

A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

BOOKS IN CANADA

OCTOBER 1985

FROM EH TO ZED: THE NEW CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA

Party politics: how
the War Measures Act
divided English Quebec's
leading writers

Al Purdy on three
Atlantic poets

And an interview
with Alexander Ross



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BOOKS IN CANADA

Volume 14 Number 7

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Wall of fame

At Bens Poets' Corner in Montreal the house specialty ranges from smoked-meat sandwiches to Louis Dudek's zucchini

HOW WOULD YOU like to have your picture in Bens Poets' Corner?" said Louis Dudek, chuckling at the other end of the telephone. "Look, man, the place is as well-known as Westminster Abbey, and our poets are still alive!"

I dismissed the idea as *drôle*, since Dudek is the most private of persons. Why would this self-effacing man want an 8" x 10" glossy of himself hanging in a deli beside showbiz tarts and Tartuffes? There already was a Canadian poets' corner on the campus of the University of New Brunswick, dedicated to the dead cousins Bliss Carman and Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, along with Francis Sherman. Besides, the notion of preserving a "corner" for poets, like some endangered species, sounded distasteful, a punishment. What! You're a poet! Go to your corner and recite "Time of the Ancient Mariner" until you turn into a pumpkin!

Months later, over tea and cookies in his Westmount hideaway, Dudek took out a snapshot of himself. The photo showed the unpredictable professor holding a huge zucchini (grown in his country garden at Ways Mills) between his legs. He was anxious to get it up at Bens.

"Hmmm, I see." I agreed to join his conspiracy.

Bens, you see, is different from other Montreal restaurants. Unlike the mercantile smiles you meet at Murrays, or the McDonald golden calf, or the junky chickens at Village du Poulet, at Bens you can sit down with the management and discuss civilized topics such as poetry. Co-owner Al Kravitz, who coined the adjective "Bentastic," is an cany-going kibbitzer who can be seen chatting with a beautiful winner in the National Film Board's *Ladies and Gentlemen: Leonard Cohen*, which was shot on the spot. Kravitz waxes eloquent about his schoolmate Irving Layton, and speaks warmly of Hugh MacLennan, another Bens habitué. He likens MacLennan to the 16th-century French author Nostradamus for his ability to "prophesy the future." He remembers another literary figure, A.M. Klein, sitting at a table until 2 a.m. watching the

show people enter and exit with their make-up still on.

His most loving anecdotes concern his father, Benjamin Kravitz, the original Midas of meat, who had fled from czarist Lithuania with a bullet in his leg. He began selling his hickory-smoked sandwiches in 1908 from the back of his house at Duluth and St. Lawrence. Soon everyone was asking for that "smoked meat," and the name stuck.

During the Depression, Ben Kravitz covertly handed out little bags of food before dawn to the grey cloud of hoboes who assembled behind his delicatessen. (He was too timid to inform his son why the account books weren't balancing.) In the politically turbulent 1960s a front window was smashed during a riot (nothing but some cigarettes was stolen), and the apostrophe in Ben's was swallowed up by Bill 101, Quebec's possessive French-language law. And once a juicy package of kosher meat was flown via Air France to an Israeli soldier in what has to be the farthest take-out order in history.

Stories, stories. . . . Of Red Skelton stumbling in drunk one night following a show at Loew's and repeatedly losing his doughnut in his coffee; of Jimmy Durante announcing his wedding at age 70 to the press in yonder corner; of Bobby Hull "drinking his steak with a straw" (it was puréed specially through a blender after John Ferguson broke his jaw during the Stanley Cup playoffs); of Liberace mincing in to doublecheck whether his two photos (one in colour) were still on the wall.

Now, if you happen to bump into the north wall, a gold-lettered plaque with a plume and ink-bottle will welcome you to Le Coin des Poètes/Poets' Corner. Here they are, signed and framed, the starving and the stuffed: Claude Beausoleil, Manuel Betanzos-Santos, Nicole Brossard, Paul Chamberland (Leonard Cohen is coming, but omnipresent anyway), Antonio D'Alfonso, Louis Dudek, Ron Everson, Endre Farkas, Lucien Francoeur, Ralph Gustafson, A.M. Klein, Tom Konyves, Irving Layton, Seymour Mayne, Gaston Miron, Ken Norris, P.K. Page, F.R. Scott, Sylvie Sicotte, Fred Ward, Phyllis Webb. Also Raymond Filip.

A collision of worlds. Or is it? Poets are also hungry egos to feed. The purists might argue that only poetasters would stoop so low as to advertise themselves in front of barbarians munching on Bensburgers. But I'm sure none of the poets represented feels he has sold his soul for an inch of *ben bon* smoked meat piled between slices of rye bread.

The smoked-meat masterfeeders cater to more than two million customers a year. ("We've never changed," says Al Kravitz. "Everything is simple, easy to clean, and everybody knows everybody.") But there is something more to Bens than the merger of capitalism, culture, and the art of cooking. Something more in the air than the aroma of pastrami and coffee; something beyond the neat rows of jars containing sweet red peppers in boiled honey, home-made pickles seasoned in brine; sealed briskets in their display case; old-fashioned soda-fountain signs as big as playbills featuring sundaes and strawberry cheese cake; the cashier in her glassed-in box office; the "Lucky Wall of Fame" crowded with serious and facetious faces, names beside no-names, Gino Vannelli beside Alvaro Costenno. At least here is one corner where living poets can put up their feet and not feel like leftovers. — RAY FILIP

Books and crannies

I WAS INSPIRED by Rufus Moffat in Eleanor Estes's series of children's books, who thought that "reading looked easy. It was just flipping pages." If he could get his own library card, so could I. I practised compressing Sherie Posesorski into library-card line space (my signature still resembles a hamster's cardiogram), and dashed over to the neighbourhood library. I dreamed of a library with neoclassical pillars, monumental clock, massive staircases, and mahogany woodwork but, a child of the suburbs, faced a bookmobile parked in a shopping plaza.

I became a human bookmobile, never remaining in any library longer than it

took me to grab more books than any one person could read in a three-week loan period. I read about places like the New York Public Library and the British Reading Room, where people actually remained to read. But the series of uncongenial concrete and glass-box libraries plopped outside arenas and Esso stations that I encountered had all the charm of bus depots. Many suburban libraries designed in the then-popular Bauhaus utilitarian style betrayed no clue to their identity. Interiors were decorated with the finesse of a school auditorium, using the ubiquitous blond wood, glaring fluorescent lights, tile floors, and cafeteria-size reading tables.

In theory, university research libraries provide a soothing environment for hours of rarefied study. Not in my experience. Entering the University of Toronto's Robarts Library (nicknamed the book-mausoleum for its resemblance to a 14-storey concrete gravestone), I always felt like someone had just placed a plastic bag over my head. A common sight was of passed-out students sprawled over white plastic furniture.

To avoid libraries, I decided to build my own. When a friend asked for a towel, and I opened my closet to hand him *The Making of the English Working Class* instead (having run out of book-

case space, I used my linen closet), I knew it was time to return to libraries. But where?

Driving through Markham, on Ontario's Highway 7, visually satiated by the worst aspects of urban sprawl, miles of Dairy Queens and gas stations, I was startled to see the library of my dreams.



I parked the car, and stood entranced and delighted in front of the Markham Community Library, a three-storey brick building with an oversized roof, 14-foot diameter glass clock, series of gable and bay windows, fronted by a reflecting pool, bandshell, cenotaph, and pink-blossomed trees that matched the pink eavestroughs.

