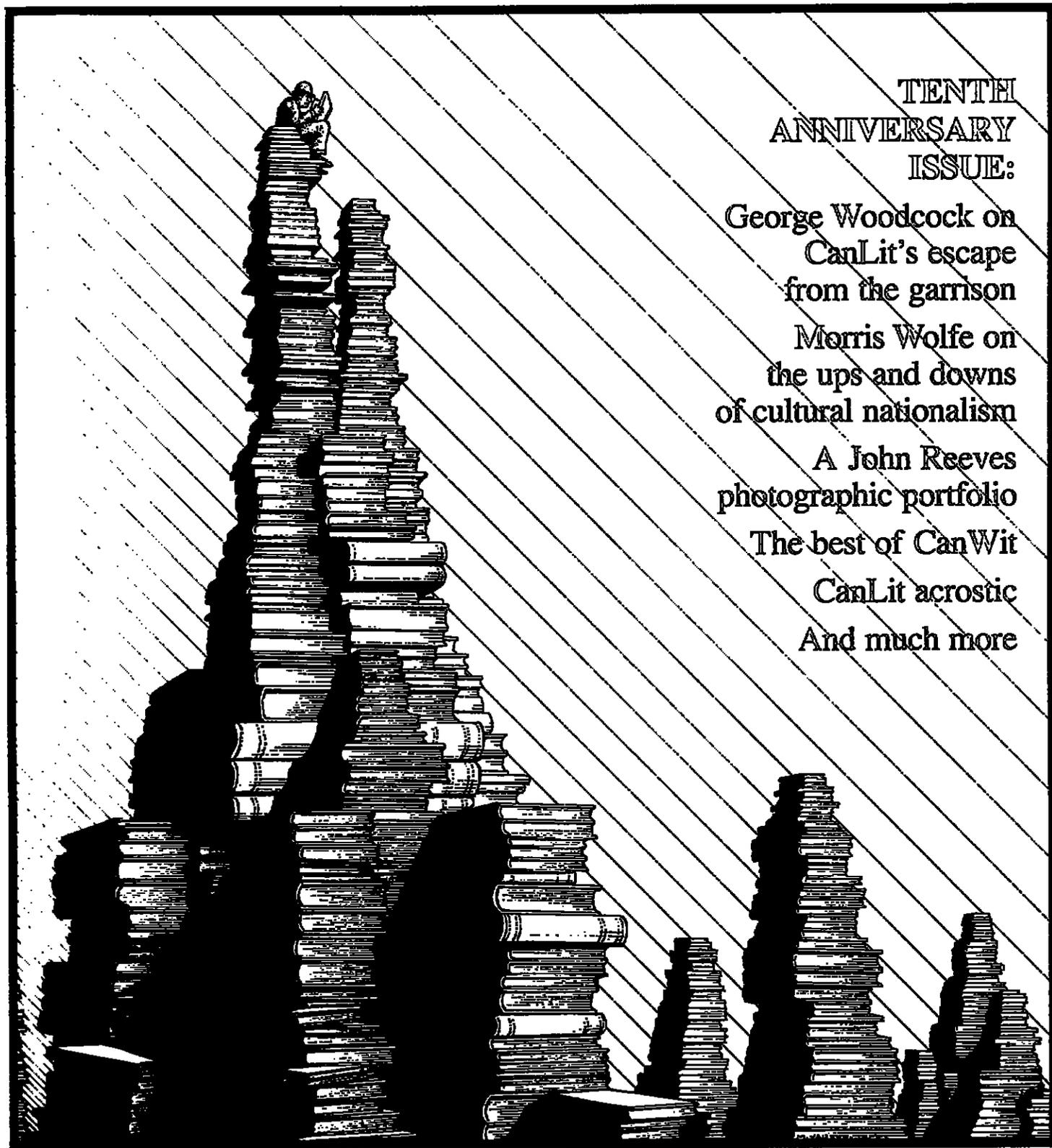


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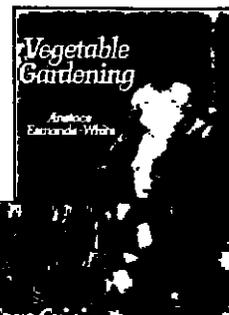
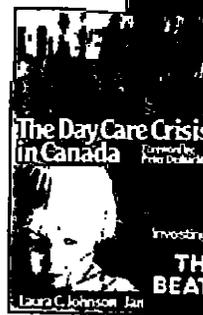
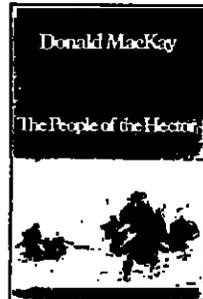
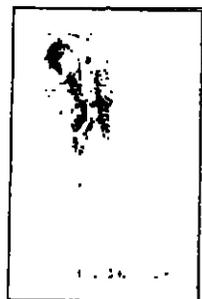
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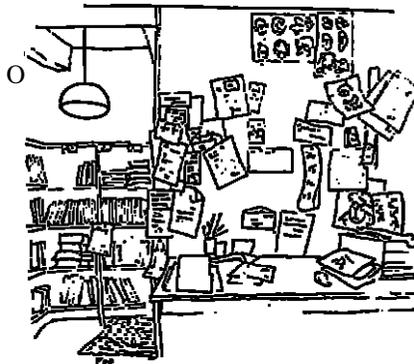
The chief glory of every people arises from its authors. — Samuel Johnson

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Books in Canada is published 10 times a year, with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, by the Canadian Review of Books Ltd., 366 Adelaide Street East, Suite 422, Toronto, Ont. M5A 1N4. Telephone: (416) 363-5426. Available to the public free in subscribing book stores, schools and libraries. Individual subscription rate: 19.95 a year (\$15 overseas). Back issues available on microfilm from: McLaren Micropublishing, P.O. Box 972, Station F, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2N9. Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index. Member of the CPPA. Member of the Bulk Distribution Audit Division of CCAB. Material is commissioned on the understanding that both parties are bound by the terms of the standard PWAC contract. The editors cannot be held responsible for unsolicited material. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2593. Contents © 1981. Printed by Heritage Press Co. Ltd. ISSN 0045-2564

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Ten years before the masthead

TEN YEARS NOW have passed since the introductory issue of *Books in Canada* was published. It was dated May, 1971, though as things turned out its readers didn't get to see it until June. The cover carried a review by Dave Godfrey of Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman* — under the uncharacteristically bland heading, "A Major Canadian Novel" — and inside were a profile of Robertson Davies and reviews by Hugh Gamer, David Helwig, Alden Nowlan, and Al Purdy, among others. The inaugural issue had been published with a \$250 grant from the Ontario government and a few dollars chipped in by the as-yet unpaid staff. As Val Clery, the founding editor, prophetically told a reporter at the time, "It's not going to be something that's going to make a fortune for any of us."

Clery, a freelance writer who had recently prepared a survey on book promotion for the publishing industry, had decided (through something akin to self-fulfilling prophecy) to establish the magazine on the basis of his own brief. Book buyers, he had discovered, were unduly influenced by publicity in U.S. periodicals, while Canadian newspapers and magazines seldom reviewed Canadian books. In particular, the Canadian version of *Time* magazine — a nationalist scapegoat that was eventually driven right out of the country — paid too much attention to U.S. best-sellers. What was needed, the book publishers had agreed, was a national book review of our own.

It was a pivotal time in our cultural history. The publishing industry had lately been shaken by the sales of Ryerson Press and the textbook division of W. J. Gage Ltd. to U.S.-owned firms, and in April the Ontario government had dramatically provided a loan of close to \$1-million to keep McClelland & Stewart in business. Day after day Ontario's Royal Commission on Book Publishing heard the pleas of impoverished Canadian firms and condemnations of the U.S. companies that dominated the industry, especially on the paperback stands. Yet today the paperback racks boast, if not a landslide, at least a large smattering of Canadian mass-market books. Canadian publishers still are far from wealthy, but in the intervening decade Canadian writing has blossomed and matured.

From the beginning, *Books in Canada* suffered from the same financial pressures and seasonal fluctuations as the publishing industry. Though Clery had planned to publish the magazine 18 times a year, in practice it barely appeared 18 times in 2½ years. Such aberrations as the celebrated April-May-June, 1973, issue (which came out in July) were not a totally unpredictable result. Money was always a problem — though complicated by an early office employee who had so little use for large numbers that she numbered invoices only in multiples of 10, and then proceeded to ignore what numbers she did use. As

a consequence, the magazine's publishers never knew what services — subscriptions, advertising, whatever — they were being paid for.

It's a reflection of the perilous times how frequently the staff of the magazine changed in those days. In the first issue, Clery was joined by Douglas Marshall, former television critic for *Maclean's* magazine; Mary Lu Toms, a graphic designer from Seneca College; Randall Ware, former manager of the Book Cellar; Tony Hawke, formerly with McClelland & Stewart; and Jack Jensen, then chief buyer for Coles book stores, who served as a consultant. Of those, only Mary Lu Toms and Jack Jensen remain on the masthead today (though Douglas Marshall, who succeeded Clery in 1973, guided the magazine through much of its history until late last year). Sometimes workers changed positions with astonishing haste. One managing editor left a meeting to make a telephone call and wasn't heard from for six months. The call had apparently led directly to a new job.

Yet, despite all the upheaval, *Books in Canada* has consistently managed to attract the time and talent of some of the country's but-known literary figures. Through the years we've published such respected critics as I. M. Owen and Robert Fulford; such writers as Margaret Atwood, Matt Cohen, Marian Engel, Margaret Laurence, and Hugh MacLennan; and have received editorial assistance from Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Doug Fetherling, Wayne Grady, Sandra Martin, Peter Such, and Morris Wolfe, to name a few. An oft-repeated story tells how, in an attempt to recruit

reviewers, a small notice asked whether there weren't any aspiring George Woodcocks out there. Soon after, a letter arrived from Vancouver to ask if the teal George Woodcock wouldn't do. He has contributed regularly to these pages ever since.

Today's *Books in Canada* unquestionably beats little resemblance to the promotional newsletter the book publishers had in mind. From the vantage of a later decade the early issues seem defensive, a bit self-conscious, and hopelessly ambitious. One is tempted to wonder how the magazine could ever have expected to survive. Yet over the last 10 years most of the changes in content and format (glossy covers, longer reviews, expanded features, and the feeling that Canadian writing has sufficiently matured that we may review foreign books too) have been less revolutionary than evolutionary variations on the

original theme. While our aims remain the same, in future issues we plan to continue that evolution, with more thoughtful feature articles and some innovations in typography and design. It's true that many of our earlier problems still hamper us — despite generous government assistance, we still suffer from the vagaries of the publishing market — but nowadays we do publish on time. □



Second wind

If the post-war years saw the second coming of Canada's literary pioneers, succeeding decades — especially the '70s — marked a dramatic escape from the nationalist garrison

by George Woodcock

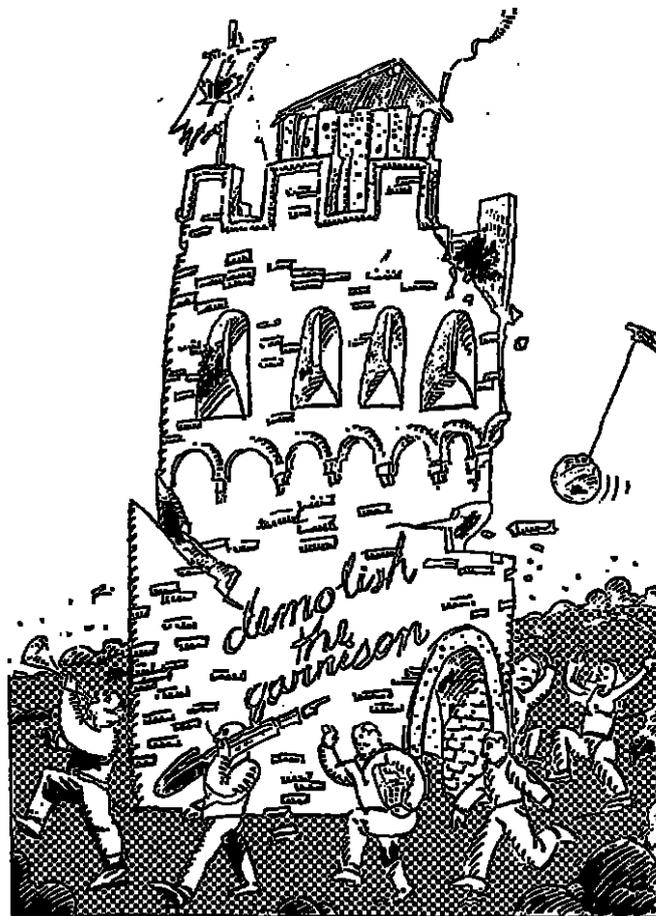
CANADIAN LITERATURE began to claim its separate identity between the 1920s and the 1930s, the days of the *McGill Fortnightly Review* and *New Provinces*, when A.J.M. Smith, F. R. Scott, and Dorothy Livesay were young poets, when Frederick Philip Grove and the other Prairie realists were helping to create a fiction as appropriate to the land as Morley Callaghan's was to the cities, with his masterly urban parables of the Depression years. The separateness was achieved in the 1940s and '50s, the years when Layton and Dudek, Souster and Patrick Anderson and P. K. Page, developed the noetic voice of Canada in what now seems to us the unlikely setting of Montreal; when Hugh MacLennan and Sinclair Ross in their various ways linked an awareness of Canadian terrain to a rising national consciousness: when a truly Canadian criticism virtually began with Northrop Frye's reviews of poetry in the annual "Letters in Canada" feature in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*.

But what a strangely simple and archaic look that period now has, viewed from 1981. We imagined then that Canadian writing had achieved a plateau of maturity: in fact, it had only reached the base camp for the ascent, since everything was still understood in the simplicity of clear issues and obvious stands. It was the second coming of the pioneers, for the "garrison" mentality detected by Frye among the original pioneers still remained: it was merely that the fortress to be defended had changed and expanded. The wilderness that had once been hostile territory had been accepted, if not absorbed: that acceptance had already begun with Charles G.D. Roberts and Duncan Campbell Scott. Now it was the world outside Canada's borders that had to be kept at bay as we constituted ourselves into a national community, and the first step in successful self-defence against the forces of continentalism was for Canadians to define themselves as a people and to chart, in imagination, their country and their culture. The original pioneers had deliberately followed British literary models and fostered the social attitudes inherited

from the old country as a sign of their resolution not to be submerged by the negative forces of an untamed land. The new pioneers — who could no longer preserve the illusion of escape from the very place where they lived — set out to create a Canadian literary language and a set of cultural attitudes that would proclaim that they had understood and accepted the wilderness that was their country and now must assert and defend its special character against not only old and new imperialisms but also against the disintegrating forces of cosmopolitanism.

It was no accident that Hugh MacLennan came so much to dominate the Canadian literary landscape of the 1950s. His very preoccupation with the Homeric myths that helped to shape his novels was appropriate, for the development of definitive versions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had played a crucial role in the emergence of a Hellenic consciousness in Greece. In the same way MacLennan's novels played their part in the imaginative creation of a Canadian consciousness. *Barometer Rising* projected the awareness of a new nation, united from sea to sea, casting off the worn integuments of its colonial relationship to Britain. *Two Solitudes* brought into the open the divisions between French and English — and by implication between all majorities and minorities within the country — that somehow must be healed if Canada as a nation were to evolve and survive. *The Precipice* tackled the problems of a nation trying to grow in independence and maturity in the shadow of a giant and more developed neighbour. All these novels represented great and timely national preoccupations that most people saw rather abstractly, but to which MacLennan gave human and imaginative dimensions.

It was the grandiose and almost epic literature of an archaic period, when issues seemed clear and a certain nobility appeared to grace our national preoccupations as Canada, conscious of its new-won independence, began to see itself as a great moral influence in the post-war world. MacLennan's novels were popular —



despite the largely justified misgivings of critics who saw in him an essayist manqué rather than a novelist-because. Like Pratt's quasi-epics and Earle Birney's earlier poems, they mirrored the preoccupations of a people rather self-consciously coming to terms with being rooted in their own land and not in the soil from which their original stocks had come. The wide acceptance of MacLennan's first five novels was understandable as the wide rejection of his sixth, *Return of the Sphinx*. MacLennan had not changed when he wrote that book; he was still the same kind of didactic novelist as the public had accepted in the 1950s, still deeply concerned with the fete of Canada as a national collectivity. *Return of the Sphinx* was even a better piece of writing than some of his earlier work (notably *The Precipice*), but the times had changed. It was 1967 and Canada had passed out of its archaic phase of self-realization; simple and powerful statements of moral and political truths garnished with a bit of naive psychology were not enough.

In the 1960s and '70s there was no figure in Canadian fiction comparable to Hugh MacLennan. Perhaps the most impressive novelist of the time was Margaret Laurence. Her grasp of the art of the novel was superior to MacLennan's, and if I had to name a notable Canadian prose epic I would certainly pick her Prairie tetralogy (for the Prairies f&M the heartland of her characters even when they wander) from *The Stone Angel* (1964) to *The Diviners* (1975). It has a breadth of vision, a historical sense, and a largeness of texture that are unique in Canadian fiction. But one cannot propose Margaret Laurence as the dominant Canadian writer of the 1960s or '70s. The fact is that a literary landscape once sparsely inhabited by writers of real individuality has become visibly populated by scores of novelists and poets, dramatists and critics of high idiosyncratic talent. It has, in other words, reached maturity, and with maturity, as the last decade has shown, has come its necessary concomitant, variegation.

Nothing in any situation is ever, of course, so simple as the cultural historians suggest, and those who have seen Canadian literature in narrowly nationalist terms have missed what has perhaps been the most important development in the later 1960s and the 1970s — the escape from the fortress, from the garrison of enclosed attitudes. In some ways it has been a physical escape, for it is impossible to consider Canadian writing as it is today without remembering the great journeyings of the late 1950s and 1960s that took so many writers out of Canada and brought them back changed and creatively enlarged. It happened to older as well as to younger writers, to Earle Birney and Dorothy Livesay, to P. K. Page and Irving Layton, as well as to Margaret Laurence, Dave Godfrey, Audrey Thomas, and Marian Engel. The remarkable second careers on which Birney, Livesay, and Page embarked as poets after they returned from their world travels have been as typical of the last decade or so as the phenomenon of Margaret Laurence perfecting her craft by writing about Africa before she turned a very practised hand to writing about Canada. It is virtually impossible for us to imagine what *The Stone Angel* would have been like if *This Side Jordan* and *The Prophet's Camel Bell* had not gone before it.

In maturing literary cultures a related phenomenon to the travelling writer is the expatriate, the writer who goes and stays away because that is the only manner in which he can get a real perspective on his native world. It happened with so many of the Irish and later with so many of the Americans. Mavis Gallant is perhaps the best Canadian example. She has been living away since 1951 and has not yet returned. In the 1970s, with her novel *A Fairly Good Time* and her book of stories, *The Pagnitz Junction*, she has been writing at the top of her form. And the interesting thing is that now, after so many years presenting other expatriates and exiles, she has reached the exile's logical goal by turning to a neo-Proustian kind of reconstruction of her Canadian youth in the remarkable series of Linné Muir stories that has been appearing in the *New Yorker*, and which one eagerly waits to see collected.

Mordecai Richler became a different kind of expatriate. He went away and wrote about Canada often and Canadians always, while obstinately refusing to accept description as a Canadian writer. His period away ended after the completion of *St. Urbain's Horseman* (1971), one of the twin peaks of his career, the other being *The*



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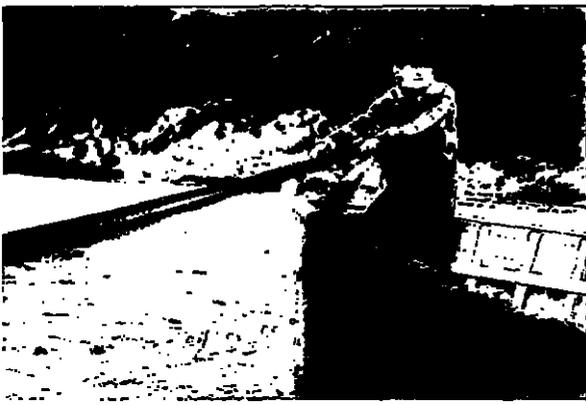
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By and by, fellas quit
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I stuck it out 'til May.
Then, goes up and asks the boss,
"I'd like a layoff, the salmon run is on at home."
He looks at me, laughs, and says,
"Is it in you, too?"
I says, "Yes boy, it's in me alright."



My God what fun we used to have — ramping and the limes. I can understand the people not being contented living in here now because they had everything so nice out there, everything they wanted, they had cattle — cows and sheep. It was a wonderful place to live. And, the berries! How much berries used to grow out there. Blessed Heavens! And, the mussels and wrinkles, truck loads of them. They're a big dish now, you know. And, clams, well the people used to live on them! In the wintertime, they'd be hunting — after seals, after ducks.

OUTPORT

Reflections from the Newfoundland Coast

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Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz. Since then Richler has come home, but not with the charge of energy and renewal that Margaret Laurence and — among poets — Al Purdy brought back from their travels. For, in spite of the praise it has received, *Joshua Then and Now* is a poorly constructed book that often reads, as it repeats and adapts situations from the author's own past novels, like a self-parody. Perhaps Richler stayed too long abroad. Or perhaps, like Henry James, he is one who can only thrive in transplantation.

The crossing of boundaries that has been going on for the past decade and more has been much more than physical. It involves an opening out of Canadian writing in all kinds of ways. Whole genres, like criticism and stage plays, were suddenly expanding and becoming important; poetry at the end of the 1960s was positively booming with scores of new poets, poetry magazines, poetry presses; the short story, so long neglected, re-emerged as a vital form in the hands of writers like Alice Munro, W.D. Valardson, and W.P. Kinsella.

But just as striking as the sheer numbers of new writers was the great variety of styles and approaches that emerged. This is particularly true of the novel, which until the 1960s had been with a few exceptions such as Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, and Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John* — a conservative genre in Canada. At the end of the 1960s experimentation of some kind had become almost *de rigueur* in prose fiction; even comparatively realistic novelists like Margaret Laurence and Mordecai Richler played with time and memory in ways that earlier writers like MacLennan and Callaghan never would have attempted (though interestingly enough, in novels they have written in old age, such as *Close to the Sun Again* and *Voices in Time*, both Callaghan and MacLennan have turned to temporal manipulation, to the considerable revivification of their art). The flickering edge between verisimilitude and fantasy seemed to excite Canadian writers as they moved away from the depiction of everyday living to the elaboration of quasi-mythical structures as in the novels of Robert Kroetsch and Roch Carrier. The trend continued notably into the 1970s with the appearance of Jack Hodgins (especially in his extraordinary novel, so true to fact and fancy, *The Invention of the World*) and Matt Cohen, with his excursions into futurism (*The Colours of War*), primitivism (*Wooden Hunters*), and rustic melodrama (*The Disinherited* and the recent *Flowers of Darkness*).

