit." No wonder. Complete with thatched hut, lagoon, scuba gear, and other assorted paraphernalia, the good doctor's office and influence still somehow encourage Artie Kerner to reveal and begin to combat his strange addiction. (Perhaps it's only because his own madness seems to pale in the light of the doctor's delusions).

Artie suffers severe withdrawal symptoms whenever he goes too long without making a buy — the more expensive and worthless the object, the better. And if he resells anything, he can only survive by immediately going out to buy an object double its value. As big Moishie points out when Solly tells him this amazing tale, "It sounds too crazy to be a lie." Solly and Moishie decide to befriend Kerner by attempting to help him out of his mess, but it isn't nearly so simple as the plot and subplots continue to take one unexpected

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turn after another until eventually everybody becomes a sucker, including the masters themselves.

His plotting is superb and the dialogue is a treat. Seymour Blicher's circus of strangely scrupled characters makes for first-class entertainment. Can this really be what happens to the likes of Duddy Kravitz when he and his pals grow up? □

Portrait of the artist as a Jung man

Woodworth: Blood from a Stone, by Brenda Webber, Dime Novels Canada, 187 pages, \$4.95 paper.

By PHIL SURGUY

AT FIRST THIS seemed to be something else. A quick skim suggested a lady in St. Catherine's had invented a contemporary artist named Ray Woodworth, written a short biography of him, and then built a representative selection of his work and taken photographs of it to accompany her prose. In short, it seemed as if the art world had generated its own version of Sarah Binks.

There are 43 photographs in the book, pictures of works, mainly sculptures, with such titles as "The Martin Hartwell Bubblegum Machine," "Rat Lure," "Wooder" (a carved wooden replica of a steam iron), "Mush," "Masterbating Buttocks," "Truck," "Total Failure," and "Johnny Canuck Canadian Ego Exposition." It starts with an introduction in which the author declares that her character is fictional, but the events and art works are real in the sense that they would have happened and would have been created if Ray Woodworth had been a real person. She says, "I built the character to be the type of man I would have fallen in love with: the ideal man."

However, there really is, in what for the sake of convenience we'll call real life, a Ray Woodworth. He is a relatively prominent Ontario artist who has created works identical to the ones pictured here. Furthermore, the bulk of the book appears to have been written by him, and all this raises a couple of interesting possibilities. If Woodworth *did* write the book (and I believe he

did), then it is reasonable to assume that Brenda Webber is his invention too, that he has imagined an ideal woman who has imagined an ideal man — him. Nice. Or, perhaps there is a real Brenda and she has indeed got into Woodworth's head and written his autobiography. If that is true, then the Niagara Artists' Company can claim to have generated its own version of Gertrude Stein.

Considered as fiction, *Blood From a Stone* hasn't too much going for it, although it is occasionally funny. One chapter, which deals with the Rothmans company's concern about Woodworth's miniature reproductions of their cigarette package, is reminiscent of Groucho's quarrel with the Warner Brothers over who had the rights to the name Casablanca.

As an autobiography, the book is a moderately interesting record of a young contemporary artist's life and work. He gives us some bits of information about the process by which he became an artist and *only* an artist: "If you have something to fall back on you will inevitably fall back on it." And there are also some anecdotes about himself and his friends, plus accounts of exhibitions and events he organized and took part in.

But much of his writing seems to be an effort to justify what he does and a complaint against the public and the bureaucrats and art administrators who have so much influence over the art market. However, his arguments quickly degenerate into a mishmash of naivety and cynicism which, if one wants an example, is neatly reflected in his own (or Brenda's) appraisal of *Blood From a Stone* (it appears in the glossary of art terminology at the end of the book): "A documentary history book about Canadian Art and how to get in on a piece of the action. A must for every library and art institution."

Most visual art today is as synthetic and absurd as the society we live in, so it shouldn't be a big surprise if an artist sounds confused when he is talking about his work. Woodworth may not have articulately said what he was trying to say, or told us everything he had to tell us, in *Blood From a Stone*, but he has still, however unconsciously, given us quite an accurate representation of the muddle we are currently calling art. □



Chime of symbols, tingle of greatness

The Impstone, by Susan Musgrave, McClelland & Stewart, 112 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By ROBIN SKELTON

THIS IS Susan Musgrave's fifth collection of poems, and her best. The language is taut and spare without taking on that dead flatness characteristic of so much Canadian poetry that, in attempting colloquial candour, achieves banality. The confessional urgency that occasionally made some of the earlier poems frenetic and obscure is still present, but now is controlled and qualified by wit and by an assurance of tone that makes even the most challenging assertions authoritative. Moreover, the self-dramatization that marred some of the early work, as it marred much of the poetry of Ann Sexton and Sylvia Plath, now is entirely absent, and even the most personal and poignant verses have a precise clarity that gives them dignity. Consider the opening of "The Right Word":

*The silence you
filled me with
is a dream I
cannot remember
nothing replaces you
not even
the silence*

This occurs in the first part of the book, "Making Blood," which deals with a love affair and its ending. The poems circle around a small number of key words: death, blood, silence, and animal are the most obvious. This iterative imagery binds the section together to some extent, though on occasion one wishes another, a less thunderously archetypal image than the one chosen, had been used. It would be unfair, however, to give the impression that the vocabulary of these poems is limited. In the second section, "Recovery," there is enormous variety in both imagery and tones of voice; there is savagery and there is exuberance; there is grotesquerie and pathos; and from time to time a flash of satire. This controlled turbulence continues through the third section, "Success Story," where the black humour has a Jacobean force, as in the serio-comic "Vampires Should Be Liberated,"

and "Consummation" in which the speaker addresses her own skull. The landscape of these two middle sections is as varied as the tone. Scenes of the city, of airports, of social gatherings, neighbour poems that make use of the wild mountains and deep forests of the Queen Charlotte Islands that dominate the first section of all.

It is in the last section of the book, "Archaeologists And Grave Robbers," however, that Susan Musgrave makes a formidable contribution to that growing body of poetry that is unrarely Canadian. Here, utilizing Haida myths and beliefs, she presents with extraordinary dexterity the symbol-haunted solitude and the combination of mystical and practical wisdom that lies at the heart of her personal vision and her understanding of the Haida tradition. Without any touch of archness, any condescension, or any false theatricality, her poems speak out of the land itself, and often with shattering economy:

*Raven
in the rain binds
silence and
cedar*

*one part
feather
four parts
bone. . . .*

These opening lines of "Lure" are more cunning than they appear to be at first. Say the first four lines aloud and listen to the way the vowels and consonants chime with each other. This is not only poetry of perception but verse of a high order. The whole book indeed convinces me that if Susan Musgrave can continue to develop what shows signs of being a system of symbols and thought that is not only deeply and fundamentally of this country (or at least of the Pacific Coast of it) but also universal in its scope, and that if she can develop further her capacity for fusing disciplined and abstract thought with lucid and powerful imagery, she will bring greatness to our literature.

It is common knowledge that I was the first person to publish Susan Musgrave's work, and am a friend of hers; my enthusiasm may therefore be suspect. I must explain that I refused consistently to review her books after the beginning, for I was determined not to risk an accusation of prejudice. I thought it better to wait until a time came (if it should ever come) when I could say, as I say now, with my hand on my heart, this is a magnificent book by a major poet and there is not a bad poem in it. □

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The coming of the horde

Tuktoyaktuk 2-3, by Herbert T. Schwartz, M. F. Feheley Publishers (5 Drumsnab Road, Toronto), illustrated, 176 pages, \$10 cloth (ISBN 919880-01-0).

By CLARE MacCULLOCH

TUKTOYAKTUK, which means "Crossing of the Caribou," is a place situated across from the mouth of the Mackenzie River and over the Beaufort Sea. It is inhabited by the Inuit, the people of the Arctic, "whose spiritual values and unique lifestyle have been hammered out by thousands of years of incessant struggle to survive."

Dr. Schwarz first discovered Tuktoyaktuk in 1967. To him, "it appeared to be a lonely and forbidding place, just a cluster of cabins hugging the shoreline with boats and schooners half buried in the snow, and as far as the eye could see in the twilight were vast stretches of jagged ice and snowdrifts." He remembers the place first struck him as "eerie," "desolate," "like an unknown barren planet."

The people who met him were "dot-like figures," shapes "which emerged from the cabins, climbed the steep bank of the bay and converged on the plane." Fur-clad, their eyes as razor sharp as the cold, their speech "a harsh guttural language": they seemed to be "an amorphous mass of identical faces . . . a different race."

In a very predictable way, this English-born doctor had succumbed to the Canadian artistic fallacy; he was seeing his new country in terms of the landscape only. But that was soon to change. This book is about how the blank-like faces of the Eskimo crystallized into individual components and acquired their own identity. The events Schwarz records are only the most memorable and they are "but lightly sketched, barely touching the surface." There are trappings, caribou hunts, whaling, the great Eskimo gatherings on the Husky Lakes, the lives, customs and stories of the people, the old ways and the new realities, "more recently the cataclysmic impact of oil explorations on the people," the land and wildlife and the desperate struggle of the Eskimo to save their hunting grounds at Camp Bathurst, the

Inuit Council men, and the new invaders.

