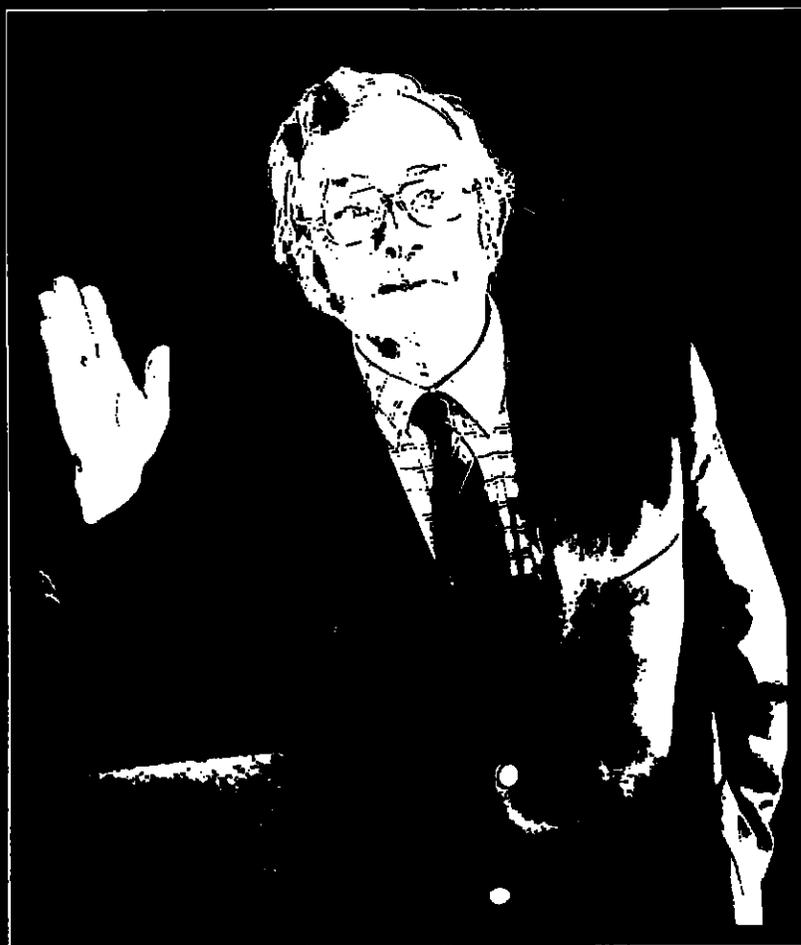


A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

BOOKS IN CANADA

JOSEF SKVORECKY WRITER IN EXILE



Audrey Thomas on a new novel by Margaret Atwood
Words in progress: What some of our leading
writers have in store for the fall season
Plus reviews of new fiction by Robertson Davies,
Mavis Gallant, Jack Hodgins, and David Helwig

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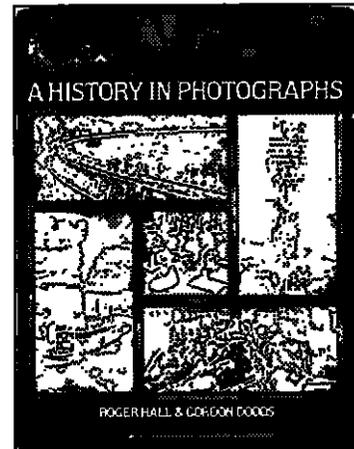
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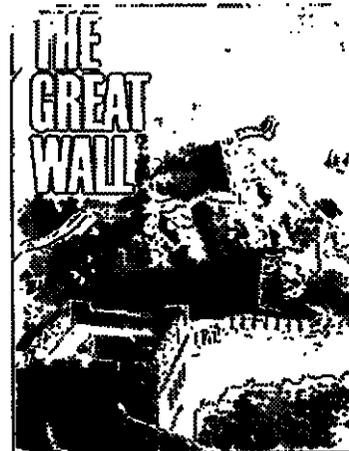


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Drawing: throughout the issue by Bill Russell.

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THE MARK OF THE EXILE

Hailed by Graham Greene as 'a master of the sadness in comedy,' Josef Skvorecky fires arrows from Canada that still strike the heart of Czechoslovakia

By PAUL STUEWE

THE SHORT, MILD-MANNERED man relaxing in the backyard of his downtown Toronto home certainly seems innocuous, but he is in fact a dangerous international fugitive: a subversive. His citizenship has been revoked by the country of his birth, and his name has been expunged from its official literary history, a field in which he once occupied positions of trust and power. He nonetheless continues to produce books so dangerous to the national welfare that their mere possession is grounds for arrest and imprisonment. His books are legally proscribed and illegally treasured within the border of a Czechoslovakian state that uneasily rides herd upon its restless citizens.

Josef Skvorecky is no flaming reactionary. His experience of the German occupation of Czechoslovakia during the Second World War did not exactly enamour him of National Socialism. In "Red Music," the foreword to the two novellas collected in *The Bass Saxophone*, Skvorecky cites Hitler, Brezhnev, and Joseph McCarthy as examples of how "totalitarian ideologists don't like real life (other people's), because it cannot be totally controlled: they loathe art, the product of a yearning for life, because that, too, evades control—if controlled and legislated, it perishes." As a chronicle of the kind of real life that goes on regardless of changes in political regimes, Skvorecky's work has earned him the enmity of all those who expect reality to conform instantly to every alteration in ideological fashion: his characters are as familiar as that quizzical face in our mirror, which we know masks a Self made up of anxieties, appetites, and the odd ideal or two, and those who would turn away from their own reflections may fear the revealing probes of this writer's pen.

Skvorecky's own story is a unlikely amalgam of the mundane and the bizarre, and like his fiction would be totally unbelievable if located anywhere other than the crazy-quilt canvas of contemporary eastern Europe. He was born in 1924 in the Bohemian town of Náchod; his father was a bank clerk and chairman of the local patriotic organization. Skvorecky's early years were distinguished by precocious interests in both literature and music. At the age of 10 he undertook his first serious writing project with a continuation of an unfinished trilogy by the Canadian author James Oliver Curwood, and his fascination with jazz was sparked by the recordings of such top swing bands as the Jimmy Lunceford, Chick Webb, and Andy Kirk aggregations. By 1939 a number of Czech

groups were playing credible jazz, and in Náchod an ensemble of enthusiastic amateurs would shortly be augmented by the unpolished but intense tones of the young Josef's tenor saxophone.

The coming of the Second World War and the German occupation of Czechoslovakia put an abrupt end to all this. Skvorecky's formal education was interrupted by assignments to factory, trench-digging, and cotton mill work, and jazz music was officially suppressed because of its "Judeo-Negro" origins. A underground jazz culture continued to exist, however, and many of the less ideologically brainwashed German soldiers participated

as either listeners or players. Some day Skvorecky hopes to write a musical comedy that will capture the spirit of these topsy-turvy days, with a shot-down Allied airman joining an already polyglot Czech-German band; it will be no stranger than the reality he experienced during the war years.

After the war a consuming interest in literature and a lung problem that curtailed his saxophone playing steered him into Prague literary circles, where he found congenial anti-authoritarian company as well as support for his interests in writing and translating. During the 20 years between the Communist coup in 1948 and the Russian invasion of 1968, Skvorecky's career was a kind of one-man barometer of the political climate: during periods of liberalization he was able to publish his work with relatively

little difficulty, but when the hard-liners were in control his books were banned, confiscated, or even destroyed. And the transition from one official orthodoxy to the next could be rather sudden: his novel *The Cowards* precipitated a major purge of Czech intellectuals when it was published — after being passed by the state censorship — in 1958, and Skvorecky was tired from his job as editor of *World Literature*. He published several books, he says, "under a friend's name," and *Miss Silver's Past* was denied publication in 1966, but published under the Dubcek regime in 1968. The first printing sold 40,000 copies; the second printing of 90,000 copies was confiscated and destroyed in 1970.

In 1968 Skvorecky and his wife Zdena Salivarová, a singer, actress, and novelist, emigrated to Canada and were stripped of their Czechoslovakian citizenship, which one might think would have ended that government's interest in his past literary efforts. His name, of course, has been eradicated from all official histories of Czech literature, but recently an academic critic quoted from



PHOTOGRAPHS, INCLUDING COVER, BY JOHN DEEVES

one of Skvorecky's translations in a book and caused a major flap when the offending passage was discovered after binding but before official publication. And when the state publishing house wanted to reprint Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* the two existing translations, one by Skvorecky and the other by a notorious Nazi collaborator, were both deemed to be politically unacceptable. A new translation was commissioned with the proviso that it be completely different from its predecessors.

This kind of mindless persecution seems even more ridiculous when one looks at what Skvorecky has actually written. The *Cowards*, for example, describes the chaotic events at the end of the Second World War from the viewpoint of a Czech teenager, whose obsessions with girls and jazz are completely credible and effectively contrasted with the more obscurely motivated political machinations of his elders. It is apolitical rather than anti-communist, and it supplies its own defence against the latter charge by making the narrator a callow cod inexperienced youth. It offends socialist-realist literary doctrine, however, by failing to include what are known as "positive characters" — the ones who build the dam, foil the saboteur, get the girl, etc. — and for this it was severely attacked. *Miss Silver's Pun* does present a rather damning indictment of the operations of a government publishing house, but in a humorous manner that stresses personal foibles rather than ideological issues, and within an atmosphere of sexual obsession and romantic mystery that hardly carries much of a political punch. The two novellas published in *The Bass Saxophone*, the title work and "Emöke," deal with the same sort of material as the novels: "The Bass Saxophone" could easily be a prelude to *The Cowards*, and the narrator of "Emöke" would be quite at home struggling with the ambiguities of the heroine of *Miss Silver's Past*.

Though hardly the stuff of anti-communist reaction, they do represent an accomplished body of writing that has earned Skvorecky the acclaim of Graham Greene, Czeslaw Milosz, and the judges of the 1980 Neustadt International Prize for Literature. One of its most unusual aspects is its avoidance of the socialist-realist and surrealist modes that have dominated post-war Eastern European writing — socialist-realism because of official cultural policies, and surrealism because it can be downplayed as mere fantasizing when the political weather is at its most severe. Skvorecky identifies Ernest Hemingway as his strongest literary mentor: "Before reading him I didn't know you could write dialogue without making a speech, or having people tell each other what was going on." The short, direct sentences of *The Cowards* (written in 1948-49) but not published until 1958) are probably the clearest demonstration of Hemingway's influence, which is still discernible in the crisp dialogue of Skvorecky's subsequent work. Kipling and Shaw were among the first authors he read in English, with Shaw being perhaps more significant because of Skvorecky's conviction that "reading plays is an excellent way to learn a language." But another decisive influence is certainly that of William Faulkner. Skvorecky's translation of *A Fable*, which took more than three years, "injected Faulkner's style into my bloodstream and for a time made it impossible for me to think in any other way." The "mythic sentences" he learned to write as a result of this immersion find their most direct expression in the novella "Emöke," and they are still a constant, if better controlled, presence in his more recent work.

Translation has been important to Skvorecky as a source of employment, an introduction to foreign literatures, and a process that has often been applied to his own writing, since he still writes in Czech and is then translated into English. He believes that "every language has certain possibilities unique unto itself, and as a translator must know when to seek approximate rather than exact equivalents. Translation is a craft, one to be worked at, and a sense you should be doing an article on my translators rather than on me." The problem of translating regional accents and dialects within a language are currently of particular interest to Skvorecky since his forthcoming novel, *The Engineer of Human Souls*

(due shortly from Lester & Orpen Dennys), includes several characters who speak a Canadian variety of Czech, which is hilarious to Czech-speaking readers but not necessarily so to English-speaking ones. The kinds of misunderstandings that can occur are exemplified by a Czech translation of one of Agatha Christie's books, in which the somewhat stiff English spoken by Hercule Poirot struck the translator as analogous to the kind of

Sixty-Eight receives no government subsidies of any kind, a circumstance Skvorecky finds ironic in view of Canada's commitment to multiculturalism

Czech spoken in the Sudeten region. This was accurate enough as far as it went, but overlooked the historical fact that many Czechs associate this accent with pro-Nazi attitudes, and would therefore find M. Poirot a less than sympathetic protagonist.

Skvorecky is currently on leave from his post as professor of English at the University of Toronto's Erindale College, where he teaches courses in American literature, but he is closely involved with the operations of Sixty-Eight, a Czech-language publishing house to which his wife devotes all her time and he whatever he can spare of his. In its nine years of existence, Sixty-Eight has issued more than 100 titles, which are purchased by members of the substantial Czech exile communities in Canada, the U.S., Germany, and Switzerland, although the two subscribers in Nepal and the one in Rarotonga are also faithful readers. "Since we're happy when we break even, you couldn't describe it as a business," Skvorecky comments, "although it is very important to us as a means of keeping Czechs in touch with one another." This also includes those who remain in Czechoslovakia, who receive Sixty-Eight publications by means of cars specially constructed to smuggle about 50 paperbacks across the border. One of these courier vehicles was recently taken apart by suspicious frontier guards; the books were discovered, and several people were harassed.

Sixty-Eight receives no government subsidies of any kind, a circumstance Skvorecky finds ironic in view of Canada's official commitment to multiculturalism. "The government will give you money to dress up in your native costume," he observes, "but they won't give you anything to publish books in your native language. This is despite the fact that those who perform the ethnic dances here are young people who have to be taught how to do them — they died out at home long ago."

Skvorecky is a fan of the works of Stephen Leacock and considers Morley Callaghan's *That Summer in Paris* an excellent literary memoir, and he has been favourably impressed by Margaret Atwood, Marian Engel, and Mordecai Richler. His interest in jazz led him to read Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter*, and he greatly enjoyed this imaginative evocation of cornetist Buddy Bolden's milieu. "But I don't have enough time for recreational reading," Skvorecky confesses, "and when I do have a free moment I tend to choose something as totally non-contemporary as one of Henry James's novels."

The exceptional accomplishments of this fine writer have not yet been widely recognized in his adopted country, but as his writing begins to reflect his experiences in Canada and to be published here, his domestic reputation will undoubtedly grow to match his international stature. One can even hope that some enterprising publisher will commission English-language editions of such novels as *Tankový prapor* (*The Tank Corps*), *Prima sezóna* (*A Fine Season*) and *Mirákl* (*Miracle in Bohemia*). In the meantime, it is possible to sample the fascinating and affecting world of Josef Skvorecky in the books that are available. They commit us to a recognizably human future by enlisting us in the service of a recognizably human past. □

WORDS IN PROGRESS

Some of Canada's best-selling writers
talk about the fall season
and their projects for the year ahead

By FRANK RASKY

THE PROCESS of their craft is by nature such a lonely one that most writers are delighted to discuss their work when approached by a sympathetic listener. And when writers gather together — especially with fellow members of the Writers' Union of Canada — the talk usually turns quickly from books to bookkeeping: the frequent frustrations and occasional financial successes they encounter in a generally unrewarding literary marketplace. Frank Rasky recently surveyed a sampling of Canadian writers, among other places, at a party for more than 100 writers' union members at Pierre Berton's \$500,000 nine-acre hideaway at Kleinburg, Ont. Here is what they have in store for the fall season and the coming year:

Pierre Berton rewrote 20 times the first three stages of his new book: *Flames Across the Border: 1813-1814*. "Writing doesn't come easier with age," says Berton, who is 60. "The older I get, the slower, more cautious, and — I hope — more innovative I get." The earlier companion volume of his present hook, *The Invasion of Canada: 1812-1813*, required an unprecedented four drafts before publication. "I wrote it in the present tense, which gives the narrative more immediacy, but is very tough to do with history. That sort of experimenting is slowing me down in my old age." Berton is one of the few writers anywhere to become a millionaire (with \$100,000 invested in Toronto real estate, 5600,000 in stocks, \$340,000 in pension funds, and 550,000 in gold). McClelland & Stewart published 100,000 copies of *The Invasion of Canada*, and close to 80,000 have been sold. Meanwhile, he is "floundering" through the preliminary research for his 23rd non-fiction book, the story of the one million pioneers — Clifford Sison's so-called men in sheepskin coats — who opened the Canadian West from 1896 until 1914.

Margaret Atwood, 41, new chairman of the writers' union, estimates that her 19 books have sold more than 2 million copies around the world. She also figures that her last novel, *Life Before Man*, set a record when it sold 126,000 hardcover copies in Canada alone. However, she is coy about disclosing details concerning her new novel, *Bodily Harm* (McClelland & Stewart). "I don't want to spill too many of the beans. People expect your new novel to be like your last one. Some were disappointed that *Life Before Man* wasn't as satirical as *Lady Oracle*."

Doris Anderson, 55, former editor of *Chatelaine*, knows that most readers will regard her new novel, *Rough Layout*, (McClelland & Stewart) as a *roman à clef* in which she figures as the heroine. It deals with an ambitious, outspoken woman who is managing editor of a Canadian magazine called *Young Living*, the sister publication to 'a national magazine very much like *Macleans*, published by a giant periodical organization not unlike Maclean-Hunter. "I must admit some elements of me can be detected in the heroine," says Anderson. "But since I portray a publisher who is crazy, I must state he bears no resemblance, of course, to anybody living or dead."

June Callwood, 57, author of *Portrait of Canada*, is completing

the 10th book that she has worked on as a ghost writer. A *Full Life* (Doubleday), the autobiography of Helen Gabagan Douglas, was left unfinished when the actress, political activist, and former California congresswoman died at the age of 79. Actor Melvyn Douglas, her 80-year-old husband, was able to contribute many personal details before his death in August. "I think this will be the best of the books I've ghosted," says Callwood. What was the most difficult to write? Probably, she thinks, the non-book she spooked for Barbara Walters. *How to Talk to Anyone About Practically Anything*.

William Deverell, 44, the Vancouver lawyer who won the \$1,000 Bantam-Seal first novel award two years ago for *Needles*, has a new crime novel, *High Crimes*, scheduled for publication by McClelland & Stewart this month. "It has all the wild, rangytang ingredients that make it a natural for a movie thriller," he says. *Needles* earned Deverell \$200,000, mostly from movie rights. That income enabled him to do research in South America and Newfoundland for *High Crimes* and to pay for forthcoming trips to Cuba, Saudi Arabia, and Siberia to work on a new novel about a terrorist organization with headquarters in Montreal.