As I sit writing I have a random collection of documents beside my typewriter that remind me of much that has happened in Canadian writing during the past decade. For *Openers*, Alan Twigg's collection of conversations with 24 contemporary Canadian writers; an anthology of four young poets entitled *Mindscapes* published by Anansi in 1971; a couple of the experimental Spiderline Books that the same house brought out a decade ago; a new catalogue of Anansi books in print; and lists of fiction and drama from Talonbooks. By omission as much as by commission these fragments help one reconstruct a great deal of the recent past, and fill it out with memory.

For it is really by what is left out, as well as by what it includes, that *For Openers* (a lively and intelligent set of interviews) confirms in my mind the extraordinary variegation of the literary scene in Canada today. For example, Dorothy Livesay is there, but not Earle Bimey, Frank Scott, or P. K. Page; Peter Trower, but not Michael Ondaatje or Alden Nowlan; Leonard Cohen, but not Irving Layton or Eli Mandel; Susan Musgrave but not John Glassco; Dennis Lea but not Dale Zieroth or Tom Wayman; Jane Rule but not Audrey Thomas; Robert Harlow but not Dave Godfrey; Ken Mitchell but not David French or Michael Cook. It was a critic's decade, with Frye's *Bush Garden*, D. G. Jones's *Butterfly on Rock*, and Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, but neither Frye nor Jones nor any other critic is interviewed (and even in Atwood's interview *Survival* is not one of the books discussed). In other words, Twigg emphasizes by his inclusions what has been excluded, and a criticism of him on these grounds reminds us of the immense diversity that our literature has taken in the last half-generation.

Mindscapes and those two Spiderline books — Michael Charters's *Victor/Victim* and Russell Marois's *The Telephone Pole* — cd a decade ago remind one with what enterprise in

publishing and what experimentalism in writing the 1970s started off. The four poets in *Mindscapes* were virtually unknown when Ann Wall put their works together in one volume: Dale Zieroth, Paulette Jiles, Susan Musgrave, Tom Wayman. By the end of the decade three of them had moved into what passes for a literary establishment in Canada, and they represent three marked tendencies in recent Canadian poetry: Dale Zieroth the new poetry of the land — as conscious of history as of geography — that has come out of the West, and is written as well by poets like Patrick Lane and Sid Marty; Tom Wayman a political poetry when feeling is not overwhelmed by propaganda; Susan Musgrave a whole group of Western poets — Pat Lowther was another of them—who have responded deeply to the animist traditions of the region.

The two Spiderline novelists I mentioned have perhaps not fared well in repute over the past decade, though Dennis Lee did write an eloquent essay setting out the merits of *The Telephone Pole*. But they recall the many writers Anansi brought out of obscurity before they were taken over by larger publishers, such as Matt Cohen and Marian Engel, just as the Talon lists recall such Western poets as George Bowering and Frank Davey, and the many playwrights whom this small Vancouver press not only kept in print but also helped to find an audience for.

At present Canadian publishers, large and small, are going through the doldrums. Some of the best houses that appeared about a decade ago, like New Press, have drifted away like smoke. Others, like Anansi and Talonbooks, have gone through recurrent crises, yet astonishingly remain alive. They remind one of the role that publishers play in periods of cultural vitality, and they help to shape a literary world. I think this has been especially true in England and Canada, where the self-conscious schools of writers that appear regularly in France are seldom found (the *Tish cénacle* in Vancouver was an exception and soon disintegrated), and loose clusterings of writers around publishers tend to take their place. I

have often thought an odd but interesting kind of literary history of England could be written around publishers who in some way or another gathered together what was special and characteristic in their period: Jacob Tonson in the Restoration, John Murray in the Byronic age, John Lane and the wretched Leonard Smithers in the 1890s, and in the 1930s Faber & Faber and the Hogarth Press, together with a few furtive figures like Caton of Fortune Press, who financed poetry by publishing soft porn.

In Canada that role has been taken by the small presses (not the really little presses) such as Anansi, Coach House, Oberon, and Talonbooks. McClelland & Stewart call themselves "The Canadian publishers," and they are in the sense that they publish a wider range of Canadian writers than any other house. But in a way their lists are great corrals that gather together from far and wide the writers who have fed on other pastures—that is, with the small presses. The small houses are often especially deep-mated in our literary life because writers have been so much involved in their foundation and running. Among them Anansi, in whose workings Dennis Lee, Dave Godfrey, Margaret Atwood, Graeme Gibson, and Shirley Gibson all played a part, is certainly one of the most interesting for its intimate connection with so much that has gone on in the Canadian literary world since the house was founded in 1967. After all, apart from the writer-founders, its lists over the years have included writers as varied and vital as Al Purdy, P.K. Page, Northrop Frye, George Grant, Michael Ondaatje, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Gary Geddes, Patrick Lane, Eli Mandel, George Jonas, Rachel Wyatt, Sonny Ladoo, John Glassco, and the ineffable Bill Bissett. Those names, of course, reinforce my point that the great characteristic of Canadian writing in its last, post-archaic decade or so has been its variegation. But they also demonstrate the role of courageous publishing, and suggest a fascinating book for anyone with time to write it: small presses and Canadian writers in the 1960s and 1970s. □

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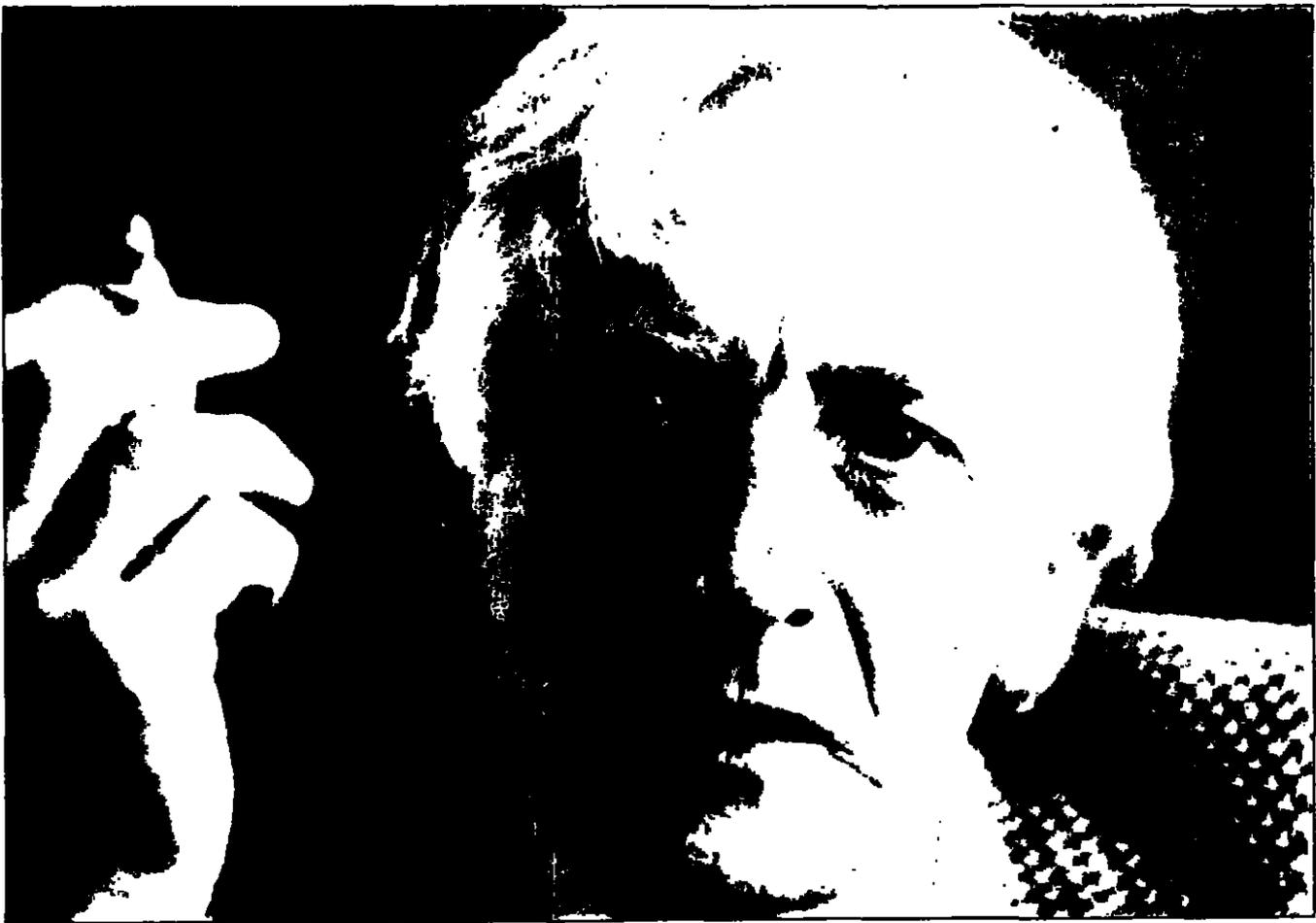
It is John Reeves's professed aim in life to restore the art of black and white portraiture to its proper place in the pantheon of photography. These eight portraits are an eloquent argument for his cause. A portrait by Reeves is not just a portrait: it records an intimate and fragile bond between two highly creative people

by John Reeves



Susan Musgrave carries with her the atmosphere of her native British Columbia. There is about her something plant-like; her presence warns of a need for humidity and indirect lighting. Why couldn't we have met in a pungent forest grotto 'midst tall, dark pines instead of in an impersonally lavish stridently immaculate North Toronto house on a glittering cold mid-winter day? The cold dry air could crack her lips; all that jarring

brightness could be bruising. She desperately needed to be seen with something green and growing. A thorough search of her host's pristine premises finally unearthed what my mother calls a jade plant which, thrown a little out of focus and back-lit by the kitchen window, furnished a certain softly organic je ne sais quoi. Convinced that Susan's image could now survive my incipient photograph, I commenced shooting.



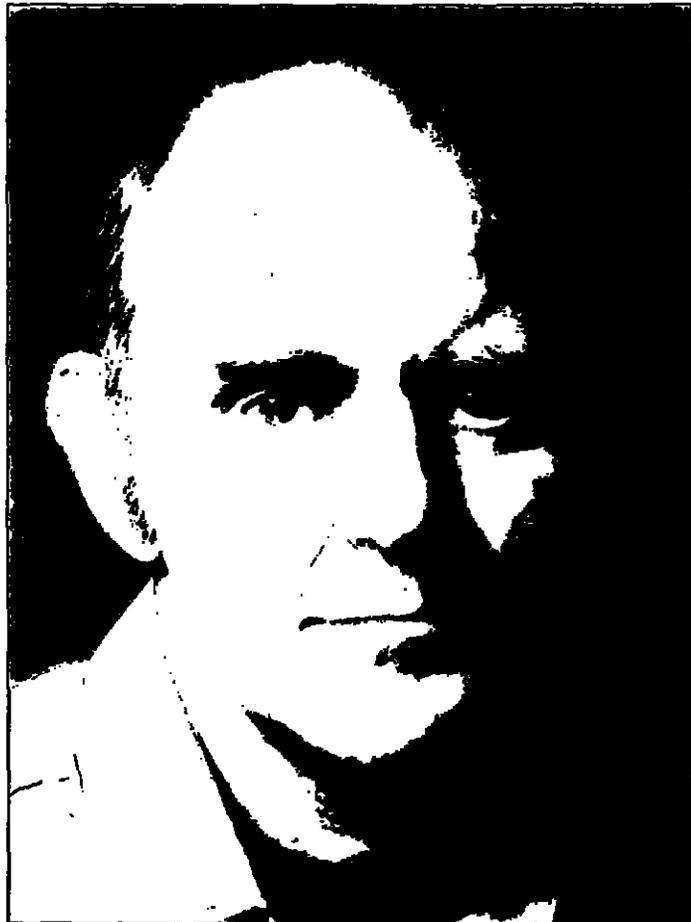
T*o say that Jack McClelland has a great face would be a fatuous diminution akin to asserting that Khatmandu has charm. McClelland doesn't have a face: he has a landscape that sits atop his shoulders. Looking at McClelland compels the viewer to confront the awesome way existence's exigencies can render permeable matter into forms of terrible beauty. Think of the granite cliff enduring the relentlessly eroding sm. McClelland's face is a frighteningly honest guide to his character -excess, eccentricity, compassion, strength, and elegance all dwell there. You understand that he will always be "looking for that card which is so high and wild," just so he'll have to deal another. Like all true aristocrats, McClelland is absolutely self-employed. He has a passion to publish and his persona has changed the landscape of contemporary Canadian publishing dramatically and for the better. For the moment, Jack McClelland is the greatest Canadian publisher.*

W*ith world-wide sales riding at the 200 million unit level, Harlequin Enterprises of Toronto is far and away our largest publishing company. The past 10 years have seen Harlequin's gross revenues burgeon from a substantial \$17 million to an awesome \$200 million. A good measure of the credit for this success must go to Larry Heisey, Harlequin's president throughout this phenomenal growth spasm. I took this photo of Heisey for Time in 1973. I enjoyed my visit. It's hard not to like someone who admires your friends, and Heisey shared my admiration for Jack McClelland. Heisey is also endowed with a fine turn of phrase and a splendid sense of humour, and he delivered himself of a fine line as we parted: "You do understand, John, that I'm not a publisher like Jack McClelland," he said. "I'm not a national park!"*





I think we tend to evolve physically into a resemblance of the people we admire. To support this thesis I should like to talk a little about my father and W. O. Mitchell. W. J. Reeves grew up in England and in 1925 — the year he turned 23 — he ventured to Saskatchewan, where he threshed for a season around Pathlow, homesteaded at Lac Vert, laid track to the Pas, and swamped logs near Melfort before moving on to B.C., where he revealed sublime talents as a vacuum cleaner salesman. Dad admires W. O. Mitchell. He likes the way Mitchell writes about the Saskatchewan countryside and its people. The Reeves are CBC aficionados, and when I was young Jake and the Kid was always approved Sunday listening. Now, W. J. Reeves is the spitting image of W. O. Mitchell, at least from the bridge of his nose to the crest of his adam's appk. It's amazing! A generation after my father I have different heroes — I bear an astonishing resemblance to Mordecai Richler, particularly if you stand a little behind me just at the right angle. I am aware that such a statement cries out for visual evidence: rest assured, wild horses couldn't prevent me from presenting it in a future issue of Books in Canada.



The production of lavish limited editions featuring the work of a single visual artist has become a noteworthy new phenomenon in Canadian publishing. There is, apparently, a reliable group of buyers eager to pay up to several thousand dollars for finely crafted books issued in small enough numbers to qualify them automatically as rare objects.

Christopher Pratt, a recent limited offering by Quintus Press of the prints, paintings, and drawings of Newfoundland artist Chris Pratt, almost sold out all 279 copies at a pre-publication price of \$2,100 each. This gave me great pleasure: Chris is a good friend, a fine man, and a superb artist. He is also a compulsive yachtsman, the owner of an exquisite custom-built C & C 45. As we all know, competitive sailing, cost-wise, leaves cocaine-snorting way back in the dust: Chris will need those Quintus earnings to keep himself fitted out with the right stuff to stay competitive with the other hot boats on Conception Bay. My advice to Chris's brother members of the Royal Newfoundland Yacht Club is, "Keep an eye on Pratt, lads! I see some wicked new head-sails in his future."

Much has been said about the importance of book editors to writers, and Canadian literature has generated some fine books in recent years. Alas, the same is not true for Canadian photography, and distressing numbers of our photographic books have suffered for a lack of good editors. There have been exceptions, many of which were projects from the National Film Board's Still Photo Division and were eased on to the press by its executive producer, Lorraine Monk. Many of Monk's ventures -Canada -A Year of the Land, Stones of History, Call Them Canadians, and Between Friends/Entre Amis — have been imbued with aesthetic quality and commercial success. Lorraine Monk has retired from the NFB and is currently putting together a book about the Canadian landscape for McClelland & Stewart: with an introduction by Harold Towne and a text of quotations by John Robert Colombo, the folks at M&S am looking to a sale of 100,000 copies. I, on the other hand, am looking to the dearth of first-rate photo editors. Desperation has driven me to investigate the prospects for cloning more Lorraine Monks, but the short-term prognosis ain't good.



Picture-book cognoscenti can be thankful for Herzig-Somerville's involvement as photo-engravers and printers in the growing number of first-rate Canadian pictorial books. Two M&S titles spring to mind: Between Friends/Entre Amis and The Silence and the Storm, which deals with the life and work of Tom Thomson. Ernie Herzig and Bill Somerville don't see what they do simply as good business, they see it as a high calling — like the priesthood or neuro-surgery — and they have developed their own publishing arm, The Mintmark Press, which is becoming an energetic contender in the limited editions field. Last year, in conjunction with the NFB's Still Photo Division, they produced a volume of landscape photos by Robert Bourdeau. This year they are launching a series: "Graphic Masterworks of the Inuit." Their first Inuit master is Cape Dorset carver and printmaker Kenoujak. Her first book is offered in an edition of 275 copies at \$2,100 each. As with their verbal counterparts, artist/authors have to go on the road: Kenoujak appeared in my Tomato studio on her way home from an exhibition of her work at the Godard Gallery in Calgary, and on her way to a book-signing session at the Mintmark offices.



Like its neighbour the United States, Canada has a South — even a Deep South. Both these regions lie in Ontario: South means anywhere south of Ottawa; Deep South means anywhere south-west of Brantford. As with its U.S. counterpart, our Deep South was settled earlier and more intensely than other regions, and it became affluent and cultured earlier as well. As in the U.S., our Deep South is the cradle of many of our greatest intellects: J. K. Galbraith was

raised near Dutton; and Robertson Davies was born in Thamesville. Like Faulkner, Davies is a "good ole Southern boy" who writes about what he knows best, and to read his Deptford trilogy — Fifth Business, The Manticore, and World of Wonders — is to travel to the darker corners of the Southern soul and psyche. It is to learn of the south's drive for achievement and power. Look well on Robertson Davies: his books deal in magic, and he is the Great Conjuror of Canadian letters.

National dreams

The tide of cultural nationalism ebbs and flows every few generations. After a strident revival in the 1970s literary patriotism is going back out of fashion again

by Morris Wolfe

EVERY SECOND GENERATION or so of English Canadians has seemed Fated, Sisyphus-like, to roll the rock (millstone, according to Ramsay Cook) of cultural nationalism up to the top of the mountain only to have it roll back down again. There was a generation that did so in the 1880s and early 1890s, and another in the decade following the First World War. We've just been through a third such period.

Not only did the rock of cultural nationalism roll back down again at the end of both these earlier periods, but the next generation of cultural nationalists has seemed Fated to be almost totally ignorant of the fact that anyone has been up the mountain before. The result is that English Canada's cultural history has a repetitious quality about it. Our ignorance of what's gone before, however, does occasionally give rise to delightful ironies. Take the statue of Egerton Ryerson, for instance.

The first generation of cultural nationalists in the late 19th century were concerned about a number of things. They wanted patriotism fostered in Canadian schools as Americans fostered it in theirs. ("School children should be taught recitations in which the greatness of Canada is set sweetly forth.") They wanted Canadian writers and artists given the recognition they deserved; too many of them, they said, were leaving Canada in frustration for the U.S.

Statues of Canadian heroes designed in England and cast in New York became a particular focus of cultural nationalist wrath. When Edmund E. Sheppard of *Saturday Night* magazine learned that Toronto's statue of Sir John A. Macdonald was to be designed in England, he complained: "At best, art has but few patrons in a country so new as this and the amount which governments and corporations can contribute to the encouragement of artists, is necessarily small . . . It is not only unkind but improper to pass over . . . artists and sculptors who have toiled in Canada amidst great discouragements, and ask outsiders for a design. . ."

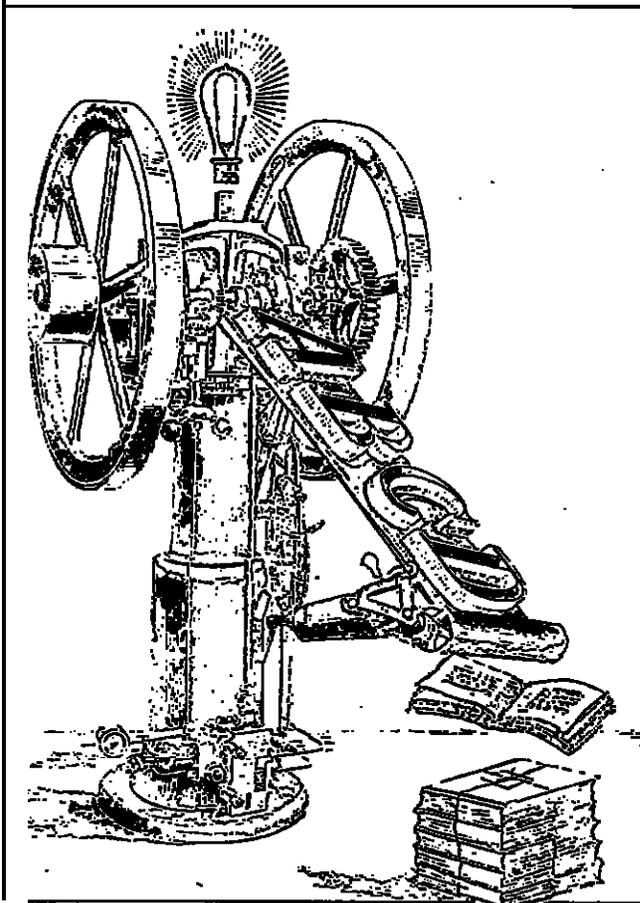
More than 80 years later, on Dec. 1, 1971, a couple of dozen

cultural nationalists gathered at the statue of Egerton Ryerson in downtown Toronto to hold a memorial service: What they mourned was the sale, a year earlier, of Canada's oldest publishing house, Ryerson Press, by its owner — the United Church of Canada — to the American multinational, McGraw-Hill. Graeme Gibson, the novelist, climbed up a ladder and draped a U.S. flag over Ryerson's arm. Others, wearing black arm bands, solemnly placed a wreath at the statue's pedestal.

But the 1971 protesters seemed unaware of two things. First, that some of their 19th-century predecessors had opposed the erection of this very statue because it had been cast in New York. And second, that Ryerson Press, whose demise they were lamenting, had for some years at that point, come to symbolize much of what was dreary in Canadian publishing.

In the 1920s Ryerson, under publisher Lorne Pierce, had been in the vanguard of Canadian literature. Indeed (they were to the 1920s what Jack McClelland and McClelland & Stewart were to the publishing scene of the 1960s.) Ryerson published the best and most exciting prose and poetry; it also published many of the most widely used textbooks. But by the late 1940s, Pierce and Ryerson had become tired and ultra-conservative. The sale of Ryerson textbooks had dropped sharply. Teachers found them out of date. Pierce himself had become increasingly prudish. (In the 1920s he'd almost been fired for publishing Frederick Philip Grove's "salacious" novel *Settlers of the Marsh*.) Now he refused to publish a book by Irving Layton because the word "piss" appeared in it. Earle Birney's *Turvey* was turned down. Mordecai Richler was rejected. Instead safe books by

mediocre writers came to dominate the Ryerson list. Not unpredictably, the results were disastrous. Thousands of unsold copies of these books filled the Ryerson warehouse. As Robert Fulford put it in the *Toronto Star* more than a decade before Ryerson was sold, "When duller books are published, they'll be published by Ryerson."