It beckoned me inside. The interior was serenely romantic with rose-coloured walls, vaulted ceilings, art-deco checkerboard floor, curving ebony circulation desk, and a spectacular central marble staircase. I wandered around, watching children in their section play in a sandbox, hang off man-shaped chairs,

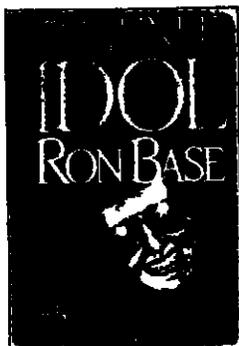
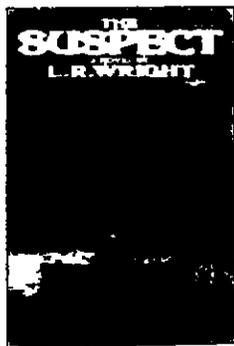
and sit quietly listening to a reading.

I solemnly walked up the staircase to the adult book section. It was dominated by a series of alcoves and nooks and crannies where people sat reading. The librarian told me that the building was designed by Phillip Carter and won him a Governor General's Medal for architecture in 1981.

Phillip Carter's office is on the fourth floor of a former slipper factory in downtown Toronto. Carter, 45, a tall, dapper version of Tom Wolfe, has specialized in library architecture for over a decade, and has been awarded several Canadian Architect Awards of Excellence. He is known as a practitioner of post-modern architecture. (Post-modern architecture is a reaction against the austere glass-box architecture of the Bauhaus style. It is characterized by the imaginative mix-and-match use of historical architectural details.)

The exterior of the Markham Community Library evokes, in a modern fashion, the Victorian, small-town flavour of Markham. Because the library is situated on the town's common, Carter designed it to catalyze the development of the site as a focal point for community life. To avoid making it resemble another anonymous public building, Carter used architectural imagery, like the monumental clock, to

Three novels from
Doubleday Canada Limited
for fall of 1985.



nov·el (nov'əl) — adj. *New in a striking or unusual way.*

THE LIFE OF HOPE by Paul Quarrington

Quarrington's last novel, HOME GAME was named one of the year's ten best books by *The Toronto Star* and CBC's "Morningside." His latest features the village of Hope, populated variously by a talking two-hundred-year-old fish and an over-sexed evangelist. \$19.95

THE SUSPECT by L.R. Wright

L.R. Wright is the award-winning author of NEIGHBORS, and more recently, THE FAVORITE. In her latest novel she brings her acclaimed literary talents to the genre of the mystery; set in a retirement village on B.C.'s Sunshine Coast. \$19.95

MATINEE IDOL by Ron Base

"Fast, sexy and glamorous," says *The Toronto Star*. Ron Base is known as a film critic, screenwriter, and television host. He has now written this novel that exposes a world he knows well — the film industry, peopled by those who often pretend to be who they are not. \$19.95

indicate that this was indeed a library.

"I wanted the library to make people curious, invite them in, and to indicate that it is fun to be in a library. One would hope that you couldn't go past this building, and see the oversized roof, the big clock, the eyebrows, the colour, without a chuckle at the building's personality."

As for the interior, Carter's design principle was to create an environment comfortable and conducive to reading in the library. "People like to read in funny situations, like alcoves, rather than the table and chairs provided by most libraries. The alcoves are places

where I like to read; it fulfils the fantasy of having a home with turrets and an attic where you can tuck yourself away to read. I'm definitely a romantic, and it is a very romantic building."

"Every day as I approach the library, I find myself grinning as I walk in," says head librarian Eleanor Gilbert. "It's a good library for people who like books and libraries because there's lots of nooks and crannies you can hide yourself in to read." Not only do a lot more people come to stay and read in the library but the library and its grounds have become the place to have wedding pictures taken (one couple even got mar-

ried at the library). "Lest you think everything is perfect," she says in a mock whisper, "this library has become the perfect apartment home for pigeons."

I browse the shelves, and choose Grace Paley's *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*. I find an alcove with a rocking chair and begin to read. In Paley's story "Wants," the narrator returns two Edith Wharton novels to a library, 18 years overdue, as she resolves to be "the woman who brings these two books back in two weeks."

No one could resist returning rapidly to this library. — SHERIE POSESORSKI

ENGLISH: OUR ENGLISH

From bad to worse

The decline in the quality of literature may be irreversible, because there aren't enough discriminating readers to make careful writing profitable

By Bob Blackburn

I DIDN'T EVEN wince the other day when a TV news reporter informed me that "a police guard was posted so as not to disturb the evidence."

Somewhere in the dank dungeons of my mind, a tiny slave wearing a headset translated the line for me, and we moved on to the next item. But, for some reason, the original version stayed on to haunt me. Suppose the translator had been on a coffee break. I guess I would have thought the reporter was suggesting that it was clever of the police to avoid posting the guard in a manner that *would* disturb the evidence. (It is not germane to this column, but I also wondered why the reporter thought it was even worth mentioning that police investigating a murder did not wish the evidence to be disturbed.)

This was a minor gaffe. Probably there were a dozen like it in the same newscast. They are so common that those few of us who are even aware of them tend to shrug them off. Certainly some slips are inevitable in that medium, since the reporter in some circumstances is under pressure and there is no opportunity for a copy editor to make corrections. But there ought to be a lot of wrist-slapping going on behind the scenes, and I doubt that there is any at all.

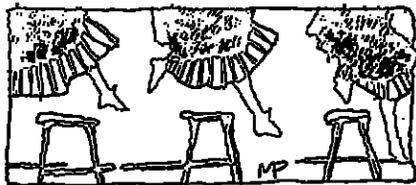
It is worse when these things happen in newspapers, worse still when they happen in magazines, worse even than that when they happen in books. And when they happen in textbooks. . . . But

they do. And it bothers me not so much because so few people care but because so few are even aware. Bad writing is the norm.

For the last couple of weeks, I have been reading myself to sleep with a fat paperback spy thriller called *Last Message to Berlin*, by Philippe van Rijn. I like spy thrillers, especially for this purpose, and this is a good, intricate yarn. But it is taking me forever to get through it. I know nothing of the author, save that this is not his first money-making venture in this genre. You can't tell anything from a name nowadays, but I suspect that English is not his first language. If I am wrong, then he is simply an atrocious writer. He is given to stylistic pretensions, but his diction is imprecise and his handling of idiom insecure.

For example, he refers to a Rolls-Royce with a "twelve-foot-square trunk." A careful writer, schooled in English *might* make such a slip. But it is improbable. And there are similar lapses strewn about on virtually every one of the 533 twenty-eight-square-inch pages, although few evoke such a bizarre image.

Novels of this sort are supposed to be fraught with mysteries, but there are two



unintentional mysteries about this one. There is an immediate one in almost every paragraph: just what was the author thinking when he chose that word or phrase? It simply doesn't seem quite right in the context. This, of course, is spoiling the book for me as entertainment; it is now merely an interesting mental exercise.

The larger mystery (easily solved) is why the publisher of a property with so much going for it would not make the effort to have the manuscript properly edited. The answer, of course, is that the publisher (if he is even aware that there is a problem with the language) knows that such things don't matter at the cash register. Many publishers (and not only book publishers) are like that.

The sad fact is that there are not enough discriminating readers left to create a climate in which careful writing is profitable. I am directed to this melancholy conclusion by reflection on the fact that this is the fifth anniversary of this department. It is beginning to dawn on me that I am not changing the world.