Sylvia Fraser, 46, says she made "quite a fair amount of money" from her best-selling historical novel, *The Emperor's Virgin*. (McClelland & Stewart), set in Rome in 95 A.D. She spent part of the proceeds on a trip to Germany so that she could soak up the atmosphere for her next novel, about a Toronto couple who visit Nazi Germany shortly before the Second World War. She expects it will be published in 1982, and regards it as "the most commercially valuable book I've written, a penetrating look at the corruption and fanaticism of the period." Fraser says she has always been intrigued by her grandfather's Bavarian background and the Germanic influence on her own personality. "I've been poring through books that examine the causes of the last war in terms of German traditions of rationality. Absorbing stuff — and frightening."

Ian McLachlan, 43, whose *The Seventh Hexagram* (Macmillan, 1976) sold 100,000 copies in the U.S. and Canada, is working on another bizarre novel. Titled *The Reincarnation of Samuel de Champlain*, it's set in the future, after a nuclear war has destroyed North American civilization. One of the few survivors is a scholarly mystic who, believing he is Champlain reborn, tries to build a new community in the wilderness with guidance from an Ojibway Indian woman. "I've been taking courses in oral Ojibway so I can make the characters sound more real," says McLachlan, a professor of cultural studies at Trent University. "If I get the diige tight, I'll expect to finish the book by the fall of next year."

Richard Rohmer, 57, is hoping that readers will note a change in style in his 12th book, a futuristic political novel titled *Triac*, (General Publishing). Like his others, this one delivers a political message — the need for the major powers to agree to eliminate all nuclear weapons — but Rohmer says it is different in several

ways. Instead of dictating to his secretary, as he usually does, he has spent a year writing it out in longhand. He has taken greater pains with plot structure. And he thinks his characterization, usually denounced by critics for being wooden, has improved. For example, his hem. U.S. President John Hansen (who was also featured in *Bull*, and *Periscope Red*), is presented here as a three-dimensional person, he believes. "I've made him a very human guy, a young Ronald Reagan type. But then, I'm prejudiced. I think Reagan is a great president. He's strong, intelligent. knows where he's going." And Rohmer believes he has portrayed his Canadian prime minister Louis Turcot as a "believable, honest power broker- I think you'll recognize him."

Jim Christy, 36, the Philadelphia-born journalist who wrote a jaunty travel book about his adventures on the Alaska Highway, *Rough Road to the North* (Doubleday), has written his first novel, to be published by Simon & Pierre. When pressed on the matter, Christy, who was born Christinzio, admits wryly that, yes, there are more than a few similarities between himself and Ciene Castellano, the chief character in *Streethurts*. His alter ego is a street-smart kid who leads a gay of juvenile hustlers through the back alleys of South Philadelphia as they wheel and deal and scuffle with bandits, bordello girls, and strippers. "In Canadian fiction, little of it deals with other than bourgeois morality-and a lot of it is boring," says Christy. "The least you can say about my novel is that it doesn't deal with the petty love affairs of neurotic professors and frustrated trade magazine editors. And you clearly can't say that it's like most other first novels, which deal with the loss of the young hero's innocence. My guy has been hustling since he was six and never had innocence to lose."

Lyn Hancock, 43 (Then's a *Seal in my Sleeping Bag, Then's a Raccoon in my Parka*), faces a dilemma The British Columbia

author, who recently acquired her M.A. from Simon Fraser University, wants to be taken seriously as a naturalist. At the same time, as an author of whimsical animal books, she'd like to exploit the 10 magazine articles she has written about her adventures with cougars: "I've done for the cougar what Farley Mowat has done for the wolf." So she has submitted to University of Toronto Press a scholarly work tentatively titled *The History of Changing Attitudes to the Genus Felis Concolor*. Meanwhile, she hopes a publisher in the U.S. will accept "my Harlequin romance version," tentatively titled *Car of Many Names and Faces*.

Edna Staebler, in her 60s, the celebrated "schmeck lady" of Ontario's Mennonite country, faces a similar identity problem. Publishers seem to think that all she can do is cook as a result of the success of her two cookbooks — *Food That Really Schmecks* (which has sold well over 100,000 copies in hardcover since 1968) and its 1979 sequel, *More Food That Really Schmecks* (more than 50,000 sold). Recently, she managed to persuade McClelland & Stewart to publish a book of folklore. It will be a collection of, articles she wrote for *Maclean's* and *Chatelaine* in the 1950s and '60s dealing with groups — fishermen, miners, Iroquois on a reserve, islanders on St. Pierre and Miquelon. "Nor a schmeck in the lot of them," she says.

Maggie Siggins, 39, is a former reporter for the now defunct Toronto Telegram who wrote a biography of her former publisher titled simply *Bassett* (James Lorimer, 1979). It sold a mere 3,000 copies. She anticipates a much bigger audience for her next book, due to be completed next year. Titled *Gang Rape*, it's an account of six men in their 20s convicted and sentenced to six to 12 years in Kingston Penitentiary for the rape of two women. Over the past

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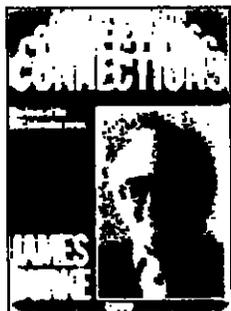


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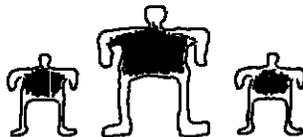
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two years she has visited them in prison six times, interviewed their families and friends of the victims, and read the 16 volumes of trial transcripts. "I've already been approached by two producers who want me to do a film script," she says. "My primary intent is to make it a non-fiction work as gripping as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Mailer's *Executioner's Song*."

Lovat Dickson, 79, looks forward to finishing by the end of this year *A Publisher's Tale*, the last volume of his autobiography,

which began with *The Ante-Room* (Macmillan, 1959) and continued with *The House Of Words* (1963). A literary man of the old school, Dickson is probably best known as the London publisher who discovered *Grey Owl* in the 1930s and introduced him to the English public. He maintains there's nothing traumatic about nearing the end of his memoirs. "It's a miracle I've lived this long," he says. "and when you reach 79, you must bow to the inevitable. I have warmed both hands before the fire of life, and I am ready to depart." □

FEATURE REVIEW

Topic of cancer

Margaret Atwood's Caribbean adventure violently affirms that 'terminal' can mean more than the end of a life

By AUDREY THOMAS

Edible Harm, by Margaret Atwood. McClelland & Stewart, 304 pages, 916.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 0812 0).

IN THE MIDDLE 1960s my husband and I and our two children spent two years in West Africa and were witness to a military coup, an almost bloodless one compared to what was to come later in some of the other African states. "They" waited until the president (who called himself Osegafu, "the Saviour") was out of the country, on his way to China as I recall. And "they" even let his wife and children leave a few days later. I suppose we were never in any real danger, for we lived in a section of the country that had always been hostile to the president, and where the coup had reportedly been planned. Nevertheless, when two young soldiers, carrying guns with bayonets at the ready, flagged down my husband on his way home to the university, he dutifully pulled over, stopped, and let them hop in. They asked him to take them to the capital, more than 150 miles away, and he said he was sorry but he was only going a few miles up the road to the university gates. They looked at one another and shrugged good-naturedly, hopped out, and flagged down a passing taxi. As they sped away, my husband realized they had left their guns and bayonets behind on the back seat, so he in turn sped after the taxi, caught up with it, handed over the weapons, and came on home to lunch.

We laugh about this story now, and he laughed about it then, sitting at the lunch table, telling me. He hadn't been afraid, he said, because it was all so unreal. (Our university had been named after the presi-

dent, and people driving university vans and official cars had been stopped and handed cans of paint and told to paint out the president's name before continuing — "Like something out of *Alice in Wonderland*," we said. "How funny.") But the day after the incident with the two young soldiers we heard about a woman in a nearby village who didn't open up her chop bar fast enough and had her head blown off. Two drunken soldiers, they said. I promptly burst into tears. "You fool," I said to my husband, "you could have been killed." Suddenly it was real, it was no laughing matter.

I tell this story here because the plot of Margaret Atwood's new novel depends for a lot of its momentum on the political power struggles going on in a small Caribbean country that is about to hold its first real election since independence from Britain. And although I've been told I was asked to do this review because I specialize in "mutilated women" (perhaps mutilated women in the tropics?), what struck me first was how accurate and chilling a portrait it is of a small, third-world country that has suddenly had power, if not greatness, thrust upon it. Rennie, the heroine, can't take any of it very seriously ("The signs and banners are going up everywhere now: ELLIS IS KING. THE FISH LIVES. Everything looks homemade: it's like collegg, like student elections. It's hard to believe.") I don't want to reveal the ending by telling you how Rennie is finally forced to take it all seriously, but she learns what a lot of innocent people have been learning these days: just because something's homemade doesn't always mean it can't blow up or hurt

you in some deep and fundamental way.

Rennie is a refinement on Annette of Atwood's story. "A Travel Ken." Like Annette, Rennie is a journalist, although her specialty is "lifestyles" and "trends," not "fun in the sun." Annette has begun to feel she's not alive, that her constant journeys ate to countries where (as Rennie will put it) she is supposed to "look but not see." ("People, she found, did not want any hint of danger in the kind of articles it was her business to write. Even the ones who would never go to the places she described, who could, not afford it, did not want to hear about danger or even unpleasantness... Once, it seemed a long time ago, staying home meant safety... and going to the places that were her speciality — the Caribbean, the northern half of South America, Mexico — meant adventure, threat, pirates, brigands, lawlessness. Now it was the reverse, home was the dangerous place and people went on vacation to snatch a few weeks of uneventfulness.") Annette is exhausted and near collapse from the effort she is making not to know, not to "see" what's really going on. Rennie, too, doesn't want to see, doesn't want to get "involved." has-come down here to recover, to get away from "it all" — from her recent operation for breast cancer and her subsequent fear and self-loathing, from her break-up with her boyfriend Jake, and from the mysterious stranger who has entered her apartment through the kitchen window, taken no money or valuables but instead made himself a cup of Ovaltine and left a thick coil of rope on her bed. (The police are guzzled by this and imply that somehow it's Rennie's fault, and it's up to her to figure it

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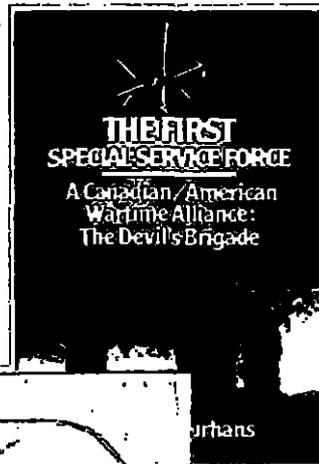
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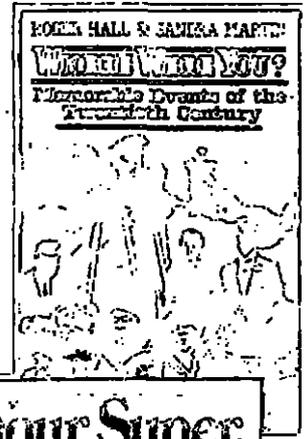
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out, a woman living alone and all that. They think she's been having gentlemen callers. To prove that she hasn't, couldn't, that no one would want her, she undoes her blouse and shows them her stigmata.) Atwood uses the jargon words of Rennie's illness — "terminal," "massive involvement," "malignant" — to good effect. The one thing La Rennie wants to avoid is "massive involvement" (she is not cured of her cancer, but her doctor thinks he has "got it all"), and this carries over into her attitude toward life. She has no illusions (except that she still believes in "falling in love"), and when Dr. Minnow, the Caribbean politician she meets on the plane, tries to get her to write about all the corruption, the misplacement and misuse of foreign aid funds sent down by the Americans and the "sweet Canadians," she keeps telling him politely that she doesn't "do" that kind of thing, she's not that kind of journalist, she just does lifestyles.

"Lifestyles," says Dr. Minnow. He's puzzled.

"You know, what people wear, what they eat, where they go for their vacations, what they've got in their living-rooms, things like that," says Rennie as lightly as she can.

Dr. Minnow considers this for a moment. Then he gives her an angelic smile. "You might say I am also concerned with life-styles," he says. "It is our duty. What the people eat, what they wear, this is what I want you to write about."

She says she'll think about it.

Dr. Minnow is the only truly good man in the book. A close second is Daniel, Rennie's doctor, with whom she falls in love — it's interesting to me that both these men are doctors, and truly dedicated men. Dr. Minnow is a "sheep doctor" who trained in Canada but returned to help his country: Dr. Luoma a surgeon who specializes in mastectomies. There are no good women unless we count Elva, an old black woman who is the grandmother of Prince, another political candidate. The women — Rennie, her friend Jocasta who runs a punk-chic Toronto second-hand boutique called *Ripped-Off*, and Lora, the life- and travel-battered woman she meets in St. Antoine and with whom she eventually shares a jail cell — are all rough and cynical and full of snappy one-liners (although we are to believe, at least about Rennie and Lora, that they are soft and vulnerable underneath).

The flip side bothered me: all three round for too much like David in *Surfacing*, and sometimes, when they engage in dialogue with one another (or when Rennie, particularly, engages in dialogue with Jake or Jocasta), you wonder who's been writing their routines. I thought of early radio shows — George and Gracie, Fibber McGee and Mollie, Jack Benny and Rochester. (Also of the heroines in stories in *The Saturday Evening Post*, only with

dirty words thrown in.) They are very funny and a lot of their apothegms are true: "Look before you leap my mother used to say," says Lora. "When they're right behind you, you don't look, you only leap." Or Rennie tell us that what was mandatory in Griswold, Ont., where she grew up, was "more often than not ludicrous in the real world. Griswold, for instance, was an early convert to polyester knit." Or that in a place like Griswold you got what you deserved and what you deserved was invariably bad. Yet I got a little tired of the relentlessness of that kind of talk, its bitter tone, its cynicism. (Rennie is not above writing the same article for *Visor*, a "mole-oriented" Toronto mag, as she is for *Pandora*, its female counterpart. In the women's magazine she gives hints on what to do if you're bored while listening to your companion; for *Visor* she gives advice on how to tell if you are boring the lady you are with. She also writes about non-existent "trends" and then is cynically amused when they catch on.)

Even if it is a façade, it gets very wearing. And according to this book there are no honest people in the journalism world, at least not in Toronto. It's absurd to be "decent," like Daniel Luoma, it's obsolete. It's dangerous to be, like Dr. Minnow, a good man in politics. (Never mind, he gets his — he is shot in the back.)

A couple of other things bothered me. Paul, who is "the connection," a man who runs guns and dope and appears to be a man for all seasons, is almost a hem out of a *Harlequin Romance* (or maybe out of their new, sexy series, *Harlequin Presents*). I found him utterly unbelievable, not because of what he does but the way in which he is presented — his "too-blue" eyes, his charisma, his world-weariness. At one point he sounds like a Hemingway hem: when he advises Rennie to take the plane back home before the election trouble breaks and she asks him if he is trying to get rid of her, he says "No —. Maybe I'm just being noble. Maybe I want there to be something good I've done." (They have become lovers: he has given her back her body.)

The other thing is Rennie's initial involvement with Lora and Paul, her willingness to go to the airport and pick up a package, even if it is supposed to be heart medicine, even if it is for Lora's boyfriend's grandma. It is necessary, in terms of the plot, for Rennie to do something that makes her really suspicious in other people's eyes. But I found it hard to believe that the same woman who carefully picks out the lettuce from her roast beef sandwich on the plane (she's been around, she knows about disease and unwashed salad) would let herself be duped so easily. I began to wonder if she'd had a partial lobotomy instead of a mastectomy. And when the parcel turns out to be so huge that it has to be dragged?

But it's a strong book, and Rennie's

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journey down into herself, the **circumstances** that force **her** to show compassion for someone other than herself, that **force her to reach out and touch someone else who is suffering — that part is beautifully done.** (I could write a whole essay on how Atwood uses hands — and the laying on of hands — in this **book**). The **metaphors and images are, as usual, brilliant, although perhaps much more violent.** A coiled rope on a bed (which reminds Rennie of the game *Clue*), a videotape of a ret coming out of a woman's

vagina, the winter faces of a Toronto crowd "not flat and open like the feces here, but narrow and pallid and pushed into long snouts, like the snouts of rats." This book is about violence, about the spread of violence and despair, whether inward, cancer of the individual body, or outward, cancer of the body politic. The word "corruption" can be used in more than one way. This is the bleakest of Atwood's novels to date. When we last see Rennie she is on the plane to Toronto and, like Coleridge's wedding-

guest, a sadder but wiser person. She has learned that terminal can mean not only the end of the line but also a connecting point. She is finally "real" and she vows to write about it. She feels that she is now a "reporter." "She" was not one once, but now she is. A reporter. She will pick her time: then she will report. For the first time in her life she can't think of a title."

But will she? And even if she does, who will want to hear about it? Where is she going to find her audience? □

FEATURE REVIEW

Dons and rebels

Robertson Davies's scholarly renegades, like the fallen angels; enjoy curious excesses among 'the daughters of men'

By I.M. OWEN

The Rebel Angels, by Robertson Davies, Macmillan. 320 pages. \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9556 5).

ROBERTSON DAVIES is celebrating the opening of his new career as former Master of Massey College in the University of Toronto with the publication of an exuberant novel about the scholarly life. He seems to have enjoyed himself hugely in writing it, as have I in reading it.

The Rebel Angels of the title aren't who you think they are: not Lucifer and that crowd. They come from the Apocrypha. The heroine of the novel, Maria Magdalena Theotoky, a scholar of 23, explains them thus to one of her would-be lovers, Professor the Reverend Simon Darcourt:

They were real angels. Samahazai and Azazel, and they betrayed the secrets of Heaven to King Solomon, and God threw them out of Heaven. And did they mope and plot vengeance? Not they. They weren't one-headed egotists like Lucifer. Instead they gave mankind another pmh up the ladder. they came to earth and taught tongues, and healing and laws — and hygiene — taught everything — and they were often special successes with "the daughters of men." It's a marvellous piece of apocrypha, and I would have expected you to know it, because surely it is the explanation of the origin of universities! God doesn't come out of these stories in a very good lit. does He? Job had to tell Him a few home truths about His injustice and caprice; the Rebel Angels showed Him that hiding all knowledge and wisdom and



From Barker Fairley Portraits (Methuen), original oil from the collection of Alan Walker

keeping it for Himself was dog-in-the-manger behaviour. I've always taken it as proof that we'll civilize God yet.