The book moves on with time through four sections: *Aujag!* or Summer; *Kilaloak!* or The Coming of the Whales; *Ukijormioq!* or Freeze-Up; and *Inugliva* (which literally means: make people fewer in number as bad times are coming) — Trouble. The text is written in prose poetry; there is much figurative language and imagery and the cadence is marked, but not in the regular manner of poetry. It is a difficult book to quote from because of its distinctive style and its content. The settlement of Tuktoyaktuk is made up of many faces, many voices and to separate the organic wholeness of the community by looking at some of the distinctive brush strokes is to detract and diminish the total picture. In the Gestalt sense of the phrase, this book is very much the sum of its parts. Schwarz's excellent introduction is perhaps the only composite overview possible. Some of the more general images are brittle and memorable. In "Shell Lake Airport" Schwarz brings us to his final conclusion:

*Surrounded by piney trees
dark green waters
of Shell Lake
few miles out of Inuvik
a child's paradise
from the air
with its multi-coloured
fat bumble-bees
in red, yellow,
blue and green
on skis,
splashing noisily
over the cool waters of the lake
and with a roar
carrying their cargo
of human pollen
and spilling it
over the countless lakes,
rivers
and the Arctic Sea.*

There are the citizens of Tuktoyaktuk whom Dr. Schwarz sees first at a distance from "Looking out of My Window,"

*The Eskimos
dream-like
bending down
then up
in a rhythmical motion.
The boat is moving
very slow
reaping harvest
of the ocean.*

and then as brothers and fellow-travelers when one comes as a "Silent Visitor":

*Sometimes
at night
a lone Eskimo
would enter through my door
drink his tea in silence*

*and stay in for hours
without saying a word*

*and then
I realize
that what he really wants
is just another human being
to share with him
this silence.*

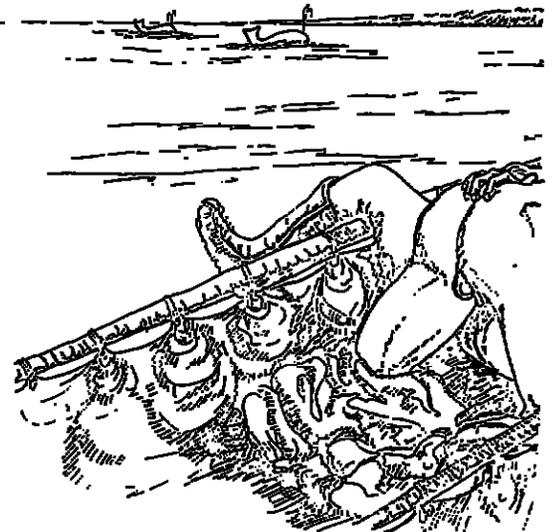
The book ends with the poignant credo: we are on the eve of a destruction from "The New Invaders":

*From prairie towns and villages
and Rocky Mountains of the South
there comes this faceless army
these new invaders of the land.*

Schwarz makes his position clear in the introduction: "I've no quarrel with the oil companies in their desire for exploration and profit. The frantic haste, however, to find and exploit our dwindling natural resources, the 'do it all at cost' policy, with little regard for the Eskimo, and the misuse of the land itself, are not conducive to excessive sympathy. Because the Arctic, although far away from the mainstream of all Canadian communities, is not dispensable. In the not too distant future our very survival may depend on it."

"The New Invaders" concludes with these prophetic and moving lines:

*The fragile land
bleeding from repeated gouging
laid waste by selfish plunder
under the heady banners
of industry and progress*



Drawing by Eddy Cobiness from Tuktoyaktuk 2-3.

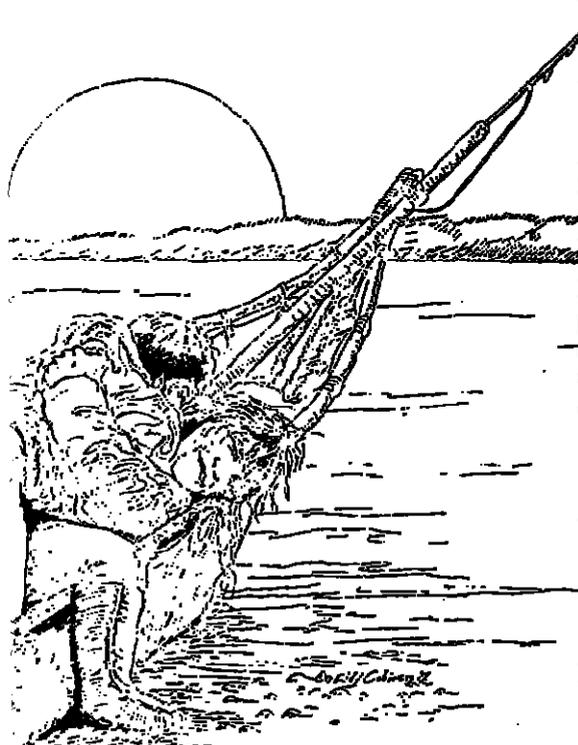
not human happiness
but an overpowering greed,
believe it
this land is dying
and with it
you and me

The book closes with "The Last Song." There an old spirit-man claps his drum and "taunted us/with spirits of long ago" —

"Aya-a-Aya"
the drummer's age-old cries
embraced timeless infinity,
and dissolved
on the brooding tundra.

Facing this benediction is one of 15 sensitive, perceptive, and oft-erotic line drawings by Eddy Cobiness, himself a Buffalo Sioux who now lives in Manitoba. He is a self-taught artist, whose work has been exhibited throughout Canada and the United States. He shares very much in the conception and execution of the white core that this book is all about.

The book is filled with images, metaphors, and concepts often as startling, memorable, and powerful as the photograph on the cover of a limp, dead seagull hung over a fresh catch of fish to keep the other birds away. The impressions left are alarming ones and they do much more than linger in a raised consciousness. They challenge each of us; there is yet time. The far North is no longer that far away from any of us. □



Woeman of the guard

The Custodian of Chaos, by Marg Yeo, Applegarth Follies (156 Albert St., London, Ont.), 71 pages, paper unpriced.

By KAREN MULHALLEN

MARG YEO IS AN arachnid, a weaver of webs, a potentially dangerous creature. Her poetry is self-destructive, because her Circean postures fail — though she is an immensely controlled, and sure-footed, weaver — as she gradually buries herself in her own entrails.

Yeo has published three books of poetry — *Game for Shut-ins* (1971), *Evolutions* (1973), *The Custodian of Chaos* (1975) — whose titles, if read counter-chronologically, suggest the evolution and winding down of her art, the increased technical skill in a few poems, and the gradual, inevitable, loss of subject matter.

Because solipsism, apparently unrecognized, is where this poet ends, it seems important to review her earlier books, to understand the skill turned in on itself. The custodian of chaos tells us, in her epigraph, that should she tell her "history 'twould seem/Like lies, disdain'd in the reporting." But the custodian is mistaken about her antecedents, for, unlike Pericles, her history is disdainful because too common rather than improbable.

Much of Yeo's poetry is thematically imitative of Margaret Atwood and Jay Macpherson; her titles also bow to Reaney's *Colours in the Dark* and Davies' *Fifth Business*. Atwood, who arranged *Game for Shut-ins*, has given her special marks, themes of metamorphosis, suffocation, subterranean confinement and perspectives, lycanthropy, and narcissism, themes that are often vicious and bloody.

Game for Shut-ins moves seasonally from spring to winter, depicting a world seen from behind glass, a one-way vision screen, a gold-fish bowl full of piranha fish. Heterosexual relationships are brittle and confining. The ending is a bare tree etched against a winter morning sky, a three-line poem that the poet says is "pointing directions," but which is pointing nowhere.

Better, and slightly longer than *Game for Shut-ins* is *Evolutions*, which is also sensitively illustrated by Diana Hinman, whose line drawings

deserve a larger format and finer paper and production. Clear in the rough-hewn rhythm of Yeo's first poem is her technical skill as she sculpts and conjures a man raking leaves:

far away, on the side of the hill, a man
raking (bend and pull) gathers heaps
of red and brown in the wind; a man small
in the distance (and around him the piles
grow
enormous, mounds bury the hillside, the
man
vanishes, yet the rasp of the rake
continues, rasp and rasp) retrieving the
crumpled
dull leaves from the hard fingers of the
grass. . . .

Yet, even this fine poem is about inhumation, living burial. The poetic voice sees herself as a settler, a pioneer, sending letters, drawing portraits in white (are they silhouettes or invisible?). In a world of mirrors, reflections, canvasses — with their echoes of early Canadian drawings by women — she identifies herself with snowy trees and only comes out when loved. Betrayed once too often, she becomes the betrayer, the mechanical bride:

. . . but see,
lover, I have a new
defence — take my metal
fingers in yours, admire
my surfaces, your own
reflection.