EACH PERIOD OF cultural nationalism brings with it new magazines. Some take root, flourish, and survive. Most don't. *Saturday Night*, for instance, is a product of the first wave of nationalism; it was launched in 1887. The *Canadian Bookman* and the *Canadian Forum* began early in the second period. The *Bookman* first appeared in January, 1919, barely two months after the war ended. From its inaugural issue, it set itself up as a kind of cheerleader for a new self-confident Canada — a Canada that felt good about the role it had played in the First World War and about having recently celebrated its 50th birthday: "... the appearance of *The Canadian Bookman* at the very dawn of this new era is not a mere coincidence," declared the magazine modestly. "*The Canadian Bookman* is itself one of the phenomena of the new era."

The *Bookman* specialized in patriotism. There was patriotic verse — poems like "The White Throat":

*Sweet, Sweet, Canada, Canada, Canada,
O patriotic bird, you're home again.
When he left us he was mute —
But hear him — clearer than a flute,
"Sweet, Sweet, Canada, Canada, Canada,"
Tell me, now your journey's done,
As you followed south the sun
Did you praise another one?*

*Hear him answer from the tree
"I have only sung of thee:
Sweet, Sweet, Canada, Canada, Canada."*

There was patriotic prose too. The magazine argued, for instance, that what the world needed was "a new Peter Pan, a Peter Pan of literature" who would restore to the world its lost faith. "Who better to play that part than Canada: 'Young, beautiful, uncontaminated by the evils of effete civilizations, untouched by any but the hand of God, she stands on the last Anglo-Saxon frontier. ...'" Then, as might be expected, there were a lot of patriotic book reviews. Here is a snippet from a 1926 review titled "A Canadian Genius," celebrating the work of the poet Wilson MacDonald: "Canada has dwelt overlong in the shade. In the shadow of two potent nations her voice has been mild and almost, as it were, apologetic. But the late war has brought her a measure of emancipation. ... The sap of her awakening nationhood stirred. It ran more strongly, and now it is merely a matter of time until the full leaf will be upon her. Through Wilson MacDonald she speaks with the voice of maturity."

All this was more than literary scholar Douglas Bush, over at the *Canadian Forum*, could bear. (the *Forum*, it must be remembered, was itself deeply devoted to Canadian culture.) In the December 1962 issue, Bush attacked the *Bookman* and the *Can-*

Children's books: seen but not heard

TEN YEARS AGO, publishing in Canada was the subject of considerable official s&tiny. In Ottawa the Secretary of SNN was holding conferences on new policy for publishing. In Toronto there were hearings by the ambitious Royal Commission on Book Publishing. When it was all over, some people noticed with concern that, outside some references to textbooks, the idea that Canadian children need Canadian books had hardly been mentioned. The past decade has been marked by the efforts of some dedicated supporters to bring this omission to our attention.

A major step toward their objective was the creation of the Children's Book Centre. Based in Toronto, it provides information about Canadian children's books and their authors and promotes them across the country. And, says Ellen Montizambert, director of the centre, Canadian publishers are beginning to respond. Unlike other areas of publishing, the numbers of children's books on trade lists are not being trimmed; in fact, they are increasing annually. Montizambert believes that quality is also increasing. Small houses that publish only books for children, such as Annick and Kids Can Press, have overcome many of their growing pains and now are producing material that is both entertaining and attractive. Grey de Pencier's children's books — offshoots of their Owl magazine — provide excellent non-fiction reading.

It has also become easier for Canadian children's books. There now are 16 stores across Canada that sell exclusively children's books and have a Canadian section. Judy Tye, who with her husband Allan operates one of these stores. Paddington Station in St.

Catharines, Ont., reports an increase in requests for Canadian material. More people went to Canadian books for family reading and for sending out of the country as gifts. What does she recommend? That depends, of course, on the situation, but *Alligator Pie* is a safe standby.

Dennis Lee's *Alligator Pie*, published by Macmillan in 1974, was a turning point for Canadian children's books. It showed publishers that a children's book was promotable and could be a worthwhile investment. But despite its success, problems certainly remain. In general, Canadian books don't sell in profitable numbers within this country, and children's books are no exception. One hopeful sign is that they are beginning to win more international recognition. Barbara Smucker has recently returned from a visit to Japan to promote her *Underground to Canada*, (Clarke Irwin, 1977), and a dozen or so representatives from the Canadian children's book trade attended the Children's Book Fair in Bologna. But the current world economic climate is not encouraging for the sale of foreign rights.

At home, Canadian children's books appear to be missing out on an important market — school and public libraries. According to the Children's Book Centre, only about 20 per cent of total children's book sales in Canada goes to libraries and 80 per cent to private buyers. By comparison, in the United States the figures are reversed, with about 80 per cent of total children's book sales going to libraries. The fact that Canadian books are usually more expensive than U.S. books may be part of the reason why many librarians don't make a special effort to order them, but

apparently there is still not enough user demand. Many adults — parents, teachers, librarians — may still think that a Canadian book for children must be either about girls growing up on Prince Edward Island or adventure on the Tundra, and some publishers accuse the review media of not living up to their responsibility to correct this misconception.

But should it really matter to us whether Canadian books reach our children? Obviously it takes much more than nationalistic content to make a book worthwhile. And we already expect so much of children's books — they most entertain, expand horizons, exercise imagination — that it seems unfair to place upon them the additional responsibility of providing a national identity. Yet that is just what the best books help to do. Children can enjoy the stories and at the same time absorb so much about Newfoundland from Kevin Major, about British Columbia from Ann Blades, about the North from James Houston, about French Canada from Gabrielle Roy, about our heritage from Barbara Smucker, Mary Alice Downie, William Toye, and Elizabeth Cleaver. Montizambert says simply that these books "help explain us to each other, at an early age."

Canada's culture is still under official scrutiny. Montizambert recently wrote to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee to complain that its preliminary publication had made no mention of children's literature. The committee responded, conceding that it was an oversight. Perhaps the fact that this concession was made shows that children's books are gaining ground.

— MARY AINSLIE SMITH

dian Authors' Association, whose organ it had become. "Every year one hopes to hear the last of our windy tributes to our Shakespeares and Miltons, and every year the Hallelujah Chorus seems to grow in volume and confidence. . . The trouble is that, born to hew wood and draw water, we are trying desperately to be literary. . . The salvation of Canadian literature would be a nation-wide attack of writer's cramp. . ."

Bush reads like Mordecai Richler 50 years later, warning us of the excesses of our nationalism. He reads too like the editor of the original *Canadian Magazine* who complained in the 1890s that "lauding everything that is printed regardless of inherent merit, buying Canadian books simply because they are Canadian, and pelting Canadian writers simply because they live in the land of 'The Maple Leaf' " was sheer folly.

TEN YEAR AGO, *Books in Canada* was a product of the most recent wave of cultural nationalism. Its introductory issue appeared six months after the sale of Ryerson Press. If the *Bookman* suffered from terminal patriotism, *Books in Canada* almost seemed over-eager to establish its independence. At first, it was downright feisty. Publishers, readers, writers, government — no one was exempt from the magazine's anger.

In its first editorial, *Books in Canada* told the publishers that nationalism wasn't enough. They had an "insufficient grasp" of their responsibilities to writers and it was time they smartened up. "Too many of our publishers survive more by good luck than by good management," complained another editorial a few months later. "Too many books have been published this season that were obviously premature or that showed inadequate editorial attention." When some of the larger publishers chose not to advertise in the magazine, the editors said scornfully, "It is too often the publishing houses who have profited most from reviews in our pages that are most niggardly in their support of our continuance."

Readers welcomed the magazine and sent congratulatory letters. The editors didn't seem to like that. "We do not encourage our reviewers to regard Canadian books as sawed cows," declared the magazine. "and similarly we do not wish our publication to seem sacrosanct. We do not want readers to revere us. . ." When readers, writers, and publishers all complained about a review of Graeme Gibson's *Communion*, the editors replied loftily, "We believe that our reviewer made excessively gallant attempts to find redeeming features in a book which we were not alone in finding pretentious. . . If Canadian writing is to be the valid expression of a Canada that has at last come of age, it must be measured in adult terms. . . We believe we are contributing to that process."

When the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing said, "we think — and found agreement among many people in the book industry — that *Books in Canada* has indulged too often in what almost appears to be author assassination for its own sake," the magazine was furious. "If the commissioners, or the publishers, wish to sustain their charges that we have assassinated any Canadian authors, let them produce the bodies. We suspect that the hopes and talents of far more Canadian authors will be killed off by inadequacies of Canadian publishers (and even of Royal Commissions) than by our reviewers." Months later the magazine was still fuming: "Should that implication ever appear again in print," read an editorial, "*Books in Canada* will immediately take action—even though the defendants may not be such an august body as Ontario's Royal Commission on Book Publishing."

Books in Canada made a lot of people angry in its first two or three years. Some of them are still angry. But one thing's certain. There's never been any doubt of the magazine's independence.

THE CULTURAL NATIONALIST period that began before Expo '67 and gave rise to *Books in Canada* has, I think, come to an end. Or to be more precise, the period of popular cultural nationalism, has come to an end. (There's always been a small hard core of Canadians who continue to be seriously interested in Canadian culture even when it's in fashion.)

Popular interest in Canadian culture began to wane in the mid-to-late 1970s. Enrolment in Canadian studies programs has declined sharply. So has membership in the Committee for an Independent Canada. Many of these who were there at the begin-

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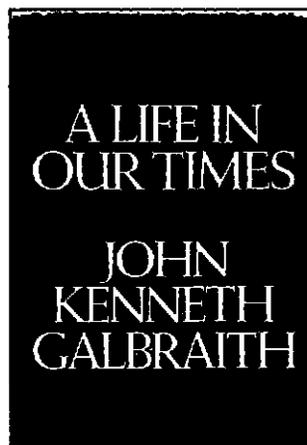
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ning of this most recent period and who gave it a focus have quietly moved on to other things. Dennis Lee, for instance, has written in *The Death of Harold Ladoo* that "For eight straight years, of crud in public places / I worked to incite a country to belong to, / But here, on this leafy street, / I wince at those hectic unreal selves."

McClelland & Stewart seems tired — reminiscent of Ryerson Press in the 1940s. Macmillan is now a shadow of the house John Gray headed, the damage having been largely inflicted by its former owner, the Canadian multinational Maclean-Hunter. (When it comes right down to it, is there really anything to choose between Canadian and American multinationals? Isn't the mentality just the same?) It's more difficult to get a serious work of

fiction or non-fiction published today than it's been for more than a decade. And once in print, it's harder than ever to get such books into the book stores. Self-help guides and the like are taking up more and more shelf space..

Given the energy that went into the attempt to save Ryerson, it's astonishing how calmly we Canadians have accepted the Americanization of the Canadian film industry in recent years. And most of us now spend so much of our time watching U.S. television that we haven't noticed that CBC-TV has never been better.

In short, it looks as if the rock of cultural nationalism is working its way back down the mountain again.

Happy birthday, Books in Canada. □

CanHits

Selected gems from the first 50 CanWits

WHO IS COOKED by adding a dash of symbolism to a cup of Crisco and blaking the mixture in a fearfully symmetrical oven for a cycle of four principles? Why, Northrop Frye, of course. Readers of our first CanWit — in July, 1975 — where invited to concoct similar recipes involving the essential ingredients of well-known Canadian literary figures. As it turned out, none of the subsequent entries quite lived up to Dr. Frye's eminent example but, if nothing else, they marked the beginning of a feature that now has survived through 63 issues of *Books in Canada*. The history of CanWit charts a perilous path (occasionally nobody seems to get the point) but, more often than not, a few provocative suggestions prompt a perverse flood of tongue-in-cheekiness. Some favourites from the first 50:

Grave mutters: In an effort to improve the country's sepulchral wit, readers of CanWit No. 7 were asked to provide appropriate epitaphs for any prominent Canadian. The winner was Morgan Cicero of Grafton, Ont., for these memorial lines:

HERE LIES
PIERRE BERTON
WHO NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION

HERE LIES
JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO
UNQUOTE

HERE LIES
GEORGE BOWERING
PASST AWAY

HERE REPOSES
ROBERTSON DAVIES
THE RIGHT SORT OF CHAP

HERE LIES
RAYMOND SOUSTER
NEXT WICKET PLEASE

HERE LIES
IRVING LAYTON
WHO'S GONE TO BE WITH FRIENDS

HERE LIES
MORDECAI RICHLER
SOON TO BE A
MAJOR MOTION PICTURE

HERE LIES
FARLEY MOWAT
REMAINDERED UNTO GOD

here lies
bp nichol
dead as
o
a o nail
r

Near-misses: Readers of CanWit No. 8 were asked to provide names, titles, or slogans that didn't quite make it. The



winner was Judith A. Small of Toronto, whose entries included:

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

Honourable mentions:

- *The Medium is the Average*
- *Jacob Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten-Ten (for slow learners)*
- *Toronto's Hollywood*

— Bruce Bailey, Montreal
* * *

- Peter Berton
- *As It Occurs*
- Council Canada

— Gordon Black, Toronto

Thanks, but no thanks: For CanWit No. 9 readers were asked to compose rejection slips in light verse. The winner was Ian C. Johnston of Nanaimo, B.C., for three rejections that would leave the recipient with at least a shred of self-respect:

*We've read the book. Parts are fine,
But need one swear on every line?
I'm sorry that the rent is owing,
But pardon me, your slip is showing.*

*Your tenth epic in prose
Could be worse, I suppose.
Some scenes are quite quaint,
But Ulysses it ain't.*

*Thank you for Caught in the Shrubbery
We're making good coin from cheap
thuggery,
The heroine's charming,
Her sex life alarming,
But the public's not ready for buggery.*

Apposite anagrams: Poor old IRVING LAYTON, who was NOT ANY VIRGIL, was the example used for CanWit No. 18, which requested anagrams based on the names of Canadian writers. The winner was Derrick Murdoch of Toronto for disentangling these names:

- RICHARD ROHMER: HORRID CHARNER
- MORRIS WOLFE: FILM OR WORSE
- PIERRE BERTON: REPORTER BIEN

- MARGARET LAURENCE: CREATE REGULAR MAN
- MARGARET ATWOOD: O, MAD TAROT WAGER!
- LEONARD COHEN: ONE HARD CLONE
- STEPHEN LEACOCK: HE CLEANS POCKET

Honourable mentions:

- MORDECAI RICHLER: A CLICHÉ MIRRORED
- ALICE MUNRO: UNCLEAR MOI
— Warren Clements, Islington, Ont.
* * *
- FARLEY MOWAT: FAY OWL TAMER
— Deborah Defoe, Kingston, Ont.
* * *
- ROBERTSON DAVIES: READ IT OVER, SNOBS
— H. Chuck Davis, Vancouver

From bad to verse: CanWit No. 20 introduced contributors to the art of the clerihew — a poem that consists of two rhymed couplets, with a first line that is always a famous name and with remaining lines that many vary from two to 10 syllables in length. The winner, Eswyn Lyster of Qualicum Beach, B.C., produced these nicely wrought lines:

*Mackenzie King
Seeking ways to have a fling
Found my idea of tedium:
A happy medium.*

*Gordon Sinclair
Has been so long on the air
He's convinced that he's witty.
Pity.*

Honourable mentions:

*Jack McClelland
Knows all is well and
Good.
He has Margaret Atwood.
— Hope Wener, Montreal
* * **

*Hugh Hood
Writes only when he's feeling good.
But Arthur Hailey
Writes dally.
— Philip Walsh, Ottawa*

Visitors welcome: When CanWit No. 22 asked for appropriate mottoes for real Canadian places, it attracted a letter from a real government agency: the toponymy division of the Federal Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources, which — you guessed it — keep files on more than 260,000 place-names. But while the entry by Mary MacPherson of Toronto was shorter on information, it scored higher on wit:

- Dog Pound, Alta.: "Home of dog's best friend."
- Klock, Ont.: "Where time flies."
- Colgate, Sask.: "Puts a smile on your face."
- Change Island, Nfld.: "Is as good as a rest."
- Wild Goose, Ont.: "For the time of your life."
- Tilting, Nfld.: "Overlooks the greater Atlantic."

- Scotch Bay, Man.: "For a drinking man's holiday."
- Nut Mountain, Sask.: "A crazy place to visit."

Honourable mention:

- Jerry's Nose, Nfld.: "You couldn't pick a nicer place."



- Calves Nose, Nfld.: "The town like no udder."
- Harbour Harbour, Nfld.: "Come come to to a lovely lovely town town."
— Peter Gorrie, Ottawa

Moody musing: CanWit No. 28 sought potential Poets Laureate to serve our country's needs, especially in the interests

of national unity. The winning entry was a brace of inspiring verses by Marvin Goody of Toronto, who has also contributed envies under such pseudonyms as Garvin Moody and Odymer Vingo, and later served as copy editor of *Books in Canada*:

The Question

*O, Canada, thy years are numbered thus:
One, one and yet one more — one hundred plus;
Most venerable span for human kind
Yet but an eye blink to the cosmic mind
Youthful as nations go in his'ry's spread,
(An age when tortoises are not yet dead).*

*Art thou to end untimely, O my land,
Victim of Yankee greed, Péquiste demand?
Shalt thou be snatched yet from their
grinding gears,
Or are thy days but numbered as thy years?*

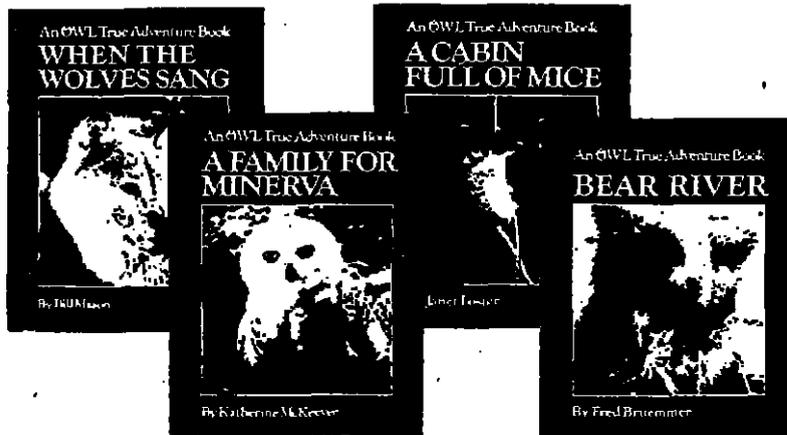
The Prophecy

*(A Prologomenon to Eternity)
Soon shall we see the healing of rifts, the
soothing of sorrows,
Tranquil this boreal land for a million
tomorrows,
For deeply shall settle the drifts, ice-locked
be the climate,
And the wasp shall lay down with the frog
till the end of time.*

Damn Yankees: CanWit No. 31 requested "official" American jokes to be included in *The Official Ethnic Calendar*, soon to be published in New York. The responses —

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Progressive Conservatives?

THE GREAT oxymoron contest of CanWit No. 29 proved so successful that the generous editors of Books in Canada even doubled the prize money. Oxymorons — foolish figures of speech in which seemingly contradictory expressions are conjoined — abound in our language. We offered such examples as "jumbo shrimp" and "military intelligence" and that bittersweet & vice known as the "tax incentive." An avalanche of rejections ensued, of which "postal service" was the commonest duplication. The winner was Margaret Pointing of Mississauga, Ont., for a list that included:

- light heavyweight
- cotton wool
- slip knot
- washer/dryer
- stop motion
- recorded live

Honourable mentions:

- spendthrift
- modern history
- permanent loan
—James E. Candow, Dartmouth, N.S.
- ***
- same difference

- living death
- diminishing growth
- humble pride
— Ruth Danys, Toronto
- ***

- little woman
- old girl
— Colleen Archer, Omemeo, Ont.
- ***

- mck music
- modern classic
- horse sense
- constructive criticism
— Duncan Meikle, Maberly, Ont.
- ***

- civil war
- manic depression
- open secret
— Barry Tait, Parry Sound, Ont.
- ***

- even odds
- slow speed
— Heather Cadsby, Don Mills, Ont.
- ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒

- civil servant
— Janice Blaufox, New York, N.Y.
- ***

- government initiative
- rapid transit
— Steven D. Potter, Toronto

including the winner, from Patty Schnorr of Toronto — reflected a preoccupation with Jimmy Carter, the president at the time:

- Q: Why do the people of Plains, Georgia, eat peanuts on Thanksgiving?
A: Because they sent their turkey to Washington.

Honourable mentions:

An American in Rome asked directions to the Sistine Chapel. By inadvertance he was directed to the public urinals. There he saw a crowd of people with their beads craned, looking up. Back home, he was asked what be thought of the Sistine Chapel. "The ceiling is fine," he said. "but the smell in there is something awful."
—A. St.-J. Swift, Montreal

- Q: What's the name of the American neurosis that Gerald Ford now suffers from?
A: Peanut envy.

— Joseph Dunlop-Addley, Appin, Ont.

Odd couples: CanWit No. 34 invited readers to invent "illicit threesomes"—the coupling of unmarried words or phrases to produce illegitimate offspring. The idea prompted an abundance of entries, of which those by David Lane of Charlottetown, P.E.I., were judged the best:

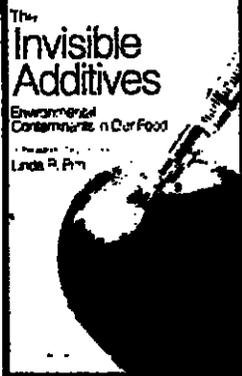
- gatecrashing bore (one at every party)
- tarred and featherbedded (punished for favouritism)

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Palm Sunday
An Autobiographical Collage
Kurt Vonnegut

James Clavell
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- ring-a-dingbat (escort service for the indiscriminating)
- South Sea Bubblegum (coconut flavoured)
- greasy spoonerism (minced words, side order of fries)

Honourable mentions:

- **figureheadache** (Governor General's constitutional dilemma)
— Glyn Davies, Toronto
* * *
- **crackpot of dawn (a rooster)**
— Myra Stilbom, Saskatoon
* * *
- **limerickshaw** (fast two-footed poetic metre)
- **downunderwear** (Australian rib-tickler)
— Robert Glazin, Stouffville, Ont.
* * *
- call of the Oscar Wilde ("Hello, sailor!")
- **gin and catonic** (a very strong drink)
— Bruce Bailey, Montreal

Double trouble: CanWit No. 43's request for back-to-back book titles brought enough double entries to sink the accountancy profession. Inevitably, there were a number of duplications, of which a favourite was George Radwanski's *Trudeau* back-to-back with *A Man to Marry, A Man to Bury*, by Susan Musgrave. The winner was Jonathan Williams of Ottawa for these combinations:

- James Simpkins's *When Was the Last Time You Cleaned Your Navel?* (Sunday

- Afternoon in the Toronto Art Gallery*, by John Gmbc.
- Roch Carrier's *Floralie, Where Are You?!* *Up Against City Hall*, by John Sewell.
- Stephen Leacock's *My Remarkable Uncle: The Man With Seven Toes*, by Michael Ondaatje.
- Al Purdy's *Love in a Burning Building / Fear of Frying*, by James Barber.