The book consists largely of good talk like that; which especially delights me because of my long and lonely devotion to the works of T.L. Peacock. Whether consciously or not, Davies has revived the form introduced by Peacock in 1816, used by him in five of his seven novels, and never as far as I know adopted by anyone else till now.

In these books, *Headlong Hall*, *Melincourt*, *Nightmare Abbey*, *Crochet Castle*, and *Gryll Grange*, the device is to bring a gathering of odd characters together in a large country house and — around the slenderest of story-lines — allow them to talk about whatever happens to be interesting them (i.e. the author) at any given moment. Since the large country house is an unlikely setting in this time and place, a large university is the perfect substitute as a background for conversation. Two colleges figure in the story, the Anglican foundation of St. John and the Holy Ghost (generally known as Spook) and a graduate college that would be quite recognizable as Massey even if the author had not given it the evocative name of Ploughwright.

Both the talk and the action are partly dominated by two 16th-century figures, Rabelais (Maria's special) and Paracelsus, the Swiss magician, physician, and inventor of chemistry. (In passing, I'm surprised that Davies didn't avail himself of the real name of Paracelsus, which is just the sort of thing to appeal to him: Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim.) A more recently deceased figure starts the action off: Francis Cornish, strongly reminiscent of the late Douglas Duncan — a wealthy art collector and occasional dealer, whose estate requires elaborate sorting out because of his inability to keep accurate records of his dealings.

By the comparison with Peacock I don't mean to suggest that the book is uneventful

— the action includes the theft of a valuable manuscript, a murder, a suicide, and a love philtre (made from toasted appleseed and Maria's menstrual blood, obtained from a tampon crushed in a garlic squeezer) that gets into the wrong cup of coffee.

Principal characters other than those I have mentioned are John Parlabane, a renegade monk who is not one of the true Rebel Angels but quite possibly a minor devil; a detestable Renaissance scholar named Urquhart McVarish, whose sexual tastes are very curious indeed; Clement Hollier, a medievalist turned "paleopsychologist" and an authority on the Filth Therapy of the Middle Ages; Ozius Froats, known as the Turd-Skinner, who is favoured to win a Nobel Prize for his exhaustive study of human excrement; Maria's mother, a Hungarian gypsy who professionally reconditions stringed instruments by pecking them in dung bought at great expense from a racing stable; and the mother's brother Yerko, a successful crook who after being taken to a medieval nativity play acquires a devotion to the Bebbly Jesu, and builds a crèche showing the Three Kings bringing their gifts of Gold, Frank, Innocence, and Mirth, Maria and Father Darcourt take turns as first-person narrator. They both write in the well-turned periods of the sometime Master of Massey, which come rather oddly from the 23-year-old Maria. But it doesn't matter in the least.

I can't resist noting that the Latinity of these ripe scholars seems to be even rustier than mine. Paracelsus wrote: "*Aterius non sit, qui suus esse potest.*" This is the first Latin sentence I've seen for years that I can read without help: it means "Let him who can be his own man not be another's: Parlabane takes from it the title of his



autobiographical novel, *Be Nor Another*, thinking that it means "Be not soother if thou canst be thyself." When Hollier repeats this mistranslation to Darcourt, the clergyman says, "I know Latin too, Clem." They both need a remedial course. □

New guy on the block

By D.W. NICHOL

The King's Evil, by David Helwig, Oberon Press, 130 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 392 6) and 57.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 393 4).

THE LAST BIT of recorded dialogue in the life of Charles I was, naturally enough, with his executioner. Under other circumstances it might have read like a Python script:

EXT. LONDON GREY
CHAS (*Foppishly dithering*): Take heed of the axe, pray take heed of the axe. I shall say but very short prayers, and when I thrust out my hands... (*Executioner removes metal plates, a false head, etc., from under Charles's peruke*) Does my hair trouble you? | *Winning as if to make out cue-*

cards) I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown; where no disturbance can be. no disturbance in the world.

CROWD: Get on with it. We 'aven't got all day.

CHAS: Is my hair well? (*Kicking the block*) You must set it fast. (*Tests it again*)

EXEC (*Making a token adjustment*): It is fast, Sir.

CHAS (*Obviously miffed*): It might have been a little higher.

EXEC: It can go no higher, Sir.

CHAS (*Resigned*): When I put my hands out this way then... (*15 minutes later. Executioner taps him on the shoulder; Charles is indignant*) STAY FOR THE SIGN!

David Helwig mixes it a different way in *The King's Evil*: Substitute one heavily peruked monarch for some poor, besotted royal look-alike shortly before execution. Then whisk Charles I off to the American colonies and let him die in shrouded secrecy, royal heed intact. Add one abysmally depressed CRC producer on an extended leave of absence. Shake until ready.

But the main ingredients — historical truth and personal myth-never quite seem to blend. Nor are they meant to. Helwig's hero and his history-upheaving idea for a CBC-Radio slot (which leads him from

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Niagara to Virginia, then to England). form an uneasy co-existence. slated for separation. Failure of both truth and myth is the ineluctable conclusion. The secret (if ever there were any secret) of Charles's escape dies on the withered lips of an English lord.

In this way, the true (or at least accepted) image of the beheaded monarch is much more suited to *The King's Evil* than that of an escaped Charles: Helwig's hem is basically running around with his head temporarily and figuratively lopped off. Helwig deliberately unplugs certain vital nerve functions of his main character, who's not exactly endeared to his readers by 'the unprepossessing epithet of Dross. Dross dreams luridly, reflects maudlinly, reacts tangentially, as though remote historical figures and confrontable human beings were the same stock of alien.

The narration suffers accordingly, its narrator suspended in an emotional limbo. The driving force of the novel, then, if not the downplayed personality of Dross, must be the vague manifestation of the Protestant work ethic. What is the best remedy for unreconcilable tragedy? Dross instinctively knows it: work. He throws himself into it no matter how: baring the labour (he buries himself in archives presumably left undusted since the 13th century), no matter how profitless the result. *Ecdysis* it might be called — the slow sloughing off of an old skin.

A more engaging aspect of *The King's Evil* is its exploration of fakes within fakes — a refreshing digression from myths within truths. Dross imagines setting up an interview for a documentary on forgery with an impersonator of Tom Keating who, incidentally, found Krieghoff to be a prolific source for his "Sexton Blakes." The development of Dross's sensationalist theory on Charles I and its transatlantic follow-up is essentially a false activity masking a highly idiosyncratic form of self-psychotherapy. But delusion itself is part of the cure.

Helwig's latest limps as a compelling read, more than a bit much in too many places: "You performed a slow asphyxiation of my soul, transplanted my heart out of me and left a hole." (Is the CBC filled with rock-song-writers *manqués*?) or, "I see your body shaved from head to toe and painted silver and spinning like a dentist's drill in a rotten tooth as you grind the rot from my soul." To cite the dross without highlighting the more redeeming elements would be unfair: there are a couple of superbly developed, macabre episodes. When Helwig sends Dross down a darkened bottle-neck passage until he squeezes himself into immobility the effect is stunningly spine-tapping.

Early on in *The King's Evil* Dross is warned from on high: "We're not here to broadcast private obsessions." What fails as a radio documentary (because it fails as

an idea) becomes the obsessive stuff of a novel. Too brief to permit much development, too contained by its protagonist's self-pity, yet too diffuse in its intent, *The King's Evil* reads like itself: something to be got out of its own system. □

REVIEW

Red and white and bleak all over

By ERLING FRIIS-BAASTAD

Making Up, by Don Bailey, Oberon Press, 119 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88756 372 1) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 374 8).

Born Indian, by W. P. Kinsella, Oberon Press, 163 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 379 9) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 381 0).

AFTER READING *Making Up*, I was disturbed by the thought that the author of these stories may have recently endured a tragedy similar to the ones his protagonists undergo. I was momentarily dissuaded from writing what most be written about this book. However, when the words inspired by a real life tragedy are published as fiction, they cease to be private exercises in therapy, and we are asked to accept them as art. In this case, the awesome emotional force Don Bailey attempts to portray overwhelm the art.

Wayne, Bailey's principal protagonist, is the only character in these stories who comes close to being a fully realized human being. He is a bright, sensitive, and often unemployed working man who suffers from an inability to let his feelings show. He seems to understand them well enough and is often the genius of his own heart. Sometimes this is moving; usually, it is ponderous. With only two exceptions, the stories in *Making Up* follow Wayne's attempt to cope with the fact that his wife is dying of cancer and his need to create a new life for his son and himself. In the two exceptions a man similar to Wayne, though without his grit, suffers through the aftermath of his wife's departure to the West and a career.

Wayne's wife, Wanda, never becomes more than a vehicle for the misery to arrive on. Wayne's mother is a demented old vodka addict. His little boy is the moral



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imperative to keep striving, and toddles off and on the stage like a small Greek chorus with bad timing.

Bailey's choppy prose often has his people talking like private detectives alone in cold water flats with only one shot left in the bottle and a price on their heads. Sometimes it's worse. Passages like, "She laughs again. It is not a pleasant sound. This is not the women who sewed me quiet Sunday dinners of roast beef and creamy mashed potatoes. Her voice is like cold, lumpy gravy." And, "I hope you're happy. All those years in the munition plant end never an accident. IF you weren't around, would I be making meatloaf?" Well, they give me indigestion.

By the final story, we find that everything is working out. Wanda's sufferings have ended. Wayne has thrown her ashes into Niagara Falls. He has started up his own company, one apparently designed as a racket, though it succeeds legitimately. His mother cheers up and is able to resume her kitchen chores. Wayne falls in love with a woman he met at the office: "The music played on and they continued to dance. Wayne found himself beginning to make up a new dream. One he could say out loud." Sigh.

It was a relief to turn to the story-telling prowess of W. P. Kinsella.

In his previous short-story collections, *Dance Me Outside* and *Scars*, Kinsella introduced his narrator, Silas Ermineskin, and the Indians of a reserve near Hobbema, Alta. In *Born Indian* he continues to chronicle their misadventures. The cover blurb calls our attention to the great sense of humour that runs through these stories. The publisher certainly isn't putting us on, though it is an oversimplification: as deftly handled as it is, the humour is only one tone on this canvas.

In a review of *77: Best Canadian Short Stories* (in the Winter, 1978, issue of *The Fiddlehead*) John Mills accused Kinsella of taking a typical middle-class liberal's approach to the lives of his characters, and even went so far as to wonder if Kinsella had ever met an Indian. Such a dour pronouncement has more in common with a middle-class liberal attitude than does anything Kinsella writes. Perhaps Mills came to his conclusion because he was dealing with a single story. One would expect a typical white liberal to get bogged down in one mood, just as his extreme opposite number would. Taken together in one volume, Kinsella's stories leap, plunge, and twist through a wide range of emotions.

Events in the title story leave the reader as saddened and numbed as they do the characters themselves. The story is about an

old man who tries to maintain custody of his grandchild & spite bureaucratic ignorance and sanctimoniousness. In "Indian Struck" Silas suffers a bitter revelation as to why some white women throw themselves at Indian men.

"Buffalo Jump" presents a dynamic young Tlingit from Alaska who moves to Alberta where he is severely crippled in a shooting incident. This story is a beautiful study of bravery. A very special kind of dilnity rides the tension right through to the story's surprising conclusion.

Kinsella works with several levels of humour. Occasionally he treats us to hilarious slapstick, as in "The Killing of Colin Moosefeathers" and "I Remember Horses." At times, Silas is reduced to a wise-cracking acceptance of fate. Most of the stories are imbued with sardonic political wit. This reaches its ultimate expression with "Weasels and Ermines" in which the medicine women, Mad Etta, spine, dark magic to battle two vengeful rednecks and a meddling constable.

I am certain that W. P. Kinsella was fully aware of the target he would become after daring to publish stories about Indians. I am glad that didn't stop him. Unless you approach *Born Indian* with hardened preconceptions about the proper way to present minorities in fiction, these stories will move you as only the best products of the art of story-telling can. □

The One-Room School in Canada

An affectionate look at a vanished era in Canadian life.

by Jean
Cochrane

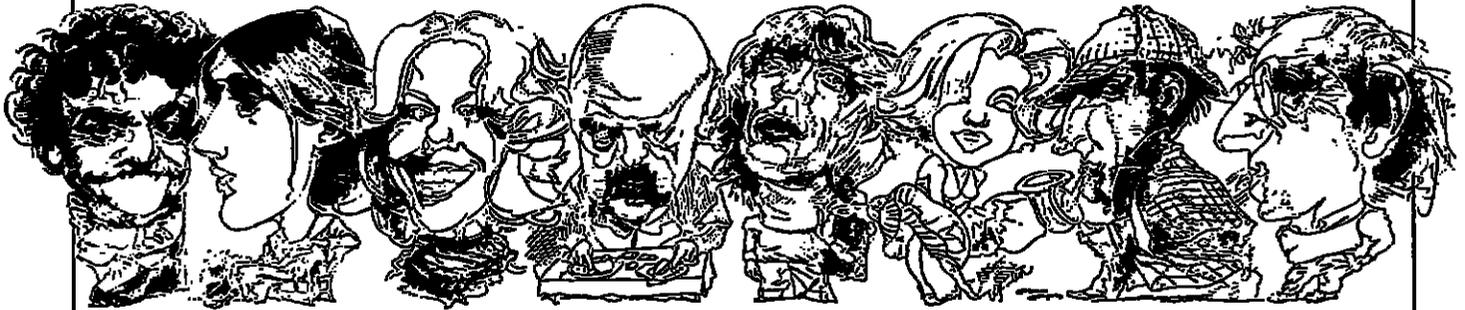


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IN BRIEF

The *White Hotel*, by D.M. Thomas, Victor Gollancz (Clarke Irwin), 240 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 575 02889 0). This third and most recent offering of English novelist D.M. Thomas is an exciting and highly disturbing look at such perennial philosophical dilemmas as good vs. evil and the existence of life after death, cleverly wrestled with through the recounting of Lisa Erdman's patient/doctor relationship with Sigmund Freud. Casually moving from fantasy to fact and back again, Thomas leads us through the seemingly successful unravelling, by therapy, of Lisa's painful psychosomatic illness. We share, through case-history, narrative, poetry, and correspondence, her thoughts, guilts, and fantasies. She is a half-Russian singer whose love affairs, marriage, and career are all aborted by her alienating illness. Freud is the superior, inquisitive, and innovative man he was in his life, but who, like his patient, cannot in the end escape from the fatalities of life and the course of history. Almost to the last page we are led to believe that Lisa's problems (not to mention the world's) are solvable ones; that the mam-

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moth strides of medicine and science are our undoubted salvation. In the end, the reader is left with little confidence in the omnipotence of science. Instead there is only a renewed reverence for the universe and its

many enigmas. We are shocked into realizing that Lisa Erdman's pain is not an end result, but an alarming prophecy. Her gift of second sight is *too* accurate. The novel does not deny the benefits of psychoanalysis, nor

that it works, but it does say that there is so much more. and that man is a founding: we are, in fact, just another of life's mysteries. A work of fierce symbolism, humour, and pathos. □ —JOCELYN HILLMAN

FEATURE REVIEW

The other Canada

Mavis Gallant's Canadian stories reveal a lost country of the mind, seen by a writer in whose unwavering vision we all are refugees

By WAYNE GRADY

Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories, by Mavis Gallant. Macmillan. 352 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9600 6).

"I OFTEN HAVE the feeling with Canadian readers that I am on trial," Mavis Gallant writes in her introduction to this collection. In an introduction she uses as a kind of defence plea against a long-standing charge of being "unCanadian," of "using language to screen a deep and disobliging meaning, or to perpetrate a fraud." That this feeling is as

strong now as it was when Gallant (and Richler, and Levine) left Canada more than 30 years ago says as much about writing as it says about Canadians: when later on she repeats Cocteau's phrase — "*Je suis un mensonge qui dit la vérité*" — she acknowledges that her writing is a lie that contains a deep and not necessarily pleasant (else why the screen?) truth. As for the trial image, Gallant's genius is to turn the table, to put us as human beings (sometimes as Canadian human beings) in the dock. We become

witnesses for our own prosecution, and as an examiner Gallant is fierce and relentless: as she also says, "no writer calls a truce."

The 17 stories in the collection are arranged chronologically and in three sections. The first group, all published in the New Yorker in the 1950s and '60s, are about children and Families. "Thank You for the Lovely Tea," published in 1956 but written much earlier, in the 1940s when Gallant was 18, is about a sullen, rebellious child in a Montreal convent. Ruth Cook is an early version of Linnet Muir, whom we meet in the third section: the story has no particular edge to it — the teasing of a schoolmate while at tea with Father's new girlfriend — and the point seems to be to delineate the effects of boarding schools on young girls. But as that if is devastating. "Jorinda and Jorindel" is also about a disaffected child in strange surroundings not of her choice. Irmgard, in her aunt's summer house for a vacation, observes the drunken antics of another guest. Mrs. Bloodworth, and treats her orphaned cousin Freddy like a stuffed doll. Her only friend is the maid, Germaine, who speaks no English and who dislikes her employers. Irmgard's future seems no less bleak than the present, an endless succession of unhappiness in someone else's how: "She will never be given anything even approaching Germaine's unmeasured love again."

Perhaps the most interesting story in this first group is "Wing's Chips," for here we have another early portrait of Linnet Muir (though still unnamed) and her Father, who are renting a summer place in a small French village on the St. Lawrence. The Father is a painter, the mother is in a nursing home in Montreal, and the daughter is on vacation from the Pensionnat Saint-Louis de Gonzague — a Familiar setting; separated Family, rented house, a remote but kindly father whose life is totally foreign not only to his



neighbour but even to his own daughter, who seems to wish he were a bank clerk like everyone else. Not until he paints a sign for the local fish-and-chips shop does she feel proud of him, and even then she won't admit to anyone that he did it for nothing.