Have things worsened in those five years? I think so, but that's purely subjective. Certainly they have not improved. The print medium may be moribund, and the decline in the quality of literature may be irreversible, but I still like to think there is hope for improvement in the quality of verbal communication, though I can find no evidence that it is any closer to hand than it was in 1980.

Perhaps a bumper-sticker campaign. . . . Oh, well, I guess not. □

Desperate measures

When the War Measures Act was declared, 15 years ago this month, some of English Quebec's foremost writers met at a party. The divisions among them epitomized the dismay that the FLQ crisis provoked

By Mark Abley

THE GOVERNMENT of Canada invoked the War Measures Act at 4 a.m. on Friday, October 16, 1970. According to the government, a state of "apprehended insurrection" existed in Quebec. As Brian Moore observed in *The Revolution Script*, "the most repressive wartime powers ever invoked in a democracy were now the peacetime law of Canada."

At 3 o'clock that afternoon, the dignitaries of Bishop's University in the little town of Lennoxville, 150 kilometres east of Montreal, gathered for a convocation. Since its founding in 1843 by Bishop George Mountain and the Rev. Lucius Doolittle, Bishop's, a minor symbol of the English domination of Quebec, had sought to preserve the

liberal arts traditions of Oxford and Cambridge. The students who strolled below the ivy-covered walls of its red-brick quadrangle were, until 1970, enjoined to wear academic gowns. On that damp fall day the university's Centennial Theatre was packed with faculty and students for the installation of a new principal, Dr. Dennis Healy, and the presentation of five honorary doctorates.

Under the War Measures Act, a person who communicated any statement from the Front de Libération du Québec was liable to spend up to five years in prison. Anyone who attended a meeting of the FLQ or spoke publicly in its support would be considered a member unless he could prove otherwise. A police officer could arrest without warrant anyone he suspected of mere association with FLQ members; that person could be held in jail for up to three weeks without any charge being laid, and then for a further 90 days before a trial date was set. To advocate the aims of the FLQ now was a crime.

The authorities at Bishop's had considered postponing their convocation in light of the crisis. They feared that a bomb threat might disrupt the proceedings. After all, in January Raymond Lemieux, the leader of Quebec's *Ligue pour l'Intégration Scolaire*, had accused Bishop's students of being "extremely racist" and had called the university "10 times worse than McGill." It was, in 1970-71, offering a grand total of three courses on the history, politics, literature, sociology, economics, and art of Quebec.

Yet despite the kidnappings of British trade commissioner James Cross and Quebec labour minister Pierre Laporte and the presence of the army on the streets of Quebec, the convocation ceremony went ahead in all its pomp and circumstance. For a while, the elegant orations provided a refuge from political terror. Only at the end of his speech did the chancellor, Brigadier-General John H. Price, OBE, allude to the crisis: "I only voice the feeling of all present here today in saying I hope most deeply and sincerely that a way will be found out of this dilemma which will support strongly the rule of law without which our modern civilization is without meaning." Who at Bishop's would question the rule of law?

But when the chancellor had regained his seat, the afternoon took an extraordinary turn. The next item on the program was listed as the "Reading of a poem by Paul Chamberland." And as most of the audience and the governing body looked on with bemusement, a slight, scruffy-looking man strolled onstage in a denim vest and cords, twirling a leather bag; his unkempt, red-blond hair drooped over his shoulders. The man reached into the bag, pulled out three sheets of typed paper, and in a slow, clear voice began to read his "*Déclaration Politique*": "*Je déclare que je suis du FLQ.*" A hush fell over the theatre. Confusion turned to horror. "*J'appartiens au Front de Libération du Québec.*"

THAT EVENING, while Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau appeared on national TV to diagnose "the cancer of an armed revolutionary movement that is bent on destroying the very basis of our freedom," some of the foremost writers of English Quebec met in the village of North Hatley, a few miles south-

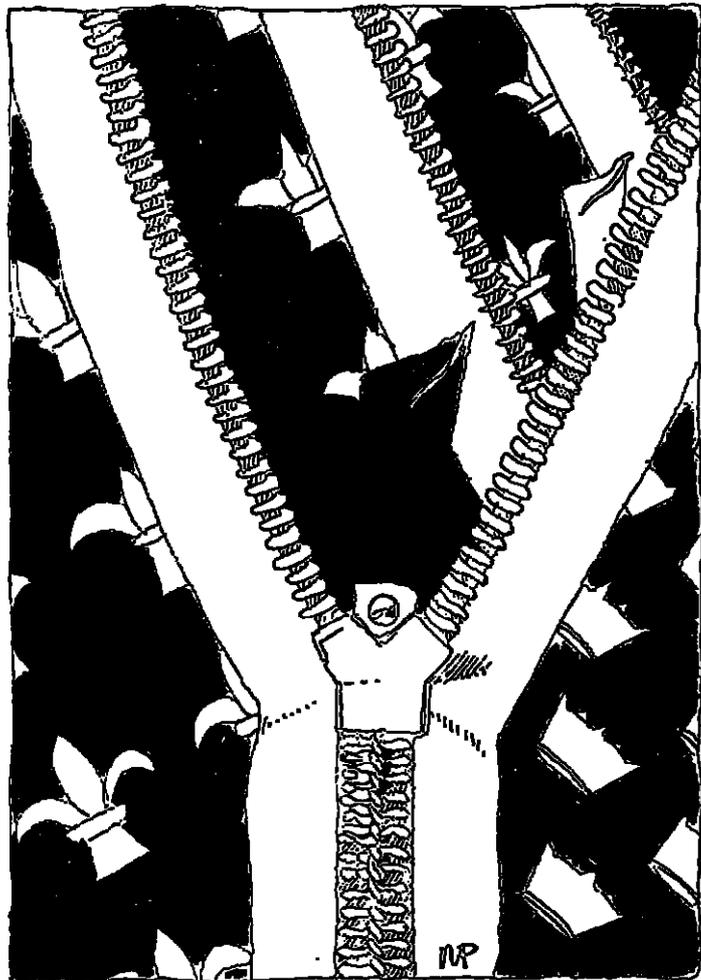


ILLUSTRATION BY MAUREEN PAXTON

west of Lennoxville. The occasion for the party was a visit by Irving Layton, a lifelong Montrealer who had recently moved to Toronto, who had returned to the province to collect an honorary degree from Bishop's. Layton's host was Ralph Gustafson, a Bishop's professor and a distinguished poet in his own right. The 40 or so guests who crowded into Ralph and Betty Gustafson's white-painted house overlooking Lake Massawippi included a host of writers: Doug Jones, John Glasco, Ron Sutherland, Sheila Fischman, Seymour Mayne, and others. Among the professors, students, and assorted spouses there was even a future senator, Philip Gigantes who, known by his pen-name Philip Deane, was then serving as the university's dean of arts. There too, like a dolphin out of water, was Paul Chamberland.

In his poem "Wednesday at North Hatley," Gustafson lovingly evoked a village where "a gentleness obtains." Founded after the U.S. Civil War, North Hatley used to serve as a resort for rich Americans; the chaotic graciousness of its architecture reflects this origin. When Hugh MacLennan bought a cottage there in the 1940s, the summers teemed with American editors and professors. MacLennan described North Hatley in his essay "Everyone Knows the Rules" as "a place where everyone loves everyone else. We play tennis and sail together and sit on verandas and are wise about the affairs of the world."