- Grandma Preferred Steak*, by Gregory Clark.
- Victor Coleman's *Speech Sucks! Exit Muttering*, by Donald Jack.
- Graeme Gibson's *Five Legs! The Mysterious Naked Man*, by Aiden Nowlan.
— Mary MacPherson, Toronto

And finally: No sentimental journey would be complete without a few vicious words about Toronto the Good, which, we suggested in CanWit No. 49, is quickly becoming Toronto the Conceited. This iambic deflation, by Ian C. Johnston of Nanaimo, B.C. — a veteran winner from CanWit No. 9 — brought the Queen City back to earth:

*There leafs decline; fresh blue jays fade unsought,
Where once the Argonauts one fateful day
With proud Ulysses (Curtis) ran and caught
The elusive glories of my Lord of Grey.
Now well-fried burghers, sleek with relish,
spy
Fond Yonge delights, new oral pleasures weigh:
Eat or be Eaton's; bawdy rubs roll by:
If all else fails, a whirling Mirvish play.
Their gods' erection with revolving knob
Looms o'er the Bay Street bondsman on his knee.
The air waves bleat across the land and throb
The pallid image of the CRC.
Horseman, ride by, descend not past Thornhill;
For all its vanity, it's Hogtown still.* □



Honourable mention:

- Jock Carroll's *Bottoms Up! The Right Cheek*, by Claire (Montreuil) Faucher.
- Margaret Atwood's *Dancing Girls! The Dainty Monsters*, by Michael Ondaatje.
- Morley Callaghan's *No Man's Meat!*

REGIONAL PORTRAITS OF CANADA		<i>Coming soon</i>
<p><i>Coming soon</i></p> <p>VANCOUVER ISLAND AND THE GULF ISLANDS Photographs by Menno Fieguth Introduction by Jack Hodgins</p> <p>This is a region where unique natural beauty holds an almost mythical place in the Canadian mind. It is where the land ends; where Canada touches the Pacific; where, beyond the coastal mountains, utopias are sought among hidden coves. For all its fame, the region is still largely uninhabited and little known. Once outside the intimate, cultivated charms of Victoria, the traveller is soon among vast rain-forests, tiding beaches strewn with driftwood, tiny untouched inlets and towering mountains covered in snow. The sea is never far away, and it will be no surprise that boats and boat-docks, fishing and ferrying, play a prominent part in this book.</p> <p>96 pages, 80 colour plates Clothbound \$15.95</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE SAINT JOHN RIVER VALLEY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Photographs by Wayne Barrett and Anne MacKay Introduction by George MacBeath</p> <p>The mighty Saint John of New Brunswick drains a larger territory than any other river between the St Lawrence and the Mississippi. It waters one of the loveliest, most fertile and most historic valleys in North America. From the forests of northern Maine, through the islands, hills and shorelines below Fredericton, the climactic tides of the Reversing Falls at Saint John, the river flows through marvellous agricultural landscapes and past many towns and villages of vivid memories and beautiful architecture. It has been said that no-one can see New Brunswick who does not travel the river between Fredericton and Saint John. In this book all that and more is achieved.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">96 pages, 80 colour plates Clothbound \$15.95</p>	<p>BRITISH COLUMBIA Photographs by Paul von Baich Introduction by Robert Harlow Paperbound \$9.95</p> <p>CHINOOK COUNTRY Albert. South Photographs by Bill Simpkins Introduction by Grant MacEwan - Paperbound 9 9 . 9 5</p> <p>FORTRESS OF LOUJSBOURG Photographs by Owen Pit-1 Introduction by John Fortier Paperbound \$9.95</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Coming</i> June 1981</p> <p style="text-align: right;">POINT PELBBI UPPER CANADA VILLAGE</p>
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CanLit acrostic

by Wayne Grady

Attention all CanLit dons and puzzle wizards. It's time to play CanLit Acrostic. Just complete this incredibly easy acrostic and send it to *Books in Canada*. The first correct entry received from each of Canada's 10 provinces and two territories wins a set of 10 recent Canadian books. That's 12 winners, 12 sets of books. Are you ready?

Here's how it works: When properly filled in, the letters in the box on the next page form a quotation from a Canadian book. You find the letters by answering the clues below and writing the answers in the numbered spaces provided. Then transfer the letters from the spaces to the appropriate squares in the box. Simple, eh? Oh yes — the first letters of each answered clue, when read down from A to U, form the name of the author and the book. Have fun.

- A. One who fears to be in England, now that April's gone
112 12 49 135 97 90 108 2 75 135
- B. Site of Notre Dame des Victoires, or birthplace of Norman Levine (2 words)
70 126 59 93 86 13 50 3 22
- C. "Beneath the pines he _____ and swayed, / Master of passion and of power . . ." — D. C. Scott, "The Piper of Arll"
92 121 36 141 119
- D. In Quebec, extreme right-wing Catholic nationalist of the last century
127 17 149 58 103 47 73 7 69 131
81 136
- E. First name of author of *La Guerre, Yes Sir!*
156 105 30 14
- F. "I know a man who waited his chance cause everybody was always telling him his chance going come. And you know how old that man was when his chance come? On his blasted _____!" (2 words) — Austin Clarke, "They Heard a Ringing of Bells"
25 99 143 10 62 114 57 139
- G. American shillings: "What do you ask for it?" "Two _____." — Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush*
101 76 33 6 111 37 23
- H. Harness for dogsled whereby dogs pull two and two along a centre trace, rather than in a fan. (2 words)
118 131 150 109 28 21 130 34 125
- I. Large recesses with windows, usually projecting from the second storey. (Obs.)
44 33 146 29 77 63
- J. "... dreaming of a world _____ to come, / in a universe of fancies . . ." (2 words) — Charles Sangster, "A Poet's Love"
46 132 85 1 117 72 110
- K. New Brunswick novelist, author of *This House of Isstens* (initials and surname)
124 42 94 134 66 8 20 107 45
- L. Region of high ground forming a watershed to the north of the western end of Lake Superior (3 words)
56 115 24 140 120 68 19 74 9 84
106 31
- M. "Man's _____ prevails even over his love of death." — Alden Nowlan
147 104 11 113 40 78 122
- N. "They were _____ then, were they not, / With such commerce polyglot?" — A. M. Klein, "Ballad of the Dancing Bear"
152 82 133 116
- O. _____ Place, novel by Angus Mowat
145 91 4 137 39 80 154 95
- P. Saskatchewan town, home of Ralph Allen Memorial Museum
32 65 102 34 88
- Q. "Many naval officers share his view that while integration of the three forces is a worthy objective, _____ is not." — *Globe & Mail*, Aug. 1, 1966
32 148 64 16 60 98 38 55 138 18
83
- R. "When _____ lets down her hair / Over the pale blossom / Of the world . . ." — A. J. M. Smith, "The Two Sides of a Drum"
144 153 79 35 27

S. "When I finally told him _____ couldn't possibly still be off pitch, Fonda insisted there must have been a slip-up. . . ." (2 words) — Josef Skvorecky, *The Cowards*

T. "Then the whole Fair's evil _____/Fell into a fatal quiet." — Duncan Campbell Scott, "The Spider and the Rose"

43 129 15 31 87 100 89

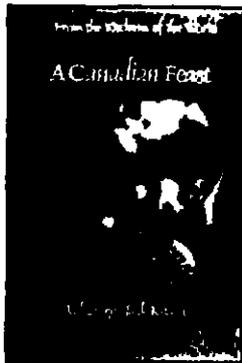
96 123 67 61

U. The Micmacs and Malicetes had never lost their loves for the French king, their hatred for the _____, and they clung to the faith of bloody-minded Father Le Loure." — Thomas Raddall, *His Majesty's Yankees*

5 71 41 128 26 48 142

1	J	2	A	3	B	4	O	5	U		6	G	7	D	8	K	9	L	10	F		11	M	12	A		13	B	14	E	15	S				
16	O	17	D	18	Q	19	L	20	K		21	H	22	B	23	G	24	L	25	F	26	U		27	R	28	H	29	I		30	E	31	S		
32	O	33	G	34	H	35	R		36	C	37	G	38	O	39	O	40	M	41	U	42	K		43	S	44	I		45	K	46	J	47	D	48	U
	49	A	50	B	51	L		52	P	53	I		54	P	55	Q	56	L	57	F	58	D		59	B	60	Q	61	T	62	F					
63	I	64	Q	65	P		66	K	67	T	68	L	69	D	70	B	71	U	72	J		73	D	74	L		75	A	76	G	77	I	78	M		
	79	R	80	O	81	D		82	N	83	Q		84	L		85	J	86	B	87	S	88	P	89	S		90	A	91	O	92	C	93	B	94	K
	95	O	96	T	97	A	98	Q	99	F	100	S	101	G		102	P	103	D	104	M		105	E	106	L		107	K	108	A	109	H			
	110	J	111	G	112	A	113	M		114	F	115	L	116	N	117	J	118	H	119	C		120	L	121	C	122	M		123	T					
124	K	125	H	126	B	127	D	128	U	129	S	130	H		131	H	132	J		133	N	134	K	135	A	136	D	137	O	138	O	139	F	140	L	
141	C	142	U			143	F	144	R	145	D	146	T	147	M	148	O	149	D		150	H	151	D	152	N	153	R	154	O	155	A	156	E		

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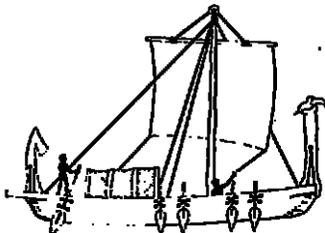
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Pitiless women, desperate men

The *Umbrella Pines*. by Gilles Archambault, translated from the French by David Lobdell, Oberon Press, 137 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 360 8) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 361 6).

The *Ceremony*, by Marie-Jo & Thériault, translated from the French by David Lobdell, Oberon Press, 105 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 384 0) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 365 9).

By SHERRY SIMON

THESE TWO BOOKS share the happy fate of having found wonderful translations. Otherwise they are as different as two works of fiction can be. On the one hand a subtle and dispassionate novel of middle-age assessment; on the other a collection of stark, brilliantly evocative tales. No banners waving, each brings a mature and significant artistry to its genre.

French-speaking jazz-lovers have long known Gilles Archambault as the owner of the raspy and genial voice that has the corner on Radio-Canada jazz programs. In this novel Archambault's voice is just as warm as on the radio—though a lot less categorical. *The Umbrella Pines* (Archambault's eighth novel) tempers its devastating exposé of human weakness with a rare, compassionate gentleness.

The Umbrella Pines is a novel about paternity. Equally tyrannized by a domineering father and by a daughter in adolescent rebellion, Serge lives in eternal compromise to the demands of others. His gentleness, his sweet obsequiousness, is interpreted by everyone — including himself — as abject weakness. But his stance is in fact a philosophical position: he is overcome by the responsibility of having brought life into the world. He "seeks forgiveness for the one thoughtless act of his life: having momentarily yielded in the temptations of paternity."

Finally, in Serge's 50th year, comes the lonely death of his father in Florida and the brutal murder of his daughter. Serge is guilty, then. Guilty of having never stood up to either father or daughter, guilty of having been a real-estate agent lacking all conviction, guilty of having never changed his restless dreams into reality.

His wife, Danielle, however, lives a contradiction that hardly bothers her. Tanning herself in the summer, she turns to leftist causes and the writing of revolutionary manuscripts in the fall. The violence in her novels — which are new accepted for publication — is in inverse proportion to the tranquillity of her life with a man whose weakness she considers touching.

Who is to blame in this tangled mess of

dependencies? Archambault is generous in a pessimistic and melancholy sort of way. Emmanuelle, the adolescent daughter, is as trapped in her opposition to Family and in her relationship with her "revolutionary" artist madman as her parents are in their attempts not to act like parents. And it is the philosopher Serge who concludes: "Ridiculous reproduction." To bring life into the world is simply to consent to suffering.

Erroneously called a novel (in French the subtitle is "contes": stories or tales), *The Ceremony* is a collection of short sketches — drawn with great care and precision — showing women involved in some sort of secret transgression of human nature. The tales combine the aestheticism of H.X. Huysmans with the exoticism of Isak Dinesen; and their sharp, sculptured prose recalls Thériault's Four previous collections of poetry.

Vampirism, werewolfery, anthropophagy, murders, strange deaths, and even stranger transformations — these aberrations become emblematic in depicting the struggle between Prince Beelzebub and the Mother-of-all-Names, the struggle between male and Female.

In these tales it is the woman who pursues and conquers her prey. Her desire it is that consumes her chosen victim. Meticulously, delicately, her design is repeated again and again under various guises. Each short piece with its harsh, timeless settings and pitiless antique suns is a fascinating recreation of the final kill.

The book leaves the reader with a series of strong images — the desperate suitor roaming the white dusty village, the Chinese nobleman submerged in the surfeits of an over-refined sensibility, the flock of identical women throwing themselves "with little moans of pleasure" on the delicate cubes of human flesh. Such is the power of a well-told tale.

A note: nowhere in *The Umbrella Pines* is there any indication of the original title, publisher, or place of publication of the novel. Shouldn't such mention be obligatory? □

Dial M for mouthwash

The *Lister Legacy*, by Jan Drabek, Mussion, 365 pages. \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 0044 7).

By **CHRIS SCOTT**

FEBRUARY, 1944. Intelligence reports suggest that BVPB (*Biologische Verteidigung der Festung Europa* - Biological Defence of Fortress Europe), an organization bunkered deep in Adam Hill in the Orlice Mountains of Czechoslovakia, is preparing

to muck up the beaches of Fortress Europe. "We have made great strides in our understanding of the behaviour of germs," a Cambridge professor tells the reluctant hem of this novel. Lt. Commander Douglas R. Howard, RCN. "Unfortunately, this understanding can also be used for nefarious purposes..." When a USAF P-38 returns from photo-reconnaissance over Cap Gris Nez with pictures of pipe-laying Germans, there can be no doubt that their purposes are nefarious indeed.

Howard (né Horvatz, a Fluent German speaker with a B.Sc. in biology from McGill) sets up a three-man commando to liquidate B VFE at Adam Hill. Natives can't be used (though they were to assassinate Heydrich) "because [they] tend to be subject to waves of emotion which at times may entirely obscure their rational judgement." Howard proposes instead to send a Pole, Stanislaw Jaroscynski; a" American, Tom Evans (whose widowed mother married a Czech farmer in Nebraska), and a multilingual Englishman, Harry Mindon, as commander of the group code-named LISTER after the Famous practitioner of antiseptic surgery. (Violating a prime rule of the game, that a code name should in no way refer to its object, this does afford Drabek some play with Lister-Listerine.)

When Mindon suffers a perforated appendix on the eve of the mission and requires surgery himself, Howard is dropped in to take his place and maintain the narrative. Mindon turns out later to be a Soviet spy while, incredibly, Howard is unaware that LISTER's Czech contact, the beautiful film actress, Hana Dykova, maintains friendly relations with the Germans only as a cover. The mission, which seems doomed to Failure, succeeds — though Evans is killed and Hana Dykova seriously wounded. Transported under Gestapo care to Dresden, rescued from that ill-fated city by none other than Josef Goebbels, she is reserved for a worse Fate at the hands of SMERSH and Drabek's plot.

Through Ludlumesque intercutting (done well enough to keep the commuter hanging from his strap and the reviewer onto his suspension of disbelief), Drabek follows various survivors of LISTER through the aftermath of the mid on Adam Hill. These include Valery Semlyonov, a Russian POW shipped out of the Birkenau chemical plant to work at Adam Hill; the movie star Hana Dykova; and Lt. Commander Howard himself.

Devastated after an operational affair with Hana and almost starved to death after a trek across Poland to meet oncoming Russian troops, Howard is nursed back to life by Sybil Hawthorne, a Friend of his cousin's. In hospital he is contacted by Mindon, LISTER's original commander, who asks for a report of the mission to be delivered only to him. Howard marries Sybil and moves back to Montreal. In 1947, on Fifth Ave. in New York, he is the target of a mob-style bit, which fails. A subsequent contact with Polish intelligence reveals that the Poles are holding his Fellow-commando

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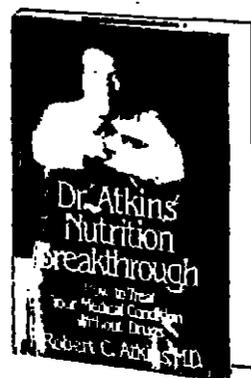
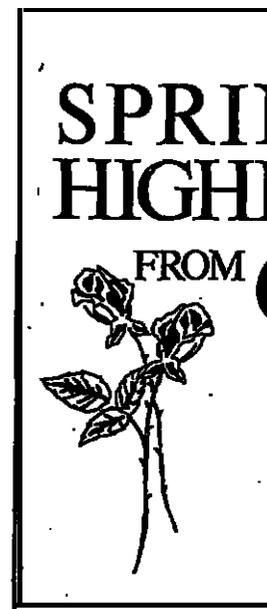
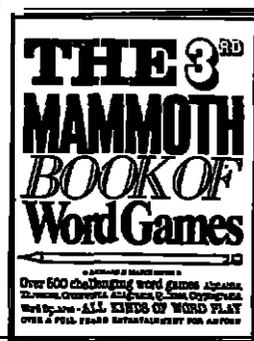
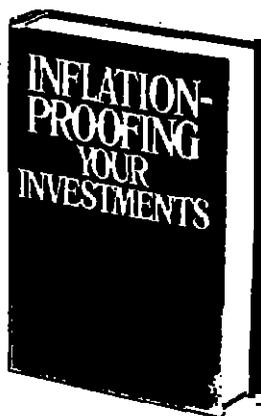
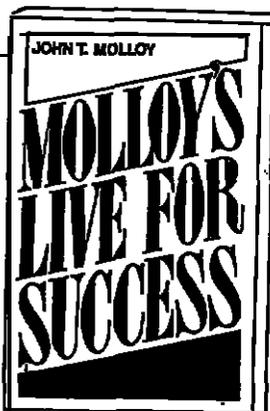
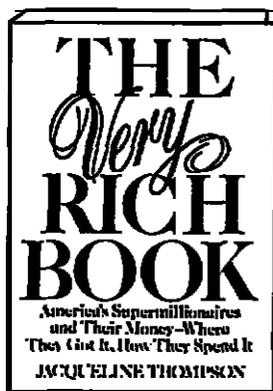
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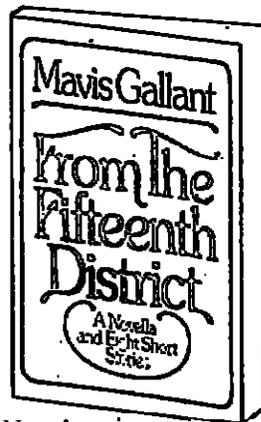
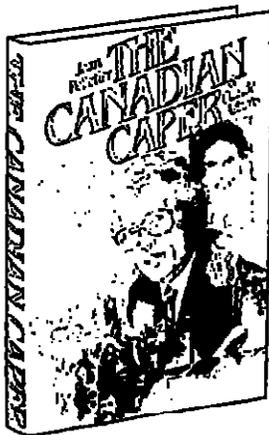
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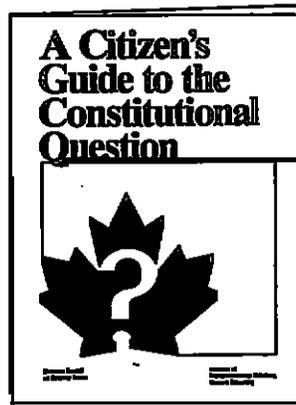
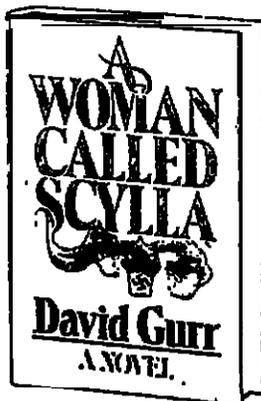
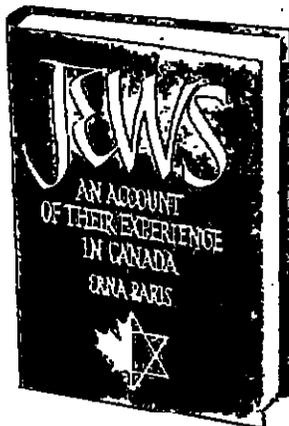
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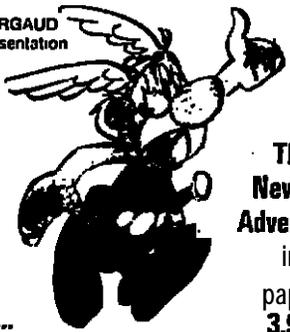
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Stanislaw Jaroscynski and want to talk. Someone, it seems, is deathly afraid of who or what Howard saw inside Adam Hill.

This point is never satisfactorily resolved by the novel. Howard learns that the Czechs have arrested Jiri Palka, one of the resistance men who helped with the raid, and in return for Howard's silence Jaroscynski and Palka are to be kept alive. Apparently the Soviets are afraid that stories of widespread collaboration at Adam Hill might leak out. Given the Soviets' Vlasovite paranoia, this is understandable—but it is a poor hinge for a novel, which must deal in particulars. Accordingly, Drabek resurrects Semlyonov, the survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Adam Hill, who in the '40s is working his way through Gulag.

One of the "weak ones," Semlyonov aspires to become one of the "strong ones." In Khrushchev's Russia he becomes an official in the West European Division of the liaison section of the Central Committee, and in a chance encounter with a member of a Czech trade commission learns that an investigation into Adam Hill may be under way. Semlyonov reacts with a Beria-like deviousness. He has to eliminate Howard (who is keeping Jaroscynski, the only other witness to who was inside the hill, alive), and he has to do so without drawing attention to himself. Since it is a convention that reviewers not reveal the outcome of a thriller, I won't reveal whether Semlyonov succeeds in this endeavour.

In a book with a fairly large cast of characters (including walk-ons by Himmler, Goebbels, and Khrushchev) it is inevitable that some should be more completely drawn than others. Unhappily, Drabek's Nazis are never more than one-dimensional stage villains: the Gestapo are swine, the scientists smarmy heel-clickers. (Robert Tiesenhansen, the fanatic Nazi biologist, is refused the Nobel Prize before the war for fear he might show up in uniform.) "Final Solution," says the Reichsführer — of the Eastern workers after the raid on the hill. (He would not have said that; "special action" maybe. Drabek is playing to the gallery here.)