The middle section consists of four stories — "In the Tunnel," "The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street," "Bonaventure," and "Virus X" — published between 1963 and 1971. These are longer stories, more grown-up, and "In the Tunnel" is perhaps the best known. It is about Sarah Holmes, a young Canadian girl who, while in a kind of exile from Canada in the south of France (Gallant's favourite fictional territory), meets another of Gallant's palely loitering knights-at-arms, Roy Cooper. Cooper has been drifting about the colonies as a prison inspector, and now lives in a part of a villa known as The Tunnel — a long, narrow, windowless room with a vaulted, white-washed ceiling where he and Sarah act out their inevitable tragi-comedy. In "The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street" there is another version of Roy Cooper, this time called Peter Frazier. Peter and Sheila Frazier are the only "happily married" couple in the book, and their happiness depends upon a shared delusion regarding lost opportunities, friends, money, and pride. Frazier is what Gallant will later, in the Linnet Muir stories, refer to as an RM, a remittance man—he wanders about in self-inflicted exile, working as a government clerk in Geneva, as a wallah of something in Ceylon, "where they should have made their fortune," and finally turns up in Canada at his sister's apartment, where they squat for 17 weeks. In their bright silk kimonos they think of themselves as peacocks, and as Frazier himself observes toward the end of the story, gazing at the peacocks in Geneva's Palais de Nations, these proud but useless birds "love no one. They wander about the parked cars looking elderly, bad-tempered, mournful, and lost."

The last six stories are the Linnet Muir stories that have been appearing in the *New Yorker* (and one in the *Canadian Fiction Magazine*) since the mid-1970s. In the introduction, Gallant recalls that the impetus to write a series of interconnected stories about the Montreal she knew in the 1940s came while she was at work on her book about Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish officer who was falsely convicted of treason in 1894. As she restored in her mind the lost Paris of Dreyfus, "there began to be restored in some underground river of the mind a lost Montreal. An image of Sherbrooke Street, at night, with the soft gushlight and leaf shadows on the sidewalk." This image worked on Gallant much as the famous *madelaine* worked on Marcel Proust. (The image appears in the first Linnet Muir story, "In Youth Is Pleasure," in which Sherbrooke Street "was lined with

gigantic spreading trees through which light fell like a rain of coins. One day, standing at a corner, waiting for the light to change. I understood that the Sherbrooke Street of my exile — Mecca, my Jerusalem — was this.")

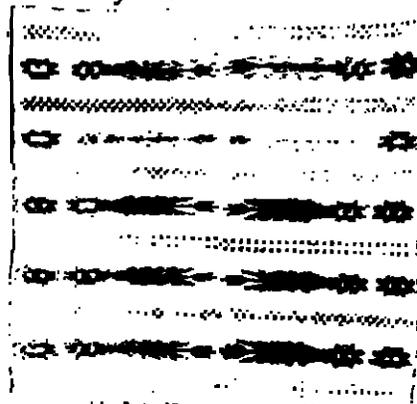
Linnet Muir, IS, returns to Montreal from New York in order to escape the confinement of living near her vapourish mother, to be independent, to find out who she is, and incidentally to discover how her father died when she was seven years old. This last quest is never quite completed: he either died of tuberculosis of the spine or he shot himself, either in Montreal, Quebec City, or in a ship going back to England. Linnet drops that particular quest and concentrates on herself. She gets a job in a government wartime agency, where she is the only woman in an office full of veterans and remittance men, full of Peter Fraziers and Roy Coopers, refugees from life who have come to most, who have accepted their lot and are in the process of disappearing: "A refugee eating cornflakes was of no further interest." In "With a Capital T" the wartime agency is replaced by a newspaper called *The Lantern* (a parodied version of the old *Montreal Standard*, when Gallant worked before leaving for Europe in 1950).

The six stories take Linnet backward and forward in search of lost time, back to memories of her parents and their friends, forward to men she meets on commuter trains who will soon be killed in the war. Gallant's handling of time is brilliant and unobtrusive. In the first story Linnet arrives at the doorstep of her old nurse, Olivia, and we know how her first three interviews with her father's former friends will go before she even sets down her suitcase. Yet we do not feel jerked back and forth as though being dragged through an over-furnished room, but rather as if being taken carefully by the hand and led through a vast, complicated, but perfectly orderly mansion.

The idea of gathering nearly all of Gallant's Canadian stories together is a good one, not merely because they all take place in Canada (a Canada that is, at any rate, extremely personal and probably obsolete), but because they are all linked by Gallant's unwavering vision. The young orphans in the early stories grow into the adolescent misfits of the middle ones, and these turn into the female Ulysses that is Linnet Muir. The early deluded and mirage-like parents become the ineffectual lovers, and then return again to being rough sketches of Angus Muir, Linnet's complex and shadowy father, who was himself one of Linnet's hated and ridiculed remittance men. In the end it is not a vision of Canada that emerges from these stories, but a vision of the world, of life: it is in that nameless country of the mind inhabited by all real writers, regardless of nativity, that Mavis Gallant lives. We are her privileged intruders. □



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Canada

Sisters of virtue

His stories are less grotesque than his novels, but Jack Hodgins continues to shake our notions of reality

By RUPERT SCHIEDER

The Barclay Family Theatre, by Jack Hodgins, Macmillan. 272 Pages. \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9597 2).

THE RUMOUR THAT a new book by Jack Hodgins — the fourth in six years — would soon appear was bound to cause some speculation, even anxiety, for those devoted to his work, particularly since he has recently done so much travelling and has become a sought-after writer in residence. For the virtues and the values that Hodgins has displayed — the enthusiasm, what he calls his “eagerness,” his “passion to wile”: the modesty, directness, and lack of pretension in speaking about his work (at a time when the national literary atmosphere is heavy with conferences and statements); the sharpness of the locale, the idiosyncratically realized characters produced by his “antennae, his supersensitivity to other people”; the freshness of his language, and the willingness to take chances, acknowledged by his saying, “I push language and reality as far as can be believable” — these, among other qualities, have attracted an enthusiastic following that might well be concerned that the new work might disappoint. I read it, on the wrong side of the Atlantic, in galleys, not finally corrected, with a combination of relief and admiration.

There is nothing in this book that I'd rather he hadn't included, unlike one or two of the collected stories in *Spit Delaney's Island* (1976). It attests, with *The Invention of the World* (1977) and *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* (1979), to the fundamental consistency of Hodgins's willing. Yet, precarious as too much travel and guest teaching might have been for some writers, there are signs of additional interests, partly perhaps the result of Hodgins's time in other parts of the country, such as Ottawa, and other pans of the world, including Japan. Ireland and Bantry Bay are here again and of course Vancouver Island. There are a number of immediate reminiscences: Jamb Weins, a minor figure in the last novel, has grown prodigiously here, and in “More Than Conquerors” there is a failed resurrection counterbalanced by a “rising.”

Although there is some broadening, the centre of the stories, the home base from which some of the characters stray or have

strayed, is Waterville, that part of the island that serves as what Hodgins calls his “metaphor.” In “the valley,” surrounded by logging and farming, Waterville is a “collection of hobby farms, along a four-mile stretch of highway.” The cast of characters of the eight stories provides a unity that was absent in *Spit Delaney's Island*, a more conventional collection. This unity is indicated by the general title *The Barclay Family Theatre*, the prefatory quotation from J.C. Barclay, and the theatrical announcement of the last story, “Ladies and Gentlemen, the Fabulous Barclay Sisters.” (I wonder whether Barclay Sound had anything to do with the selection of the family name.)

The cast includes the seven sisters, their husbands, lovers, children, neighbours, and wider connections, and most of the stories are told from the point of view of one of them. Only “The Plague Children,” marked by its impersonal, relentlessly driving prose, gives the general view of the people of Waterville. Three present the point of view of Barclay Philip Desmond, like Hodgins a fifth-generation Vancouver Islander, descended from Irish immigrants.



In the first and the last, he records in the first person early stages of his life, whereas in “The Lepers' Squint” Desmond, an academic and striving novelist, is observed through the third-person, limited point of view in Bantry Bay, trying to cope with or to “handle” — a recurrent word in these

stories — his problems, some literary. At least, like Hodgins himself, he has come to be able to say, speaking about an Irish writer of short stories: “I have my own place. . . . I don't need to borrow his.”

There are a number of explicit statements on art that are quite relevant since half of the stories involve academics, writers, and painters. Hodgins, however, does not take the so-called easy way out, like Aldous Huxley or Gide, of registering the chief themes by means of a self-aware critical commentator. These concerns are most forcefully embodied in quite non-artistic individuals. They are often isolated figures, unable to communicate. The groping realization of the horrors of “invasion,” one of the key words in the Prefatory quotation, comes to a self-satisfied North Vancouver mother, who on a visit to diplomatic Ottawa to rescue her son becomes a failed Strether, an ambassador in small. Counterpointed with an expected physical resurrection and the pronouncements of a self-assured painter are a vulgar couple, Cad and Gladdy Roote, who “rise” to sense the “possibilities,” a faith in being “on the side of life.” Gladdy has some of the qualities of Jenny, the ex-stripper in *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*. From that novel comes Jacob Weins, ex-mayor of Port Annie, his occupation gone. If is to this former buffoon, given to fantastic costumes, that “The Sumo Revisions” now come; having learned compassion, he now has a sense of direction. In both *The Invention of the World* and *The Resurrection of the Joseph Bourne*, I thought that Hodgins was risking too much in pulling the heavy weight of direct “philosophic” statement on Lily Strabo Becker, and Joseph Bourne. The problem is solved here by his separation of statement, on the one hand, by writers and artists, and embodiment, on the other, in these ordinary, coarse, slightly eccentric figures.

In “The Sumo Revisions” Weins's thoughts about costumes, Kabuki plays, and the Sumo wrestling form part of the most inclusive images and metaphors of the book, announced in the title, the prefatory quotation (“Now let's close down this show”), and the titles of the first and last stories, present in the numerous discussions

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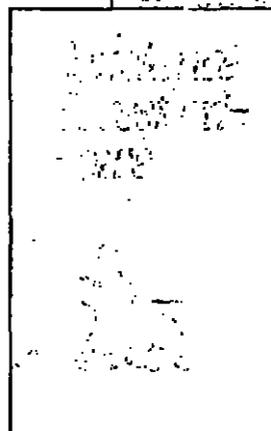
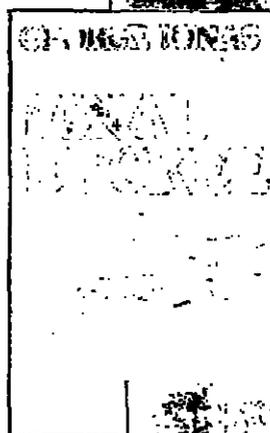
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of art, and continually woven in the texture of the prose by such words as "show," "real life," "fiction," "imagination," and "disguises," which occur in different forms on almost every page.

This unifying factor is just one of those that make this fourth book of Hodgins's fiction so satisfying. The energy and the bounce of *The Invention of the World* have been combined with the tightness, the control of *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*. Without employing grotesque characters, touched by the legendary, the allegorical, and the supernatural, that marked those two novels, Hodgins is continuing "to uncover mysteries in human beings," and to embody his interest in "people when their idea of reality is shaken." I've read the book through twice, and I believe that I will find more things to admire on my next reading. I hope that Hodgins has, as Barclay Philip Desmond says, a "novel . . . running around his head all summer and much longer, looking for a chance to get out." □

REVIEW

From bed to verse

By ALBERT MORITZ

Breaking and Entering, by Len Gasparini, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions, 96 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 889262 120 9) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 889262 119 5).

Waiting for the Stones, by Sid Stephen, Oberon Press, 72 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 389 6) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 391 8).

"HEAVEN DELIVER US, what's a poet! Something that can't go to bed without making a song about it," said Dorothy Sayers. By this definition, Len Gasparini and Sid Stephen are true poets, as they themselves strenuously proclaim in these collections bearing witness to Rich Inner Lives. *Waiting for the Stones* is Stephen's second book, and *Breaking and Entering* is Gasparini's "new and selected."

On almost every page, the two tell us what it's like to be a poet, strongly emphasizing the soul-searing and badly underpaid agony of the job. Without invading a privacy neither cares to preserve, it can be said that they are poets of the sort Sayers had in mind: they can't go to bed (or hope to go to bed, or remember going to bed) without talking about it.

Gasparini's Muse must have a chronic headache, but he still finds her to his taste: "You are a sweet mushroom . . . and soft as the dew on a rabbit's nose." Both are often alone and reflect on love's absence, as in these anatomical observations by Stephen: "In the way/my teeth fill my mouth,/how once again/uncontrollably/I seem to possess/ ten fingers, ten toes,/there is no evidence/ of our having been together."

Doubtless an instinct of self-preservation prevents Stephen and Gasparini from asking themselves if anything in these collections of Things Often Thought And Usually Better Expressed is fresh and well put. Such a question might induce writer's block, so let us not, gentle reader, provoke it. Why add to these poets' already long list of afflictions?

Gasparini is particularly heart-rending on the subject of the poet's lot: the broken relationships, the bad pay, the loneliness, the rejection. "I can't even afford a used car./ And since I recently abandoned the idea/ Of spending the rest of my wretched nights/ Sleeping in laundromats and subways,/ I rented a cold-water flat."

From "Davenport Road" he utters this naked cry: "my ex-wife/ . . . threatened to sue me for nonsupport,/ if I continued to live as I did./ Well, I lived as I did/ in order to write poems. . . ." Even his mom and dad (for whom, of course, his own feelings are very fine and proper) can't appreciate "a poet's rage."

Stephen fumes less at society's ingratitude, but he is continually being laid low by epiphanies that pierce through his most ordinary experiences. Taking the kids to Niagara Falls, he must endure "the visceral knowledge of kick" (that's right), which plunges his mind, and a stone, into the "bottoms of things green and unreachable."

He could be driving to the airport, or just casually helping some friends stone an owl to death, and suddenly he is transfixed: "the owl still warm/ I picked it up and in the distance/ watched the others turn their eyes/ to me. I waited for the stones,/ am waiting/ even now. . . ." Kinda makes your fingers itch to join in, doesn't it?

One wonders why they put themselves through so much suffering. Perhaps it is because they value the poetic struggle to merge such high thoughts with the best language, a struggle Stephen celebrates in "Revenge of the Words": "We take them, bloat/ their syllables/ with image, metaphor,/ pump them full/ of meaning/ in these goddamned poems."

Though the depth of feeling to which these poets descend for our sake submerges them in bad grammar and wearisome cliché, they surface sometimes with compressed statements matched, among the moderns, only by such masters as Barry Manilow. Compare Stephen: "This is no news report, this is happening" with Xerox: "Not just

data, but reality." Or again, Stephen: "You open your eyes and step out into the rest of your life" with various cards and posters: "Today is the first day of the rest of your life."

Yet Stephen himself is surpassed in this respect by Gasparini, among whose recraftings of the idiom are "we knew it was curtains, / and tried to accept it like men," and my personal favourite, "he suddenly fell kerplunk/into that bowl of sallow slime." □

REVIEW

High in the sky

By PHIL SURGUY

Air Glow Red, by Ian Slater, Doubleday, 346 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 171862).

High Crimes, by William Deverell, McClelland & Stewart, 390 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 2732 X).

IAN SLATER will always have a little niche in the history of Canadian publishing. His first novel, *Firespill*, was the first Bantam-Seal publication. It came out in 1977 and marked the beginning of the first likely effort to put meaningful numbers of Canadian books on the mass-market paperback racks. Half a million copies were printed for distribution in Canada and the United States, and there was talk that Bantam was investing heavily in Slater (giving him an embossed cover and everything), with expectations that his third or fourth book would be a blockbuster.

When *Firespill* came out Slater was, I believe, a graduate student in political science at the University of British Columbia. He now teaches there, and *Air Glow Red* is his third novel. It is not a blockbuster. It is a rather average example of that species of "best seller" in which the hero uncovers and puts a stop to a dastardly, catastrophic threat to mankind. In this case we have a huge solar power satellite that also appears capable of turning a large part of the earth into a microwave oven. The hero is an environmentalist and single parent who works as a White House adviser.

The book should do pretty well on the racks (there's a big, apparently uncritical market for paranoid, apocalyptic glimpses into the workings of the White House and other high places), but there is nothing here for even a moderately demanding thriller

reader. The only twist in the tired plot is right out of *The Ipcress File*, and there is not one interesting person in the entire book. About as far as Slater gets by way of characterization is to give one of his villains bad breath; two more speak with Cockney accents; another is fat. And the hero and narrator is a colourless, irritating chatterbox who overexplains everything, almost as if the book was intended for people who have never read a thriller or seen a movie. Some 50 pages of chatter could have easily been cut from *Air Glow Red*. Pruning wouldn't have improved the story, but it would have made for a slicker read.

High Crimes is an enjoyable thriller and a very slick read. It is William Deverell's second novel. Two years ago he won the \$50,000 Bantam Seal first novel award for *Needles*, a murderous tale of Vancouver's heroin industry.

Deverell is a trial lawyer in Vancouver, and over the last 20 years he has handled many drug cases. *Needles* was a good reflection of his insider's knowledge of the industry and also showed a solid talent for strong characterization and deft, true-sounding scenes. It was marred only by a rather comic-bookish ending of the sort that seems mandatory in all North American thrillers.

High Crimes is about an effort by the RCMP to nail one Pete Kerrivan, an outrageous, devil-may-care dope smuggler, the descendant of a legendary Newfoundland outlaw. They sneakily put him in the way of an enormous load of marijuana, the score of a lifetime, and it seems to him that all he has to do is put it on a boat and transport it from Colombia to Newfoundland. In real life, Deverell was one of the defence attorneys for the Tofino Five, who were caught off Vancouver Island in 1979 at the end of a similar adventure.