The title poem poses the problem, for the writer is a romantic in search of feeling, marooned "in the analytical dawn," forced to "debate," "perform . . . in public." This is epitomized in her post-lapsarian concrete poem "genesis" or "woeman."

Marg Yeo writes well. The crux is content and structure. At the end of *Evolutions*, in "home free," she finds

safety is not
being found — is finding
the secret place where
the game ends where there are
lilacs, and night
voices, is going
homelfree

Evolutions should end here. Instead the anti-climactic and pretentious "notes on time" tells that reader and poet, if they "hold/tight," will be "partners till the next explosion."

The Custodian of Chaos is consistent thematically and shares the faults of the earlier works. It is, for its content, too long; it is also often boring and unconvincing:

now when I walk I
stretch my arms out, let
my fingers lead
me into anything, I am
going to discover the
world again, with my
hands and
from the inside.

There is in the whole too much of Atwood and Persephone. Yet there is an important new note in the custodian's voice — she is capable of humour and warmth:

in my dark and secret heart i imagine i will eventually turn into marlene dietrich. i am always au cabaret and in rehearsal, i leap onto every piano, muttering falling in love again, never, wanted to, what am i to do, can't help it, and tipping my top hat at emil....

And, in the long poem "isadora," she draws a social as well as a personal mythology:

there is no space between andromache and isadora, the single cry one pain, dead child or children, lost husband or lover. there is no history in women

Humour, warmth and technical skill — small contributions, perhaps, to poetry, but at least readable ones and needed in Canadian poetry. □

Simple songs, tricky cycles

In Transit, by Eugene MacNamara, The Pennyworth Press (1429 28th St., Calgary), 20 pages, paper unpriced.

Freewheeling Through Gossamer Dragstrips, by Alan Pearson, Sesame Press (663½ Campbell St., Windsor), 72 pages, \$2.50 paper.

Ten Letters, by Colleen Thibau-
deau, Nairn Publishing House (156 Albert St., London, Ont.), 24 pages, \$1.75 paper.

Harbour Light, by David Conn, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 24 pages, \$2 paper.

By JOHN OUGHTON

OF THE FOUR poets responsible for these slim volumes of verse, Eugene MacNamara is the best known. *In Transit* is his sixth collection, a cycle of 14 elegaic love poems that draw on metaphors of movement and transportation. The poems are simple in language but not in technique;

MacNamara's ear for the use of line breaks is constantly improving and the phrasing makes the feelings live. The main weakness here is a lack of surprise; satisfying as songs, relevant to each other, none of the poems grabbed this reader with the immediacy of loss (and lust) that inspired them.

Freewheeling Through Gossamer Dragstrips is a title that gives fair warning of what to expect from Alan Pearson. He has a love for metaphor, simile, and colourful language. The poetry is stuffed with sensual images, unusual words, and the sort of deliberately anti-climactic structure favoured by Frank O'Hara. Some lines work, some don't; but Pearson has basically one mode of writing: picaresque/wry. In single doses the poetry fulfils his aim of entertaining the reader; in 72 pages one can become, well, a trifle jaded.

Colleen Thibau-
deau is the most experimental of these poets, and her *Ten Letters* merit close attention. Such lines as "Among the cedars, some of them struggling still like old limbo dancers" are unlikely enough to last. "Ground" is the operative concept of most of the poems, context giving Thibau-
deau something to get out of and dream under. The book is basically well-

LOOK TO THIS DAY FOR TOMORROW

Dorothy Henderson

Here is a collection of thoughts gathered by Dorothy Henderson during her lifetime, stored in her memories, preserved in her scrapbook of life's experiences — and found to be so creative that she wishes to share them with others. Ranging from the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-tse to such modern writers as Boris Pasternak, they illustrate and exemplify aspects of the author's philosophy.

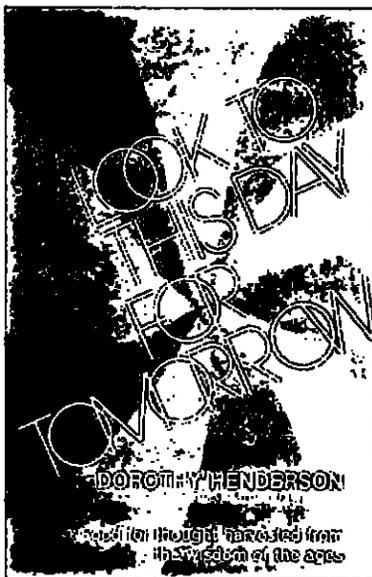
Mrs. Henderson divides her book into twenty-nine chapters, each headed by a scriptural passage from the life and teachings of Jesus. This is followed by the author's own modern interpretation, which serves as a link between the words of Jesus and the quotations that follow. Each chapter is devoted to a topic of vital interest to every individual: Faith, Courage, Love, Beauty, Happiness, Wisdom, Hope, Death and Life, and

the other concerns that constitute our lives.

With its fund of wisdom, *Look to This Day for Tomorrow* will be of value to every reader who is wondering about his own future and the future of our universe. As the introductory poem, from the Sanskrit, suggests, the answer can be found:

*Today well lived
Makes every yesterday a dream
of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision
of hope.*

Dorothy Henderson has had six books published. Her *People Have Power: The Meanings and Practice of Democracy* received Mexico's Diploma of Honorable Mention as the best book written by a woman in 1964. A Canadian of English, Irish and Scottish ancestry, she was born in Oshawa, Ontario, and now lives on a farm near King City, Ontario.



155 pages, cloth \$6.00

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designed, brown Baskerville on textured paper, but insufficient care was given to taking an even impression from the type.

David Conn's *Harbour Light* is also a cycle and deals with working in a West Coast shipyard. Quiet, undramatic, his writing aims at texture and emotion rather than the political ironies Tom Wayman draws. There are a few strong poems — notably "Wooden Tug" and "The Lion" — that show Conn can see as well as sing; his work would have more impact if it shouted once in a while. □

Exile and exhumation

Unborn Things: South American Poems, by Patrick Lane, Harbour Publishing (P.O. Box 119, Madeira Park, B.C.), 38 pages, \$4 paper.

The Shrouding, by Leo Kennedy, Golden Dog Press (15 Ossington Ave., Ottawa), 59 pages, paper unpriced.

By LEN GASPARINI

SOMETIMES A POET has to go outside his own country to unlearn the values he has taken for granted. Whether these values have provided him with the gift of a poetic speech that is solid enough or that rings with any vibration or spiritual conviction, one thing is certain: their speciousness should always be suspect. Too few Canadian poets have ventured abroad or lived in voluntary exile. Joyce left Dublin; the American expatriates swarmed the Left Bank. In our time we've had the annual globe-trotting of Layton; Purdy ice-fishing with the Eskimos; and more recently, the South American poems of Patrick Lane.

Unborn Things is Lane's 10th collection, following hard on the heels of his Anansi book. It is the product of his expedition to Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia. There are only 18 poems in this volume, but each one is as mighty and self-sustaining as a sequoia. Lane knows how to pack more feeling into a phrase than many other better-known poets know how to pack into a stanza. His rhythm and imagery are always consistent. If he writes about a leper, you can feel your skin crawl; if he writes about the "children of Bogota," you begin to understand with dread the tragic insignificance of human life:

"There are five thousand of them/roaming the streets of this city/— and just because they look innocent/doesn't make them human."

Images of decay and death underlie these South American poems. One can almost visualize babies growing out of the rank earth instead of their mothers' wombs. In "Calle Boliver" we see the organic combined with the grotesque:

*On black pavement a child sleeps
inside cups of rain. Flowers of water
bloom on his cheeks. Cockroaches
like earth-bound vultures
float between his legs*

Neruda's aesthetic-shattering statement, "Toward an Impure Poetry," has certainly had a strong effect on Lane. "At the Edge of the Jungle" is a vivid synthesis of all that Lane has worked and reworked as a poet. And nature still remains the sole mysterious force, blending mortality with oblivion: "A man could walk into this jungle/and lying down be lost/among the green sucking of trees."

There are also eight drawings by Lane. Surreal is too weak a word to describe them. They are profound, Goya-nightmarish — the cocaine visions of an extremely aware sensibility. *Unborn Things* earmarks Patrick Lane for what is truly great in Canadian poetry.

For a publisher to exhume a book such as Leo Kennedy's *The Shrouding*, after so many decades of neglect, seems strangely posthumous. Although Kennedy is alive and living somewhere in Connecticut, this book of poems (the only one he ever wrote) was originally published back in 1933. The reprint contains a nostalgic and perceptive introduction by Leon Edel, and a somewhat apologetic note by the poet, in which he confesses that his poems "were written when the world was more formal and poets thought a lot about scansion and almost as much about rhyme."

Leo Kennedy was one of the group of Montreal poets of the 1920s and 1930s. His poems seem obscure and precious now, full of religious symbolism and echoes of John Crowe Ransom, Elinor Wylie, *et al.* Any serious student of Canadian poetry will probably remember him for such poems as "Words for a Resurrection" and "Mad Boy's Song."