There are a number of editorial problems with this book. I found the dialogue, especially in the first quarter, to be incredibly stilted. ("Your writing seems strangely devoid of all the military jargon which I unfortunately meet so often." that Cambridge prof tells Howard.) Stanislaw Jaroscynski is introduced as "drinking at the Princess Street Railway Station," but a couple of paragraphs later has "finished his tea." Jiri Palka skis to Hana Dykova's villa across a lake: "Before teaching its surface he took off his long, heavy overcoat and tied it to his waist. That way his tracks would be smeared into a single wide band—quite a common indication that someone from the village had been to the forest to gather firewood..." Only a midget on abbreviated skis could pull off this stunt. *Kommissarbefehl* should be spelled with two m's, not one. There is also a fundamental doubt (which Drabek does little to dispel)

about the state of the biological warfare art in 1944: the Nazis just didn't have the capacity attributed to them. (It could be argued that one should go along with the author for the sake of a good yarn, but I would like to have seen more evidence of research from Drabek than breezy assurances about the "behaviour" of germs and the availability of unlimited research funds.)

These objections accumulate, undercutting the whole premise of the novel, its verisimilitude and long-range political pretensions. A pity, for *The Lister Legacy* comes with a dedication that leaves little doubt of the author's high seriousness: "To the memory of those who have died and to those who are ready to die in their efforts to bring democracy to my native country." If Jan Drabek does not have an ear for English as spoken by the English or, curiously, English as spoken by Czechs, the East European *mise en scène* is securely placed (which is what we would expect from an expatriate Czech). Franz Kafka is alive and well in Prague, Warsaw, Moscow. The wrong word, even if it's only a little one, can be fatal. □

Grey mischief

McGruber's Folly. by Max Braithwaite,
McClelland & Stewart, 220 pages, \$14.95
cloth (ISBN 0 7710 1613 1).

By DAVID WILLIAMSON

THERE ARE mystery novels, in which the hero tries to solve a crime, and then there are caper novels, in which the hero tries to commit the perfect crime. Anyone familiar with the works of the U.S.'s Donald E. Westlake (*The Hot Rock*, *Bank Shot*) knows how entertaining a caper novel can be. Max Braithwaite has written just such a book — *McGruber's Folly* — and it's a good one.

Braithwaite is well known for his "white" comedy — warm and humorous reminiscences like *Why Shoot the Teacher* and *The Night We Stole the Mounties' Car*



(winner of the 1972 Stephen Leacock Award) — so a caper novel is an excellent vehicle for his considerable story-telling skills.

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George Wilson of his 1978 novel, *Lusty Winter*, in that he is retired, living on an Ontario lakeshore, and determined not to slow down. Lii Wilson, he hates snow-mobilers and loves to look at attractive women. Where Wilson was an ex-high school teacher bent on pursuing his photography hobby, Ranse is formerly chief detective for Metropolitan Toronto, troubled by Canada's rampant inflation. How does one cope with soaring prices on a fixed income? Ranse's solution: rob the bank in nearby Po" Perkins.

With his ex-cop's mind actively planning every detail, Ranse becomes obsessed with the idea. The most ingenious part of his disguise: known in the area for his full beard, Ranse will shave it off, wear a fake one (made by an expert to look identical to his own) into town, whip it off for the robbery, put it back on to get out of town, then go away for a month-long fishing trip to grow the beard back. He times the job for a day in August after his loving wife, Josie, has gone to Regina to be with their daughter who is about to give bii to twins.

Complicating matters is Ranse's latent randiness. At 61, he is going through a late-blooming mid-life crisis — he has a crush on Madelaine, a beautiful teller in the very bank he plans to rob. She visits him at the cottage and, before you can say "McGruber's Folly," they're in bed. So much for Ranse's devotion to Josie.

Ranse pulls off the crime with aplomb — he has always been connected with amateur theatre and he regards this as his most polished performance. He destroys the beard and the clothes and he stashes the \$200,000 on nearby Rattlesnake Island. But then the problems begin, especially his having to discuss the robbery with his family and friends. Onto the scene comes Allenby, the insurance man on the case, who coincidentally meets Josie on her homeward-bound plane and — irony of ironies — appoints Ranse as special investigator.

Braithwaite moves everything along rapidly, keeping the narrative free of lengthy description or stylistic indulgence. An example of his uncluttered prose:

He took the Glad bag out to the Nova and stowed it under the front rear. got in and drove to town. There were still plenty of people on the main street, making lots of noise. He drove to the end, around the corner and down the hill to the liquor store parking lot.

The book is a male chauvinist's delight. There's the old double standard: Ranse has had several affairs. Josie remains true. There's the treatment of women as sex objects: Madelaine, who wins a beauty contest early in the novel, has a "delectable bottom" and "delicious breasts." Though she is 30 years old, she is regularly referred to as a "girl." The other women in the book have babies and keep house.

But who said character development was important to this kind of novel anyway? Braithwaite makes us want McGruber to

succeed, and that's enough. Plot is most important, the more clever the better. There are many twists and turns and the dirty old male chauvinist does have something of a come-uppance in the gently ironic ending. All in all, *McGruber's Folly* is fast-moving fun, far superior to most TV shows you'll see these days, and ample proof that a Canadian caper can be as entertaining as any. □

Prisoners of their sex

Elbow Room, edited by Linda Field and Mary Beth Knechtel, Pulp Press, 225 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88978 0811).

Common Ground, edited by Marilyn Berge, Linda Field, Cynthia Flood, Penny Goldsmith, and Lark, Press Gang Publishers, 173 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88974014 3)..

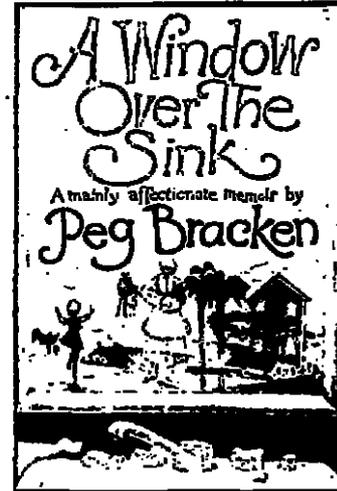
By LESLEY LITTLE

COLLECTIONS OF short stories by authors "less well-known than they ought to be" always give me the uneasy feeling that the mildly inferior is about to be strenuously — perhaps viciously — defended against all comment, useful or otherwise. (Or, failing that, a long pathetic apology will render me helpless to proceed even before I've begun.) Luckily, these two collections do not fall into these categories. But they do fail on other counts.

On the first count, the initial appearances of these books are not encouraging. The cover art, apart from a particularly poor reproduction on *Elbow Room*, exhibits a poverty of spirit that does the contents of these books an injustice. The clichéd titles and publishing house names do little to amend this. On the second count, the arrangement of stories in *Elbow Room* is disruptive to the point of exhaustion, an unfortunate handicap for some talented writing. The first story, L. L. Field's "Salty Dog," is a very poor — nay pointless — opener, not only because the wet deliriums of its alcoholic anti-heroine are more under the gun than the volcano, but also because one suspects the reason for the story's being here is that the editor had an in with herself. Sounds a bit irresponsible, not to say selfish.

As for talented writing, Don Austin's "Neurotic's Handbook," with its quotes from *Nomad's Digest* and dressing fears in tweeds, stands on its own merits; Bryan Carson's bumbling zen carpenter spins a certain charm; and R. A. Kawalilak's sketches hum the edge of madness are true to their intent. But none of these works is an actual short story. That distinction belongs to LT. Osborne's "A Dicker to Spare" and Betty Lambert's "The Last Dinner." These

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two come complete with conventional structure, twists of plot, and the like. but what makes them exceptional is that the characters grow not only beyond themselves, but beyond the limitations of the story. Mind you, this may be striking only compared to the style of writing in the rest of the book.

There is a difference of tone in *Common Ground*. Not only is this (unfortunately) a self-proclaimed collection of "stories by women," but there is a greater number of contributions with more conventional structures and topics. There is also a more even quality of writing. There are no dizzying heights of achievement, but neither is there anything to totally offend (except possibly the above-mentioned branding of these as "stories by women": it has that political collective ring to it, so offensive to the pursuit of real achievement).

There are only a couple of less-than-standard-quality stories here: "School" by Mary Schellinger and "When Winter Came" by Helen Potrebenco. They are less than they could be, not so much in their subject matter as in their inability to rise above the mediocre. They are merely depressing. The rest of the volume can be broken down into a generational pattern: the more literary offerings seem farther back in time, while the social commentary carries a contemporary setting.

Perhaps the best of these modern stories is Anne Cameron's "Nobody's Women," in which the effective use of unconventional punctuation heightens the drama and dilemma of a student nurse caught between the real and apparent madness of patients and rules on a psychiatric ward. But what makes most of the rest of the writing in this volume worthwhile, and in some cases excellent, is that the story itself is most important, not what the author has to say. When an author has an axe to grind (as in the two lesser offerings I mentioned), the greater responsibility of writing with integrity and talent is lost in a flurry of self-justifying babble.

But you will excuse me if I grind an axe: only blind arrogance could have prompted the inclusion of the lesbian tale. "I-Grec is Y: Autonomie" by Gay Bell, in this basically middle-class, post-secondary collection of Anglo-Canadian *Angst*. It isn't so much that off-the-wall francophones don't belong here as that the scope of this volume does not extend to the demimonde of lesbian Montreal. The story would have been better served in *Elbow Room*, because it is not restricted by the qualifier "stories by women": personal freedom is more the issue than the fact that lesbians are women.

But then, *Common Ground* has too many editors. As with cooks, so with editors: too many spoil it. This is the biggest problem with both these collections. There is too much time and attention paid to "getting things together" instead of letting the thing speak for itself. It really doesn't matter what the story is about, as long as it is the best it can be. And as long as the editors keep that in mind next time, their books should work out better. □

Small beer

Shandy, by David S. Williamson, Queenston House, 265 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 91986650 6).

By BARBARA WADE

MIDDLE-AGED AD MAN with boring marriage meets liberated young woman at ad conference. has first fling. After several disappointments in home life and career, ad man arranges to relieve the past with flingee in England. Finds out nostalgia isn't what it used to be. Some thorough soul-searching, a flash of wisdom, then ad man returns home to wife refreshed and contented with his lot. Hoo-ha, here we go again.

Shandy is David Williamson's second effort. His first novel, *The Bad Life*, was equally original in its concept - it followed the painful growing-up of a sensitive youth - but according to the jacket reviews on the back of *Shandy* it was quite well received. I'll be interested to see what the publishers can come up with to put on his next jacket cover. Several descriptive phrases about *Shandy* are coming to my mind, but if I use them I am afraid I can new hope to have my name on the back of one of David Williamson's books.

Back to the plot. Richard Page is our confused ad man, wondering what happened to the excitement in his marriage and the challenge in his job. His idea of sexual hi-jittks is a striptease by his wife Ruthie and his concept of the Great Canadian Novel is a half-finished manuscript about a macho curler tided *Rocks*. Every time he considers a change in his lifestyle he compensates by camping with his wife and two of their friends, competing in the wilderness for bigger tent-trailers, dining teen, and baking equipment.

Sheila, the young woman he attaches himself to with the limp glue of boredom, is David Williamson's tribute to the liberated woman. Badly dressed, foul-mouthed, she sprinkles her conversation with such original phrases as "male chauvinist pig." After the conference her letters to Richard delicately convey the love of literature that attracted him to her: "Have managed to get into some Byron poetry. I read it while I'm on the can. Is it true that he screwed his sister?"

They eventually reunite in England, where Richard's father was born. He finds she is interested in group camp-outs on the floor, and he is interested in candlelight and wine. The shandy he loved to drink while growing up now tastes like stale ginger ale. She rudely interrupts a reunion with his Nottingham relatives by posing as a curious tourist interested in the writers in the neighbourhood and then sneaks into his

bedroom For a noisy night-time tryst. Eventually Richard and Sheila separate, he is mugged, and a bomb explodes outside the Green Park tube station as he is passing by. At the climax of the story Richard finds himself wandering the streets of London, cursing the world:

As people scurried around him, some crying, others cursing the IRA, or the Palestinians, or black power, Richard shock his fist at the silent buildings around him and yelled: "You're ruining the last place on earth that matters! Come out here and fight like men!" Only two or three people took my notice of him. They stopped, looked, then fled.

Strangely enough, at this point my reaction was the same. Richard, you will be relieved to know, finally fights like a man by going to bed with the daughter of the first woman he ever loved, a prostitute in Amsterdam. Her nickname turns out to be Shandy.

The plot done is not enough to warrant those pithy phrases that are clouding my vision. After all, most novels are only variations on similar themes—it is, as we all know, how they are written that distinguishes the good from the bad. Have I one more chance to grace David Williamson's next jacket cover? Afraid not. There is no description in this novel. There is no sense that Nottingham is different from Winnipeg, or that one character is different from another except in the number of clichés they carry around with them. Richard is far too wrapped up in his own problems to look at his environment or smell the air around him. Williamson seems to have abandoned the senses of touch, taste, and smell in favour of the sense of what fills space. His poor Richard's almanac goes down like stale ginger ale. □

Sweet, nothings

Happenstance, by Carol Shields, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 216 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 007 092377 9).

By **JULIE BEDDOES**

TWO WEEKS before I quit my job as an editor at McGraw-Hill Ryerson in 1975, I pulled the manuscript of Carol Shields's *Small Ceremonies* out of the pile of unsolicited materials. Most editors will tell you that only one script in a hundred tempts them to read past the first page; usually the covering letter indicates the writer's level of literacy. I read several pages of this one, then took it home to finish. Next day, I left it on my boss's desk with a note saying that he was a writer to take notice of. A year later, Shields was awarded the Canadian Authors' Association Award for Best Fiction. She

has since published two more novels, the most recent being *Happenstance*.

Many of the qualities that are most attractive in *Small Ceremonies* and *The Box Garden* are still on display in *Happenstance*. Shields can create vivid and often picturesque characters with such sympathy that one is convinced their eccentricities are the stuff of everyday life. One has the thrill of entering a slightly exotic world without feeling that things are getting a bit far-fetched. Secondly, the dialogue is wonderful. Shields writes even the conversation of adolescents without a jarring note; the voices are distinct, natural, and convincing.

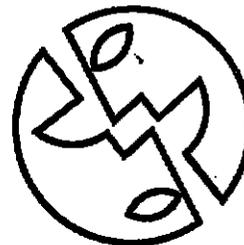
All three novels have been about the educated middle class, university professors, and their families, a milieu perhaps over-represented in Canadian fiction. However, professors have souls, wives, children, hopes, and fears, and Shields can make them amuse the sympathies of all of us. In *The Box Garden*, the university connection was secondary to a moving and unpatronizing picture of existence in a working-class suburb. The exotic touch is supplied by the heroine's relationship with Brother Adam of the Whole World Retreat. The exotic is missing from *Happenstance*, a smaller book in every way than its predecessors. Not a great deal happens, which gives Shields lots of time to exercise her skill at humorous and ironic character building via detailed descriptions of clothes, houses, food, and conversations. Nothing escapes her slightly mocking appraisal, although she is not malicious. The trouble is, in this book we never find out why we need to know these people so well.

Jack is a historian whose wife is away for a few days at a crafts conference. Between Saturday and Thursday, Jack's best friend's wife leaves him, his neighbour attempts suicide, there's a blizzard, a colleague tells him she loves him, and he gets to know his parents and his children a lot better. As the book opens, he has just found out that someone else is to publish on the topic of his uncompleted book and he has to deal with the events of the other characters' lives while he wrestles with the problem of, if you'll pardon the expression, the meaning of life. At the end he discovers that the rival book is on a quite different subject and his wife comes home: Jack is back to normal, a wiser man.

All of this is related with wit, sympathy, insight. Jack's relationship with his wife is especially well portrayed and it's encouraging to have a man who is happily married once in a while. The elderly people and the adolescents are once again beautifully drawn, without artificiality or condescension. But at the end of, and sometimes during, the book the reader is unsatisfied. One longs for less portrait painting and more event. There's a temptation to skip Jack's interior monologues and get on to what he does next. Shields's skill and intelligence deserve a bigger subject. The anxieties and taste in furnishings of a middle-age academic are not interesting in themselves. He has to represent something

"And what are you going to do for us?"

INTERVIEWS



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larger, or at least do something interesting, to command attention for the length of a book.

It's tempting, but too harsh, to accuse Carol Shields of having substituted off-beat situations for plot. In *Small Ceremonies*, the strange activities of the heroine's husband, and the much richer range of characters and situations in *The Box Garden*, do have something to say beyond description of the lives of moderately interesting people. But *Happenstance* has neither off-beat situations nor much of a plot, just a bundle of characters and events given definition by the period of the wife's absence.

Happenstance is set in Shields's native Chicago. Perhaps it can be seen as a warm-up, a preliminary exploration of the focus of a future major book. I recommend reading her first two books and eagerly anticipate the fourth: or whichever it is in which she finds a theme worthy of her skill. □

Celestial roulette

A Game of Angels, by Anne Szumigalski, Turnstone Press, 48 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88801044 3).

By MARK ABLEY

WRITERS GAIN recognition for many reasons. Fashion and personality, marketing decisions and media connections, regional appeal and sheer good luck: all these can matter just as much as the quality of someone's work. Among the most important factors may be the feeling that a writer can somehow serve as spokesman for a particular group or area (spastics or loggers, feminists or junkies, West End Vancouver or East End Montreal). Anne Szumigalski is nobody's spokesman. She will probably never be famous; she probably doesn't want to be famous. But she happens to be among the finest poets in the country.

"In June I visited a Charnel house/ in Holland I was searching/for a friend/I wore black gloves/the attendant showed me great respect." One of her fiercest poems, "Sitting Under Death's Rich Shade," begins in that low-key manner. Its central image (a woman treasuring the skull of a man she once desired) could in other hands become maudlin and sensational; Szumigalski's tact matches her audacity. When, at the end, the woman damns the skull, we're left shaken and wondering. Szumigalski is superb at telling a story, setting a scene, evoking a mood; many of her poems inhabit the fertile borderland between narrative and lyric. The people of this prodigal frontier are always liable to do the unexpected: "I know you/ you are the lady who gave birth/to a fox on TV." The games of human beings rarely

submit to a rational explanation; Szumigalski's world is no less mysterious than a child's, and no less keenly felt. In her work, as in most good poetry, the emotional resonance is linked with acute details: desire with a wood strawberry, applause with an illusion of roses, love with beaks and talons.

One of the qualities that lifts *A Game of Angels* far above the common rout of poetry is her intensely physical imagination. Whether writing about a wild grain pancake, a pissing elephant, or new-mown hay, she can make our world luminous. Some of her dream-like images may suggest an affinity with surrealism, but she's her own woman; prey for no school. All her poems are deeply felt, true to the impulse or idea that spawned them; she never sins against the imagination. Her poetry, like the fiction of such European masters as Franz Kafka and Bruno Schulz, is distinguished by the haunting recurrence of certain images (flowers, food, birth, tangled hair). Such vision sets her work apart: "a dish of flames is set down before me/ its cinders glowing like cherries/ you are luckier/ get a basket of petals/ into which you dip your face/ making munching noises." In short, her work is purely original.

Her second great virtue as a poet is her joy in the English language, a passion that complements but never overrides her love of people and the natural world. In the book's first poem, "A House With a Tower," she confronts the dangers facing any logophile: "the Celt within/ who likes to stand up and sing/ecstatic and undulating songs" is also a liar. How then does she reconcile the ecstasy and the facts? The answer is partly by means of a constant attendance to the truth of an emotion, the intimate details of a place or face, and partly by means of irony and a warm sense of humour. Furthermore, Szumigalski believes in the art. A loving faith in poetry shines through all her work, regardless of occasional distress: "the long and difficult vowels/rest on our lips like stinging insects/ we dare not brush away." Up to a point, her poems seem to fit the self-referential theories of literature current among modish theorists, for hers is an art of messages and fables, a world where words have the noisy life of flies -- but Szumigalski always ties language to experience. Her poems never retreat into pure sound or pest literature. Even "Childermas," born of a dictionary, soon moves away from that delicious word into a poem about children, joy, and sexual pleasure.

Then why is her work so little known, except among other poets? For one thing, it mixes two landscapes unfashionable in Canadian poetry: Saskatchewan (where she's lived for 30 years) and England (where she was born and grew up). Nor is she prolific: *A Game of Angels* is only her second collection. The first, *Woman Reading in Bath*, was published by Doubleday in 1974, and received as much notice in American magazines as it did in Canada. Her poetry grinds no axes, feminist, nationalist, or otherwise; having known a

world war and its aftermath, she remains too conscious of pin and death to go in for facile protest. Finally, the obvious craft of her work, its humble care for sound and shape, go against the theories of raw voice and random form prevalent among many critics and poets nowadays. These are only guesses: A *Game of Angels*, drawing so richly on images and experiences familiar to us all, seems to me more accessible to a wide public than are most new books of poetry.

This is a marvellous collection. My only regret is that it should include just 40 pages of poetry. Most of its 25 poems are entirely successful, and several take their place among the most distinguished and memorable Canadian poems of our time. I can only add a personal note: these poems mean more to me than I've begun to say. Without them, my life would be the poorer. □

Old enough -- to know better

Europe and Other Bad News, by Irving Layton. McClelland & Stewart. 96 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 4930 7).

By TECCA CROSBY

IN THE PAST, Irving Layton always seemed to want to sound younger, more hip, than he really was. Now, in his most recent collection of poetry, *Europe and Other Bad News*, Layton is trying to sound older than he is. Perhaps he feels this new persona is more in keeping with a poet who so regularly threatens his readers with retirement: "Two books ago... I announced my intention to lay down my pen and rest on my undisputed fame as this country's most prolific poet. . . . However, Old Blue Eyes is back, in what is for Layton a rather novel incarnation: the poet as wise old man.

Whatever mask or persona a poet chooses, he must convince his readers that he has the experience or wisdom to play the part. The poet as wise old man is a common enough device, and Layton uses it to the hilt, gathering around himself an eminent coterie of wise old men to bolster his pronouncements: Whitman, Freud, Sartre — even God. This venerable voice lends an air of authority and high seriousness to a collection that addresses itself to mortality and the horrors of the world after the Holocaust. But Layton fails to convince us of the truth or clarity of his vision, because he lacks the experience of Whitman, the wisdom of Freud, the intuition of Sartre, or the omniscience of God. Layton's old man is rather a doddering intellectual adventurer in a land he doesn't know, with a passport he has forged. He exhibits little of the objectivity or understating that come with a lifetime of experience. (After all, Layton,

who is 69, is getting on.) Instead his voice is egotistic, almost narcissistic. In some instances it borders on the autoerotic: "Such lines can make my nipples rise."

He presents us with two different worlds — his own backyard and the realm beyond. The poems that deal with the barking of the neighbour's dog, the whistling of the paper boy, the activity of the insects in his garden, add a homely, domestic touch to the persona of the retired poet. But the poems fail to give these events a sense of monumentality. Layton fails to become an observer of the great in the small, and his verses end up sounding like the mutterings of the village idiot rather than of the local philosopher.