The overall plotting, which resembles the actual case only in very broad outline, rarely rises above the frothy level of a Donald E. Westlake caper, and much of the action appears to have been written with a movie sale in mind. But any mechanical flaws are easily transcended by Deverell's ability to set dramatic scenes and create believable, interesting people. Even his female characters (notably Jessica Flaherty, an American narc, the sole liberal in a nasty, Reaganite bureaucracy) have their own energy and ambitions. In most thrillers the women are simply there to be rescued or laid or both. The only character who doesn't quite achieve his full potential is Kerrivan, largely because the plot requires him to spend a lot of time at sea, transporting the dope. However, this hole in the story is admirably filled by the lurid Miami adventures of Sergeant O'Doull, a naive RCMP electronics expert who fancies himself a super-cop.

At one point in *High Crimes* the federal government and the RCMP fix a trial. Now,

in most North American thrillers descriptions of how things are arranged in high places are not much more than corny, paranoid fantasies. Deverell's fix, on the other hand, comes off as just an extraordinary bit of everyday plea bargaining written by a man who knows exactly how such things could be done in real life. Indeed, for all its derring-do and melodrama, this novel, like *Needles*, has a hard, realistic foundation. In his depictions of evil, and in his descriptions of the frequently corrupt interplay between cops, lawyers, dealers, thieves, politicians, judges, and junkies, Deverell persistently indicates a deep knowledge of how this shadowy edge of our society works. But in neither of his novels, as good and as entertaining as they are, has there been any indication that he has yet got close to the nuts and guts of what he knows. All we have any right to ask him to do is to continue to write enjoyable books. Yet, given his talent and privileged insights, it is not unreasonable to hope that, as he does so, he will become a much more ambitious novelist. □

REVIEW

Mute tones and the clash of symbols

By STEPHEN SCOBIE

Land of the Peace, by Leona Gom, Thistle-down Press, 90 pages, \$14.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920066 38 0) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 920066 37 2).

Humans and Other Beasts, by Lorna Uher, Turnstone Press, 80 pages, \$7.00 paper (ISBN 0 88801 040 0).

LEONA GOM and Lorna Uher have a good deal in common. Both are women writing poetry out of the prairie experience; both are gifted young writers who have moved beyond the first stage of their careers and now are publishing their third books; both have established their individual voices and styles, and deserve to be taken seriously, no longer dismissed as merely "promising." Yet there are also vast differences between them: Gom's work is realist, anecdotal, and deliberately restrained in its language, while Uher's poetry is more violent, symbolic, and linguistically extravagant. Each in her own way explores the limits and the possibilities of their chosen styles.

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Leona Gom's *Land of the Peace* is, as its title suggests, very much a poetry of place: the Peace River country of northern Alberta, where the writer was born and raised. It's a country of vast open spaces, of overwhelming sky, of that whole sense and beauty of scale which the Edmonton artist Norman Yates defines as "landscape" rather than "landscape." It's also a country where history is close to the surface, in the remains of the farm buildings of the first immigrants, in the sparsely filled graveyards, in people's memories.

Gom's poems are about memories, and the production by Thistledown nicely illustrates this with a series of family snapshots printed in faded sepia tones and defined by the harsh black edges of old-fashioned photo-corners. The poems are straightforward, anecdotal, vividly recalling (at their best) the scenes and images of childhood: a child's incomprehension of adult ways, of death, of the complexities of human relationships and the simpler facts of bad days and hard times. A poem like "Chop" illustrates the virtues of the book: Gom recalls how her father, covered with "the thick flour of grain," would need to have his clothes cleaned by being beaten, like a carpet, with a broom. "But I never struck him hard enough ... the dust scarcely stirring/ under my apologetic

blows," until her mother comes out from the house to beat him more vigorously:

*And me standing back,
a child, inarticulate,
watching the blows fall
and his body absorb them,
in that fine tension
of their understanding,
that easy balance
of their practical love.*

A large part of the book's purpose is, clearly, to render articulate such "inarticulate" moments of memory.

Gom's style accords with the general movement of prairie realist poetry with which Thistledown Press is now most closely associated. She has the virtues of the style: clear, direct observation, a nicely muted and understood tone, a willingness to let the strength of the material emerge without relying on showy "poetic" effects. Yet there are also weaknesses: a flatness of tone, a lack of variety in the rhythms, the feeling that much of what is being said would be just as effective in a short story or prose sketch, the whole question of what the language is doing in this kind of poetry. At her best, Gom holds a fine balance between these weaknesses and these strengths, which are so intertwined with each other; she shows a fine tact and discipline in her command of words, and a control of tone

that insists these are poems, not merely random reminiscences.

But where can she go from here? Childhood memory is a limited subject, and though Gom, writing in Vancouver, humorously portrays her own poems as "homesick ... crawling out/ from under my pen/ and running back/ to the north," she also admits in the closing lines of the book that her memories provide her with

*nothing to tell you finally
where you are from,
why you changed,
what you have become.*

That's a pretty devastating conclusion for such a book, and it clearly indicates the need Gom feels to find new directions for her writing.

Lorna Uher is a poet who has never been afraid of new directions. Her willingness to take chances has always been one of the most attractive aspects of her writing, and even if she occasionally comes a cropper, that is still to be preferred to more conventional safeties. Her stories are not realist reminiscences, but wild symbolic fantasies of animals, magicians, mythological creatures, circus freaks, people who carry inside their skulls the pulse of wings or the scuttles of rats.

Her book is divided into four sections.

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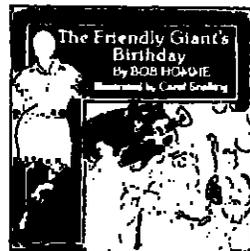
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The first, "Humans and Other Beasts," is constructed around a series of four poems on the animals in the four seasons. The animal theme is modulated between natural and mythological portrayals, from fallen birds to betrayed unicorns, and juxtaposed to modern reworkings of the medieval legends of Merlin and Morgan le Fay. It's a fascinating sequence, the richest and most complex in the book, though I find the "geek" poems at the end less interesting than the legends — among which I like particularly one of the "many versions" of "Nimue and Merlin," of the enchanter's entrapment:

*I have shrunk him
carry him in my pocket
He is not unhappy
but dances in my palm
light as an eyelash
A wizened man
no bigger than a raisin.*

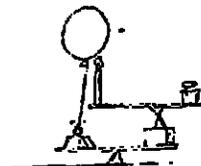
The second section, "She Makes Me Beautiful," is an attempt to speak in the persona of an abused, drunken, urban Indian woman: the material is powerful, but the tone of voice is uncomfortable, as if Uher had never fully decided what her own stance was. The device of the persona invites irony, but the character discourages it. The third and fourth sections both deal with male-female relations, "Returning" being an especially impressive sequence about revisiting an old lover. Too often here, though, the original situation gets lost in the rhetoric.

Rhetoric, indeed, is Uher's temptation and major weakness. In her desire to avoid the flatness of tone that sometimes dulls prairie poetry, Uher occasionally goes too far the other way, piling on adjectives and bizarre images for their own sake, posing in the linguistic trappings of profundity without always convincing us that she has earned the right to all these images of skulls and claws and dying children. A poem like "Letter" —

*Our first daughter
with pinking shears cut out
her mouth, stuck it on the mirror,
a lipstick drawing, then spoke
her death in blood*

— seems almost mechanical in its assemblage of fashionable items: daughters, mutilation, mirrors, blood. Here Uher becomes a prisoner of the mode of her own excess.

Nevertheless, these are the flaws of ambition, of daring, of trying for something more. If Lorna Uher can gain full control of what is clearly a powerful and disturbing imagination, she will indeed become a poet to be reckoned with. □



REVIEW

For King and country

By MICHIEL HORN

A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft 1929-1968, by J.L. Granatstein, Deneau Publishers, 488 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88879 046 5).

THE POPULAR IMAGE of civil servants is not good. They are the butt of many jibes; they are too easily seen as self-serving parasites or sloths. Their guiding principle seems to be Parkinson's First Law, "Work expands to fill the time available."

To those who believe the image to be undeserved it may be reassuring to read J.L. Granatstein's solid study of Norman A. Robertson. He was "the model civil servant," tendering calm and well-informed advice to his political masters. A precocious native of Vancouver, he studied at UBC, Oxford (as a Rhodes Scholar), and the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C., before joining the small Department of External Affairs in 1929. Twelve years later, at the age of 37, he succeeded O.D. Skelton as Undersecretary of State for External Affairs. During the war years he was unquestionably one of the most influential men in Ottawa and in Canada.

His professional life was full and varied, as Granatstein amply demonstrates. Tariff negotiations with the United States and Great Britain loomed large. He was at the San Francisco Conference in 1945 at which the United Nations took shape; he served as high commissioner in London and Ambassador in Washington. Throughout he sought to enlarge Canada's freedom of international action, but he had no exaggerated notions as to how far that freedom might extend. Good relations with our nearest neighbour were important to him, as they were to the governments he advised.

He was for a time Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary of the Cabinet. This he found to be a less than satisfying role, and with relief he escaped to London. During a second stint as undersecretary he found it difficult to communicate with John Diefenbaker, but reinforced Howard Green's distrust of nuclear weapons and his hostility to seeing them placed on Canadian soil.

In the last years of his life — a chain-smoker, he lost a lung to cancer in 1964 and died four years later — he was the first head of the Paterson School of International

REVIEW

Rhyme without reason

By DOUGLAS CHAMBERS

Affairs at Carleton University, while continuing to serve as a foreign policy adviser to the government. He was, in John Holmes's words, "the greatest mandarin of them all." According to his lights and to any fair standards of judgement he served his country well.

Granatstein's account is generally admiring without being uncritical. There were incidents in Robertson's first term as under-secretary when few people in government looked good, notably the internment of the Japanese Canadians and the Gouzenko affair. Granatstein shows that Robertson, though neither a bigot nor a reflex anti-communist, gave advice that modified but little the tendency of politicians to act high-handedly. However, his attitude was liberal though not libertarian, and he sometimes chose the bad in order to prevent the worse.

There is much to value in this book. Granatstein writes easily, and has an eye for trenchant comments made by others. One example is Robertson's own explanation for the Anglo-French fiasco over Suez: "the politics of menopause." The volume is based on thorough scholarship; its interpretations are judicious. Unfortunately its view of Robertson is not as clear as it might have been. Not only did the man leave few personal papers, but his widow requested that his private life be kept largely out of this book, a request that Granatstein has honoured. This is not a full biography, therefore, and as a consequence the book does not really come to life. It sparkles less than some of the author's other works; indeed, it is often heavy going. Of course, to make tariff negotiations into good reading would probably be beyond the powers even of a great historian.

In addition to informing us about Robertson's career, Granatstein sheds light on the policy-making process. The people who crowd the pages of this book include prime ministers from R.B. Bennett to Lester Pearson, with Mackenzie King necessarily most prominent (Robertson never much cared for him). And then there are the highly able civil servants with whom Robertson worked: Hume Wrong, Arnold Heeney, Hugh Keenleyside, Jack Pickersgill, Pearson again, Escott Reid, and many others.

Robertson was, Granatstein sums up, "one of the men who made modern Canada. With a handful of other mandarins, he created for the Canadian public service the ethos of duty, high competence and intelligence that animated it in its hey-day. . . ." He helped to make possible the social programs of post-war Canada. Granatstein dates the golden age of the mandarins as lasting from the mid-1930s into the late 1950s. It is hard to escape the inference that since then the Ottawa bureaucracy has gradually fallen into the hands of a race of epigones. □

Variations and Theme, by Robert Finch, the Porcupine's Quill, 80 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88984 033 4).

Selected Poems, by Darryl Hine, Oxford, 128 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540362 2).

IT IS ALWAYS a pleasure to find Canadian poets who write as if craft mattered, whose concept of poetry goes beyond the flatulence of alcoholic and sexual yawp. Both Robert Finch and Darryl Hine are craftsmen; their poems reflect the same respect for order that they plainly admire in their predecessors. Finch's "Stay Lovely Rose" is an invocation of the 17th-century poet, Edmund Waller; the stanza form of Hine's "The Nap" is that of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Finch's Belloc-ese fails him in "Miranda Sings," but his invocation of a '90s song is effective in "The Proxy."

Both poets, too, are fond of Horatian *sermocinatio*, the poem of familiar conversation or discussion. This form, though, needs to be handled with Horace's wit and tone. Too easily the ordinary becomes merely the banal. The newsboy "in every doorway thrusting lettered sheets" in Finch's "Deliverer" has more of Edgar A. Guest than H. D., although it is of the latter that we are frequently reminded in Finch's work. Similarly, both poets use inversion in a way that seems merely tortured. "But our old age not even rates disdain," in Finch's "Antiques" is Spenserian syntax without the life. "And white as salt, for waves of salt consist," in Hine's "Tristan" is syntax tortured to fit rhyme.

Rhyme often in Hine seems less an echo to the sense than its stern taskmaster. It is difficult to read "Under the Hill" without feeling that the lines have been prettily tormented to find rhymes for the recurrent words "found" and "sound." In an otherwise commendable poem, "The Trout," the Yeatsian echoes do not redeem the confusion of image or the lameness of rhythm in the sixth stanza:

*As I was laid upon the deep sea floor,
Part of the faded pattern of the carpet,
Or spilt like the sperm the kissing fish
ignore*

Held in each others' scales as in a net.

Finch has similar lapses, not so much of sense as of good sense. "How like an

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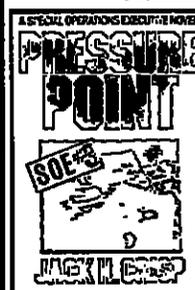
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upward dove this waterfall." just won't do, not simply because (like "the thought of you is like the smell of roses") the initial image is greeting-card stuff, but because its subsequent development makes no sense.

Some of Hine's mythologies sound like anemic Wallace Stevens, some of his reflections like the more vapid bits of Ashberry, but he is saved from both by a tough wrestle with tradition. To compare his "Raleigh's Last Voyage" with Finch's poem on David Hume and Phyllis Wheatley is to see at once that Hine avoids sentimentality by metaphor and syntax:

*In our dreams the mine shrunk to a quarry
Like affection which becomes indifference
in a friend
Or seeking hiding. There the tale should
end
But I must prove the example in love's
story.*

Raleigh's line is the measure of Hine's.

Each line is both a unit of consideration and an enjambed part of a large argument, as the mine becomes the mind.

One of the problems that the work of both poets has in common is the elusive "I" and "we." In Finch's poems sometimes the latter are lovers, sometimes merely humanity; it is not always easy to tell from the context. In Hine's case the "I" is often so elegantly elusive that the poems become almost anonymous. In "My Optics," however, he uses his own glasses as a literal focusing device, wittily making the connection between the optical and the poetic:

*Metrical devices
With corrective lenses
Bring the phrase in focus.*

It is a nice turn, and the nicer for being without the sort of rhetorical flourish that mars some of his longer poems. The poet's business, as Hine says of Psyche, is "sorting out the letters / Of the infatuated alphabet." His finest sortings are pleasure to behold. □

IN TRANSLATION

Exploring a labyrinth of tongues:
from the folklore of Quebec to a trenchant
analysis of Soviet society

By PAUL STUEWE

THE DEBUT of a new column is typically heralded by a flourish of reasons, rationalizations, and high hopes, and thus even an enterprise as self-explanatory as "In Translation" probably requires some words of introduction. The reasons consist of the large number of translated titles now available in Canada, the rationalizations assert that such books usually pass unnoticed by our excessively parochial reviewing media, and the high hopes come from a conviction that there is a tremendous amount of good reading awaiting these periodic expeditions off the beaten track of anglophonic (rhymes with "monophonic") literature. As to *modus operandi*, we'll adroitly sidestep questions of whether the translations themselves are accurate, idiomatic, or what have you, and simply treat them as literary artifacts existing in a language we do have some competence in assessing. This will both exempt us from a lot of tiresome work and give us the illusion of having some kind of meaningful relationship with such diverse tongues as the French, Spanish, Hebrew, and Russian languages in which the books reviewed below were originally written.

"In Translation" will be particularly interested in spotlighting translations from

Québécois and hyphenated-Canadian sources, not least because I expect to discover many books as unfamiliar and yet thoroughly worth knowing as Lucien Francoeur's *Neons in the Night* (translated by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Véhicule Press, \$4.00 paper). Since this is the author's 10th book, he is obviously no stranger to francophone readers. But since it is also the first to appear in English, I can confidently predict a much larger audience for this selection than for his previously published verse. Francoeur's funky syntheses of advertising slogans, pop music lyrics, and surreal word associations are as fresh and compelling as the classic Jean-Luc Godard films they often evoke, as demonstrated by this excerpt from *Les Grands Spectacles* (1974):

*cellular instinct
back-peddalling pupils tilted
everyone for himself
emergency music
music for lovers
bab-a-lula rock & death by joy
with fleshy girls
my brain has a built-in stereo
In the whole wide world i am the most
COCO CHANEL kisses my feet right up to
my teeth*

A SENSATIONAL SEASON

THE ACQUISITORS
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Peter C. Newman

**FLAMES ACROSS
THE BORDER**
THE INVASION OF
CANADA 1813-1814
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Clive Cussler

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BRUSSELS SPROUTS**
A KNEES-UP, WHEELS-UP
CHRONICLE OF WORLD WAR II
Douglas Harvey

ODYSSEY
MIRROR OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN
Roloff Beny

ALWAYS TIP THE DEALER
Gary Ross

CONN SMYTHE
IF YOU CAN'T BEAT
THEM IN THE ALLEY
with Scott Young

LONG CLAWS:
AN ARCTIC ADVENTURE
Written and illustrated
by James Houston

THE DARK BROAD SEAS
WITH MANY VOICES
—VOLUME I
Jeffrey V. Brock

**VINCENT VAN GOGH
AND THE BIRTH OF
CLOISONISM**
Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov

AFRICAN MAJESTY
FROM GRASSLAND
AND FOREST
William Fagg

**THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
F.R. SCOTT**
Edited by John Newlove

HAMMER THE GOLDEN DAY
VOLUME I/THE MEMOIRS OF
HUGH L. KEENLEYSIDE
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**A READER'S GUIDE TO THE
CANADIAN NOVEL**
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SUNDAY'S CHILD
Edward Phillips

CONFLICTS OF SPRING
Poetry by Ralph Gustafson

ALBERTA
Sherman Hines, Photographer

**MY BODY WAS
EATEN BY DOGS**
Poems by
David McFadden

HERITAGE CANADA
Philip Graham

**FIRST LADY,
LAST LADY**
Sondra Gotlieb

CONSEQUENCES
Margaret Trudeau

ROUGH LAYOUT
Doris Anderson

ACT OF ART
Jack Shadbolt

QUEBEC
Mia and Klaus.