By 1970, the rules were slowly changing. Gradually the migratory Americans had been replaced by English Canadians, drawn to the wooded, rolling hills of the Eastern Townships and to a village with self-conscious charm. Every summer its population of 600 would triple, swelled not only by writers and teachers but also by wealthy executives. There were even a few pioneering Francophones, notably the poet and publisher Gérard Godin who, along with the singer Pauline Julien, owned a hilltop farm above the straggling community.

In general, however, North Hatley — like Lennoxville — was still an enclave of the English-speaking intelligentsia. Gustafson, Jones, and Sutherland lived on the same street, not far from the summer homes of MacLennan and F.R. Scott. But elsewhere in the Townships, the English language was in retreat: It had already become hard for a child to grow up in the nearby city of Sherbrooke, as Gustafson had done half a century before, speaking little French. On the night of October 16, while the writers and professors gathered in North Hatley, two Molotov cocktails bounced off the walls of Sherbrooke's armouries. A cell of the FLQ claimed responsibility.

Soldiers were patrolling the bus station that morning when Paul Chamberland arrived from Montreal. The new administration at Bishop's, in the persons of Dennis Healy and Philip Deane, hoped to create lines of communication between the university and French Quebec — a desire that had led them to ask Chamberland to read at the convocation. Chamberland was 31 years old. A former seminary student, he had made his mark in the early 1960s as the most eloquent poet among the young writers of *Parti pris*, a radical publishing house. At that time he believed that Quebec deserved a violent revolution. In his long poem *L'afficheur hurle* ("The poster-hanger screams") Chamberland had written:

*we will penetrate the bitter delight of death . . .
we're learning the ferocity of our roots
we're delinquent we're criminal
we're liberated from your laws*

He also addressed Quebecers in the words: "O people intact beneath the English erasure." For his book *Terre Québec* (1964) Chamberland had won a \$1,000 prize sponsored by the provincial government — an award that annoyed the culture minister at the time, Pierre Laporte. To Chamberland and his colleagues at *Parti pris*, Canada signified mental impoverishment, even spiritual death.

But after 1968 his way of life underwent a transformation. Chamberland moved away from political commitment to a

quasi-mystical revelling in Love: "sexual energy is human dynamite. . . . Man is an intense animal who wants to make love without reserve." Though few people realized it yet (Chamberland was married with a daughter) his own sexual energy was by 1970 concentrated on boys. In the sprawling energy of his writing, as well as his willingness to celebrate himself, he had become a kind of *Québécois* Walt Whitman.

The "*Déclaration politique*" that Chamberland delivered at Bishop's was an attempt to make his new position clear. He had spent the previous night typing and revising it, oblivious to the soldiers and the mass arrests. A total of 465 people were detained under the act, more than half of them on the first day; only two would ultimately be convicted of membership in the FLQ. Several writers were thrown in jail: Michel Garneau, Gérard Godin, Gaétan Dostie, and Gaston Miron, one of the finest poets in Canada. Even the government's supporters would admit that the arrests were, in large measure, arbitrary. But although Chamberland had once dedicated a poem to "our comrades of the FLQ," no policeman had knocked on his door.

When he stepped off the Voyageur bus into a chilly, nervous Sherbrooke, he was unaware that the War Measures Act had even been imposed. That morning he had heard no radio broadcasts and bought no papers. Monique Grandmangin, a Bishop's lecturer in French, met Chamberland at the station and told him the news. He merely laughed and said, "Wait till you see what I've written!"

His speech — or long prose poem — made nobody at Bishop's laugh. In response to the opening line, Irving Layton blanched onstage; his wife Aviva, near the front of the audience, felt an immediate panic that Chamberland's dangling shoulder-bag contained a bomb. Only later in his speech did it become clear what Chamberland meant by the notorious initials "FLQ": "Free Love, Quebec" (or "*Faire L'amour au Québec*"). The members of his audience who could not understand French may never have realized that his address was lyrical, idealistic, and darkly ecological: "The final battle is approaching, because the earth is in danger. The earth, like a giant organism, may be on the point of death." Chamberland was a single "cell" in his own, self-made "front" — for the sexual and imaginative liberation of Quebec.

It was the era of flower-power. In Toronto the police had just won the right to wear sideburns and waxed moustaches; in Vancouver a hundred young transients were occupying the student union building at the University of British Columbia. In Lennoxville, Paul Chamberland announced: "I belong to the Woodstock people. I belong to the *Québécois* tribe, which will be one of the stars in the flag of the New America." Fortunately, he refrained from tossing into the audience the tiny paper flowers in his bag; had he done so, several heart attacks might have ensued. At the end of his address, Chamberland broke into English: "ALL AGAINST THE WALLS . . . WE SHOULD BE TOGETHER."

He walked offstage, and the tension broke. The ceremony resumed its expected course. Presenting Irving Layton for a doctorate — his first from any Canadian university — Ralph Gustafson claimed, "he is a valuable national asset. . . . He disturbs us with the truth." Gustafson also read a poem of his own: "Fantasia on Four Deaths," a plea for gentleness and non-violence. Like so many of his poems, "Fantasia" finished up in North Hatley,

*. . . where life
Renews itself: this lake,
This territory green and lovely,
Claimed by song. . . .*

A song ended the convocation: "God Save the Queen."

IT WAS FOLLOWED by a reception in an adjacent hall. Chamberland was still the furtive centre of attention. While a gaggle of

well-wishers surrounded the official party, most people kept well away from the apostle of Love. In another context, Chamberland might have seemed innocently "poetic"; that afternoon, many saw him as a revolutionary trespassing on hallowed ground. As he wandered alone through a quiet hall, a moat of space went with him. Who could tell what he might do next?

A few people spoke to him, of course. One of them, a philosophy professor named Bill Shearson, explained to Chamberland the peculiar reactions that his presence caused. When he learned of the fear that his shoulder-bag might conceal a bomb rather than just a toothbrush, a manuscript, and

In another context, Chamberland might have seemed innocently 'poetic'; that afternoon, many saw him as a revolutionary trespassing on hallowed ground. When he learned of the fear that his shoulder-bag might conceal a bomb rather than just a toothbrush and some paper flowers, he was stupefied

some paper flowers, Chamberland was stupefied. By then he was also exhausted.

But that evening he spent several hours at Betty and Ralph Gustafson's house in North Hatley. It was a cold night, presaging winter; the afternoon's clouds had drifted off, and the stars were almost bright enough to be mirrored in the still lake. Nobody lingered on the porch or in the stone-walled garden; nobody wandered downhill to contemplate the shore. For many residents of the village, the political violence seemed remote. Yet Hugh MacLennan and his wife had returned to Montreal, feeling safer in the city than in North Hatley. A handful of people, meanwhile, had been detained under the War Measures Act in Sherbrooke. At l'Université de Sherbrooke, the police had removed some books about cubism from a professor's office. They suspected a connection with Cuba.

Gustafson's tidy, immaculate, book-lined home is an apt reflection of the poet's character; even those acquaintances who disagree with his beliefs, particularly his enmity to Quebec nationalism, hold him in affectionate esteem. A handsome piano makes his living-room small for a crowd, and that night the guests, convivial yet edgy, spilled into the study and the dining-room. Some of them stayed most of the evening in the smoky kitchen, which Betty Gustafson cheerfully called her "galley." On a couch in the living-room, across from the huge fireplace, Chamberland chatted with John Glassco, the poet, pornographer, and one-time rural mailman who had translated some of his work. But there were other men and women who took care to avoid Chamberland.