One thing that particularly disturbs me is that Kennedy abandoned poetry long ago for the writing of advertising copy. Of course, this in itself is not a crime, but then it's not what you would



CANADIAN BOOK REVIEW ANNUAL

edited by Dean Tudor,
Nancy Tudor and Linda Biesenthal

In this the first edition of the CBRA, professional librarians and subject specialists provide original, concise 200-word evaluative reviews of all Canadian trade titles published in 1975. Included are English translations of French Canadian titles, 1975 reprints of books which have been unavailable for the past ten years, and selected federal and provincial government publications. Arranged by number within subject categories, each entry is headed by complete ordering and bibliographical information (author, title, publisher, date and place of publication, price and ISBN), followed by a brief outline of content and critical evaluation.

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UNIVERSITY AT HOME

Louis Brunel and
Kees Vanderheyden, editors

Increasing numbers of students around the world are receiving higher education without setting foot in a university lecture hall. *University at Home* is the product of a recent symposium held in Montreal; the distinguished conferees were drawn from many countries. The systems of "education at a distance" of Europe, East and West, Great Britain, Canada and the U.S.A. are discussed in detail, and bibliographies are given for each one.



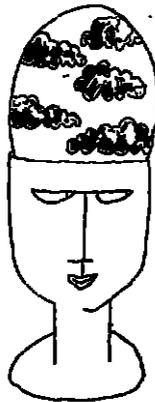
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call dedication either. Rather than re-issue a book that has little relevance to the present, I think the publisher would do much better to cast about for the real. Furthermore, we have A.J.M. Smith's anthologies.

The publication of *The Shrouding* is just another example of self-indulgent academicism. A resurrection this book is not. □

New dope on an old GeeGee

Monck: Governor General, 1861-1868, by Elizabeth Batt, McClelland and Stewart, 191 pages, \$10 cloth.

By J.A.S. EVANS

"I CONGRATULATE you on the legislative sanction which has been given by the Imperial Parliament to the Act of Union, under the provisions of which we are now assembled, and which has laid the foundation of a new nationality." For Canadians who are interested in the climate of opinion that attended Confederation, those words are an important gobbet, particularly the phrase "a new nationality," which was much quoted at the time, and which was quoted again by the distinguished historian of Canada, Frank Underhill, in his 1963 Massey Lectures on the CBC.

The sentence comes from the Throne Speech of Charles Stanley, fourth Viscount Monck, the Governor General at the opening of the first Parliament in the new Dominion, on Nov. 7, 1867. Presumably he spoke with the sanction of his Canadian ministry, for the Governor had acted the part of a constitutional monarch within Canada for almost two decades before Confederation. But he was by no means a figurehead. During his term of office, Monck was the intermediary between Canada and the Imperial Government, which still assumed responsibility for directing Canada's foreign affairs and defence. He could also assert constitutional discretion, and in the province of Canada before Confederation, when ministries rose and fell as regularly as they do in modern Italy, the discretion of a shrewd Governor mattered. It was Monck who, in 1864, deferred a grant of dissolution of Parliament, and asked his ministers and the leaders of the opposition to consider if a coalition might be formed to break the political deadlock in the pro-

vince. From this coalition emerged the Quebec Conference, and from it in turn, the British North America Act.

Yet Monck is a relative unknown. He is not included among the Fathers of Confederation. His seven years in Canada were a brief portion of his career, and for his wife, an unhappy portion. A well-connected Irish peer whose family had acquired its estates by purchase or prudent marriage, Monck had been Lord of the Treasury in Lord Palmerston's government, and when the Palmerston government fell in 1857, he was out of a job. Unemployed and in debt (he had acquired a £90,000 debt along with his wife, who was the daughter of an impecunious Irish earl, Monck's own uncle), he hoped for a salaried government post. None came. By 1861, he let it be known that he would be willing to accept a colonial appointment, and was soon offered the governorship of Canada. Four British peers had already turned it down.

Elisabeth Batt, who is Monck's great-granddaughter, makes the best of it, but the fact is that British North America was not an attractive assignment for a member of the British ruling élite if he could think of something else to do. It offered little of the pomp and swagger of an old colonial governorship, although the Governor-in-Chief of New Brunswick did manage to have himself prayed over in the province's Anglican churches under the appellation of "Thy servant Arthur." Moreover, Canada was a potentially dangerous post. Some three weeks after Monck reached Quebec, Britain and the United States were on the verge of war over the incident known as the *Trent* affair, and in any outbreak of hostilities, Canada would have been a helpless pawn. Monck's private correspondence on this affair is lost, for most of his papers were burned in 1931, and his biographer lacks the sort of documentation that would flesh out a full picture of her ancestor. But the *Trent* affair strengthened Monck's hand in pushing for the Militia Bill, a project dear to the heart of the Colonial Secretary in London, who wanted Canada to pay for her own defence.

The bill was entrusted to John A. Macdonald, whom Monck had appointed Special Minister for Militia Affairs. Macdonald knew the urgency of the situation. But he also knew that Canada's finances were in a parlous state, and that much of the hostility of the United States for Canada was caused simply by the stormy course of

Anglo-American relations during the U.S. Civil War. Over that, he had no control. He took to the bottle. The bill went forward with delays. "Mr. J. A. Macdonald," Monck reported to the home government, "was prevented from attending his place in the House during the whole of last week, nominally by illness, but really, as everyone knew, by drunkenness." At second reading, the bill was defeated. The Colonial Secretary was livid, and although Monck and Macdonald became friends, in his early dispatches, Monck treated Macdonald with reserve. London eventually settled for an emasculated Militia Bill, which was, however, much less expensive for Canada.

Yet no war with the United States materialized, and Monck deserves some of the credit for that. The U.S. government, particularly Secretary of State Seward, seems to have regarded

The fact is that British North America was not an attractive assignment for a member of the British ruling élite if he could think of something else to do.

him as a sound, trustworthy man. He had much the same reputation in British North America, where politicians accepted him as well-meaning and honest, and trusted him when they would not trust each other. But popularity eluded him. His wife did not like Canada, and although Elisabeth Batt makes every allowance for her, Monck had little support from that quarter. Some of the leading politicians in French Canada came actively to dislike him, and in those parts of the Maritimes where flags flew at half-mast on July 1, 1867, he was naturally unloved. A year after Confederation, the Canadian Parliament cut his salary, which made a successor difficult to find.

Ms. Batt pays little attention to the rest of Monck's career. He concerned himself with the Irish question, which was his chief interest, but anything he achieved there has now been swept away, and if Monck has a niche in history, it is because of his seven years in Canada. This biography is long overdue, and although Ms. Batt is a little over-insistent on the virtues of her ancestors, she has produced a readable account of Canada's first Governor General. □

Write, write, for the pun is at the gate

In the Name of Language!, edited by Joseph Gold, Macmillan and Maclean-Hunter Press, 209 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0-7705-1355-7) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0-7705-1356-5).

By DOUGLAS MARSHALL

I SEE BY my Sunday newspaper, the one that describes singer Anne Murray as "infanticipating," that "three teams of researchers are conducting a \$500,000 study for the Ontario education and universities ministries to see if Ontario students are literate." The simple answer, which can be had for the price of a telephone call to any rewrite desk, is that most of them are not. I speak with 20 years of experience as a published writer and editor. I define a literate English-speaking person as one who has an intuitive grasp of the English language and how it works on paper, and who possesses a reasonable working knowledge of the literature that forms the ark of our cultural heritage. It is as plain to me as the 0 on this typeface that a distressingly high percentage of persons under 40 whose minds touch mine, including many with great intellectual powers, suffer from the crippling handicap of being unable to write a clear English sentence. The sad part of it all is that, with rare exceptions, these cripples either don't recognize their disability or dismiss it as a trivial burden. Sadder still, it's too late to give the adults among them remedial aid even if they sought it. We're left with a huge army of semi-literates, two generations strong, slouching through the latter part of the 20th century toward a new Bethlehem — the wired world of village idiots.

When the Ontario research teams have spent their \$500,000, reached the obvious conclusions, and written up their report in the official dissertationese they learned so well in their graduate courses, a counter-reformation movement will no doubt spring up demanding that something be done about the situation. For my money — and it is my money, and yours — the best thing that could be done is to send a copy of *In the Name of Language!* to

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This spring Oberon Press will publish its hundredth new Canadian title, *Blood Ties* by David Adams Richards. Readers of David Richards' first novel will remember him as a writer of relentless intensity and passion. Here he returns once again to the country of his boyhood, the narrow, concentrated world of the Miramichi. The result is a book of great beauty and authority, a major achievement for both writer and publisher. Coming 30 June at 11.95

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And watch for a first book of stories, *The Butterfly Ward*, by Margaret Gibson Gilboord, author of the CBC-TV script *Ada*. These stories all deal with the reality and mystery of madness. Like Sylvia Plath, Margaret Gilboord understands the essential sanity, as well as the vulnerability, of her characters. A painful and touching work. Coming 31 March at 8.95/3.95.