*Rum and coke in my hand,
I blast the cherry pits
two at a time into the grass*

...
*Only later
the newsboy's whistle will loose
the day's events, yelping like a pack of dogs*

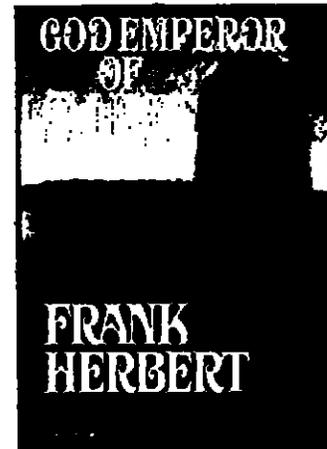
*Wherever they are Camus and Sartre
can aim their halos at each other like
Frisbees
or hump the nearest cloud*

Layton's depiction of the land beyond his backyard is the more crucial part of the collection and the area in which he most seriously stumbles. In his introduction he takes the precaution of defending himself against the criticism he knows will arise: "In the present collection I've again explored themes that have engaged me for almost a half-century: . . . about the structure of evil in the twentieth century and the roads that lead to it. If I have again composed poems with the Holocaust in mind it's not because the needle has got stuck in the groove or because I am a Jew. It's because for both Jew and non-Jew it's the central moral and psychological fact of our times." True enough. But Layton has become stuck in a groove. He is hooked on the horror of the Holocaust and has made a business out of it. He lays guilt in our laps and bludgeons us with the dreadful events. He is stuck on the spectacle and cannot move beyond what happened to what would be a more profound assessment. When he does try to draw out a moral or a caution his words are clichéd, as in the poem "Gulag":

*When you think
you have plumbed
the bottom
of human viciousness
and perversity
you find out,
horror and disbelief
grappling for your face,
you haven't
even scraped
the surface.*

As the tide of the collection tells us it is Layton's mission to fault Europe, as the breeding ground of evil, for what happened to the Jews in the Second World War. Layton's view of Europe does not include a place for Wallenbergs, resistance movements, Allied victories, or Nurembergs. Layton's Europe is devoid of joy, culture, learning, and humanity. Layton is repeat-

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edly sharpening arrows, misdirecting them et misjudged targets, losing the force of any argument he might have had. He is a man grown old with bitterness, guilt, and lack of forgiveness. His thinking is repetitive. His wise old man becomes a wise guy, senile with rage. □

**No match
for the Devil**

Voice Storm, by Raymond Gariépy, Longspoon Press (Department of English, University of Alberta, Edmonton T6G 2E5), 80 pages, 57.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 01 5).

The **Inanna Poems**, by Karen Lawrence, Longspoon Press, 80 pages, 57.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 02 3).

Where **Have You Been**, by Miriam Mandel, Longspoon Press, 80 pages, \$7.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 00 7).

Echo end **Montana**, by J. O. Thompson, Longspoon Press, 80 pages, \$7.50 paper (ISBN 0 919285 03 1).

By ROBERT KROETSCH

LONGSPOON, THE NEW poetry press in Edmonton, has a constellation of editors that has nothing to beat it west of Coach House. Doug Barbour, through his respect for editor-poet bp Niihol, in fact represents a western manifestation of the Coach House audition. Stephen Scobie, involved in the editorial and critical activities of New York's Richard Kostelanetz, has internationalist sympathies. Shirley Neuman, working in the school of language theory sod autobiography end narratology that finds its source in Gertrude Stein, is one of the most exciting critics et work in Canada today.

With three such gifted editors, can a press lose?

The answer is a qualified... yes, it can.

The 1970s on the Prairies saw the emergence of three poetry presses: Tomstone, Thistledown, and, mote recently, Coteau. All three are unabashedly committed to William Carlos Williams's dictum that the local is the only universal.

Whet about Longspoon Press and its editors, prepared, it would seem, to dirpense with the local and to deal with the Devil himself?

It's a pretty tame devil they summon op.

J. O. Thompson, in *Echo and Montana* (with notes, lest we have forgotten our Ovid) writes in the '50s British posture of the wilfully minor poet:

*Half the time I Britishtly my petrol,
the other half Canadianly gas*

and furs capper throws in:

*my dear Alberta dry too, or
withholding —*

Miriam Mandel works out of the '60s assumption that you could write a poem by shifting the carriage of your typewriter often and randomly to the right. Her *Where Have You Been* fails et the edge of ik own daring; it hesitates to become the manifestation of its own primal stuff.

Karen Lawrence sometimes writes out of the Greet Tradition of young Canadian women who have discovered, much m their astonishment, that they have vaginas. But et her best, in *The Inanna Poem*, she makes Sumerian myth speak nakedly to the coo-temporary ear.

lo Raymond Gariépy's *Voice Storm* I feel a care for the weight and sound of words. He hears new edges in language. Lii Karen Lawrence, he can flirt with the Jungian beast, sod sometimes come back a lover.

But I read these four books, finally, with a small sadness. This is my dear Alberta speaking, announcing itself to a world that is at once sceptical and envious. I listen to the choices made by three talented editors and I am left asking: But where is the intellectual rigour of that bear-man poet. Ted Blodgett of St. Albert? Where is the lyric gift of the young Calgary Poet, Robert Hilles? Where is the dark, profound comedy of Calgary-born Erin Mouré?

The editors of Longspoon would do well to reread Barbour's *White* or to read Scobie's new long poem, just out frm Quadrant Editions. □

**From a
far-off shore**

Wilson's **Bowl**, by Phyllis Webb, Coach House Press, 96 pages, \$7.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910218 X).

By DAVID MACFARLANE

AS ONE BECOMES more familiar with coo-temporary Canadian poetry one begins m discern, here and then, a certain similarity of voice. There is some kind of common language, some fashionability of wit and phrasing whiih, without detracting from any good poet's individuality, will allow the future to see writers of the present as a recognizable group. An exception to these vague but not meaningless classifications will probably be Phyllis Webb: The publication of *Wilson's Bowl* has distinguished its author as a unique sod extraordinary talent. It is difficult to imagine anyone writing anything very similar.

Webb lives in British Columbia, on Salt Spring Island, and almost every p&m in *Wilson's Bowl* reflects in some way the loneliness and importance of that island existence. There is a sense of distance and isolation that pervades the book; Webb looks at everything she chooses to look at — anarchy, love, death, literature-es if

standing on her own small shore and locking across at the incomprehensible mainland. In her foreword she quotes Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*, explaining that "it so perfectly describes my relationship to writing," Barthes wrote, "I am too big and too weak for writing. I am *alongside* it, for writing is always dense, violent, indifferent to the infantile ego which sclick it." The meaning of the statement becomes clear as the reader witnesses Webb's struggle with her poetry. From the "Poems of Failure":

*Away from everything, alone with a road
map of Salt Spring Island
I drive spitting dust with a map
of the U.S.S.R. in my bag. Too
big for my head.*

An element of Wilson's *Bowl* that underlies its unusualness — eccentricity would be only slightly too strong a word — is its awesome self-absorption. Everything is filtered through Webb's quiet, observant, sometimes tortured self, and unlike many poets, she does not pretend to have much mastery over her subjects. In "Socrates" she writes, "I ignoramus/fiddling with/the lives of/ the great/ think Socrates/ occasionally/a fool taking/logic for truth." This is not to say, however, that the section of *Wilson's Bowl* entitled "Portraits" is merely a reflection of Webb herself. One would be hard pressed to come up with a more convincing and finely crafted portrait of Ezra Pound:

*Nevertheless he hikes from pole to pole
to plot once more the stars of his fixed
obsession. It seems so clear. If only
they'd listened. They shine light all night
on the perplexity of his predicament.*

Her portrait of Kropotkin is equally strange and yet equally close to the mark. The poem is introduced with some of the most sonorous and dignified lines in the collection:

*Consider the dead
for whom we make elegies
how they differently
instruct us.*

At times, Webb's concerns are so personal and so superficially ordinary the reader might suspect that she has lost herself in her own small world. But there is something mysterious about everything she touches. Everyday moments are fraught with the kind of haunting importance that Alex Colville finds in a truck at a gas station or a woman with binoculars. These poems sometimes read like voices in a dream, but they are never consciously surrealistic.

*Shall I tell you what I do to pass the time
here on the island at night?
There is red velvet and purple velvet. *
I cut out diamonds from a pattern piece
by piece. I sew two pieces, one purple
one red, together, attach another making
designs
as I go. Mapping it into some kind of crazy
poncho. I am absorbed in the fitting
together
of pieces. Troika the white cat watches.
Red velvet on purple purple on red colours
of the mystic and revolutionary. The
Politics
of Experience, Love's Body, Psycho-*

pathology and Politics. *Trotsky's Journal*,
Pushkin,
The Possessed, Social Contract, Journey
into Russia
Memoirs of a Revolutionist, The
Romantic Exiles,
Anarchism. *Eleanor Rigby*.

*Far out in the strait low star lights of the
ferry boats follow a radar map.*

The cat jumps on my lap. She stares.

It becomes clear, reading Webb, just how painful it must be to support the existence of both a revolutionary and a mystical nature. One senses that Webb, like her cat, is continually stopped dead in her tracks. She simply stares. It can't be very easy to be Phyllis Webb, but the struggle has produced some exceptional poetry. □

Papal fallibility

Earthly Powers, by Anthony Burgess, Hutchinson (Mussn), 649 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 09 143910 8).

By D. W. NICHOL

AT THE 1981 Glasgow Bookfest, Anthony Burgess spoke on the author's daily damna-

tion. It might have turned into a rehash of what any Burgess devotee would already know from interviews, biographical tidbits, and fictional transpositions — the early thwarted musical aspirations (in fact, he was wincingly introduced as "a composer of some note"), the terminal year (1960) in which he produced five novels; the unjust accusations hurled at him when the last of these, *A Clockwork Orange*, was rendered in a truncated and cinematized form. Recent tabloid coverage, giving full front-page headlines to a murderer who listened to Beethoven for incitement, proclaimed: **CLOCKWORK ORANGE KILLER**. Beethoven not being around, Burgess was (again) misrepresented as the subliminal implanter of evil deeds. Damnation persists. But somehow Burgess put it all past him — the muted rage, prolific despair, Britain's ranking ignorance of one of her finest writers — and delivered an affable, well-humoured, and profound oration on the time-honoured problems of writing.

To reach the peak of one's powers at an age when most established authors would like to retire gracefully CC their royalties is an uncommon thing. Graham Greene sets a vigorous precedent, still producing books in his late 70s, but we tend to think of vast creative output as the demesne of youth. The last wave of seminal gerontic writers seems to have been the first: Aeschylus finishing his *Oresteia* in his late 60s; Euripides's *Bacchae*, done in his late 70s;

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Sophocles leaving behind *Oedipus at Colonus* — his last of 123 plays — at 90.

Burgess now is a mere 64, and his prolificacy is in no way declining. *Earthly Powers* is by far the best of his 25 novels. It is a masterwork that intones a "epic resonance with each succeeding episode. At last Burgess has found the ideal voice, the attuned confidence of narrative, the unknotted confluence of style and content. Once are the half-created characters, the unsettling experiments, the haplessly flailing misunderstood heroes. *Earthly Powers* positively flows through modern history.

"Recent years Burgess's output has been preoccupied, in its own grimly comical fashion, with death. *Enderby's End* concluded *The Clockwork Testament*; Ron Beard, fresh from the thanatologist's office, attempted suicide by running up stairs; *ABBA ABBA* recorded Keats's "gallop of death-warrant blood." *Earthly Powers* opens on a celebration of birth. Kenneth Marchal Toomey is 81 to the day, and in lieu of candles (by hilarious crisis of protocol the cake is claimed by a bathetic poet named Sciberras) Burgess gives Toomey 81 chapters (three squared and squared again for numerologists) plus one for luck.

Toomey's retrospective narrative recounts the early turmoil of the fledgling playwright-author forced to choose between the god of his glands and that of Church-sanctified sexuality in 1916, his London stage successes and hasty exile to France, the meeting in Sardinia the Campanati brothers, one of whom is destined to become a "infelicitous Hollywood composer, the other Pope Gregory XVII. The bond between the homosexual writer, the womanizing composer, and the celibate priest is strengthened when Domenico, the aspirant to La Scala, marries Toomey's sister Hortense. But it is the prelate brother Carlo who animates much of the early comedy, and sets Toomey's memoirs in motion (he is asked to write a book on Carlo, brother-in-law, His late Holiness). We see Carlo shooting craps with the Anglican Archbishop of Gibraltar, drinking sacramental wine in an American restaurant during Prohibition (then taking out his flask of cognac), kicking fascists in the testicles, and performing a miracle on a child who eventually presides over a Jonestown-like eucharist of death.

Late in *Earthly Powers* a smear campaign is conducted by the Italian press against Carlo — he's displeased the industrialists with his pronouncements on Marx — and the narrative is brought sharply into focus. Too late and too penetrating to make a convincing parody of Italian journalism (by now we abide by Toomey's art of "contrivance"), the article nevertheless forces the reader to reinterpret the events of the novel. Burgess cunningly demonstrates the ambiguities of rendering life into fiction by rendering one fiction (the novel) into another sort of fiction (explorative slanted journalism).

As well as deliberate narrative ambigui-

ties, Burgess poses some weighty moral ones: is it wrong for Toomey to grant a propagandist interview in exchange for his freedom (the Second World War has been declared during his abortive rescue of a Nobel prize-winner); is it tight for Carlo to lie while a girl is mutilated by Nazis? The terms are dissatisfying: "If I could write so blatant a tautology, I could write also of the goodness of evil or the badness of good..." The authorial voice asserts free will — each to his own métier, be it religion, art, love, or violence.

How does the novelist treat the aftermath of an ironic accident? Toomey's sister has been blinded, the eye lost. She's removed the patch:

The deformity was clear but in shadow. She put her head nearer the lamp. "Horrible, isn't it?" She sat on the edge of the bed. "Go on, take a good look." Overcome with pity and love I raised myself and kissed it. I put my arms around her and she suffered the embrace stiffly. I kept my lips pressed to the untenanted hollow; there was no flutter of eyelashes.

The words "untenanted hollow" are as finely wrought as Edgar's speech on Gloucester in *King Lear*:

and in this habit
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
Their precious stones new lost;

The sinew of Burgess's prose style has "ever been more capably applied. Filled with tears, laughter, insight, anecdote — Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, Havelock Ellis, Jim, and Tom Joyce, Maynard Keynes, Mussolini *et al.* — and a variety of cigarette lighters, *Earthly Powers* attests to the awesome talents of its own *miglior fabbro*. □

Suffer little children

Kiss Mommy Goodbye. by Joy Fielding, Doubleday. 288 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 00234 3).

By JULIE BEDDOES

ALTHOUGH IT OFTEN seems that Canadian publishers produce books and then refrain from promoting and selling them, Joy Fielding's second novel demonstrates that someone is doing the job well. Her first, *The Best of Friends*, was much praised, and *Kiss Mommy Goodbye* has received an impressive amount of prepublication comment and staggering subsidiary rights sales. If it's that easy to flog a bad book, whatever will happen when the publishers get behind the good ones?

Some excitement has been generated on the assumption that *Kiss Mommy Goodbye* deals with the trendy topic of parental kidnapping, and the blurb promises that it

"recounts the harrowing effects on the five-year-old boy and two-year-old girl caught in the crossfire." This is a fib. The book is all about Mommy, or Donna. She marries a handsome but domineering man who is so mean to her that she gradually cracks up and is behaving very strangely by the time their second child is born. The dialogue between them is a horribly convincing demonstration of how one person can destroy another by being unanswerable. Donna has a nice lover (a saintly doctor) who backs her up all through the harrowing divorce and custody battle. Mommy wins. Daddy kidnaps. kiddies disappear and don't re-enter the story until the last few pages.

The fights that take up the first half of the book are convincing, although long, repetitive, and depressing. The trial is believable, though we could be told less often that one person's attempt to cope looks like craziness to another. Nothing else is psychologically convincing: not the good-goody doctor; not the ex-husband's spiteful calls, not Donna's second crack-up and return to health. Eventually finding the children depends on one of the most improbable coincidences in fiction, but I won't spoil the ending.

The writing is commonplace. One would guess that Joy Fielding had learned English from advertisements full of one-word sentences. Really. Her prose is as cliché-ridden as Donna's pastel-and-broadloom Florida home (the book is aimed at the U.S. market). I've read more satisfying discussions of child-napping in magazines and better novels in many places. □

Down and out

The **Fighting Fishermen: The Life of Yvon Durelle**, by Raymond Fraser. Doubleday, illustrated, 288 pages, 914.95 cloth (ISBN.0385 15863 7).

By JACK BATTEN

THE TROUBLE WITH this biography is that Raymond Fraser has let too much of its scaffolding show. He refers constantly to "news clips" he's used as source material, and quotes from them at annoying length. His interviews with sportswriters who sew Yvon Durelle in boxing action are dropped into the narrative as awkward lumps of conversation. And there are enormously long passages in which it's clear he's let his tape recorder run for a couple of hours, and then reproduced the results without much editing or reorganization. Very sloppy stuff.

All of which is surprising for a couple of reasons. One is that Fraser has written some fine novels — the excellent *Black Horse Tavern* is his — and readers might reason-



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ably have expected him to turn out a smooth, literate, and nicely integrated piece of biographical writing. The other reason comes in the curious confession Fraser offers in his prologue: "If you can compare writing to boxing, which I'm about to do, then after twelve years or so of getting gold nor glory, it's about time I weighed in for a decent purse." But if Fraser expects to earn money out of the book, he should at least have given us a solid reason for spending our cash on his work.

As for Durelle, he wasn't much of a fighter. His notion of boxing was basic and brutal: "The way I wanted to fight," he tells Fraser, "was like this: you hit me and I'll hit you and we'll see who goes down first." Not exactly the sweet science as A.J. Liebling perceived it. Durelle had a hard punch and a stout heart, but even with those admirable attributes he managed to lose almost all of his important bouts. And he is celebrated today mainly for his most sensational feat, an 11th-round knockout at the hands of Archie Moore in a light-heavyweight title fight at the Montréal Forum in December, 1958. What made the struggle so memorable — indeed *Ring* magazine's "Fight of the Year" for '58 — is that Durelle had the great Moore on the floor four times in earlier rounds. But he couldn't keep Moore down, couldn't make the short step to greatness, fortune, and a championship, and that's not a bad metaphor for Durelle's entire life.

His story is another illustration of the Going Down the Road principle: take a simple guy from the Maritimes (Durelle was



born in Baie Ste. Anne, N.B.), move him out of his milieu, and he's bound to come to grief. Durelle and his down-east manager were invariably taken to the cleaners by the city slickers. Whenever they'd head to New York or Detroit or Montreal for a big night, they'd somehow return home, win or lose, with empty pockets. From his two championship matches with Moore, Durelle realized only a few thousand dollars. Moore earned 25 times as much. Poor Yvon, always the sucker of the story.

His life after boxing wasn't much of an improvement. He has, in recent years, shot a man dead (and been acquitted at trial on rather narrow grounds), driven his wife to a nervous breakdown, drifted through a succession of mostly marginal jobs, and suffered his own terrible despair. Maybe his life illustrates that man, even one as elemental as Durelle, can endure in the William Faulkner sense. Maybe Durelle really is, as Fraser keeps insisting, a swell guy, a secret sweetie ("Doux" is his nickname). Maybe so. But somehow it seems slightly difficult to entirely appreciate the appeal of a man whose idea of a terrific gag is to defecate in a friend's new suitcase. *Yecch!* □

a thousand words

by Christopher Hume

Pictures in a museum: from Milne's prints to the tangled gardens of the MacDonalds

IT CANNOT BE said that the cause of Canadian art is not well served by Canadian publishers. Indeed, they have made it their own. Not surprisingly, National Museums of Canada are a leading producer of books about art. One of their recent offerings, *Reflections in a Quiet Pond: The Prints of David Milne* (National Gallery of Canada, 260 pages, \$39.95 cloth) by Rosemary Tovell, exemplifies the excellence of which they are capable.

David Milne was born 99 years ago in a rural Ontario log cabin. His father, a farm labourer, came to Canada from Scotland sometime during the 1870s. Milne described his ancestry as being "close to the soil":

I have the broad short fingers of the peasant. I have too the taste for few and simple things, extending to an almost abnormal

dislike for, and impatience with, possessions that are more than necessities. I like to think that my leaning toward simplicity in art is a translation of hereditary thrift or stinginess into a more attractive medium.

Although his artistic abilities surfaced early, Milne claimed the only subject he ever failed in school was drawing. During his 20s he began taking correspondence courses in art; he later said it took him "years to get over the damage" they did. All in all, his start was not a very auspicious one. It wasn't until 1922 that he started experimenting with printmaking. "The most important of Milne's prints," observes Tovell, "are, without doubt, his multiple-colour drypoints." No one would disagree. Her book is the first to deal with and fully catalogue this aspect of Milne's work. In addition, *Reflections in a Quiet*

Pond is the first complete biography of one of Canada's most original and independent artists.

The tone of *Tovell's* book is academic rather than popular. I mention this not as a complaint but more as a warning. There are so many abbreviations, catalogue entries, and so forth that reading it has to be planned as thoroughly as a military operation. However, if facts, figures, dates, and places are what you're after, search no further. The book is extremely handsome and well put together; because Milne's drypoints lend themselves nicely to reproduction, even those who aren't concerned with details will find plenty to please the eye. The tide comes from a rather poetic article. *The Colour Dry-Point*, written by Milne in 1947 for *Canadian Art*. "When you look at the reflections in a quiet pond," wrote Milne, "you have before you nature's version of a colour dry-point."

I don't want to quibble and let me say again that the book represents a thorough and respectful treatment of Milne's life and printmaking — but perhaps National Museums should consider producing companion volumes to books like this one. Books in which the reams of technical data of interest only to a few are omitted. The results would be streamlined, beautifully illustrated works with much more appeal to the general reader.

The *Drawings* of Alfred Pellán (National Gallery of Canada, 150 pages;

\$14.95 paper) by Reesa Greenberg is a less exalted production. It doesn't suffer for it. Greenberg contends that "while Pellán is best known for his paintings, drawing is the basis of his art." She argues the case convincingly and the many illustrations (there are 123) help mightily.

Although they are not new, the National Gallery of Canada Canadian Artists Series deserves some mention in these pages. Each of the seven titles will be good news to anyone interested in this country's visual arts. These small paperback books (fewer than 100 pages each) come with numerous

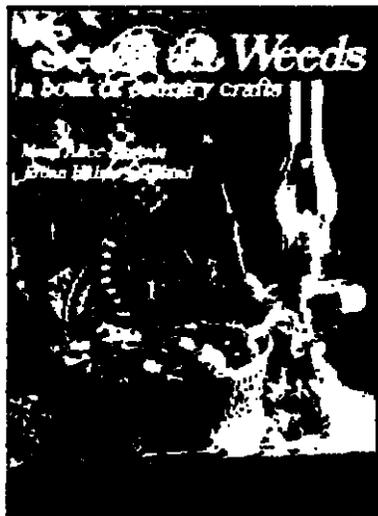


colour photographs and a short, no-frills text. The artists covered are Bertram Booker, William G.R. Hind, Paul-Emile Borduas, Edwin Holgate, George Heriot, F. li. Varley, and Charles Huot. The books are priced at 33.95. A bargain!