While Gustafson roamed to and fro, dispensing drinks and effortless goodwill, the gossip and hearsay flew. In their peasant blouses and Indian dresses, their velvet suits and embroidered shirts, many of the younger guests were playing a deliberate role. North Hatley offered them the chance of an idyll, free from the normal constrictions of small-town life. In the innocent terms of Joni Mitchell's song "Woodstock," they saw themselves as stardust; as golden; as searchers for a way back to the Garden. The Townships were an ideal land on which to try to free their souls. But the War Measures Act — and the challenging presence of Chamberland — forced them to confront politics.

Shortly before 10 o'clock, Gustafson approached Irving

Layton, who was holding court about love and literature from the comfort of an orange chair; a few young people squatted at his feet. With a subdued excitement, Gustafson told Layton that the prime minister was about to address the nation. Would he care to listen? Together the two men moved into the congested study, and observed the flickering black-and-white images of the most important speech Pierre Trudeau had ever made.

Persons who invoke violence are raising deliberately the level of hate in Canada. They do so at a time when the country must eliminate hate. . . . This government is not acting out of fear. It is acting to prevent fear from spreading. It is acting to maintain the rule of law without which freedom is impossible.

Gustafson agreed. Politically, he thought the War Measures Act was necessary; aesthetically, he admired the style and the elegant delivery of Trudeau's speech. He found in the prime minister's cool assertions more true poetry than in the lyrical effusions of Chamberland's "*Déclaration politique*," which he took as a kind of insult. Like other men in the older generation of English-language writers from Quebec (Glassco, MacLennan, Louis Dudek, Frank Scott) Gustafson believed that strong action was required to deal with the FLQ; to him the October kidnappings were only the newest proof of its evil. In the previous seven years, some 250 bombs had exploded in greater Montreal alone. Gustafson was haunted by memories of the bombers' maimed or murdered victims.

Layton, meanwhile, found himself in a somewhat ironic position. A party to celebrate his doctorate threatened to turn into a series of anxious political discussion-groups. As always, he felt profoundly out of place in Lennoxville and North Hatley — a Jew from the wrong side of the tracks, strayed into a community of Wasp privilege. Layton had lived as a young man with a French-Canadian family, and he had a certain sympathy for Quebec nationalism, but the FLQ outraged him. He suspected a malignant connection with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Red Brigade, and he applauded the vigour with which Trudeau had acted. The FLQ seemed to him like a festering boil on the body politic of Canada. At last, the government had chosen to lance it.

Back in Toronto he would write a letter to the *Globe and Mail* condemning "the many boneless intellectuals . . . posturing in front of the cracked mirrors of their imagination; their self-congratulatory bows are to a ghostly audience made up entirely of febrile souls like themselves." He saw such intellectuals — and they were common at the Gustafson's party — as prisoners of a dangerous innocence about the true nature of terrorism.

. . . it has been demonstrated now to us by a few misguided persons just how fragile a democratic society can be, if democracy is not prepared to defend itself. . . . Those who gain power through terror rule through terror. The government is acting, therefore, to protect your life and your liberty.

The opponents of the War Measures Act wondered if Trudeau was himself imposing terror on the people of Quebec. They found his language exaggerated, his arguments hollow. Doug Jones and his wife at the time, Sheila Fischman, while dismayed at the violence and the lurid rhetoric of the FLQ, were no less dismayed by the presence of the army and the mass arrests. Like other young, bilingual writers in North Hatley, such as Ron Sutherland and Brenda Fleet, Jones and Fischman saw no evidence of an "apprehended insurrection" — the sole justification, according to Canadian law, for imposing the act. That night, while they drank and agonized, their friend and neighbour Gerald Godin was held for an hour, in the company of five other men, in a transfer cell that measured four feet square.

Throughout Quebec, rumours were rampant. Ron Sutherland worried more about a savage Anglophone backlash than about any danger from the FLQ. Privately, the authorities were confident that the number of active FLQ members did

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not exceed a few dozen; most English Quebecers felt no such assurance. The vast majority rejected the words of New Democratic Party leader Tommy Douglas, that the War Measures Act represented "overkill on a gigantic scale . . . a sledgehammer to crack a peanut." (Doug Jones would echo the metaphor: "an elephant-gun to kill a mouse.") Yet the FLQ peanut would finally be destroyed not as a result of the sweeping powers of the War Measures Act but thanks to some long, hard, routine work by the police. The act was *not* responsible for the discovery of James Cross's kidnappers or the killers of Pierre Laporte.

It was responsible for restoring to millions of frightened Canadians a confidence that their government remained in control. They may have sensed intuitively a notion that Frank Scott was later to put into forthright words: "There are no civil liberties if you don't maintain a democratically elected government. There are none!"

But this principle cost the liberty of hundreds of innocent Quebecers. The arrest of so many writers, professors, journalists, students, and union officials raised the question of whether the authorities could even distinguish between a separatist and a terrorist. As a precaution, Jean Grandmangin urged his wife Monique (later to marry Doug Jones) to destroy her Parti Québécois membership card.

That evening in North Hatley, the opponents of the act felt baffled and shaken. For political, personal, or even aesthetic reasons, some had welcomed the election to power of a well-read French-Canadian intellectual; now the admiration turned to anger. But out of respect for the Gustafsons, out of sorrow at the recent events, or simply out of fear, many of them kept their true feelings to themselves.

There are very few times in the history of any country when all persons must take a stand on critical issues. This is one of those times. This is one of those issues.

After Trudeau's speech, the crisis occasioned a wave of fresh commentary all over the house, but in a while the mood of the party changed. Wine bottles were uncorked. It was as if politics had intruded too far into private lives. Canadians are not accustomed to fearing violence, whether from terrorists or from armed soldiers. Ragtime music burst from the piano, and for once in that troubled month, no one thirsted for the latest news.

ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, Irving and Aviva Layton left the Gustafsons' home, where they had stayed the night upstairs, to return to Ontario. The long lake glittered in the morning's cool sun.

That evening Pierre Laporte's strangled body was found in the trunk of a Chevrolet east of Montreal. Soon after he heard the news, Ralph Gustafson began to compose an angry political poem, "Aubade." Believing that the FLQ had merely put into action the extremist rhetoric of the 1960s, he blamed certain intellectuals for fomenting terrorism in Quebec. "Aubade" contains a sour reference to Paul Chamberland:

Tout ce que je désire, c'est l'amour.
So sang the prejudiced poet
Under city walls.

Chamberland and Layton had met in the course of a party where each of them felt alien, but they exchanged few words. Their lack of contact is a poignant irony. By 1970 Chamberland was becoming the prime exponent of sexual liberation in Québécois poetry; he would eventually publish a daring book called *Le Prince de Sexamour*. Layton, for his part, was proud of lugging sex into the Presbyterian corridors of English-Canadian verse. As it happened, it was Chamberland who wrote, "The liberation of my sexuality has been, till now, my most powerful motor of evolution"; Layton could have made the same claim. But that night, divided by politics and age and language, the two men saw little of each other. Hugh MacLen-

nan's vision of Canada as a pair of solitudes seemed more appropriate than ever.