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every English teacher in the land and make the book required reading on every English 100 course from now until the cause is won.

The book is a collection of essays by six enlightened academics (with a brief afterword by a seventh) who burn with shame for their discipline. It is first and foremost a pleasure to read; the essay endures as one of the most effective forms in our literature and these are splendid samples. It is also a belated call to arms. "The enemy is within," says George Whalley in one of his two contributions. A generation ago, he notes, English took over from the Classics the role of the central civilizing discipline, the heart of the humanities. The teachers and keepers of the language picked up the banner with confidence: "That confidence has now largely evaporated. If we could find a wall we would have our backs to it."

Whalley here has hacked through obfuscating verbiage and philosophical camouflage to sink his axe into the truth of the matter. The proudest tree in Academe has Dutch elm disease; it is rotten to the core. Little empirical beetles, carrying the virus of communications theory, have gnawed their way through the protective bark to transform the hard wood of a humane discipline into the soft pulp of "just another subject-area." The blight now threatens the entire grove and the only cure is for the teachers and keepers of English to relearn their business.

Other contributors arrive at the same point by other routes and using different metaphors. F.E.L. Priestley, in a graceful and reflective essay, sees language "as a vast kit of tools, suitable for every kind of job." Geoffrey Durrant attacks "the new barbarians" who devalue language, "the natural domain of the human mind," because they fear its liberating power. Maurice Elliott wanders erratically through the wasteland of contemporary jargon and "nowspeak," quoting a bit too much but demonstrating how only an active and critical consciousness of language can reveal the "real" world. He also stresses, as does Priestley, that one of the many arts English teachers must rediscover is the ability to read aloud.

Michael Hornyasky's essay, which appeared in truncated form in the *Toronto Globe & Mail*, deserves special mention because he attempts to penetrate the linguistic hostility of the semi-literate by hitting them where they live — in their "image." Briskly updating Fowler, he runs through a list of the common mistakes of usage that betray a

person's ignorance or insensitivity. Purists will pale at his permissiveness, but his thoughts on idiom are vindicated by his own jaunty style. Moreover, he presents the best definition of language I've yet read: It "is a means of giving a precise pattern to thought and feeling, and a means of conveying that pattern to other people."

The themes of the various essays are tied together in a neat syntactical bundle by Joseph Gold's introduction. "Our children have a right to know the tale of their tribe," he writes. "Pleasure, freedom, and identity may not be guaranteed by reading, but they may be unavailable without it." Many readers of this review might feel themselves superior to this warning, confident that a dedicated literati can keep literacy alive. Gold nicely pricks that smug balloon. "Libraries, publishers, and poets depend on a large audience," he says. "There is an economics to literacy that must not be forgotten."

The last word belongs to Whalley: "There really is no other way of coming to terms seriously with language than by trying to write well." Boards of Education everywhere, there beginneth the lesson. □

Tollerware party

Toller, by Elva Oglanby, illustrations by Toller Cranston, photographs by David Street, Gage, 131 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By MYFANWY PHILLIPS

MOST PEOPLE seem to like Toller Cranston. He is without doubt a popular hero, a man spoken of with genuine affection and respect. People like his fashionable, androgynous features; women call him "cute." Everyone wishes him well and hoped he would take the gold medal at the 1976 Olympic games. In the event, he placed a gallant third.

Somehow it just seems too easy to put this book down. There are thousands of people out there spending their hard-earned dollars putting *Toller* on the best-seller list. That's curious. Who are they and why do they find this book so appealing?

On the surface, the book is a deceptively attractive package for the price. It pretends to be what the introduction calls "a portrait in words and pictures," a sort of "mood" book you



might call it, containing some poems (I think that's what they are), some prose, colour reproductions of a few paintings, and a great many predictably competent but uninspired black-and-white theatrical-type photographs. It is a book especially for fans, the kind of book the Osmond brothers might put out for themselves. A piece of unadulterated self-promotion. And if Arthur Erickson can similarly indulge himself, why can't Toller Cranston? After all, who has ever heard of Arthur Erickson?

The people who *have* heard of Arthur Erickson are definitely not buying this book. They are, strangely enough, the people for whom all the bad reviews will be written. They are your doctors, lawyers, architects, and clergymen. True, this is a confessional book, but it certainly doesn't fit in with those people's idea of what St. Augustine and Malcolm Muggeridge had to say. It's no conventional autobiography either, for you never actually find out anything about Toller Cranston, his skating or his painting.

His paintings, in fact, reinforce the point quite well. Those of us who pretend to know anything about Beardsley, Dulac, Nielsen, and the great Arthur Rackham (*Grimm's Fairy Tales*) just won't put up with this derivative stuff. Those artists relied on folklore, myth, fantasy, and magical visions for their inspiration. They were at once both whimsical and satirical. Cranston's paintings have the same universal appeal and the colours are pretty, but the visions are more limited and the results merely decorative.

You can leave out your everyday working man, too, from the list of purchasers. He may buy his paintings on velvet and have scenes of tropical paradises on his living-room wallpaper. But he knows that the people who paint them don't pretend to be "great artists of our time." He likes things to be more straightforward, like his favourite country songs. He expects

a shower of spring titles

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by Maara Haas
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SEA LIFE OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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edited by Michael Gnarowski
This latest addition to the *Critical Views on Canadian Writers Series* looks at the three facets of Cohen... poet-novelist, pop artist, and "media freak". May \$9.95 hc \$5.95 pb

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Honk if you love them

The Flight of the Snow Geese, by Des and Jan Bartlett, Collins and Harvill, illustrated, 189 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

By LINDA MARCHAND

THE SNOW GEESE are among the most romantic and mysterious of wild birds. Their yearly round-trip flight of 6,000 miles is indeed incredible, their beauty is captivating, their cry haunting. This past fall I was treated to the sight of more than 100,000 of these magnificent creatures when they landed at a sanctuary on the St. Lawrence (Cap Tourmente), just 18 miles from my home. They stopped for some days to feed and rest, then took off in great white waves to continue their journey south. It was a stunning sight.

Des and Jan Bartlett, Australian naturalists and wildlife photographers, spent two years and 10,000 miles with these great birds, making a film and keeping a daily journal for this book. I've not had the opportunity to see the film, but the book, their third on wildlife, is thoroughly enjoyable.

The stated purpose of the book is to tell the story of the snow geese, both wild and imprinted. The Bartletts have done that and more, for they also recount the adventure of living a summer on the tundra, the vicissitudes and victories of photographing wildlife and offer fascinating detail about many other species of birds, from the Arctic loon to the Texas Attwater's Prairie chicken. They've also included the tale of Fred, an adopted sandhill crane, and for those whose appreciation of animals runs to anthropomorphizing, it is an appealing ingredient.

During the first summer they spent near a snow goose nesting ground at the McConnell River on the western shore of Hudson Bay, the Bartletts took on the demanding task of caring for several parentless goslings. The "creeps," as these 10 imprinted geese came to be called, were with the Bartletts for a year, whereupon they chose to return to the wild. This endearing adopted brood provide much of the drama and humour of the book and it is from their story that we learn most about the life and ways of the snow geese.

The photography is interesting: some, such as one particularly delicate photograph of a goose walking with her goslings and the colour prints of the geese in flight, are exciting. However, on the whole the photography is not exceptional and the book is not recommended for its illustrations. In fact, there are a few irritating omissions. The narrative mentions some exciting moments caught on film, a jaeger attacking a snow goose in mid-air for example, that don't appear with the photographs. As well, pictures of the geese bathing, preening, and nesting are missing, though there is a fine photograph of a spring mating. And Fred; he's so much a presence in the book that a few more photographs of him and his antics would have been appropriate.

The Flight of the Snow Geese is a pleasurable and easy book to read; by combining their skill as naturalists and their interest in wildlife the Bartletts have managed to give us an intimate look at the snow geese without spoiling the mystique that surrounds them. □

Air apparent

A Pictorial History of Radio in Canada, by Sandy Stewart, Gage, illustrated, 154 pages, \$12.95 cloth.

By HARRY BOYLE

IN APRIL THE Canadian Association of Broadcasters celebrates its 50th anniversary. Private radio in Canada goes back to 1919 and the Marconi Company in Montreal with XWA, later to become CFCF. Their first scheduled broadcast was on May 20, 1920, which was a meeting of the Royal Society of Canada in Ottawa. Public broadcasting emerged from intercession, politicking, pressure, churches, the CNR, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, and finally the CBC.

Radio has been vital in Canada. Captive at first to American programs, the CBC emerged in the 1939-45 war as a new reporting force, and television forced private radio to devote its energies to local interest and service. All through the public sector, however, dating back to the Aird Commission, there was a will to be original.

There's a tremendous story to be told in all this because, from the time Canadians discovered hockey broadcasts, radio became truly national. There hasn't been too much written about it apart from chronicles of the political scraps that led to the establishment of a public system.