LADDERS TO HEAVEN
Edited by
Oscar White Muscarella

THE GAME OF OUR LIVES
Peter Gzowski

TERRY FOX/HIS STORY
Leslie Scrivener

THE GROUP OF SEVEN
Peter Mellen

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EDMONTON
PORTRAIT OF A CITY
A Reidmore Pocol Book

THE ART OF LEN GIBBS
A Reidmore Pocol Book

ALBERTA
PROVINCE OF PROMISE
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A HISTORY OF THE
CROATIANS IN CANADA
Anthony W. Rasporich

STRUGGLE AND HOPE:
THE HUNGARIAN-CANADIAN
EXPERIENCE
N.F. Dreisziger
with M.L. Kovacs, Paul
Body & Bennett Kovrig

A SENSATIONAL LIST



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WHITE
WICKS
YOUNG
ANDERSON
ATWOOD
BENY
BERTON
BROCK
CUSLER
DEVERELL
DREISZIGER
FAGG
GRAHAM

There are moments when the drive to combine the banally ridiculous and the metaphysically sublime seems more willed than felt, but for the most part this is a delightful collection that whets one's appetite for further examples of the author's work.

Denys Chabot's novel *Eldorado on Ice* (translated by David Lobdell, Oberon Press, \$17.95 cloth and \$8.95 paper) is also going to impress a lot of English-Canadian readers. The book is solidly grounded in the rugged talk and rich folklore of Quebec's Abitibi region, which it uses as the raw material for a sophisticated post-modern concoction of interpenetrating identities and multiple points of view. Again, there are times when the author's evident delight in intellectual gamesmanship soars far beyond the possibilities actually generated by his text, but such occasional excesses of enthusiasm do not seriously mar a very powerful and accomplished book.

The more familiar name of Marie-Claire Blais offers us *Deaf to the City* (translated by Carol Dunlop, Lester & Orpen Dennys, \$13.95 cloth), which won the 1980 Governor General's Award for fiction in French. The novel is set in the aging Montreal neighbourhoods that Blais has made her particular fictional turf, where a well-realized group of characters lives out the kinds of mundane but emblematic existences that make up her distinctive view of reality. The technical skills exhibited in interweaving these disparate voices without losing a forward narrative impulse are simply stunning to observe in action, and make *Deaf to the City* a noteworthy addition to the work of one of our very finest authors.

Russian dissident Alexander Zinoviev's *The Yawning Heights* was one of last year's publishing sensations, although its complex allegorical structure probably baffled many readers expecting something more along the lines of a Solzhenitsyn exposé. The *Radiant Future* (translated by Gordon Clough, Clarke Irwin, \$17.95 cloth) is a somewhat more accessible novel, which combines a trenchant analysis of Soviet society with a moderately intriguing cast of disaffected intellectuals. The effect is to humanize what is essentially a programmatic and at times rather abstruse philosophical treatise. It's doubtful that a similar book dealing with, say, the fundamental nature of life in Switzerland would ever be published here, but because of its subject matter *The Radiant Future* will appeal to readers who might otherwise be put off by its sometimes clumsy transitions between drama and didacticism.

Vladimir Volfoff's *The Turn-Around* (translated by Alan Sheridan, Clarke Irwin, \$25.95 cloth) was likewise a surprise 1980 success in France, where it was lauded as the domestic answer to foreign thriller competition. The light, bantering tone of

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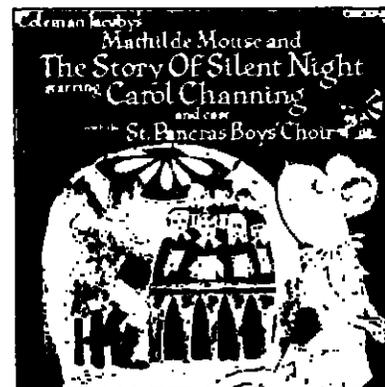
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THE RADIANT FUTURE
ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV

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the initial scene-setting suggests that a romp of the Fleming-Deighton variety is in store, but an unexpected transition into matters of personal identity and religious faith brings us onto the headier plane of Greene-Le Carré land with an exhilarating shock. The competing but in some respects coinciding attractions of Christianity and communism are given brilliant fictional life, and only an unsettling disparity in intellectual calibre between the flyweight protagonist and his heavyweight opponent renders the psychological aspects of the story somewhat less convincing than its metaphysical ones.

Israeli author Benjamin Tammuz's *Minotaur* (translated by Kim Parfit and Mildred Budny, New American Library, \$12.95 cloth) also attempts to combine secret-agentry with more intellectually challenging material, but in this case the banality of the characters and the monotony of the writing render it an unsuccessful effort. Nothing in the novel resonates, and as a consequence the frequent shifts in location and temporal sequence seem like a last-ditch attempt at arousing interest, rather than an integral part of the author's con-

ception. Despite the title, there's nothing the least bit labyrinthine about this *Minotaur*, although it's impossible to resist the temptation to describe it as more cretinous than Cretan.

Speaking of labyrinths, that old master of the teasing fable Jorge Luis Borges and his friend Adolfo Bioy-Casares show how puzzles should be constructed in *Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi* (translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni, Clarke Irwin, \$14.95 cloth). These 40-year-old spoofs of the classic detective story go one step further than the locked-room type of mystery by featuring a locked-up sleuth who has to rely upon hearsay for his evidence, and his problems aren't made any easier by the fiendishly complicated plots his creators have invented for him. But Parodi always muddles through to a solution no matter how bizarre or baroque the case, and both fans of the literate detective story and those engaged in the detection of literature will have a good time trying to keep up with his thought processes. For example, Watson, take the case of the Moslem leader knifed to death during an arcane cult ritual in a darkened villa. . . . □

paragraphs and scenes like poems. They light with bitter intensity a cruel chapter in our history of expediency and cowardice in high places.

* * *

GEORGE JONAS's *Final Decree* (Macmillan, 224 pages, \$14.95 cloth) similarly addresses the problems of Canada's minorities by fictionalizing an actual event. Instead of a lyric memoir, he's written a hard-hitting, suspenseful thriller, based on a Toronto homicide of a few years ago. It's the portrait of a strong-willed immigrant in conflict with customs, laws, and values he is unprepared for and cannot cope with, hounded by the agents of the system into an act of violence against it.

Kazmer Harcsa arrives in New York from Transylvania in 1957 and comes to Canada with his American-born, Polish-Hungarian wife Petrona. He establishes himself as a carpenter, they buy a house and have two children, she leaves him — basically because he oppresses her — taking the kids, the colour TV, a lamp, the sofa, and \$600. Kazmer survives, more or less, though baffled and hurt, until Petrona begins divorce proceedings. From then until the novel's end he lives in a nightmare of lawyers and judges, legal paper, and court orders.

As the product of a nearly feudal village culture, Kazmer is locked into rigid, male-dominant assumptions about honour, justice, marriage, sexuality. His failure to adjust to contemporary attitudes, his fear of the new technological order behind them, his disintegration as he senses his powerlessness — Jonas creates this character and sets out his reactions and motives with imagination and skill. His prose is strong and stylish, even if its ironies are often ponderous and its rhythms occasionally convoluted. He plays the sonorities of folk aphorism and metaphor insistently but well. The novel is richer in psychological, than philosophical or social insight. Jonas makes Kazmer himself — the inner man — convincing; his treatment of the hostile world that menaces him will raise some readerly hackles. The author has a reputation (at least in Toronto) as a peevish opponent of the left-liberal point of view on nearly everything. He's got a surfeit of moral certitude, and nothing sets him off — here or elsewhere — like a bit of well-meaning government or interest-group intrusion into the processes of social change (which he thinks are a mistake anyway). In *Final Decree* he's got an array of targets: Ontario's attempts to reform its marriage and divorce code, the Women's Movement, community workers, the Gospel according to Johnny Carson.

The trouble is, Jonas's spleen regularly inflames him to exceed the context he needs to develop Kazmer; when this occurs he comes across as no more than a writer trying to give the legitimacy of social comment to

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Ethnic fiction: the dispossessed Japanese, a reactionary Transylvanian, and a clever but tedious run at the Royal Family

By DOUGLAS HILL

JOY KOGAWA, born in Vancouver, is a Japanese-Canadian poet and teacher. In *Obasan* (Lester & Orpen Dennys, 250 pages, \$13.95 cloth) she tells the story of the evacuation of her people from the British Columbia coast during the Second World War, and of their internment and subsequent dispersal. It's a painful and moving personal narrative and a quietly savage indictment of Wasp-Canadian racism.

Most who underwent the experience, Kogawa suggests, have attempted to bury the memory of it. Assimilation and economic security have counted more than protest: "It is better to forget." Not so. *Obasan* uncovers the emotional scars that resulted from such suppression. Grandparents were bereft and bewildered; parents were driven frantic or sullen; children (of whom Kogawa was one), witnesses to anxiety, grief, and dispossession, they couldn't comprehend, were most deeply and subtly damaged.

The novel has a sophisticated but not obtrusive structure. As a young girl in 1942, Naomi Nakane, the narrator, was taken in by her uncle and aunt. Her father, a doctor in Vancouver, died soon after; her mother, on one of her periodic trips to Japan, simply disappeared. In 1972 — the present-time of the novel — another aunt, a doughty civil-rights activist, arrives for the uncle's funeral (in a small town in Alberta) and examines with Naomi and her brother a package of documents — letters, journals, briefs, newspaper clippings — that contains the concealed or lost pages of their family chronicle.

Kogawa demonstrates a good poet's care with language. Rarely does the delicacy of feeling and image she records lose touch with the ground and start to float away from her. When she reaches for generalizations her grasp is sure. The style of *Obasan* is usually natural, direct, and deliberately simple; there's little straining for effects. The precise control of detail produces



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his own prejudices. And a particularly nasty and wide-ranging set they are: gays, Jews, the elderly and effeminate and weak and handicapped, women who don't conform to his standards of behaviour. Whenever he gets outside Kazmer's head, the book loses momentum and fictional integrity. Too bad. As the story of a dreadful human predicament, *Final Decree* is good stuff. As cultural criticism its complaints are spiteful nonsense.

IT'S FITTING, somehow, with all this talk of ethnic Canada, that the third novel this month take a run at the Royal Family. *Sagacity*, by Janet Hamilton (Anansi, 135 pages, \$7.95 paper), describes itself as "an account of the friendship between Anna Brownell Jameson and the Queen, including the notebook of Mrs. Jameson, a portrait of the final man, and an examination of plain, distinct notions of right and wrong." It's a work of considerable intelligence and wit, the significance of which seems to me more a matter of suggestion than statement or paraphrasable content.

The novel purports to describe a series of brief discussions and encounters involving one or more of: the Queen (Victoria), Mrs. Jameson (1794-1860), the Queen's sister and mother, the Consort, Sir Francis Bond Head, and other members of the Household. There are also a few fragments from Mrs. Jameson's journal. The subjects of all these vignettes — women's roles and rights, colonialism and empire, the monarchy — are treated in a mannered prose style that blends Jamesian analytic elegance with Barthelemaic elliptical mystification. Hamilton's control of ironic nuance is admirable.

"Some things, not many, really happen. Most don't," Mrs. Jameson observes to the Queen, and the words express the tone and effect of the novel. *Sagacity*, clever, obscure and difficult, ultimately (for me) tedious and soporific, still deserves to challenge a wider audience than it will probably find. It's an experiment, with uncertain results, but the project's been managed with discrimination and restraint. □

IN THE BEGINNING

Balancing the books: a
grown-up look at children's literature
as the children see it

By MARY AINSLIE SMITH

A FEW YEARS ago an Ottawa-based group of parents became disturbed about the lack of consumer information on Canadian children's books. Acting on this concern, in 1979 the Citizens' Committee on Children published *Children's Choices of Canadian Books, Volume 1* (90 pages, \$3.50 paper), a report that rates about 200 Canadian children's titles according to how they appeal to children. To arrive at the rating the committee recruited about 800 children to read and assess the books. Then the adults collated the results and placed each book in one of six groups according to the percentage of readers that had rated it highly. The result is a useful catalogue of Canadian children's books, complete with bibliographical information, a brief plot summary, and a synopsis of the reactions of the children who read it.

Response and support for this project was so encouraging that the same group now has published *Children's Choices of Canadian Books, Volume 2* (118 pages, \$5.00 paper). Using the same methods, this book rates nearly 200 more children's titles,

obviously a very ambitious project for a group of volunteers. There are some limitations — the child readers are all from the National Capital area, and so there would seem at least to be geographical predispositions, if not also economic and social ones. Nevertheless, the two volumes are important if only as a means of presenting these 400 titles to our attention, and librarians, book sellers, teachers, families — anyone selecting books for children — should find the rating system helpful. Both volumes are available by mail from the Citizens' Committee on Children, P.O. Box 6133, Station J, Ottawa K2A 1T2.

As an adult leafing through the ratings, I have mixed feelings. I feel tremendously vindicated when the children have agreed with my opinion on a book and very defensive when one of my favourites has impressed a low percentage of readers. It is interesting that the adult volunteers who compiled the results decided to include a special notation in each volume, a marginal symbol to mark certain books as adult favourites, quite independent of the

children's opinions. Age, it seems, is just one of many factors that makes preference in books a highly individual matter.

One of my favourite Canadian children's authors is Robert N. Munsch. His books are fun to read, although I suspect that at least part of his humour has more meaning for adults than for children. Jonathan Cleaned Up — Then He Heard a Sound (Annick, 32 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper) is his fourth book for young children. Munsch's heroines in previous stories, the Paper Bag Princess and Jule Ann in *The Dark* and *Mud Puddle*, exhibited a cheerful self-reliance and a practical approach to their problems. Jonathan in this new story carries on that tradition. When a mistake at City Hall turns his nice clean apartment into a subway station, he tracks down the source of the problem and finds a solution. The art by Michael Martchenko is very entertaining, particularly the pictures of the hordes that leave the subway train, move through the wall of Jonathan's apartment and leave incredible chaos in their wake.

From an adult's point of view, Frank Etherington's *The Spaghetti Word Race* published by Annick in the same 32-page format (also \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper) is less successful. Its intriguing title is explained in the plot. A little boy decides that

words squeeze through the holes in the telephone mouthpiece in spaghetti shapes and travel along the wires. He tries to race the words as they travel between his house and his friend's. Although all this is believable enough, the plot seems more contrived and awkward than Munsch's fantasy. Children, however, find the resolution very satisfactory. The warm colours of Gina Calleja's illustrations are a big asset and all in all it is a cheerful little book.

Douglas & McIntyre announced their recent book *Pettranella* (28 pages, \$8.95 cloth) as "another magical book for children from the creators of *A Salmon for Simon*." The publisher's enthusiasm in this case seems to be justified. Betty Waterton's story is simple enough for a young child to understand, but it has a satisfying depth. With her parents Pettranella leaves her country far away for a new homestead in Manitoba. During the tedious and difficult journey, the little girl carries with her a gift from her grandmother who was too old to come with them — a small bag of flower seeds to plant a garden in her new home. Readers share Pettranella's desolation when a few miles from the end of the trip she loses the seeds. But Waterton provides a happy ending with hope not only for Pettranella and her family but for all settlers to that new

land. Ann Blades's watercolours, most of them focusing on the changing expressions of Pettranella's face, seem just right for the story.

Tales the Elders Told is a collection of nine Ojibway legends by Basil H. Johnston, illustrated with paintings and drawings by Cree artist Shirley Cheechoo (Royal Ontario Museum, 64 pages, \$8.95 cloth). Johnston, who is a lecturer in the ROM's Department of Ethnology and a specialist in Ojibway culture, has produced an attractive book whose purpose, he says in an introduction, is to "give some idea of the scope of the Ojibway imagination, and perhaps bring a smile." Although it is more properly classified as ethnology rather than children's literature, young readers will enjoy learning, for example, why birds go south in winter and how dogs came to be.

Children's Choices of Canadian Books suggests in its ratings that Indian and Inuit stories tend to appeal mainly to readers with highly specialized interests in that area. The ever-increasing number of such books indicates either that those readers must be very supportive or that there is a growth of appreciation of stories about Canada's native peoples. One great popularizer is, of course, James Houston. His recent book *Long Claws: An Arctic Adventure*

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 SCHOLASTIC PAPERBACKS FOR KIDS ...
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(McClelland & Stewart, 32 pages, \$11.95 cloth) is intended for young readers. Two children, a brother and sister, have a terrifying struggle with a barren-ground grizzly bear as they try to bring a caribou home to their starving family. As always, Houston's story and illustrations arouse sympathy and admiration for the traditional Inuit way of life.

Intended for readers with specialized interests of another sort is Jamie Brown's *Superbike!* (Clarke Irwin, 172 pages, \$10.95 cloth). Young people who like motorcycle racing will delight in Brown's first juvenile novel, with its abundance of information on bike tuning and racing procedure. Less predictably, Brown's sympathetic treatment of the young hero's problems at home, at school, and with his friends and his joy at finding something he

can do well give the story a much broader attraction.

Several Canadian paperback publishers have recently released some children's titles, many of which are out of print in hardcover or expensive and hard to find. These include: Scott Young's *The Clue of the Dead Duck*, Max Braithwaite's *The Mystery of the Muffled Man*, David Gammon's *The Secret of Spaniard's Rock* and Robert Collins's *The Mystery at the Wildcat Well* (Seal Books, all 128 pages, all \$1.95). This revives the Secret Circle Mystery Series, originally published by McClelland & Stewart in the early 1960s. Also now in paperback are Jean Little's *Listen for the Singing* (Clarke Irwin, 215 pages, \$5.95) and Joan Clark's *The Hand of Robin Squires* (Clarke Irwin, 145 pages, \$5.95.) □

ON THE RACKS

Five gloriously strong, infectious,
and omnivorous female writers are available
again after 50 years of neglect

By ANNE COLLINS

FOR AN ADDICT there is no finer fix than the forgotten novelist, the lost and found great novel. Added to the guilty compulsion to devour print is the sanctimonious thrill of discovery — the sense that an injustice has been rectified. A perfect rationale for over-indulgence. But after spending every spare moment of almost two weeks floating with only nostrils above water in the first releases of Lester & Orpen Dennys's *Virago Modern Classic* series, even I, eater of novels for breakfast, am satiated.