Chamberland spent the night next door, in the elegant white home of Doug Jones and Sheila Fischman. More than any other writers in the region, perhaps even in the province, Jones and Fischman were devoted to breaking down the two solitudes. In 1969 they and a pair of friends had founded the bilingual magazine *Ellipse*; in its first issue, writing by Layton, Chamberland, Gaston Miron, Gérald Godin, and Frank Scott had appeared in both French and English. An editorial clarified the journal's purpose: "to generate a more intimate commerce between the two languages."

Jones, like Scott, was a poet, translator, university professor, and a fixture of the North Hatley scene. The evening after the Gustafsons' party, Fischman and Jones ate dinner with Frank and Marian Scott, who had travelled down from Montreal during the day. But the two poets found themselves in opposite camps. A friend of Godin, Jones was distressed that the government of Canada could intimidate and jail its citizens on the grounds of mere association. A friend of Pierre Trudeau (whom he had urged to run for the Liberal leadership), Scott was distressed that a gang of terrorists could expect to hold the government of Canada to ransom. He felt the survival of the nation was at stake. The meal was tense.

By then Paul Chamberland had left North Hatley. At breakfast that morning, after some much-needed sleep, he had talked with verve and passion. While Fischman, a bleary-eyed Jones, and their other house-guests, Cathy Mezie and Ron Graham, listened over mugs of coffee, Chamberland lamented the heavy-handed use of power in Quebec. He preferred, like Joni Mitchell, to dream of song and celebration, of bombers turning into butterflies above the spontaneous children of God. But the crisis grounded such dreams. As the morning newsreaders announced, 255 people had already been detained throughout the province. L'Université du Québec had closed down; its rector claimed that the War Measures Act made free expression impossible.

Before Chamberland returned to Montreal, he wanted to see the country home of Gérald Godin — his friend, fellow poet, and colleague in *Parti pris*. The crimson of fluttering leaves and the dark green of conifers stood out that day in sharp relief against the sky. As Chamberland walked with the four Anglophones up past the Hatley Inn, away from the mild village, an odour of moss and fallen leaves pervaded the air. The lake, rinsed with light, fell away to the south.

Godin's farm was shut. Normally at this time of year, he and Pauline Julien would have come down to the Townships to prepare the place for winter. A rumour had spread through North Hatley that the police had paid the farm a visit, but nobody knew for sure. Now, on the tousled trees, the apples were ripe for picking. On impulse, Chamberland plucked a few of the juiciest-looking and stuffed them in his shoulder-bag. It was his only luggage. Not realizing that Godin and Julien were being held incommunicado in separate prisons, he hoped to present them with their own apples.

The five men and women strolled down the hill. A bizarrely tranquil pastoral was ending: it was time for Chamberland to go. Back along the narrow, winding highway through the sleepy university town; back past the convent and the Hell's Angels clubhouse to the bus station in Sherbrooke. For all he knew, the Montreal police might be waiting to drive him to jail.

But Chamberland would remain free. Under the grey haze of the city, he began to write a "Manifesto of the Free Children of Kébec"; it would soon appear in *Ellipse*, in a pair of languages. The manifesto is an answer to the FLQ, and to the Canadian government. It includes a statement of faith: "Against the violence of weapons, money or the manipulation of brains, I choose the colours of love and the strategy of life." □

Canada first

Though eloquently comprehensive about accomplishments at home, Hurtig's new encyclopedia tends to overlook Canada's role outside the country's borders

By George Galt

The Canadian Encyclopedia, Hurtig, 3 volumes, 2,089 pages, \$175.00 cloth (ISBN 0 33030 269 X).

AUSTRALIA DOES NOT appear as an entry in the new *Canadian Encyclopedia*. But under "Canada and Australia" relations between the two countries are examined, and most general readers will find some surprises in this thorough account of our bilateral economic and cultural exchanges. I learned that "Calgary's link with Western Australia is strong: over 25 Canadian-based oil companies have set up joint ventures there," and that responsible government in Australia was "a constitutional gain indebted to Canadian precedents." I was also reminded that Canada's high commissioner to Australia is Ed Schreyer, who, if his old habits have held, will be one of this encyclopedia's most avid readers.

The former Manitoba premier and governor general will probably warm to these volumes. The entry on him describes the provincial government he led as "moderate, honest, mildly progressive," which is how, with a qualification or two, I would describe the editorial tenor of this impressive reference work. Schreyer has a mind for detail, as does Hurtig's *Encyclopedia*. When I interviewed him at Rideau Hall

in Ottawa a few years ago, he began our conversation with a bizarre icebreaker — he gave me an anecdotal history of the small Ontario town I had told his press secretary I inhabited. It was a little speech, I still believe, taken from one of the encyclopedias he reportedly perused for pleasure. Schreyer and his ilk will enjoy these new source works, even though Napanee, the town I once lived near, has no entry; nor does Gibbard's, Canada's oldest operating furniture factory, which still stands on Napanee's main street. Even the best books of knowledge must have rules of exclusion. Everything can never be collected in one place.

The scope of these volumes is nonetheless generous and wide. What they miss in overlooked or excluded detail, they more than compensate for in conceptual range. There are penetrating essays on a wide variety of cultural and socioeconomic subjects. The natural sciences, history, and politics all appear to be well covered. And there are less demanding entries that fill these hard factual outlines of our national map with dots of vivid colour. Among the lighter pieces are the hundreds of mini-biographies of distinguished individuals, those who are probably now making or who have already left a lasting mark on the society around them.

Encyclopedias are often thought to be objective, but they never are. Every book has its bias. Perhaps the National Library is an objective repository of knowledge, in the sense that it collects copies of every book published in the land, without exclusion. But encyclopedias, in spite of their broadly encompassing erudition and measured view, inevitably reflect the values of their publishers and editors and, if the writers are given any freedom at all, of their writers too.

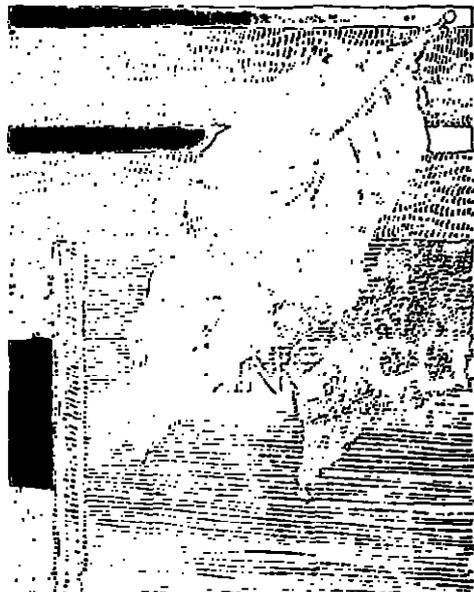
Hurtig's team of editors lays a heavy emphasis on what might be called loosely culture and communications. Science is covered in some depth too. There is, as I mentioned, a mildly progressive leaning in the three volumes. They devote much space to discussions of public policy, both within larger essays and in entries on specific policy issues.

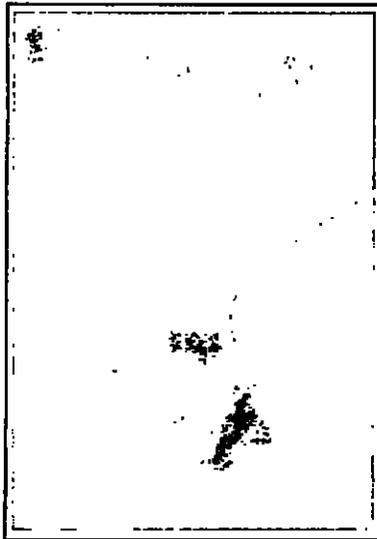
The academic writers (who make up the majority of contributors) tend to be among the less conservative in their disciplines. Even those on the radical left, however, are scrupulously balanced and comprehensive in elucidating the various conflicting views that surround their topics.