Sandy Stewart's *Pictorial History of Radio* will appear to be superficial to many people who were involved in the story. That's only natural because we each carry our own assortment of memories and prejudices. The history of broadcasting in this country is something like the history of a war. Your memory depends on which battles you were fighting. Yet the overall story was composed of many skirmishes between politicians and between private and public broadcasters, although the latter two ended up with a great deal of interdependence.

While others merely talked about the wealth of historical material and human interest stories about broadcasting waiting to be collected, Sandy Stewart, with his usual enthusiasm, waded in and did something about it. He has straightened out some injustices such as the role of Fessenden, a Canadian in pioneering radio who was ignored

while Marconi recorded unchallenged credit. Stewart has also provided a focal point for a general overview of radio broadcasting in Canada.

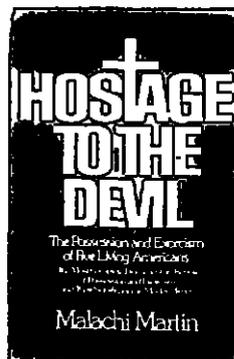
It's not definitive. It is, however, a valuable starting point for subsequent books that will capture more and more of what one of the first Canadian radio dramas portrayed under the title of "The Romance of Canada." Tyrone Guthrie was imported from Britain to produce it in 1931. It's interesting that Guthrie came back to help fan the spark Tom Patterson had for creating the Stratford Shakespearean Festival. Andrew Allan began on CFRB in Toronto and went on to develop the *CBC Stage* series of radio dramas that encouraged a generation of writers and actors. Many are still active in all fields of creative effort in Canada.

There are many similar insights into how we've stumbled into a cultural identity. When you read this book you'll find memories induced by reference to J. Frank Willis and the Moose River Mine disaster broadcasts, Charles Jennings and Lorne Greene reading the CBC National Radio News, or Hamish McGeachy broadcasting during the Blitz. What about Don Mes-

ser and The Islanders, or The Happy Gang? *A Pictorial History of Radio* is a companion to A. E. Powley's *Broadcast From The Front* and Max Ferguson's *Now, Here's Max*. Let's hope there are more. It's about time we took stock of such things. Such efforts may finally quell the people who keep harping about our lack of identity.

There are no duplicates of the late J. Frank Willis. Even as I write this I can hear that inimitable theme, Quentin Maclean at the organ and Frank reading the things he liked on *Nocturne*. Do you remember? I'll bet you do!

I should add that the pictures are terrific. Stewart obviously had a time finding them. We're a dreadfully careless lot about our historical artifacts. If this book simply stirs people to dig out their own broadcasting relics it will be well worth the effort. □



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No date with destiny

Of Dust and Time and Dreams and Agonies, by Pat Bird, illustrated by Yvonne Slipka, The Canadian News Synthesis Project (NC Press), 166 pages, \$3.50 paper.

By DAVID COTTER

AS THE U.S. Bicentennial band warms up in the wings, the dissonance seems absolute: 1775 — the red coats are driven out of the government by, for, and of the you-know-who; 1975 — the last American troops are whirred away in disgrace from Indo-China. Standing over Concord Bridge, reflecting on the American Dream, President Ford is moved to remark that "American sea power now ranges to the most distant shores." Not a word about racial justice, individual liberty, social equality. (Probably just as well. Roughly four per cent of the population owns some 65 per cent of all privately held corporate wealth and bags 24 per cent of the national income.) Freedom by shining example in 1775; liberation by heavy artillery 1975, and easily afforded since the defence budget will equal by the end of the decade \$114 billion per year. And what of the two-party system? It is becoming creepily apparent that it is nothing but an elaborate front with the electorate a "quadrennial chorus whose function is to notify with hosannahs one of two candidates carefully picked for them" by the property class.

As Americans reflect on the long division between what their nation was intended to be, a political adventure in the art of governing men, and what it has become, a predatory empire, Canadians would do well to consider their own discrepancies.

Consider Pat Bird's new book such a reflection — a sobering, nicely illustrated little primer on our efforts to become a true alternative to the American Dream. The back cover forewarns that it is not a scholarly treatise but rather a short economic and social history of Canada. Add italics to the word economic and the fact that it is distributed by NC Press, "The Canadian Liberation Publishers," and you should be prepared for the tone and the slant.

The argument is familiar. Canada has always been a hinterland, first exploited by Europe and now by the U.S.

through our own "silent surrender." The agonies in the title belong to the working class, all good socialists, bled by U.S. imperialism and the greed of Canadian businessmen (who invested \$1.8 billion in foreign-owned subsidiaries in 1965). As for the Depression, Miss Bird feels too much sympathy has been paid to millionaires who jumped wailing from Wall Street windows. Compared to the working class, they got off fairly lightly.

Most interesting, perhaps, are her views on Confederation and her analysis of the Founding Fathers' economic motivations. How calm, how practical, how reasonable they all were and how absolutely deaf to the opposition. Her vision of what their dream really was and what they proclaimed it to be is dark and unsparing. Her version of the CPR, with every spike a nail in somebody's coffin, is a refreshing contrast to Berton's *National Dream*.

Still, one major objection. Much of Canadian history has necessarily been reaction against the happy waggings of the U.S. imperial tail. To understand our own divisions, it is imperative that we understand how and where and why the American Dream has gone wrong. To write the whole thing off as a grim reminder that free enterprise doesn't work, is to miss the boat — and to sell both futures short. □

Yesterday's headlines

Public and Private Persons: The Ontario Political Culture, 1914-1934, by Peter Oliver, Clarke Irwin, 291 pages, \$12.50 cloth.

By MALCOLM MacLEOD

THIS INTERESTING book features the best-known names in Ontario public life 50 years ago — such men as Sir William Hearst, Howard Ferguson and Peter Smith (politicians), and Sir Joseph Flavelle and Aemilius Jarvis (businessmen). The heroes appear and re-appear in seven separate, self-contained essays. Four of these articles have been published before; three are new. The topics are two scandals, two instances of political party disintegration, Regulation 17, the establishment of the Ontario Research Foundation, and temperance.

Taken altogether, Professor Oliver's essays add up to a quite comprehensive

review of major issues and developments in Ontario politics between the First World War and the 1930s. They range from "Sir William Hearst and the collapse of the Ontario Conservative Party" (1914-1919) to the 83-page *pièce de résistance*, the most significant example of new work included here — "Scandal in Ontario politics: the Jarvis-Smith affair, an Ontario Dreyfus case?" (The United Farmer Provincial Treasurer and a socially prominent broker went to jail after illegal fortunes were made in government bond deals. Will it ruin the suspense to say that Oliver decides the case was nothing like Dreyfus?). Each chapter is a masterpiece of academic narrative history: copious documentation; great clarity in exposition; and carefully crafted conclusions.

The book does not have the dual appeal promised on the jacket. Its title is misleading. To redeem his pledge about portraying private persons, the author would have had to give us some personal and psychological insights about his heroes. They are presented, however, very much in their public guise. Based on the evidence assembled here, we have to assume they had no life outside of controversy, and that they lived in their offices — or else in the morgue files of Toronto papers whence editors periodically resurrected them for headline stories and photos. The dedication to male-dominated public affairs is so firm that we can make a short list of all the women who appear here: Reverend J.O.L. Spracklin's wife, almost gunned down when rum-runners came after her husband who was heading up a police squad enforcing the Ontario Temperance Act; a "known prostitute" whom the government's opponents claimed was an *agent provocateur* obtaining booze convictions; and all the women of the province, enfranchised in 1917 without — apparently — doing anything very active to press for the change.

The book's scope is therefore quite narrow; this is political-party historiography. Oliver is extremely good at interpreting his own work within these limits. Each conclusion is carefully balanced with suggestive whys and wherefores. In an interesting commentary on regionalism, which introduces the collection, he writes: "Somewhat to my own surprise, the subjects dealt with ... could all be regarded in some respects at least as arising out of the problems and challenges faced by a rapidly industrializing and increasingly urbanized society." Without pretending

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Marian Engel

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to be social history, this book indeed indicates a changing style of life that gave the public persons of Ontario their newsworthy preoccupations. □

Dirty tricks in history

On Active Service in War and Peace: Politics and Ideology in the American Historical Profession, by Jesse Lemisch, New Hogtown Press (12 Hart House Circle, U of T, Toronto), 150 pages, \$3 paper.

By **EDWARD HAGERMAN**

THIS IS THE first publication of Jesse Lemisch's controversial essay on the ideological repression of New Left academics by the American academic establishment and in particular by his own historical profession. First presented at the 1969 American Historical Meetings, the essay has received wide underground circulation. It is somewhat ironic, from both sides of the border, that a Canadian socialist publisher should take the initial risk of bringing out this American document of the 1960s. The Canadian content is an introduction by Canadian historian Thomas Schofield that extends Lemisch's thesis to the Canadian historical profession.