Here are eight forgotten novels, (by five women writers) to explore, picked out from England's *Virago Press* list, purchased for Canada, and published as elegant black-bordered and affordable (\$6.95 each) trade paperbacks. Antonia White is the least prolific of writers, so in its first year the series has been able to release her whole life's work: four novels following a young girl from her days at school in the Convent of the Five Wounds to the annulment of her first marriage and her slow dissolve into the world "beyond the glass" — madness.

In an interview just before her death last year at 80, White said that of course the books were "all true because I have no imagination, though in *Frost in May* [1933] I did slightly run two nuns into one." But hers is autobiographical fiction without a trace of exorcism or egotism; she

has had the imagination to stand back from her own self — the manipulations of an overly strong and fond father, the barbarisms and boredom of the mental asylum — and turn that self into an independently realized character. *Frost in May*, which she began at 16 but was unable to finish until after the death of her father, is the best of the four, narrowed down and told simply through the eyes of Nanda Grey. Swimming in the overpowering element of the Catholic faith, the convent girls race to outdo each other in displays of godliness — the most devout lay their two black stockings out in the form of a cross before praying themselves to sleep each night. Nanda, a convert, has to work at such faith but, being a good Daddy's girl, masters the outer forms quickly and wins ribbons for proper behaviour.

Inside her, however, is a stubborn conviction that what she thinks of as art — certain moments of secret illumination connected to mood and light and other people — is more important than religion. It is this wellspring of worldliness that the nuns try to break in her, only possible through the collusion of her beloved father and her expulsion from the convent. The restless emotional wreckage that results is steered through young womanhood and love in *The Lost Traveller* (1950), *The Sugar House*

(1952), and *Beyond the Glass* (1954). These are all brilliant novels, but there is a sense of loss in reading Antonia White. The nuns and her father did win a victory over art, in that her output was small and she was never able to consider as an artist events outside her own unhappy life.

Voracious fatherhood is Antonia White's territory; voracious motherhood is that of Rebecca West in *The Judge* (1922) and of Radclyffe Hall in *The Unlit Lamp* (1924). West's early novels were written off by her critics and her own eminent self in favour of journalism, literary criticism, history, philosophy, and her later novels of ideas. *The Judge*, with its passionate and defensive exploration of unwed motherhood, perhaps reminds Dame Rebecca too much of her painful 10-year affair with H. G. Wells and the birth in 1914 of her own illegitimate son, Anthony. "Every mother is a judge who sentences the children for the sins of the father," is the harsh pronouncement of Marion Yaverland, mother of the obsessively loved illegitimate Richard and the unloved lawful child Roger. When Richard tries to make room in his heart for the vivid little suffragette Ellen Melville, the spark is set that ignites the tinder of the Yaverland family. The explosion has the combined impact of the Brontes, Thomas Hardy, the Greeks, and the story of Cain and Abel: only Ellen Melville survives, the "new woman" and second-generation unwed mother, the strongest female character I've encountered among the walking wounded of 20th-century fiction.

Joan Ogden is not so lucky, for her mother is a fragile-seeming succubus who fastens on to Joan for her strength, having been leached out by her own demanding husband. The weak and the selfish inherit the earth in Radclyffe Hall's first novel, *The Unlit Lamp*; the strong and the talented are food to be preyed on. Though also formed around issues — the unjust fate of the spinster daughter — *The Unlit Lamp* is a better novel than the book that brought Hall notoriety with its single-minded plea for sexual tolerance, *The Well of Loneliness*. And the passionate friendship between Joan and her would-be rescuer and teacher, Elizabeth Rodney, is a slightly more even-handed examination of women in love. Love should not be a territorial invasion, says Hall, but a glorious partnership of equals. Hard to do between men and women, even harder between mother and daughter.

My Brilliant Career (1901) by Stella "Miles" Franklin, reveals the kind of exuberant, hectoring novel its 16-year-old heroine Sybylla must have been writing, stomping about in her heavy farm-girl boots in the alternating dust and mud of the Australian bush. The prose is sometimes a victim of the adolescence of its author, with its flurry of underlining techniques. ("SPECIAL NOTICE: You can dive into this

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book: head first as it were. Do not fear encountering such trash as descriptions of beautiful sunsets . . ."). And also to overstatements of Franklin's ardent nationalism, typical of the artistic and cultural birth-pains of Australia in the 1890s ("I am proud that I am an Australian, a daughter of the Southern Cross, a child of the mighty bush"). But her story of Sybylla, a misfit girl who invents feminism in the midst of the female slavery of pioneer life, who invents art to dream her way out of life, who turns down love — though she is well aware that it has life-giving importance to her — because it also entails the binding ties of marriage, is as vivid on paper as it was on the screen in the recent excellent movie version. Fierce is the best word to describe it — or pugnacious. Franklin had the gall to end the book with the worst description of a sunset ("The gorgeous, garish splendour of sunset pageantry flames out . . . the lookaburras laugh their merry mocking good-night") she could commit to paper.

F. Tennyson Jesse's *The Lacquer Lady* (1929) is a fictionalized account of the annexation of the 1,000-year-old kingdom of Upper Burma by the British in 1885 in order to save their interests in its teak forests. Its young, amoral heroine, compared by contemporary reviewers to Becky Sharp, has been entertaining in her unconscious tooting on the hearts of various males. Its author, a great-niece of Tennyson, is expert at playing on the literary susceptibilities of her readers with magnificent descriptive passages of the gem city of Mandalay and even the dun and grey British sea-town of Brighton. Jesse's first name, by the way, is Fryniwyd, which considering her vivid and exotic prose did not come as a surprise.

If all so good then why forgotten? Most of these books were published to unblemished and glowing reviews. In the case of Antonia White praise and popularity were heaped on her three times, when *Frost in May* was first published, when it was rediscovered in 1948, and now. Madness and her own writer's block caused White to hob in and out of view, and notoriety wiped Radclyffe Hall's slate clean of all but *The Well of Loneliness*. But the ephemeral reputation of all these novels owes something to the lack of conscious career-building on the part of their authors. "Great" novelists are made: literary careers to survive have to be carefully fostered for the future. There was too much for these women to do to see themselves in the light of literary greatness; as they skated on the front edge of social change, the whole world was there for them to curve figure-eights on. Rebecca West could not be just a novelist; Miles Franklin was compelled to work in the trade union and women's movements; Tennyson Jesse was so diverse that she was also a respected criminologist, one of the first women to

report from the front during the First World War, and a successful playwright. There are gloriously strong, infectious, and omnivor-

ous female egos at work in these novels. They couldn't stop to make their reputations, which leaves it up to us. □

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Being all shaken up about grammar is different to being superstitious, but it can still make you a rose between thorns

By BOB BLACKBURN

COMEDIAN JERRY LEWIS was appearing on Phil Donahue's TV talk show to promote a charity. He admitted that there were other charities that were "equally as important." "Equally as important," echoed his host.

A senior TV newsman told us of an accident in which "a passenger was shook up."

A newspaper critic, earnestly attempting to praise a performance, called it "stultifying."

We're in trouble. We learn by example, and these are examples of the examples we learn by. Donahue, I'm sure, would say "equally important" or "as important," but he slavishly repeated Lewis's mistake, thereby reinforcing it.

The TV newsman, I'm sure, grew up listening to Elvis Presley singing about being "all shook up."

"Stultify" is not a word in everyday use. The recommended procedure when one encounters such a word is to look it up in the dictionary, but most readers don't. Instead of discovering that it means to cause to appear foolish or worthless, many will simply adopt it as a term of praise and spread the error. I have no idea what the critic thought it meant, but I do know that such misuse stultifies words.

The amount of bad writing professional communicators expose us to is terrifying, but we can't blame them for all our problems. Some of those problems come straight from the schoolroom. A number of readers of this column have asked me to point out that we should say "between two" and "among three or more." I would be happy to oblige, but it just isn't that simple. This is one of those rules-of-thumb, so loved by minor pedagogues, that Fowler calls "superstitions" or "fetishes." I was taught it in school, and I daresay you were, too. But it doesn't serve. (I was taught also never to start a sentence with "but.")

The *OED* goes on and on about it, making it one of those subjects I wish I hadn't looked up. If you and a group of your

friends wish to discuss the matter *between* yourselves, that's okay with the *OED*. At election time, you may have a choice *between* three candidates, not *among* them. *Among* suggests belonging. If you fall *among* thieves, you become one of them. If three thieves surround you and knock you down, you fall *between* them. It is not correct to speak of "a rose *among* thorns" and it is not poetic to speak of "a rose *between* thorns." That's your problem. No doubt the best thing to do is keep in mind that the rule-of-thumb is generally but not invariably applicable.

And (there goes another "superstition") a bit of common sense would help. English, for all its orthographic peculiarities, syntactic awkwardness, ambiguities, and general cussedness, frequently responds much more graciously to the application of common sense than to the application of classroom fetishes. A couple of my pet hates (previously discussed in this space) are "to try and do" and "different than," both of which offend me chiefly because they don't make sense. (I was telling a friend that I could die happy — or even happily — if I



could convince the English-speaking peoples to say "try to," and never, under any circumstances, to say "try and." Said he: "You'll try and fail.")

Fowler says it's okay (well, okay, he wouldn't say "okay") to say "different to," and that its prohibition is another "superstition." That's okay with me, although I don't know why anyone would want to say that, but anyone who repeatedly says "different than" is not welcome in my bar, and that includes the Right Honourable the Prime Minister. I don't give a hoot for all the exalted precedents quoted in the *OED*; "different than" is illogical. It is never a waste of time to apply the test of logic to language problems, and I'd be delighted to hear from you if you can suggest an example (I'm sure there are some) of good usage that does not somehow meet that test.

For instance, there is an aspect of the style of punctuation followed by this magazine (and virtually every other publication in the English language) that is illogical and so, I maintain, dead wrong. Fowler agrees, but deems it a lost cause. It'll be the subject of a future column. Meanwhile, let me know if you've perceived what it is.

FOR SEVERAL REASONS, all of which indicate

a certain shoddiness in my character, letters to this department do not get answered. They come in. All are read with care; most with enjoyment. Suggestions are appreciated and often acted on. This is a note

of apology and an expression of appreciation (albeit shamefaced) to everyone who has taken the trouble to write, and to assure all that their letters do not fall into some mysterious void. □

INTERVIEW

W.P. Kinsella on the \$10,000 trade that took him from the Indians to the Chicago Cubs

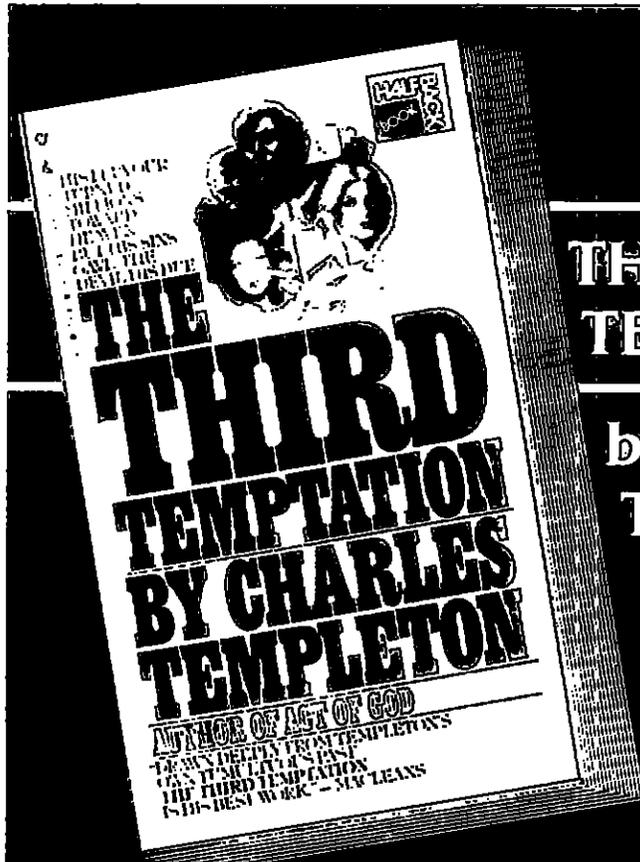
By KENNETH McGOOGAN

BORN IN EDMONTON in 1935, William Patrick Kinsella lived on a farm in the Alberta bush until he was 10. He went to high school in Edmonton, and later attended the universities of Victoria and Iowa. Kinsella has published four collections of short stories: *Dance Me Outside* (1977), *Scars* (1978), *Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa* (1980) and *Born Indian* (see page 15). He recently won a \$10,000

Houghton-Mifflin Fellowship for his first novel, *The Oldest Living Chicago Cub*, which will be brought out in the spring of 1982 and he currently teaches creative writing at the University of Calgary, where he talked with Kenneth McGoogan.

Books in Canada: *What is a Houghton-Mifflin Fellowship?*

Kinsella: It's a \$6,000 prize and a \$4,000



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advance, or the other way around, I'm not quite sure. And a big push for the book. I'm in the company of people like Philip Roth, whose first book was published on a Houghton-Mifflin Fellowship. They tell me that you're sure to get covered in the *New York Times Book Review* and places like that, because people know Houghton-Mifflin only gives this out occasionally, it's not an annual thing.

BIC: How did you come to write *The Oldest Living Chicago Cub*?

Kinsella: Larry Kessenich, an editor at Houghton-Mifflin, sort of discovered me by reading a two-line review of the Shoeless Joe Jackson story in *Publisher's Weekly*. He wrote to me and said, If it's part of a novel, we'd like to see it; if it isn't, it should be. I wrote him back and said I had never written anything successful longer than 25 pages, and if I'm going to write a novel I will need a lot of help. This usually produces an ominous silence, judging from other editors who have written to me wanting a novel. But he wrote back and said, What the hell, I'm in love with this idea, why don't we try it? So I wrote 25 pages continuing on and treating the short story as a first chapter, though at that point I thought it should be about the third chapter. You see, I didn't believe I could maintain the intensity of the Shoeless Joe Jackson story for 250 or 300 pages, and I kept saying this can't be done. So the first 25 pages were a kind of relaxed, rambling introduction to the story, and I

sent it to Larry and he said no no no no, this is not what you want to do, you're trying to confuse the reader. He gave me a couple of paragraphs about how he would start it, and



W. P. Kinsella

it just clicked. I went right into it from there and really didn't need any further help from him.

BIC: So the Shoeless Joe Jackson story is section one of the novel. Expanded?

Kinsella: No, pretty well as is. And in the second section the narrator, Ray Kinsella,

goes off to New Hampshire and kidnaps J.D. Salinger, because he finds out that Salinger has used him as a character. Salinger wrote a story that I discovered in the archives at Iowa. It's in a 1947 issue of *Mademoiselle*, a story called "A Young Girl In 1941 With No Waist At All." It's one of Salinger's quite bad uncollected stories, but the character's name is Ray Kinsella. And then of course in *The Catcher in the Rye* there's a character named Richard Kinsella, so the narrator develops a twin brother named Richard who doesn't come in until later on in the story. Anyway, Ray goes off and kidnaps Salinger and takes him to a baseball game at Fenway Park.

BIC: What exactly happened with *Seal Books*? You submitted *Chicago Cub* to the first novel competition.

Kinsella: It didn't win the contest. They decided not to give out the prize. The story they give out is that my novel had no appeal to their British publishers, who said no. And Seal said they were not going to take a second choice, so they didn't award the prize. McClelland & Stewart say they want the Canadian rights, and it would be a big help to have them publish it in Canada, with Houghton-Mifflin bringing it out in the U.S. and Japan. Richard Brautigan sells millions of books in Japan, and my work is not that different from his.

BIC: Has Brautigan influenced your work?

Kinsella: I think he has, a good deal, yes. Ray Bradbury is a big influence, too, the

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poetic prose of his language especially.

BiC: *What other contemporary writers do you admire?*

Kinsella: Anne Tyler very much. I don't know if she influences my writing, I just admire her a great deal. And André Dubus. He's an American who went to Iowa also. He writes devastating short stories.

BiC: *What about the South Americans? Cortázar, for example?*

Kinsella: I've not read the South Americans at all. I can't even get into them in the short story collections. They're too far out for me.

BiC: *You were at the creative writing school in Iowa in 1976. Was that a good experience?*

Kinsella: Oh, yes. Though I'm not thrilled with what they do there. I got virtually no help. The undergraduate program at Victoria is much better than the graduate program at Iowa. I mean, they make you work. In Iowa, they just turn you loose. Their theory is that if you're going to write, you'll write, and if you're not going to write, you won't, and nothing can change that. My feeling is that you should work the ass off graduate students. I expected them to demand that I submit a story every second week or something, which would make me work. Fortunately, I was disciplined enough to write two books while I was there — *Scars* and a novel that hasn't been published, and which I think I'm going to rewrite this summer.

BiC: *With this latest collection of stories, Born Indian, we're back on the reserve again. Where do these stories come from? You've obviously had a lot of experience with Indians.*

Kinsella: No. I've a good imagination. The Indians I know come from sitting in the bar of the New Edmonton Hotel, or the York, or the Royal, or the New Empire in Edmonton, sort of getting a table in the middle and opening up my ears. And I put myself through university in Victoria, part of it, driving a cab. Of course half your fares are Indians when you're driving a cab anywhere. They don't own cars, so they travel by taxi, mostly the alcoholics. Eighty per cent of your business is with alcoholics when you're driving a cab. First they lose their driver's licence, then they sell the car, and then they travel by cab.