Political axe-grinding is certainly not a flaw of the entries I have read, but writers do seem to have been given a free hand to impose a concluding judgement on their pieces in the last few lines, and it is here that sometimes their bias shows. Depending on your political stripe, you may believe (as I do) that the editors have made just the right compromise between even-handed arguments, which tend to be colourless, and forthright opinion, which tends to be spirited; or you may feel these books are a liberal or even a socialist plot to subvert the minds of a generation of students, ironically funded with a \$4-million grant from the Alberta Tory government.

Another general comment that can be fairly made is that, particularly for entries having to do with the life of the mind, the emphasis is on Canada's more recent past. The cultural landscape of this country has flowered dramatically since the 1950s, and the contributors dutifully record this rich blooming. But sometimes all the enthusiasm for contemporary accomplishment gives the articles a brisk currency that begins to suggest ephemerality — disconcerting in an encyclopedia.

The article on "Art Writing and Criticism" exemplifies the historical imbalance I see. As in most of the longer entries the first paragraph (in this case the first two) is general and introductory. There follow one paragraph covering the 19th century; one partly on the first years of the 20th century; one and a half on the years after the Second World War; and then six paragraphs on the years since 1970. Yet could it be otherwise? The arts *have* expanded rapidly in Canada over the last 30 years, and the recent efflorescence is precisely what makes this reference work so timely. It is to the *Encyclopedia's* credit that, with few exceptions, the contributors



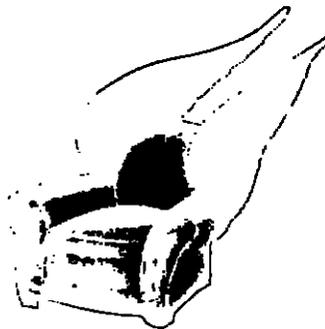


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succinctly and gracefully in their limited space encapsulate the significant trends, personalities, and achievements that have given contemporary Canadian culture its strengths.

Books, publishers, and writers, their history, cultural contributions, and economic problems are lavished with attention in these volumes. The publishing industry may not have enjoyed such thorough public coverage since 1970 when the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing generated wide interest. Among other entries dealing with the subject are those headed "Authors and Their Milieu," "Best-Sellers in English," "Book Publishing," "Bookselling," "Literature and Politics," and "Small Presses." Canadian literature is given intelligent critical overviews under the headings "Autobiographical Writing," "Essay," "Exploration and Travel Literature," "Novel," "Poetry," "Popular Literature," and "Short Fiction." The genres have counterpart entries for literature in French.

Among the most pleasurable passages in these books are the brief profiles of distinguished architects, artists, broadcasters, choreographers, film-makers, musicians, and writers. They are written deftly, often with energy and style. Other groups that appear to have fared well in the competition for space are scientists, sports figures, clergymen, and exceptional women. Businessmen seem to receive less deference. Carling Bassett, for example, the young tennis star, has her own entry, while her flamboyant entrepreneur relatives do not. But there seems to be an editorial foul-up with the Bassetts. David and Douglas are cross-referenced in the index to the "Baton Broadcasting Inc." entry. They are not mentioned there.

Business is not ignored in these books, but it is accorded no special status either. Our premier bank, for example, the Royal, is given a brief, one-paragraph entry. The life-insurance companies, some of which are among Canada's largest multi-national corporations, are given no individual entries at all, a curious omission in view of the Canadian inclination to save money and avoid risk. The editorial strategy for business is to treat it by industry rather than by individual firm.

Distinguished entrepreneurs (distinguished, usually, by their ability to accumulate immense pools of capital) like the Belzbergs and the Bronfmans get individual entries, but apart from a few stars the approach is impersonal and colourless. Canada's important resource, manufacturing, and service industries are all thoroughly examined. For a casual reader this plethora of fact

can be sleep-inducing, but the industrial entries are among the most vital parts of such a reference work if it is to be used as a reliable educational tool. The thoroughness could lead to confusion in readers new to their subjects — but this is true of most good encyclopedias. If you have a question about trees and their impact on the economy, for example, you have to look here at five different articles: "Forest," "Forest Economics," "Forest Fires," "Forest Harvesting," and "Forestry." But I can't think of any question I've ever had about forests that remains unanswered after reading all six pages of dense print.

Architecture wins a sympathetic hearing throughout these volumes, acting to correct a longstanding and widespread Canadian ignorance of the subject. In pioneer North American society buildings were rarely more than shelter, and in the nascent industrial economy that followed, few buildings were allowed to stand in the way of economic expansion. Many graceful architectural monuments to industry and commerce were built in Montreal and Toronto, for example, in the 19th century, but few survive. English-speaking Canadians have tended to regard the structures in which they live and work as practical necessities — pleasant to see them dressed up if the builder had the money, but no fancy garment could make any edifice irreplaceable.

Architecture as art is a fairly recent popular notion in this country, as the entry on "Heritage Conservation" implies. The *Encyclopedia* reflects this enlightened perspective, not only in nine pages of articles on architecture, its styles and development, but in additional entries on "Barns," "Bank Architecture," "Railway Station," and so on. The piece on barns, written not by an agronomist but by the architectural historian and critic Eric Arthur, is the kind of imaginative and felicitous medium-length entry (eight paragraphs) that crops up unexpectedly yet often enough through these volumes to make them a pleasure to browse in. The dry, laboured prose that sometimes characterizes encyclopedias can be found in these pages, but it is not a defining trait.

There appears to be only one significant blind spot in the world view of Hurtig's *Encyclopedia*, though intense use by teachers and researchers may well identify others. My single disappointment in the scope of these volumes is that their broad perspective is not a world perspective but an inward-looking Canadian view, fine as far as it goes, but ultimately distorting, I believe, as a vision of Canadian reality. Educated Canadians have always looked beyond our borders (and have often gone to live

and work beyond them) with far more energy and discernment than these books do. The "Canadian International Development Agency" is given one brief paragraph. "Foreign Aid" is given only five. Taken together the two pieces give a cursory and quite superficial account of a Canadian endeavour that has occupied some of our best minds and now absorbs about one billion of our dollars annually. There is no entry acknowledging our missionary activities abroad — an astonishing oversight.

The entry on "Exploration and Travel Literature in English" is good, but again only as far as it goes, which is only to our borders. No mention is made here of those who, like Margaret Laurence and George Woodcock, have written literary travelogues about other countries, nor of those who, like Al Purdy and Earle Birney, have travelled widely and brought home poems. (The article on travel literature in French, on the other hand, does mention travellers abroad.) And I wonder if the omission from these pages of Norman Levine, a highly accomplished Canadian fiction writer who for years was better known in England and Germany than at home, arises from the same blindness?

In the editors' defence it must be added that, as well as the "Canada and Australia" entry already mentioned, there are articles on external relations, covering our evolving role in international politics, and on "Canada-Third World Relations." But here mention could have been made of Canadian missionary work in Latin America, China, and elsewhere, and much more than a single paragraph could have been allotted to church-sponsored and other non-governmental aid agencies. The entry is regrettably brief. There is no strong sense that life away from home is interesting or important enough to our self-definition to merit much space.