Lemisch contends that a liberal-conservative Cold War alliance among the leaders of the American academic community has since the Second World War, and in particular during the volatile 1960s, systematically attempted to suppress the New Left critique of American Society. Lemisch chronicles a familiar story of academic black listing, faculty firings, and thought control in graduate school curriculums and academic journals. In retrospect, Lemisch's analysis of the intellectual context of the controversy seems hardly worthy of such intellectual and political fury, to say nothing of dirty tricks. But Lemisch presents an academic élite inextricably entangled with the political and other institutional élites in society; and in a time of cultural crisis they panicked and repressed together in their attempt to sustain the intellectual and institutional forms of the liberal-conservative world view.

Lemisch's essay raises some good fundamental questions about the nature of world-view processes in the intellectual, institutional, and political culture

of academics; and Lemisch is the first to appreciate that the worth of his essay rests ultimately on its success as an inspiration for a more systematic historical and social scientific analysis of these questions. The result must be not merely more systematic scholarship, however; it must also be greater intellectual and moral self-awareness in academic society.

Whether Lemisch's essay lives up to his expectations for cultural and political uplift or not, it will remain a document of continuing interest to students of the American New Left in the 1960s. The essay gives this country — with its small army of imported American academics — some insight into the ideological forms and conflicts of one of our significant minority groups. The comparison and contrast with our own academic culture that Schofield suggests in his long introduction is certainly worth pursuing, albeit with care. □

IN BRIEF

FOR INFORMATION terrestrial and celestial, *The 1976 Corpus Almanac of Canada* (Corpus Publishers Services, \$25.95) compares well with the main competition from Copp Clark. Entries range from the obligatory Ducks Unlimited under Associations and Societies, to sections on Sources of Information, Communications, Education, Religion, Law, Real Estate, Business Organization, Finance, Taxation and our too many governments — in short, everything you always wanted to know about everything. There is also an expanded section on Native Peoples, which includes an unreadable map of linguistic groups. A better scissors-and-paste job could have been done on the astronomical section, and we do not really have to be told that: "The sun is a good average star. Many other suns are hotter than the sun, or cooler; many are larger or smaller; many are redder or bluer. All other stars are, of course, much further away from the earth." Of course. For librarians and insomniacs.

CHRIS SCOTT

THE REPRINTING of L. A. Wood's, *A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada* (U of T Press, 452 pages, \$5.95 paper), is a boon to historians, political scientists, and sociologists who are concerned with analysing early

agrarian responses to a changing Canadian society. With a fairly sophisticated notion of a social movement foremost in mind, Wood carefully examines the circumstances surrounding the Grange, The Patrons of Industry, and various other farmers' associations in Canada. In addition, he skilfully attempts to account for successes and failures by analysing the consequences of both internal and external events for the movements in question. In short, he asks, and answers, the right questions. The major shortcomings of the book can be reduced to two: first, Wood does not identify his sources of information and consequently those engaged in similar types of inquiry will receive little bibliographic direction; second, his treatment of later movements, like the United Farmers of Ontario, is somewhat sketchy. Despite its limitations, Wood's book deserves distinction as a classic in the realm of Canadian social movements. Consequently, it should still be required reading for various university courses. In addition, its easy style will appeal to the informed non-specialist.

J. PAUL GRAYSON

SOFT & RECYCLED

By PAUL STEUWE

INTERNATIONAL Women's Year seems to have made little impact on Canada as a whole, but it has had a profound effect on those of us who dabble in book-reviewing. Last year's torrent of volumes by and about women has established two incontrovertible facts: the number of run-of-the-mill women writers and boring feminine subjects is quite as large as that of their male counterparts, and the new chauvinism ("Only a woman can understand another woman's experience") is just as repellent as the old ("She writes pretty well—for a woman"). Women, it turns out, are people too, and perhaps now we can begin applying this long-overdue conclusion to the sensible estimation of Canadian writing.

A good place to start would be with Audrey Thomas's novel *Mrs. Blood* (Talonbooks, \$4.95), a painstaking ex-

amination of the turbulent emotional life of a pregnant wife and mother. This complex maze of competing memories and reflections gradually resolves into a sharp portrait of a woman in crisis, perpetually tormented by the real wounds of a vulnerable body and the symbolic wounds of shattered relationships. At the end, having exhibited her courage through "grace under pressure" (Hemingway), she surrenders when there is no longer any point to being courageous; but unlike Hemingway's existentially isolated protagonists, one feels that she will return to the fight another day. *Mrs. Blood* is a vivid, haunting and absolutely convincing creation that should swell the Audrey Thomas cult to super-star proportions.

Totem Books is the new mass-market paperback line from Collins Publishers, and two of its initial releases suggest that PaperJacks may be in for some strenuous competition. Ivan Shaffer's *Business is Business?* (\$1.95) is the sort of minimally competent time-waster (randy young Jewish businessman wheels, deals and schlemihls) that will appear in second-hand bookstores almost as quickly as in drugstores and supermarkets, but

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Spencer Dunmore's *Collision* (\$1.95) is a rattling good yarn in the stiff-upper-lip tradition. Even the author's apparent phobia regarding young people with long hair — compounded by the misprint "hidsute" (hideous-hirsute?) in one amusing instance — could not keep this reader's flowing locks from twitching to the nail-biting finale of a superbly orchestrated thriller. Piece of cake, chaps, what?

Heather Robertson's *Grass Roots* (James Lorimer and Company, \$4.95) also displays a rather virulent reaction to a specific social group, although in her case it is the short-haired residents of Prairie towns who trigger a series of sketches liberally laced with acid. The book skims the surface of Prairie life in search of all the simplistic preconceptions the city mice cherish about their country cousins, and, having found them, settles back for an extended chortle at the latter's expense. Although the author lists Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* in her bibliography, there is nothing in *Grass Roots* to indicate that she has read it: Ross is equally harsh on the meanness and prejudice found in these small communities, but he understands that this is a tragic stunting of human potential in a harsh environment rather than a conspiracy engineered by pointy-headed fascists. *Grass Roots* does contain some interesting material relating to the history and economics of Prairie development, but this can be easily obtained elsewhere without subjecting oneself to Heather Robertson's brand of caustic social comment.

After ploughing through *Grass Roots*, it is a pleasure to turn to the more judicious prose of Roderick Stewart's *Bethune* (PaperJacks, \$1.95). Stewart has organized his research, kept psychological theorizing to a minimum and written an excellent short account of the life of perhaps our most famous world-citizen, and the result is a book that should find wide acceptance in classrooms as well as mass-market paperback outlets.

Some of the titles in the French Writers of Canada series published by Harvest House are now beginning to appear in paperback, which is a real blessing for those of us who must depend on translations for our knowledge of French-Canadian writing. The first two volumes of Claire Martin's autobiography, *In an Iron Glove* and *The Right Cheek* (both \$2.50), give human shape to the familiar saws regarding the repressive aspects of Church and fam-

ily in Quebec. Together they constitute a potent, and very well-written, introduction to some of the forces still rending the social fabric of French Canada, and are an auspicious start for a highly promising series.

Finally, Peter Such's novel *Riverrun* (Clarke Irwin, \$2.50) is quite as fine an achievement as Audrey Thomas's *Mrs. Blood*. *Riverrun* is a powerful imaginative reconstruction of the last years of the Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland, as convincing in detail as it is emotionally overwhelming as a whole. The opening pages seem a bit over-written, with poetic inversions and stream-of-consciousness fragments retarding the narrative flow; but once the characters have been established and the story launched, *Riverrun* settles down into a compelling tale of a people poised on the brink of extinction. □

NOTES & COMMENTS

MARIAN ENGEL is to be congratulated on her restraint in choosing the plain title *Bear* for her new novel, which is reviewed on page 6. Given the theme, the opportunities for sensationalism were endless. For instance, when the newly "Canadianized" *Reader's Digest* gets around to running the condensed version, we suspect the editors will be unable to resist changing the title to conform with a joke that has long haunted them — *How I Screwed a Bear for the RCMP and Found God*.

Speaking of titles, we notice that Collins is bringing out a new thriller this month by the British author Antony Trew. The plot concerns a group of Palestinian terrorists who threaten to destroy London with a hidden nuclear device. There is at least one well-known Canadian author who will doubtless find the book fascinating. It's called *Ultimatum*.

* * *

WE HOPE His Excellency, the Governor General, will not be too offended by our cover story in this issue (page 3), which talks of books as horses and authors as jockeys. But as we have often argued in this column, we think Canadian literature would be better served if the annual Governor General's Literary Awards were made more of a horse race. To that end, we approached the Canada Council

(which administers the awards) several months ago, asking if the short list of contenders in each category could be made available in advance. The council declined to co-operate this year, citing shortage of time as the main reason, but promised to reconsider the idea for next year. We went ahead anyway with the one category — English-language fiction — where the principal contenders seemed fairly obvious. If the Gee-Gee judges disagree with us and choose a horse we haven't mentioned, the contenders we list can console themselves with the knowledge that they at least made it into the *Books in Canada* sweepstakes.