Also active on the art book scene is Penumbra Press of Moonbeam, Ont. Two

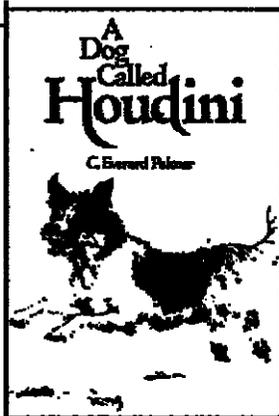
recent entries from Penumbra include J.E.H. MacDonald: *Sketchbook, 1915-1922 (A Facsimile Edition)* (1% pages, \$14.95 paper) and *Thoreau MacDonald's Notebooks* (217 pages, \$14.95 paper) by Thoreau MacDonald. The former is a wonderful, entrancing glimpse into the artist at work. J.E.H. MacDonald, member of the Group of Seven and father of Thoreau, has probably become best known for Tangled Garden paintings. The *Sketchbook* shows MacDonald's facility with a pen and testifies to the delight he took in recording (for his own reference) the things around him. These drawings were not done with an audience in mind and represent, therefore, a more informal, approach. If anything, this adds to the pleasure we feel upon viewing them. We revel in their spontaneity and unself-consciousness. *Thoreau MacDonald's Notebooks*, unfortunately, are much too talky. The tone is so chatty and the substance so slight that the book is as memorable as a moment of polite conversation with a stranger in an elevator.

From the better late than never department comes *Canadian Art Auctions: Sales and Prices 1976-1978* (General Publishing, 255 pages, \$60.00 cloth). This book represents "a first effort to produce a cumulative listing of the work of Canadian artists sold in auction houses in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver." It's a great idea given the huge interest in art as an investment — too



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Finally, then is The University of Guelph Art Collection (University of

Guelph, 410 pages, \$15.00 paper) by Judith Nasby. A quietly impressive collection that runs the gamut from Albrecht Dürer to Pablo Picasso. It comes respectably documented in this attractive volume. □

on the racks

by Paul Stuewe

Expatriate fiction: heavyweight titles from two world-class writers in exile

THERE'S DEFINITELY ROOM at the top for Josef Skvorecky's *The Bass Saxophone* (translated by Kaca Polackova-Henley, Lester & Orpen Lknyns, \$5.95), number one on the publisher's International Fiction List and entitled to a comparable position in any qualitative ranking of the domestic product. Skvorecky, a Czech emigré who has lived in Canada since 1968, is an extremely talented writer whose portraits of life in his native land deal in nuances of character and situation that both require and reward close attention, and these two novella-length tales are among his finest work. "Emöke," a bittersweet romance of flirtation and withdrawal set at a shabby summer resort, is an affecting demonstra-

tion of the emotional subtleties characteristic of his writing, and the frantically surreal activity of the title story exhibits his ability to create in contrasting tempos and keys. A wonderful book, and an impressive beginning for what should be a most worthwhile publishing project.

It's also a pleasure to welcome home Mavis Gallant's *From the Fifteenth District* (Laurentian Library, \$5.95), an almost uniformly excellent collection of short fiction by an author whose emigration has been from Canada to France. Gallant is adept at infusing even the most seemingly commonplace situations with language of extraordinary delicacy and evocative power, and she is also capable of writing

about unfashionably genteel characters with a depth of insight that fascinates even such objectively *lumpen* folk as me. The only disappointment here is the tide stay; a cautious experiment in post-modernism that doesn't quite come off. Otherwise this is a scintillating selection from another world-class writer.

At a somewhat more mundane level of accomplishment. Lois Simmie's *They Shouldn't Make You Promise That* (Signet, \$2.25) is a competently-crafted novel of marital breakup that tells its story smoothly and efficiently, but doesn't quite achieve the distinctive personal voice that writers such as Carol Shields bring to similar material. I enjoyed it, but no memories seem to be lingering on. Hubert Evans's *Son of the Salmon People* (Harbour Publishing, \$6.95) is intended for younger readers, but it should also appeal to anyone looking for a straightforward tale of coming of age in the far West. *The Skeena River* settings are convincingly done and the requisite melodrama is tempered by the author's care in delineating an interesting cast of characters.

In the genre department, Eileen Kernaghan's *Journey to Aprilioth* (Ace, \$2.50) is a fantasy novel of the "sword and sorcery" variety that should find favour among the audience habituated — or perhaps we should say "hobbituated" — to the doings of wee'beasties and the like. My tolerance for this sort of thing is minimal — "Suddenly he could feel the eyes of the World-Mother on the back of his neck" exceeded my limit, and I'd only reached page two — but one of Toronto's leading experts in this area assures me that it's "a solid piece of work," so try it if you like it. Connoisseurs of the thriller need not do the same with this month's best inoffensive offerings in their bailiwick. Jan Drabek's *The Lister Legacy* (PaperJacks, \$3.95) is an overlong and generally tedious go at high-spy mayhem that touches upon almost all of the field's common clichés. John Ballem's *Sacrifice Play* (Fawcett, \$2.25) seems more energetic, but this is probably the function of a higher ratio of acts of gratuitous violence per page rather than any qualitative improvement. And Frank Smith's *Sound the Silent Trumpets* (PaperJacks, \$2.95) is notable only for the unattributed rave reviews on the back cover, although I suppose such anonymity is appropriate for the no-name quality of an instantly forgettable novel.

The month's sole nonfiction title is Josh Freed's *Moonwebs* (Virgo, \$2.95), this publisher's first venture into mass-market paperback territory, and an extremely successful one. Investigative journalist Freed's descent into the nether world of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church is a superb piece of contemporary reportage, and a crackling good yarn to boot. The action begins when one of the author's friends is brainwashed into accepting this insidious cult's brand of group-think, and both suspense and our understanding of the issues involved mount as the rescue effort

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also make you think twice the next time some cheebic street person asks you to buy a flower and support the next big consciousness-expanding thing. □

on/off/set

by David Macfarlane

Timely hits from three rookie poets whose talents rival the best in the major leagues

NO ONE WHO pays attention to the Canadian publishing scene would deny that a great deal of exceedingly bad poetry finds its way into print. But, quite apart from the pleasure it gives venomous reviewers, there is a lot to be said for bad poetry. Not only is it we that bad poets may someday become good ones, or that bad poems are often more fun to read than almost anything else, it is also a fact that inept, unintelligible, and silly verse acts as a kind of mortar for the bricks of the literary community. No peer, however successful, however widely acclaimed, is more than a draft or two away from the worst of his or her peers. During its composition, a poem moves doggedly away from the truly awful to the truly great and stops somewhere in between, depending.

If nothing else, the ceaseless snapping of the bed at the heels of the good is evidence of a cohesive literary community that functions on its own terms and writes by its own rules. The possibility of failure keeps everyone on his or her toes. The arbitrary boundaries set up in the public imagination between commercially viable and government dependent, smell presses and big ones, little magazines and fat ones, are thankfully irrelevant when it comes to putting pen to paper. Nothing could be more topsy-turvy than the prevalent notion that the small publishing houses and literary magazines exist as bush league teams, providing the majors with pre-tested talent.

So ridiculous a misconception becomes even more so in view of the recent publication of two books of very fine poetry. The three authors—all women — are not yet household names, but they rank in talent far above many of our more successful writers.

Breed and *Chocolate* by Mary di Michele and *Marrying into the Family* by Bronwen Wallace (Oberon, 85 pages, \$12.95 cloth and \$5.95 paper) are two collections that have been published under a single cover. The book is handsomely designed and the poetry is well mitten. Although di Michele is the more accomplished of the two, both poets possess a haunting sense of detail, embroidered beautifully with an unobtrusive and rhythmic vocabulary.

The poetry of di Michele is, for the most part, an arresting combination of the personal and historical. It keeps track of vest movements through the eyes and memories of individuals. In "A Streetcar Named

Nostalgia" she witnesses the passing of generations in the history of her family:

*1903, great-grandfather then 30
came to this country
walked in a tweed blend mar
among the grey flannel,
a feather in his houndstooth hat,
slipped to work each winter day,
missed Christmas waiting for an
epiphany,
lived alone choking on tea and English
biscuits*

By its conclusion, the poem has come full circle:

*and he jumped a steamer
back to where
my mother was born
married a man
and in 1954, my father, then 30
sailed to Canada's Toronto...*

Bronwen Wallace is no less concerned with the histories of families and the meaning that the past can bring to the present. In "Finding My Real Ancestors" she writes:

*even in my grandmother's stories
her stepmother's arrival
when she was three was
just another detail
like her first party dress
or her wedding
stories I half heard
or later asked for simply
to humour her*

Sleeping with Lambs by Marilyn Bowering (Press Porcépic, 107 pages, \$5.95 paper) is an equally poised collection. Disturbing and quietly original, Bowering fashions her verse with a persistent devotion to craftsmanship. It is eerie, magical, and chant-like poetry. It is not particularly easy, end, et times, not very pretty, but it is always very good. These poems, like many good poems, reveal themselves slowly.

*Now, while our bodies smell the same,
stunned to one shape,
I want to tell you the truth.
I want you to shut your eyes.*

*The rowan is bared and black,
Mended east by wind;
its cast, yellow leaves
restless on earth or air.*

All three of these poets are in the same league as our best poets. The present pessimism that pervades the publishing

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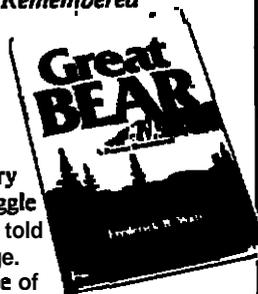
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42 Books in Canada, May, 1981

world notwithstanding, we should consider ourselves lucky that small houses like press Porcépic and Oberon continue to produce work of such high calibre and low profit. Excellence, or the absence of it, has nothing

first impressions

by Douglas Hill

The show and tell of personal fiction: too much 'I' and too little 'eye'

THE THREE NOVELS under consideration this month have one feature in common: they don't work very well as fiction. Each has its virtues; each made me pause, and reflect with some concern, serious or amused, about the ideas, characters, or situations portrayed. But none of them gets off the ground novelistically.

All three ate first-person narratives, and here's where the problem may lie. None of the authors seems to have been able to achieve the distance from the material that would have allowed for a dramatic rather than an expository presentation of it. Too much "tell," not enough "show." These books are more like personal documentaries than novels. Maybe they would have worked better if they'd simply been announced and delivered as memoirs, or meditations, o'says, or travel-pieces, or monographs in folklore, or whatever. As it is, the reader waits for them to come alive fictionally, and they never quite do.

NORMA HARRS, in *A Certain State of Mind* (Viio Press, 237 pages, \$14.95 cloth and \$4.95 paper), tells of an Irish-born Canadian woman, Sarah Caldwell, married with children, who returns to Belfast, by herself, to promote a novel she's written. During her two-week stay she reconnects with her friends and family and encounters a former lover, with whom she begins a passionate affair.

There's considerable feeling here for the quality of life in the militarized zone that Northern Ireland's become. The tensions in Sarah's family are sometimes vivid. The plot is fairly predictable, however, even though it's rather disorganized; whatever rhythms HARRS's prose is capable of are too often damaged by lack of control and careless proofreading.

HARRS is obviously sensitive and intelligent, and she comes up with some insights. At times her narrative begins to show strength, but then collapses into cliché. With some firm editorial help along the way, to pat the brakes on self-indulgence and overwriting and tighten everything up, this could have been a much better book.

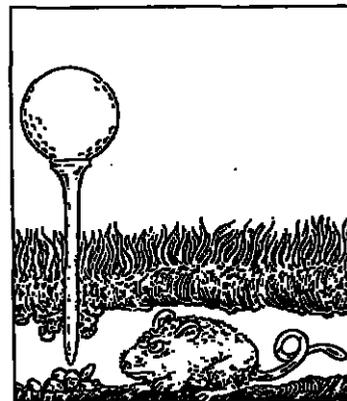
Tally Ho!, by Marie Mitchell (Borealis Press, 98 pages, \$7.95 paper), is an often

to do with the size of a print run. As Oscar Wilde almost said, there is no such thing as a commercial or non-commercial book. "Books are well written, or badly written. That is all." □

funny, sometimes jest cutesy exposé of the crowd that trots around these expensive hills north of Toronto in pursuit of status and the (artificial) fox. There's a plot to the novel, but it's better not summarized; the book is really best read as a series of sitcom sketches.

Mitchell writes dialogue badly. It's stiff and awkward and once or twice ("Well, I am worded. Maybe you are here today, but how about when you are not here and the children are in school and I alone way out here.") sounds as if English were not its first language. The book is inscrutably punctuated, occasionally ungrammatical, stylistically confused, and packed with typographical errors.

Still, there's a mordant sense of humour on the loose in Tally Ho!, and when it collects itself the book is readable. Mitchell comes closest, of the three authors we're glancing at, to finding a distinctive voice. Her attitude and tone are reasonably consistent, and consistently sardonic, but prose style and mechanics and Borealis Press have let her down everywhere else.



THERE ARE NO typographical errors in *Black Around the Eyes* (McClelland & Stewart, 182 pages, 514.95 cloth). Jeremy Akerman, the author, is a former MLA from Cape Breton and former leader of the Nova Scotia NDP, and now is the province's Executive Director for Intergovernmental Affairs. He's written a book filled with fascinating stories and circumstances; it's a sort of lightly fictionalized oral history of the labour movement half a century ago in the Cape Breton mines and mills.

Akerman's narrator is Donnie Ross, now 80, a retired miner. He remembers his youth: poverty and degradation, the pit union struggles, wild escapades, women, holidays in the country. The focus of his reveries is the strike of 1925, a brutal and bloody chapter in Canada's labour history.

The book is anecdotal. It starts slowly but picks up speed. Akerman has some trouble with Donnie's voice: the tone and level of style now and then seem uncertain. There's a lot of gritty realism, a good deal of folksiness, and a considerable effort et eloquence, often of a derivative sort. ("I remember one summer day when the warm west wind was herding the cotton clouds into billowy bunches and the mosquitoes were rising like mist from the dew-damp

grass. . . ." I thought if you mixed Hugh MacLennan with Dylan Thomas you always got Ernest Buckler. Apparently I was wrong.)

Black Around the Eyes is politically sound, as you might expect, though it's at times a bit propagandistic. As for its fictional values, I'm afraid there will be too much 'romantic stereotyping, both of character and language, for most tastes. The narrator's premise — "It is almost as if the miserable black stuff somehow produces the greatest heroes, the foulest villains, the saddest tragedies, the happiest triumph" — suits the folk-tale better than the novel. Akerman's book is enjoyable, but like the others this month, it's not a stimulating novel. However, it's the best of the lot. □

english, our english

by Bob Blackburn

A brief interval on the subject of commas from the vantage of various stylish persons

FOR AS LONG as I can remember, people have been dumping on me for saying "people" when what I mean, they say, is "persons." This has made me a coward. In preparing these columns, I have several times written "people," then changed it to "persons," simply because I did not wish to be dumped on. Now I have a letter from a reader, Ray Parker of Halifax (my own birthplace, for Pete's sake), dumping on me for saying "persons" when what I mean, he says, is "people."

Well, he's right. "Persons" sounds stilted, and then's nothing wrong with "people" in an indefinite reference to persons. Shakespeare, Steele, and Dickens used "people" that way. Some people feel that "people" should be reserved for reference to persons who make up a community, tribe, race, or nation. While there is some etymological justification for such a distinction, it has long since been overruled by usage. On the other hand, a careful reading of what the *OED* has to say about "person" could convince some people to be a little more careful about their use of that word.

The preceding paragraph contains at least two commas that most newspaper editors I know would delete without a second thought. They are the ones after "Steele" and "race," and they are in there because William Strunk Jr., with the concurrence of his reviser, E.B. White, told me to put them there. I do not regard Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* as definitive, but at 86 pages in paperback, it is the lightest reference book I own, and it is no more confusing about commas than are many heavier books.

I have always had a hellish time with commas, and things have gotten worse over

the years. Not only do different editors have different ideas, but styles change. There are few commas around today when I was a lad. It is true that if you follow the old rules you sometimes end up with more commas than are absolutely necessary for clarity, but newspaper editors have gone too far in cutting out the ones they deem to be superfluous. The result has been a sort of syntactic anarchy, and the ensuing chaos is not mitigated by any simple-minded instruction to "punctuate for sense."

I got onto this subject because I was just stopped dead by a passage in Richard Gwyn's *The Northern Magus*: "Later, Trudeau's ideas would change. But for about four years, he preached and practised the doctrine of national self-interest." I read "but for" in the sense of "with the exception of," and took the opposite meaning from the one Gwyn intended. The hell of all this is that Strunk has a general rule that would condone Gwyn's omission of a comma after "but," but, in this case, the omission led to confusion. The omission of commas is supposed, by the omitters, to remove unnecessary impediments to the flow of their words; too often it has the opposite effect.

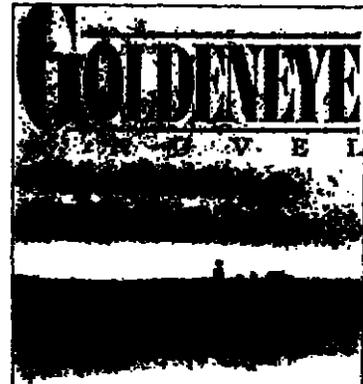
The writer who punctuates by the rules does both himself and his reader a service. He can do it automatically, and is less likely to be misunderstood. If he "punctuates for sense," he has to keep stopping to think about it, and even then is likely to blow it.

Now, if only we could find out what the rules are. . . .

* * *

I've suddenly noticed a lot of reporters telling us that "another child has gone missing," or that "the mental patient went

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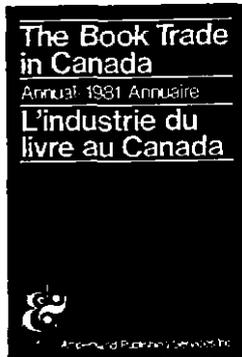
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missing last Wednesday." I don't know the origin of that term, and would appreciate being enlightened, but I don't think it belongs in written English. "A child is missing" says it, as does "the mental patient disappeared (or escaped, or whatever he did)."

The same reporters, writing about the arrest of a murder suspect, tell us that "police say they have no motive." That's silly. Police always have a motive. It is to enforce the law. A murderer, presumably, has a motive; if the police don't know what it was, why not say that?

Interviewers who haven't the foggiest idea what the term means are always talking about "begging the question." They can't even agree on how to misuse it. One will accuse his subject of begging the question if the letter seems to be avoiding a direct answer. Another will say, "What you've just told me begs the question: 'Why did you do it?'"

Begging the question, to use Fowler's

simple and clear explanation, refers to "the fallacy of founding a conclusion on a basis that es much needs to be proved es the conclusion itself." To say that children should obey their parents because their parents know best would be begging the question. It is, indeed, a useful phrase for TV interviewers in particular, but I have yet to hear one use it correctly.

This is the time of year when newspapers run cute stories from the zoo, written by reporters who, in trying to be cuter, expect us to know they're talking about elephants when they write "pachyderm." It is correct to call an elephant a pachyderm. It is also correct to call a horse a pachyderm. So much for that.

The line of the month was spoken by a TV network newscaster who was reporting live from some scene of action and was having difficulty answering questions being put to her by her anchorman. Her explanation: "I can't see anything from this vantage-point." □

à la carte

by DuBarry Campau

How to do it in the kitchen: notes from a happy cooker on a Kama Sutra of delights

VARIATIONS IN cooking make the vagaries of sex, from the *Kama Sutra* to the missionary position, seem limited in comparison. In this new batch of books on how-to-&it in the kitchen, the range is from the totally cosmopolitan to the distinctly local, from holiday menus to one-food manuals, from sophistication to basic. There's even a big volume for people who only want to eat what's good for them.

A *Canadian Feast*, by Val Clery and Jack Jensen (Clarke Irwin, illustrated, 208 pages, \$12.95 paper) brings together recipes from all of the native countries whose emigrants have made up our own population. In their preface the authors say one of the wisest things I have ever read about cooking:

No cook will slavishly follow cookbook instruction for the simple reason that the palate is a subtle and variable instrument of perception. Recipes are to cooks as seam to musicians: a little more emphasis on ddi ingredient, a little less on that, a little more heat here, a little less there. Every dish is a performance and an adventure.

One of their recipes I have followed, though not of course slavishly, is from New Zealand, for lamb braised in beer. It did astonishing things to this too often bland meat and should not be missed. Another, simple but spicy, comes from Madagascar — lemon curry soup.

Peruvian-style potatoes, Mexican pork with oranges, Japanese eggplant with mustard dressing, tahini dip from Egypt, Greek

fish roe salad, veal filets with cheese from Switzerland, orange cream from Italy, Portuguese garlic soup, Swedish baked pancakes, Danish meatballs, and black chestnuts from France are among the many dishes in this book that have me drooling like Pavlov's dogs. It deserves a parade of crossed forks.

Renée Galioto, a resident of Belleville, Ont., who has lived and studied cooking throughout Europe, has written *The Mother Kitchen* (Renée Galioto Productions, Box 480, Richmond Hill, Ont. L4C 4Y8, illustrated, 116 pages, \$9.95 paper). It is an exceptionally fine book on Italian cuisine, describing the many elegant foods usually found only on their native soil and never to be met at a pizza parlour or a spaghetti house.

If you think creamed onions are mundane, you haven't eaten them, as she recommends, with white wine and nutmeg added to the sauce. Her cold tomato sauce is a joy with either meat or fish. Spinach pudding (with veal) is an elegant main dish. Creamed chicken with coyo, lemon juice, and tomato sauce will make you forget the lumpy mess you've too often been given for lunch. Roast turkey stuffed with chestnuts, beef, pork, prunes, cheese, and garlic could transform Christmas dinner into a Roman orgy.

She will open your eyes (and your mouth) to the amazing imaginativeness of real Italian food.

Mama Never Cooked Like This

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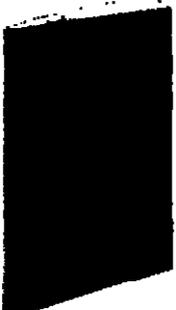


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(Talonbooks, 128 pages, \$7.95. paper) is Susan Mendelson, who owns and runs The Lazy Gourmet, a take-out catering shop in Vancouver. A recipe for Spinach and Crab Diet Delight caught my eye quickly; it really is a delight and very low in calories — a quiche without a crust. A sauce that she puts over tuna patties would be even more delicious, I think, with any other kind of fish. It's made with lovely, non-fattening things — yoghurt, cucumber, onion, basil, and dill weed. She has fresh ideas for hors d'oeuvres, is very good on vegetables and can lure you into making your own candy, but don't look to her for instructions for steaks, chops, or roasts — she doesn't mention meat.