BiC: *What reaction have you got from Indians to your Indian stories?*

Kinsella: *Dance Me Outside* is taught in most of the Indian schools in the country now. It's the best-selling book Oberon has ever published. It passed Valgardson's *Bloodflowers* last year. It's up in the 10,000 area. But the best compliment I ever had was from [Edmonton writer] Merna Summers, who gave the book to someone from Hobbema and said, You have to read this. The lady read it, and later they were going through the book and she stopped at one of the stories and said, Oh, I know who

that one's about. I've never been to Hobbema. I set the book there for convenience. The first story was written about 10 years ago now, and I don't know why I chose to tell it from Silas's point of view. I think maybe it was because I was getting a lot of crap in the class I was taking about my sentence structure, and I thought, the hell with you, I'll show you, I'll write something from the point of view of someone who's had a grade five education, and then you can't yap about sentence structure.

BiC: *Someone suggested that with the Indian stories you're verging on formula writing. You have Silas, you have the trick, and you're able to keep doing it. So Born Indian is essentially a repetition of Scars or Dance Me Outside.*

Kinsella: Well, it's only a repetition in that it's the same narrator. They're totally different stories. What I look for is a good opening and some kind of dramatic closing, and then fill in the blanks.

I think *Born Indian* is the best of the three books, technically. I don't think there are any weak stories in the collection. I think I've refined the language considerably, so that it's still there, but it's not as choppy as it was. If we ever decide to sell the American rights to *Dance Me Outside* I would want to rewrite it.

BiC: *Do you see yourself moving in any particular direction?*

Kinsella: I think this may be the last Indian book. I have nine or 10 stories, and I may do enough to make another collection, I don't know. I haven't written any Indian stories recently. I'm not very excited about Silas anymore. I think I may have run him down, although I know I could do stories like this for a long time to come. But I like to do audacious things, and the audacity is gone out of Silas.

I like to write stories like "Shoeless Joe Jackson," which shouldn't work, but does. The Janis story is the same thing. My novel shouldn't work, and I'm usually not that confident about what I write, but I think this novel is one helluva fine book, and I think it's going to go places. It really is wonderful, I'm kind of in awe when I read it. I think, God, did I really do this? Because it has some wonderful stuff in it, and I'm wondering what I can do for an encore.

BiC: *What are you going to do?*

Kinsella: My agent and my editor tell me that I can make a living writing novels. And you can't make a living writing short stories. I would really rather write short stories. I enjoy writing them. I enjoy the idea that I'm only looking two weeks ahead when I start one. For a novel you're committing eight or nine months of your life. I wrote *The Oldest Living Chicago Cub* in nine months and I can't see committing any more time than that to it.

I think what I'm going to work on next is that Grecian Urn story again, trying to make it into a novel. If I can write another sellable

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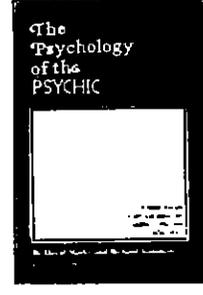
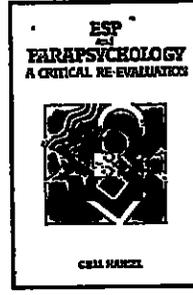
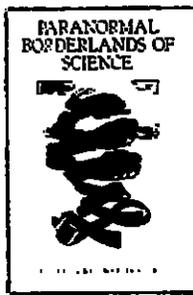
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novel. I think I would have confidence enough to quit my job. Actually, we can exist on very little money. I would rather make very little and write novels than make a whole lot and have to teach. □

LETTERS

The right stuff

Sir:

There is at best a disconcerting half-truth about the *modus operandi* of Glenn Witmer's Personal Library Publishers as described by Linda M. Leitch (June-July). "We publish authors, not books," Witmer is quoted as saying, and he admits to having been influenced by Jack McClelland, from whom he learned to "get the right authors, sell them, treat them right. They're the stars. Feature them. The books will follow."

Though an intriguing, even perhaps clever business practice — one resembling more than anything else a Hollywood film producer and his starlets — such a method is destined to give rise to a cult of personality if not necessarily to an official literary culture. In such a procedure, the most outstanding talents may prove uncultivable, hence go unnoticed. Whence comes a publisher's omniscience to determine the "right" authors? And may not treating them "right" be the surest means of guaranteeing their dissolution as artists with a private vision?

I fear not so much for the reading public, which might in any event get by by going to the public libraries for first-rate books produced before the cult of literary personality evolved. My chief concern is for the author suddenly bewitched into a fairy prince or princess. If there has been some genuine incipient talent, its dilution by the twin expectations of publisher and public is a very real threat.

It is said of Igor Stravinsky that his compositions, as they successively appeared, puzzled musical scholars for the reason that each seemed quite unlike the last. Stravinsky's creative personality was evidently responding to the unique demands of each new situation, and he was not the hireling of any particular publishing house. Had he been, then his own intense originality might thereby have been dampened.

It is suggested that Canadian publishers who thus begin to patronize certain talents may not be doing them any special favour — let alone the public. Mr. Witmer is

described as a former teacher, and his slogan, "We publish authors, not books," echoes the educational progressivist's "We teach students, not subjects." Needless to say, the latter has at this juncture become a dated catch-phrase, one perhaps as slipshod as Mr. Witmer's own jargon.

David Lawson
Montreal

Shame!

Sir:

It is now more than two weeks since I read I.M. Owen's review of Elspeth Cameron's biography of Hugh MacLennan (June-July). In the interim, my initial discontent has grown into indignation, until I feel compelled to vent my spleen.

It is disgraceful that *Books in Canada* found it necessary to assign this book to someone who was apparently reading MacLennan's fiction for the first time. It is inexcusable that Mr. Owen did not see it as part of his task to evaluate Cameron's success or failure as a biographer, or even to analyze (except in the most superficial way) the strategies she adopted in treating her subject. Mr. Owen's review is basically a resumé of Cameron's book — a plot summary. Shame!

I strongly recommend that Mr. Owen be barred from reviewing any future literary biographies in your pages.

T.D. MacLulich
Assistant Professor
Department of English
University of Victoria

I.M. Owen replies: Since nobody who had actually read my review could suppose that I was reading MacLennan's fiction for the first time, or think that I hadn't evaluated the success of Elspeth Cameron's book, I conclude that T.D. MacLulich reads as fuzzily as he writes.

CANWIT NO. 66

LONE WOLF, bearded smoker and drinker, fond of dressing up in skirt, seeks adventurous companion to share sailing and animal voyeurism. Object: whale of a time. Contact Farley, Box 1001, *Books in Canada*.

COMPANIONS WANTED columns have become so popular in newspapers that we feel it's time to publish some of our own. Contestants are invited to compose suitable ads from Canadian public figures, authors, or their fictional characters. Penalty points

will be assessed against entries from lady writers who claim to be loaded for bear. The deadline, for a prize of \$25, is Nov. 1. Address: CanWit No. 66, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4.

Results of CanWit No. 64

EITHER MOST OF our readers really were charmed by "the wedding of the century" (doesn't anyone remember Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio?), or else the postal strike forced them to restrain their feelings. At any rate, our request for verse to commemorate the royal event raised few replies and little nastiness. The winning entry, by Dave Martin of Ottawa, fittingly evokes the labour strife that deadened the summer:

To Chuck

*We can't take you out to the ball game,
We can't watch you on CBC,
We wanted to send you a present,
But the posties won't stand guard for thee.
So forgive us, dear Chuck, if we're absent,
It's just that we can't guarantee
That our airplanes will even be flying,
Or that our ships will be sailing the seas.
You know if we could that we'd make it,
With 80-cent dollars at that,
'Cause we're suckers for pubescent weddings.
Pierre, I'm sure, told you of that.
But the nation is under the weather,
We're not feeling quite up to snuff,
We're taking a labour vacation,
The country has had quite enough.
Now these may sound like hollow excuses,
But we'll try to make some restitution.*

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Michael Gorman

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Honourable mentions:

Lines Composed Upon the Occasion of the
Announcement of the Betrothal of H.R.H. the
Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer

Go sound the trumpet, let'er blast,
Our bonnie prince will wed at last.
Success has crowned his lengthy quest
For consort fit to bear his crest.

Run speculation long and rife:
Would Charlie ever take a wife?
As hard to bind our young prince flitted,
Yet finding none for queenhood fitted.
Each serving well the royal pleasure —
None answering to the royal measure.
(For she who's suited to be queen,
Spotless must be, and so be seen.)

But then parental urging came,
"Love, son, is no mere idle game;
The royal bed must issue yield,
Else is the fate of Windsor sealed."

So now at last he's made his choice;
The Di is cast and we rejoice
That 'spite the pound and Maggie Thatcher,
Our Charlie-boy contrived to catch'er.
Then let us hope, though Empire wane,
In future time she long may reign
O'er England's pleasant land and green —
A true Spencerian Fairie Queen!

— Marvin Goody, Toronto

A Plea to Prince Charles on the Occasion of
His Wedding to Lady Diana Spencer

"All Hail!" let true repatriots cry
To Chuck the Prince and Lady Di.
We've even sent some flowers.
Our coeurs (that's Fench for "hearts") enthuse;

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We give to you your sovereign dues
And hope you'll give us ours.

As when the felon is set free
On Royal Day by Royal Decree,
Please grant to me our "Act."
Then gentlemen from out the West
Can stick consensus up their vest,
Or some convenient tract.

And should you, at your wedding feast,
Reject the pleas of liberal East
And cook our national goose,
Then shall the provinces gain ground,
Then shall their praises be unbound
And "All Hail!" will break loose.

As one who through a tempest rides,
Assailed by Margarets on both sides,
I beg, please stop this bother.
Please sock it to those gentlemen
Who meet with She at Number 10.
Best wishes to your mother.

— Pierre

— D. Eyre, Saskatoon

A sportive young heir to the throne
Was quite frequently supine or prone.
If this bedmate should purr
"Shall we marry, kind sir?"
He'd emit a garantuan groan.

The monarch cajoled and accused
As her offspring thus wedlock refused.

When he'd wall, just in jest,
"Oh! But what of the rest?"

She'd reply, "We are less than amused."

This state of affairs could not last;
His thirteenth birthday was past.

He thought with a sigh
"It's Do or it's Di;

'Queen Doreen'? 'Queen Diana'? Oh blast!"

So Di got the nod as we see.
She'd dandle new kings on her knee.

She's a fine strapping lass
From the right sort of class;
All England will toast her in tea.

And Charlie? — Well, he knows the score.

His gay bachelor days are no more.

He's joined the royal stud
To pass on the blood —
An Englishman right to the core!

— Odymer Vingo, Toronto

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:

Additive Alert, by Linda R. Pim, Clarke Irwin.
Aids to Make You Able, compiled by Wendy Davis, General.
All in Good Time, by Don Guttridge, Black Moss Press.
Aqua-Fitness for Women, by Grace Lawrence, Personal Library.
Arctic Breakthrough, by Paul Nanton, Clarke Irwin.
The Art of Margaret Atwood, edited by Arnold E. Davidson and Cathy N. Davidson, Anansi.
Autokinetics, by Ken Norris, Cross-Country Press.
Blind Faith, by Penny Sanger, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Blue Angel, by Tim Inkster, Black Moss Press.
Bogle's Book on Fitness, by David Bogosch, North Park Avenue Productions.
British Regulars in Montreal, by Elinor Kyle Senior, McGill-Queen's University Press.
Budget Travel in Canada, by Jay Myers, Nelson Canada.
Canada and the Age of Conflict, Vol. 2: 1921-1948, The Mackenzie King Era, by C.P. Stacey, U of T Press.
Canada's Urban Past: A Bibliography to 1980, by Alan F.J. Arbib and Gilbert A. Stelter, U.B.C. Press.
Canadian Georgian Furniture, by Donald Blake Webster, Royal Ontario Museum.
The Canadians, Volume II: Bloodbrothers, by Robert E. Wall, Personal Library.
The Charles Dickens Cookbook, by Brenda Marshall, Personal Library.
Cities, Lester & Orpen Denny's.
Columbia Icefield: A Solitaire of Ice, by Bart Robinson, photography by Don Harmon, Altitude Publishing.
The Council AACR2, by Michael Gorman, Canadian Library Association.
Cottage Country Series, by Martin Avery, A.S.P. Communications.
David Miller: The New York Years 1903-1916, by John O'Brien, The Edmonton Art Gallery.
Dragonhunt, by Frances Duncan, The Women's Press.
The Egg Marketing Board, by Thomas Borchending, The Fryer Institute.
English Skills Program 1, by Erna Plattner et al., Gage.
Family Law in the Family Courts, 2nd edition, Vol. 1, by David M. Steinberg, Carswell.
Fatal Destinies, by Charles Bandelaine, translated by Joan Fiedler Mele, Cross-Country Press.
Federalism and the Organization of Political Life, by Herman Bakvis, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University (P.D. Meaney).
Federal-Provincial Collaboration, by Donald J. Savoie, McGill-Queen's University Press.
Flames Across the Border: 1813-1814, by Pierre Burton, M & S.
Flavours of Newfoundland and Labrador, by J.J. Sharp, Breakwater.
Gabriola: Petroglyph Island, by Mary and Ted Bentley, Sono Nis Press.
Gustown Stories, by Mary Drew, illustrated by Norman Drew, NC Press, (1980).
Good to the Last Bite, by Marlys Carruthers et al, The Happy Cookers Publishing (1979).
Grammar to Go! (revised edition), by Rob Colter, Anansi.
The Great Canadian Alphabet Book, by Philip Johnson, illustrated by David Peacock, Houslow Press.
A History of The University of Alberta, 1908-1969, by Walter H. Johns, The University of Alberta Press.
Hopeful Travellers, by David Gagan, U of T Press.
How to Intervene and Hire Productive People, by Jack Peter, and Don McQuig, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Inequality: Essays on the Political Economy of Social Welfare, edited by Allan Muscovitch and Glenn Drover, U of T Press.
The Land of Rum and Big Fishes, by J. Mark Boudreau, Mark's Publishing (1978).
Last Resort, by Peter Evanuchuck et al, Serpent Press.
Light in the Wilderness, by Paul von Balch, Oxford.
Limits, by Robin Skelton, The Porcupine's Quill.
Macdonald, Sheard and Hull on Probate Practice, 3rd ed., by Rodney Hull and Maurice Cullity, Carswell.
Manitoba, by Robert Taylor, Oxford.
The Marmalade Man, by Charlotte Vale Allen, M & S.
Mentally Handicapped Love, by Marie Putman, Harbour Publishing.
The Modernization of Easter Island, by J. Douglas Porteous, Department of Geography, University of Victoria.
Niagara, by Peter Fowler, Oxford.
The One-Room School in Canada, by Jean Cochrane, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Ontario Prehistory, by Peter L. Storck, Royal Ontario Museum.
Operation Literacy Series, Canadian Library Association.
Paradise, by Sarah Neilan, Musson.
Platonic Love, by Scott Watson, New Star Books.
Poems, by Joe Wallace, Progress Books.
A Poor Photographer, by John Barton, Sono Nis Press.
Project Progress: A Study of Canadian Public Libraries, Canadian Library Association.
Queens of the Next Hot Star, by Linda Rogers, Oolichan Books.
Rats live on an evil star, by Joaquin and Maura Kahn, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
The Raw Edges: voices from our time, by Dorothy Livesey, Turastone Press.
The Red Commissar, by Jaroslava Hasek, translated by Cecil Patroit, Lester & Orpen Denny's.
The Regional Decline of a National Party: Liberals on the Prairies, by David E. Smith, U of T Press.
Riding to Nicola Country, by Andrew Wreggin, Harbour Publishing.
The River Horsemen, by David Williams, Anansi.
Romantic & other faults, by Endre Farkas, Cross-Country Press.
The Scottish Canadians, by Allen Andrews, Van Nostrand Reinhold.
The Secret Life of the Unborn Child, by Thomas Verry, Collins.
Sharing the Work, by Noah Meltz et al., U of T Press.
Skeezers Dog with a Mission, by Elizabeth Yates, illustrated by Jean Drescher, Breakwater.
The Songs of Bathsheba, by Candace Adamson Burstow, Fiddlehead.
Totem Poles: An Illustrated Guide, by Marjorie M. Halpin, University of B.C. Press.
The Trapper and the Fur-Faced Spirits, by Jim Tallosi, Queenston House.
Vanishing Canada, by Rick Butler, Clarke Irwin.
Wondrous Tales of Wicked Winston, by Linda Manning, illustrated by Barbara Eidlitz, Annick Press.

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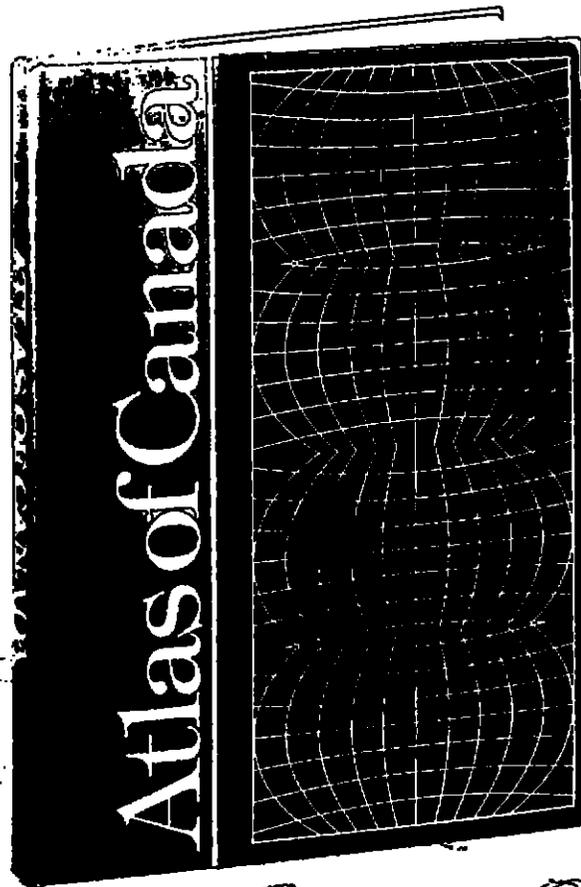
In September, a major exhibit of his work will appear at the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Ottawa, an exhibit that will then tour both Canada and the United States. Bateman himself will begin an extensive Canadian tour in October, when he will appear in major centres from Victoria to Halifax. **THE ART OF ROBERT BATEMAN** is a Literary Guild, A Reader's Digest, and A Book of the Month Club selection.

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