* * *

LAST FALL we invited Susan Musgrave, whose latest collection of poems is reviewed on page 17, to contribute a report on the meeting of the Canadian League of Poets held in Victoria. That meeting was marred by the discovery that its chief organizer, Pat Lowther, had been brutally murdered. Ms. Musgrave's report was delayed by the mail strike and arrived much too late for publication. But it concluded with a poem for Pat Lowther, written in Ireland last September before Ms. Lowther's death. We print it now:

WEDDING SONG (for Pat Lowther)

*She signs away the moon.
She signs away the wind and the stars.
She signs away cities, she
signs away men and women.
She builds a life out of the
ashes of children. She signs away
the fire.*

The flowers go on opening.

*She puts her signature to the
slippery black rocks, to the
winter earth, to wild sage
and peppermint. She signs away
darkness, she signs away
the sun.*

The flowers go on opening.

*By the ocean she sees
a graveyard filling up.
She puts her signature to the
unmarked graves, the
ringing chapel, the
dead bell.*

*She signs away the earth,
she signs away the water.*

The flowers go on opening.

The beautiful flowers. □

The Princess Story

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by Norman R. Hacking and
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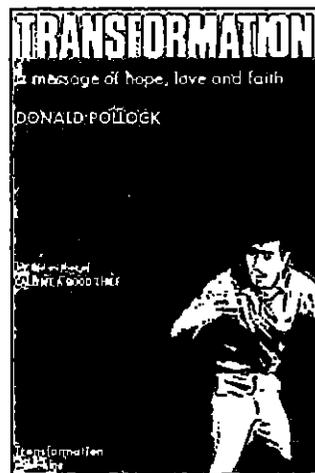


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by Jonathan Simpson

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FIRST GASP

Sir:
I never called your reviewer "an Italian pretzel." I said he had twisted himself into one to find praise for a book of verse which I considered kitchen sink kitsch. It's not splitting caraway seeds to point out there's a significant difference between these two statements.

If someone were to say that I had elongated myself into "a Jewish rye bread" I'd find the epithet both colourful and funny and I'd laugh my head off. What's this sudden over-touchiness about racial and national origins?

I suspect if I'd said your reviewer had transformed himself into "a Swiss roll" or a "French croissant" neither you nor he would have thought the epithet indigestible.

Irving Layton
Department of English
York University
Toronto

NEXT GASP

Sir:
I had thought Christopher Wiseman quite capable of defending himself against Len Gasparini's review of his volume of poems, *The Barbarian File*, in your October, 1975, issue and therefore did not send any comments of my own. But I see in your January issue that he chooses to avoid any imputation of vested interest and deals instead with the similar treatment accorded Douglas Barbour.

Christopher Wiseman is a very talented poet with a fine sense of craft. His volume is a sharp, often desperate comment on contemporary life. One might accuse Mr. Gasparini (a competitor as a poet) of malice in his misreading, but the problem would seem to be more incorrigible than that.

Ian Adam
Victoria, B.C.

LAST GASP

Sir:
Has "critic" Len Gasparini gasped his last? After an obtuse review of Seymour Mayne's prize-winning *Name*, now he has seen fit to offer a jejune review of Raymond Souster's *Rain-Check* (October). Spare us additional reviews which "seem to aim no higher than a cliché response."

A. E. Burke
Department of English
University of Ottawa

BEST GASP

Sir:
Thank you very much for having the good judgement to pass on our book (*Pocket Pool*) to Len Gasparini for review (March).

Needless to say both the author, David Berry, and myself are extremely happy with the results.

Unfortunately, owing to a typo, our address was listed incorrectly. It should be 204 (not 284) Sibbard Ave., Toronto.

Thank you again and keep up the fine work.

Richard W. Miller
The Peppermint Press
Toronto

UNEMPLOYED INDIANS

Sir:
Edward S. Rogers not only misses the central points of David Stymeist's *Ethnics and Indians* ("Full Centuries Five Our Fathers Lied," January), but says things about this slender book that are so wrong that I can only conclude that (1) he did not read it, he merely looked at some pages, or (2) he suffers from Canadian academics' chief malaise, petty malice.

Stymeist's book is *not* about Indians in "Crow Lake" (Sioux Lookout); there are scarcely any there. They are not allowed in, by devices of exclusion which are about the history and inter-relationships of ethnic groups in "Crow Lake," but especially about how the early "vertical mosaic" of a pioneer railroad town developed, along with the rest of Canadian society, into a community, the economics of which was very strongly dependent upon bureaucratic institutions (about 25 per cent is his estimate in Crow Lake, and to lose that proportion of its payroll would fatally cripple any town, regardless of the source).

The critical issue in his book Stymeist does not make quite as explicit and clear as I have heard him make in lectures and discussions: those bureaucratic institutions on which the post-ethnics of "Crow Lake" depend so heavily today are those that control the health, education, housing, employment, and incomes of Indians living in reserve communities in the surrounding "bush" — some hundreds of them. Thus "Crow Lake" people as well as the rest of those in bureaucracies depend heavily upon *keeping* the Indian communities cesspools of sickness, alcoholism, unemployment, alienation, ignorance, and dependence on welfare. Their jobs are to service those needs. *That's* what the Native people's militancy is all about, and *that* is the implication of Stymeist's last sentence in *Ethnics and Indians*: "For a Native person locked into this system, the hypocrisy of bureaucratic agencies and the violence and prejudice of the local white society become two omnipresent and inescapable forces against which only direct action may seem reasonable."

That, *Books in Canada*, is what Stymeist's book is about. I wonder why Rogers has misrepresented it!

L. E. Sweet
Professor in Anthropology
The University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

OIL'S WELL IN SARNIA

Sir:
As a former resident of Sarnia, where gas is not always considered to be flatulence, may I suggest to Miss — Ms. — Mrs. — Mr. — Joyce Castor that she or he, as a proponent of civic enlightenment, title her next book, "Castor Oil for the Lamps of Sarnia."

Frank B. Ricard
Dorval, Que.

CanWit No.10

"ONE BAD APPLE," an Ontario cabinet minister ventured recently, "can give the whole thing a black eye." If we're going to mix metaphors, surely we can be more imaginative than that. The usual prize (see below) for the funniest entries. Actual quotes are welcome, of course, but we are also relying on readers' powers of invention. Address: CanWit No. 10, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide St. East, Toronto M5A 1N4. Deadline: April 30.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 8

O. THE MARVELLOUS world of might-have-been. Readers were asked to provide names, titles, or slogans that didn't quite make it. There were a number of excellent entries and the judges wish to congratulate all contestants. The winner by a whisker is Judith A. Small of Toronto. She receives a copy of the award-winning art book *John Fillion* by Dorothy Cameron and John Reeves (Martlet Press, \$10.50) for these delightful near-misses:

- *Tragedy of Errors*
- "A tulip by any other name."
- *Wind in the Poplars*
- *The Importance of Being Clive*
- Luncheon of Champions
- *A Farewell to Weapons*
- It's the genuine thing.

Honourable mentions:

- *The Medium is the Average*
- *Canuck, Huh?*
- *Jacob Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten* (for slow learners).
- *Lester: The Autobiography of Lester B. Pearson*
- *Toronto's Hollywood*
- *The Divinest*

— Bruce Bailey, Montreal

* * *

- Peter Berton
- *As It Occurs*
- Council Canada
- The Hatfield, Mark I
- *Cooks in Canada: A National Review of Cooks*

— Gordon Black, Toronto

* * *

- Bricklin has a better idea
- Third cousin Twice-Removed's Cookies
- *Lizard Plan*

— W. A. McDougal, Calgary

* * *

- *The Upright Mosaic*
- *The Swing in the Arboretum*
- *Going Down Limp*

— Keith Garebian,
Dollard des Ormeaux, Que.

* * *

- *The Third-from-last Spike*
- *Star Trudge*
- "I'm proud to be an ogre from Muskoka."
- Pepsi: the ununcola

— John Oughton, Toronto

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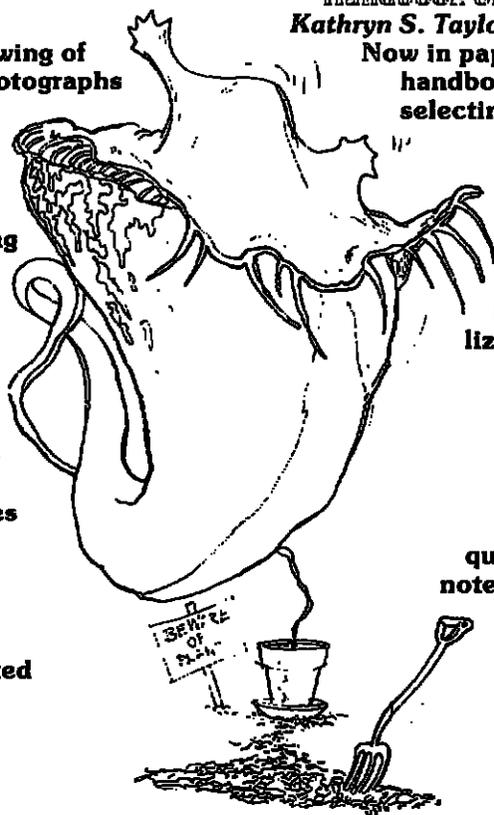
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