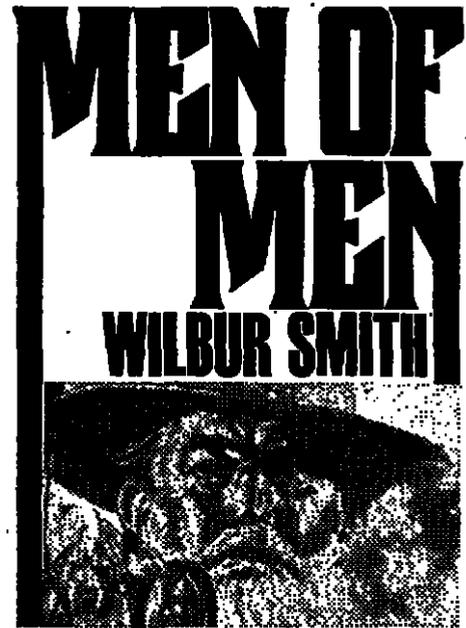
Georgian Bay Gourmet (The Georgian Bay Gourmets' Cc., 307 5th St., Midland, Ont. L4R 3W7, 221 pages, \$13.95 paper) is a guide to entertaining from autumn to Easter. It is compiled by five women living in or near Midland, Ont., and the recipes are focused on holiday dinners, suppers, and brunches. As I first looked through it, my eye was caught by something called Impossible Pie — actually it is ever so possible. ever so good and has no crust.

Something that did put me off, however, were the proportions for a drink coyly called "Martannies" — eight ounces of dry vermouth to 16 ounces of vodka. Under the heading "Drop in for a Drink" are some other nasty alcoholic surprises — Rosey Shakes made with strawberry ice cream and vin rosé or an Eggnog Alexander — one-third cup of crème de cacao, two thirds cup of brandy to two quarts of eggnog. These are drinks that must have been concocted by a pastry chef.

However, this book isn't primarily intended as a bartenders' guide — and it is far more solid and sensible when it comes to food. There is great variety and some imagination in the menus, but what I found more rewarding were some side bits. A quick recipe for chili sauce that can be made end eaten the same day, and doesn't overwhelm the kitchen, is a joy. Also the wise instruction to roll out slices of bread very thinly before using them for mushroom rolls.

This would be an excellent book for family living, when the cooking isn't done between 6:30 and 7:00 in the evening, and where there is plenty of room and lots of energy to entertain.

From a Coastal Kitchen: Food and Flavour from Lull Bay, by Lee Reid (Hancock House, illustrated, 157 pages, \$7.95 paper) is oriented to the lifestyle of the Pacific Northwest. Not surprisingly it offers many ways of preparing fish, but what is surprising is that they are often delicate and deliciously flavoured. Minstrel Seafood Crêpes, for instance, can be made with crabmeat, shrimp, or any finely textured fish — or with chicken. The crêpes are perfect, the filling well-seasoned, and the mornay sauce that covers them is luscious. Smoked salmon pâté is a well balanced blend of flavours, including sour



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cream and dill. *Salmon Coulibiak* pie sounds both tasteful and filling. And for a change from the routine, there's Lull Bay lemon md. Away from the briny, there's a tangy glaze for roast turkey with herbs, mustard, and wine.

The desserts in this book are both yummy and hearty. Hot rum cake sounds almost addictive end mm turns up in many other sweets. such es peach cobbler, pineapple cake, and rum cream for Uncle John's peer crisp. You really need the outdoor life to fully appreciate all this sugar and alcohol.

The *Pioneer Cook* by Beulah Barss (Detselig Enterprises, 6147 Dalmarnock Cr., N.W. Calgary T3A 1H3, illustrated, 127 pages, \$1.95 paper) is really more for reading than for using as a cooking manual. It has fascinating descriptions of domestic life in the early days on the Prairies, including the primitive equipment used for the preserving and preparation of food. how to build an ice house, how to butcher a steer, end lots of other things that most of us will never need to do but can marvel that they ever were done.

A typical day's menu circa 1910 from an Albertan household is given: Breakfast — bacon and eggs, fried potatoes, prunes, syrup, bread and butter, coffee; dinner — roast beef, gravy, potatoes, vegetable, pickles, bread and butter, tee; supper — cold meet, potatoes or macaroni and cheese, stewed fruit, tea and milk.

But a menu from the Royal Hotel in Strathcona in 1903 makes the menus of today's most expensive restaurants seem sparse and piddling in comparison. It starts with raw oysters and goes on to seeps, entrées, boiled meats, roasts, game, vegetables, salads, relishes, pastry, puddings, creams, jellies, and fruits, with many choices under every heading.

Now we come to some even mere special kinds of offerings. *Shark* by Eddy Hovey (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, illustrated, 112 pages, \$9.95 paper) is literally about that rather formidable fish, but 'I suspect that most of the recipes can be easily adapted to other kinds of sea food. I hope so, because Pat Fergusson of Booth Fisheries tells me that most wholesalers don't stock shark (or by its even less attractive name, dog fish), but it can be ordered, and sometimes is, for special occasions. She says it retails at about \$3.50 a pound and is preferred by many to haddock, especially in England.

If ye" do catch your shark, you'll find many interesting things to do with it in this volume, from coping with its 'fins and making soup of them to, making a shark' pie with cheese biscuit topping or baking your shark with ripe olives. Surprising, isn't it?

The *Canadian Bread Book* by Janice Murray Gill (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, illustrated, 219 pages, \$12.95 paper) is all about the staff of life and its variants, such es bees, rolls, croissants, and Danish pastry. Although I relish every form of bread fmm cottage rolls to coffee cake. I cannot make it. I'm terrified of its rising all by itself somewhere in the house — taking on an

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alien life of its own, rather like The Blob in that horror movie.

Nevertheless, I plan to give this book to a braver friend of mine and hope that he will whip up a six-strand braided loaf, a pain aux fines herbes, or a tea ring with cherry filling and let me sham them.

And now we come to The Complete Family Book of Nutrition and Meal Planning by W. Harding LeRiche, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C) (Methuen, illustrated, 242 pages, \$11.95 paper). It sounds ominously like those old-fashioned volumes of home remedies that told you how to make a

mustard plaster and how to quiet nerves with orris root, and it is sternly scientific and assumes that all one's cooking is stirred up in an antiseptic laboratory.

The use of the word "family" in the title is misleading — it is impossible to think of anyone's mother scrutinizing these endless charts and tables and graphs before slapping up a few peanut butter sandwiches for her children's lunch. But it might well be required reading for the dielicians in hospitals and other institutions more dedicated to the well-balanced diet than to gourmet treats. □

interview;

by Geoff Hancock

Festival organizer Randall Ware on the disastrous plight of books in our schools

AS THE CHIEF coordinator of the Canada Council's National Book Festival, Randall Ware supervises a variety of activities, from the printing of posters and bookmarks to the organizing of autographing parties. In addition, Ware, former manager of the Book Cellar in Toronto, was associate editor of *Books in Canada* when the magazine was founded in May, 1971. Geoff Hancock talked to him in Toronto about the problems facing book promoters in the 1970s and today:



Randall Ware

Books in Canada: Could you talk a bit about your early days with *Books in Canada*?

Ware: The early days of *Books in Canada* were a great deal of fun, but they were not particularly profitable. We felt, as did people in other areas of the industry, that we were involved with something terribly new, terribly exciting. When we began the magazine, we embarked on a great cause, a great mission. On reflection, we all saw ourselves involved in some sort of radical activity. We had a strong nationalist motivation. Now, 10 years later, some of that motivation seems to have waned in many of us. But we have succeeded in what we set out to do. We made people more aware of what we had; we encouraged new writers

and publishers; we let everyone know what was being done. *Books in Canada* is the only magazine of its type at the popular level. It's important and always will be. I think it could reflect regional interests and concerns somewhat more than it does, but I recognize the difficulty in doing that.

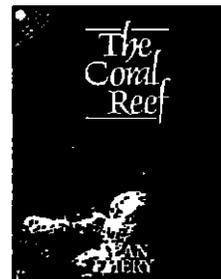
BIC: What's the purpose of the National Book Festival?

Ware: R's a program designed to create a greater interest in Canadian writing and publishing, and at the same time create a greater market for it. We try to do that by organizing ourselves on a regional basis with five coordinators. Our prime notion is that we want people to come to us with their ideas. We want people to respond to the idea of Canadian writing in ways they find comfortable. In that sense it's a passive program. We wait for people to come to us, and try very hard not to impose anything on anybody. We learned from last year's festival that when people bring their ideas to it, they take their activity that much more seriously. That's a notion we wish to encourage. We hope they will create the programs and celebrations that will best suit the needs of the readers in any particular part of the country.

BIC: Do those needs vary widely?

Ware: Quite widely. For example, in Atlantic Canada we are widely involved in the schools. This in retrospect is not too surprising since there are greater deficiencies there than in other parts of the country. There's a great desire to know about Canadian writing, to see Canadian authors. In central Canada, large-scale public events seem to be the order of the day. Provincial programs are in place. Writers are brought to schools. So the focus is on the performance, the large event that draws people to a central location. Events like the Writers' Union of Canada's world's largest autographing party, where the public is invited to meet more than 100 writers. In the West, many of the programs are in-

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volved with Outreach, the travelling pm-grants. Biblio-buses take books on the mad to 10 or 15 communities in Manitoba. Writers are sent on tour throughout small communities. We're reaching into the Northwest Territories.

BiC: And other projects?

Ware: The Writers' Union has asked each of its members to tape five minutes of a favourite passage from their work. These will be transferred to a 90-minute master tape, which in turn will be distributed to radio stations across the country for broadcast, authorized copyright-free for the week of the festival. We're sponsoring a major essay competition in every English language high school in the country. The theme is "Canadian writers and Canadian writing." The 20 winners will come to Toronto, tour the Clarke Irwin warehouse, and take back \$250 worth of books for the school library. We're very excited about it. Though we are heavily involved with schools, we've never been able to touch all schools with any of our projects in this way.

BiC: Why the schools? An you trying to change the attitude of students toward books? What is their attitude?

Ware: We're not precisely sure what their attitude toward books might be. However, it is very clear to anyone in the industry that the situation in school libraries — particularly at the primary level — is perilously close to disastrous. Very few Canadian books are available in our school libraries, even now, in spite of all the information available.

BiC: Who can we blame for this?

Ware: It's hard to assess blame. The school library budgets are simply not enough for the kinds of books they need. The book purchase plan alleviates some of this, but it's a small plan. And not all the kits go to school libraries. Even if they did, it would only touch about one in 15.

BiC: What are your proudest accomplishments in the past decade? What does it all add up to for you?

Ware: I've had a taste of all kinds of experience within the book world. It's a world I love very much. The National Book Festival has offered me the greatest opportunities. I've travelled around the country, and had a chance to learn a good deal about the concerns of writers and publishers. My accomplishment has been to simply learn about the country I live in.

BiC: Is there a common concern among all the regions of Canada?

Ware: Yes. Literature has still not achieved the primacy it should.

BiC: What's the five-year plan for the National Book Festival? The 10? The 20?

Ware: If the Festival is successful, it should self-destruct. There is a level — and I don't know what it is — where the literature can exist. If the Canadian share of the market is, let us say, to be 40 per cent of the total market, I would hope in 10 or 20 years the festival would not be necessary. We would all understand what needs to be done, and in 10 years it will be done. □

Letters to the Editor

REMEMBER THE MAIN

Sir:

In reference to "Insult and Injury" (March), may it be hoped that Mordecai Richler will convey to both you and Sandra Martin a city map of Montreal.

Ms Martin's "ghetto" is in dire need of geographical exactitude. Notwithstanding the sincere misuse of distance of "five working class streets," the use of "Outremont" to denote the north perimeter is folly. Outremont Avenue, placed in part within the City of Outremont, runs in a north-south direction; moreover, the aforementioned city is to the "ghetto's" west.

"Fletcher's Field," may it be noted, is a City of Montreal municipal park-playground extant even to this day.

Jim McPhail
Ville St. Pierre, Que.

Sandra Martin replies: I can't respond to Mr. McPhail's charge that I am guilty of a "sincere misuse of distance" since I have no idea what that statement means. May I suggest that it is Mr. McPhail's English rather than my geography, which is in "dire need" of "exactitude." If I had meant Outremont Avenue, I would have said so, although I do admit I would have been more accurate to say Outremont to the north-west rather than the north. In fact the northern boundary of the "ghetto" is probably Mount Royal Blvd., but since that perimeter is loosely designated, I thought I would be safer to say Outremont. Finally, I'm glad Mr. McPhail is aware that Fletcher's Field is a "municipal park-playground." Had he read my article with his mind rather than using it as an exercise for his sextant and compass, he would not have found it necessary to pass along such a gratuitous piece of information. The fact is, as I wrote, that Richler's Fletcher's Field High School is based on Baron Byng, the school Richler himself attended.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Sir:

Douglas Hill's review (March) of Ken Stange's novel, *Bushed*, is inadequate and wrong.

As Stange states near its beginning, *Bushed* is intended for people who are attracted to the North; that is, people who know something about the northland, and/or have had profound personal experiences there. These people will appreciate the great job that Stange has done in crystallizing facets of the northern and wilderness experience. Often these experiences are indeed, mystical.

And yes, Stange's personality is very evident throughout the book, especially in the footnotes derided by Hill. But the author's presence is necessary and beneficial, as it acts as a guide for our journey into the North's vast space to where Stange transports his own microscopic "space," thus diminishing himself in fact, and alleviating any sense of pretension or egocentricity that may arise from the book's structures.

Ken Stange's *Bushed* is like a loan's call from the far North, full of mystery, allure, and utterly alone.

James Garratt
Scarborough, Ont.

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CanWit No. 63

AS AN ECONOMY measure, McClarkan & Newspeer have recently been encouraging more and "tore literary collaborations in an attempt to market two authors for the price of one. The newest title on their spring list is *St. Urbain's Norseman*, a novel co-written by Mordecai Richler and W. D. Valgardson". and their backlist includes *The Last Pike*, by Pierre Berton and Roderick Haig-Brown (a sequel to the best-selling, *The National Bream*) and *Roughing It in the Bush Garden*, by Susanna Moodie and Northrop Frye. Contestants are invited to propose other collaborations by well-known Canadian writers, living or dead. The winner will receive \$25 and, as a tenth-anniversary bonus, all entrants awarded a "honourable mention will receive a free subscription to *Books in Canada*. The deadline is August 1. Address: CanWit No. 63, *Book in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 61

OUR REQUEST for omnibus words brought a typesetter's nightmare: a compendium of

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obscure mouthfuls suitable for everyday use by thesis writers and aspiring bureaucrats. The winner is W. Richie Benedict of Calgary, whose entries, while not the longest, concealed the sharpest points:

- *Postpatternizationalism*: Someone who is sorry for what he said after drawing the wrong conclusion.
- *Transitionally*: A government operating before it gets a new constitution.
- *Megafalsifications*: Bii lies by members of parliament.
- *Corpodependopulous*: A plump person of Greek extraction who is totally reliable (Spiro Agnew would have been anti-corpodependopulous).
- *Atropandishingly*: A handsome person who has been aging fast in his job, as in "She is atropandishingly cute."
- *Semicandureactible*: A country that is capable of producing nuclear weapons but has not yet done so.

Honourable mentions:

- *Blackburnianantineologisticprecisecorrectionalism*: The tendency to nit-pick within the English language.
- *Autopoliticoprolixeqnyawn*: A politician's long boring speech to himself.
— Martin R. Zeilig, Winnipeg
* * *
- *Minimcyclothmicalschizoidaldrepressive*: Slightly mad.
— Dorothy Simpson, Port Robinson, Ont.
* * *
- *Bafflegagapephallicfallacioutate*: To warn, to caution; to dissuade.
— M. Timchuk, Sudbury, Ont.

The editors recommend

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

FICTION

Lunatic Villas, by Marian Engel, McClelland & Stewart. A complicated story about a Toronto writer named Harriet, her six children, and an uninvited English guest, told, as always, with a superb and scornful wit and hurtling energy.

NON-FICTION

Add *Rain: The North American Forecast*, by Ross Howard and Michael Perley, House of Anansi. A grimly fascinating account of the massive plague that threatens to invade every aspect of our lives, and the determination of government and industry to ignore it.

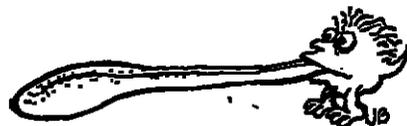
POETRY

The Stone Bird, by Al Purdy, McClelland & Stewart. No longer the old, familiar, genially shambling Purdy, but someone who writes with greater depth and solemnity about his awareness of the creeping shadow of death.

Books received

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

- After the Developers, edited by James Lorimer and Carolyn MacGregor, James Lorimer.
- The American Limerick Book, by Hugh Oliver and Keith MacMillan, Beaufort Books (Nelson, Foster & Scott) (1980).
- Anne of Ingleside, by L. M. Montgomery, Seal.
- Anne of Windy Poptars, by L. M. Montgomery, Seal.
- Anne's House of Dreams, by L. M. Montgomery, Seal.
- Archaeology of the Rivas Region Nicaragua, by Paul F. Healy, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Bertram Brooker, by Dennis Reid, National Gallery of Canada (1979).
- Beyond the Harvest: Canadian Grain at the Crossroads, by Barry Wilson, Western Producer Prairie Books.
- The Black Discovery of America, by Michael Bradley, Personal Library.
- Bluenose and Bluenose II, by R. Keith McLaren, Hounslow Press.
- Born Indian, by W. P. Kinsella, Oberon.
- Brave New Universe, edited by Tom Henighan, Tecumseh Press (1980).
- Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism, by Robert Bothwell et al., U of T Press.
- Canada's Financial System, by Edwin H. Neave, Wiley.
- Canadian Selection: Books and Periodicals for Libraries, 1977-1979 Supplement, by Isabel McLean and Edith Jarvi, U of T Press.
- Caroline R, by David Lancaster, Musson (1980).
- The Catch Colt, by Mary O'Hara, M & S.
- C. D. Howe, by John D. Barbrton, Fitzhenry & Whiteside (1980).
- Country Bed and Breakfast Places in Canada, 1981-82 edition, by John Thompson, Decoau Publishers.
- Coyote's Running Here, by Mark Mealing, Pulp Press (1980).
- The Dilemma of Our Society, by Errol A. Gibbs and Marjorie G. Lindo, Exposition Press (Consolidated Amethyst Communications) (1980).
- Dowson v. RCMP, Forward Publications (1980).
- Dynamic Investing, by Jerome Tuccille, NAL.
- Expeditions to Nowhere, by Paddy Sherman, M & S.
- The Growth of Human Ideas, by Peter Payack, Véhicule Press (1980).
- Hardrock Mining, by Wallace Clement, M & S.
- The Judge, by Rebecca West, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
- Ladders to Heaven: Art Treasures from Lands of the Bible, edited by Oscar White Muscarella, M & S.
- Listen for the Singing, by Jean Little, Clarke Irwin.
- Love & Rage: Entries in a Prison Diary, by Carl Harp, Pulp Press.
- McAlmon's Chinese Opera, by Stephen Scobie, Quadrant Editions (1980).
- More Brave New Words, by Bill Sherk, Doubleday.
- The Music of Passion, by Lynda Ward, Harlequin.
- Narcissistic Narrative, by Linda Hutcheon, Wilfrid Laurier University Press (1980).
- Neons in the Night, by Lucien Francoeur, Véhicule Press (1980).
- Nobody Danced With Miss Rodeo, by Sid Marty, M & S.
- Perpetuum Mobile, by Mary Lydon, University of Calgary Press (1980).
- Peltranello, by Betty Waterton, illustrated by Ann Blades, Douglas & McIntyre (1980).
- Pilgric the Death, by Bernard Epps, Quadrant Editions (1980).
- Portrait of Canada, by June Callwood, Doubleday.
- Radhā: Diary of a Woman's Search, by Swami Sivananda Radha, Timeless Books.
- Reduce Your Taxes, by Gordon Rich, General Publishing.
- Sable Island, by Bruce Armstrong, Doubleday.
- The St. John River Valley, by Wayne Barrett and Anne MacKey, Oxford.
- The Seven Dimensions as the Keys to a General Theory of The Universe, by Donald P. Scott, Crown Publications (1980).
- Signs Against an Empty Sky, by Stephen Hume, Quadrant Editions (1980).
- Standing Ovation or Polite Applause?, by Don Davies and Bern Wheeler, St. George Press.
- Thomas Chandler Halliburton, by H. R. Percy, Fitzhenry & Whiteside (1980).
- La Traviata, by Giuseppe Verdi, translated by Marie-Thérèse Paquin, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- A Trip Around Lake Huron, by David McFadden, Coach House Press (1980).
- Under Coyote's Eye, by Henry Bessel, Quadrant Editions (1980).
- The Unlit Lamp, by Rodclyffe Hall, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
- What Matters, by Daphne Marlatt, Coach House Press (1980).
- Wintering Over, by Terence Byrnes, Quadrant Editions (1980).
- The Women's Business Directory: Metro Toronto Edition, compiled by Karen Fraser, Best Sellers.
- The Word Processing Handbook, by Katherine Aschner, Self-Counsel Press (1980).
- Zero Energy Growth for Canada, by David B. Brooks, M & S.



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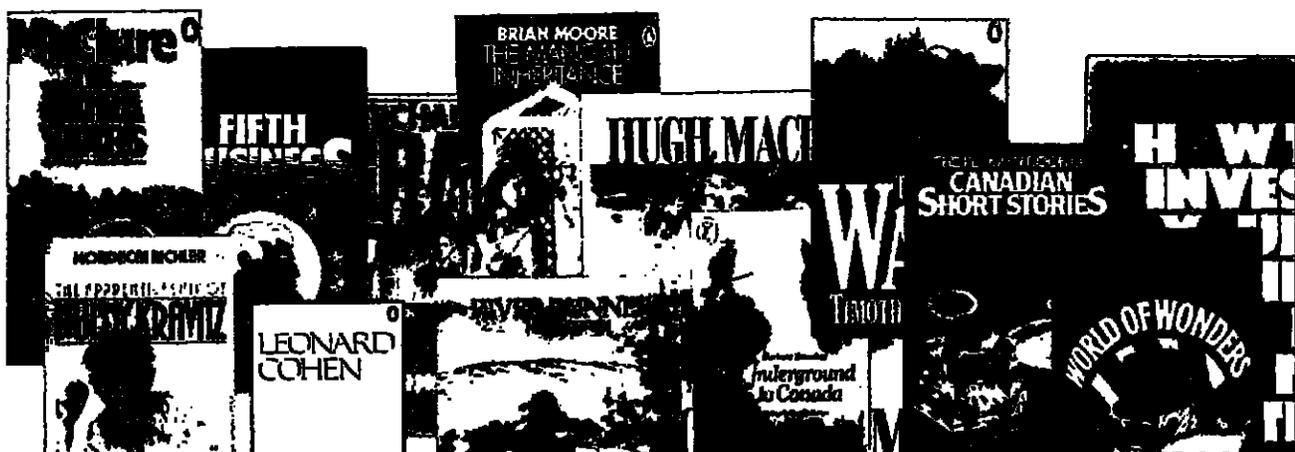
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