For my eyes the type in these books is small and dense, though not uncomfortable to read for short periods. Some people who have looked at the pages find them distractingly shiny. More distracting for me are the smaller, almost postage stamp-sized illustrations, which act less as visual aids to the articles than as gratuitous interior decorations. I would dispense with them altogether. One excellent design decision, though, is the inclusion of the many reproductions of paintings adjacent to articles about their creators. Some are as large as half a page. They are a pleasant relief from the sea of print, and a worthwhile adjunct to the pieces on individual artists.

There will always be quibbles about the priorities assigned by the editors to various subjects, and about decisions to

include this and exclude that. Should Gail Fox, an established minor poet (whose work I admire) have her own entry when David Helwig, a novelist of note, does not? The *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* reverses it, and I would be inclined to do the same, but this kind of nit-picking demeans the accomplishment of these volumes. In broad outline and in much of the writing they deliver a reference work of high excellence. Nothing equal to their reach and eloquence has ever been published in Canada. After growing a little familiar with the structure and multiple voices of this information epic, I am left with the sense that a vast and variegated land has met its match in print. □

REVIEW

Back to the future

By I.M. Owen

The Handmaid's Tale, by Margaret Atwood, McClelland & Stewart, 304 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 0813 9).

MARGARET ATWOOD'S new novel is a departure, quite different from its predecessors, though immediately recognizable as coming from the same mind, by the grace of its style, the penetration of its wit, and the emotional chill that pervades it. Hitherto her novels have been studies of her own generation. This one looks into the future, two or three generations on.

It's apparently set in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and references to various unnamed buildings doubtless make points for those who know Harvard that are lost on the rest of us. Anyway, since the assassination of the president and the massacre of Congress, New England now is the fundamentalist republic of Gilead, beset by constant war on the periphery with rival sects, especially the Baptists. But the problem that exercises the authorities more is impaired fertility, which has brought the Caucasian peoples well below zero population growth.

To these fundamentalists, if a couple is childless the reason must be that the woman is barren, as in the Bible; male infertility is unthinkable. As childlessness is endemic, especially in the governing class, the Commanders of the Faithful, Gilead has resorted to the device invented by Rachel in Genesis, chapter 30, when she says to her husband Jacob: "Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her, and she shall bear upon my knees, that I also may have children

by her." To this end they round up women of childbearing age and of proved fertility who are unmarried or have been partners in marriages to divorced men — which are no longer considered marriages. Then, after careful indoctrination, each of these women goes into the household of a Commander as a "handmaid," to perform the function of the maid Bilhah. The narrator and central character is one of these. She has lost her husband and daughter in an attempt to escape to freedom in Canada — it can't happen here, you'll be glad to know — and in her new role as a handmaid has also lost her name; she is called simply Offred, because her Commander's name is Fred.

In this review I want to tell as little as possible about the way things are ordered in Gilead, because the great glory of the book is its technique of gradual revelation, sustained with dazzling skill from beginning to end. It was this that kept me reading with delight. But it must be said that the second reading was much less pleasurable; without the constant puzzles, constantly resolved in new surprises, it became a chore.

Trollope thought that his own *Doctor Thorne* was a bad book because its plot was too good. He was wrong about this, as it happens; *Doctor Thorne* is actually his first fully Trollopien novel. But it's true that if he hadn't created a galaxy of vivid characters the elaborate machinery would have dominated the book and deprived it of lasting interest. The very elaborate and ingenious machinery of *The Handmaid's Tale* brings it dangerously close to this fate. I don't think — though I haven't tried them for a long time — that the classic works of fiction about the future, *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, would suffer as much from the rereading test.

In those classics, the societies described are built up from extrapolations of the trends that the authors most disliked in their own times. The same is true of *The Handmaid's Tale*. As we would expect from Atwood, the most conspicuous of the trends she selects are anti-feminist; but as we would also expect from her there is even-handed justice, and there are tendencies in the women's movement itself that help to form Gilead. Offred's mother is recalled as a representative and most engaging activist in the cause, and one of Offred's earliest memories is of being taken by her to a book-burning. In Gilead women are forbidden to read at all, though the penalty is relatively mild: removal of one hand after the third offence.

Atwood rightly avoids technological gimmickry. Vehicles, houses, weapons are much as they are today. The one important technological innovation is all

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too alarmingly close to today's reality. Cash has been abandoned entirely. To make a purchase you present your card, your Compunumber is punched into the till, and the correct amount is deducted from your bank account. How convenient this would be — will be, I expect. But when the revolutionary government decides that women should possess no property, all it has to do is to declare that all their numbers are invalid. Here's a danger that really is waiting for us, just around the next corner: a simple method of suppressing any inconvenient group.

So here is a novel that should be read, and that can be read with pleasure and excitement, at least the first time. After that, it remains a valuable tract for the times; its details, which I have regretfully refrained from describing, have been brilliantly worked out and are well worth examining carefully. □

REVIEW

We are what we eat

By John Allemang

Across the Table: An Indulgent Look at Food in Canada, by Cynthia Wine, watercolours by Mary Pratt, Prentice-Hall, 224 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 13 003641 2).

FOOD HABITS and habitat used to be as closely connected for human beasts as for animals in the wild. In the western world at least, that connection is growing even more tenuous. Where science has not improved nature through irrigation or clonal tinkering, truck transport has brought a continent's produce within easy reach of most gullets. Refrigerators and freezers make storage much less haphazard, and although our food may not taste better than our ancestors', it is always available.

In this discursive book on Canadian eating habits, Cynthia Wine, a former writer for *Homemaker's* magazine, has chosen to ignore this food trend while pursuing almost every other one. She divides Canada into six regions and attempts to isolate the characteristics of each.

As the subtitle suggests, her pursuit is relaxed rather than rigorous, because her subject is by definition vague. Only a few isolated Canadians belong to homogeneous communities that produce regional cuisine as the term might be defined in France. Even these Canadians (with the exception of the more remote native peoples) are bound by the conventions of their immigrant ancestors as

much as by the limits of their environment. More recent immigrants share this obliviousness to the conventions of the New World, but only for the first generation. Then they join the rest of us who toy with granola and pizza one day, porridge and Chinese food the next — North American cuisine, in short.

Although it goes against the thesis of her book, this lapse is apparent to Cynthia Wine. Of Ontario, for example, she writes, "Its regional flavour includes the taste of all the provinces of Canada and most of the countries of the world." That becomes the counter-theme of this book. While Newfoundland, rural Quebec, and Eastern European enclaves on the Prairies have perpetuated a local style of heavy eating, the dull Anglo-Saxon traditions in our cities have been invigorated by new arrivals.

As Cynthia Wine notes, there is every reason why our eating habits should change. The heavy pastries and thick gravies that gave caloric warmth to shivering pioneers are gross excess in our controlled climate. But distaste for fat in its more obvious forms — what Wine calls "excessive concern for health" — is leading us to prefer raw bran to such treats as Winnipeg kolbasa sausage or Kitchener bacon.

To its credit, Wine's book places the taste of food ahead of its medicinal value. But in doing so she is still a captive to her own urbane palate. She can't hide her disgust at the bear stew and whale membrane she is served in the North and is much happier at the musk-ox chop, which meets a city-dweller's criteria: it's thick, juicy, and it falls apart at the touch of the fork.

If this paints a picture of Wine as a self-indulgent tourist rather than an indulgent traveller, it is not far from the truth. Much of the book is the diary of a spectator rushing from event to event. There is little analysis (of historical influences, say, or the effect of autocratic marketing boards on our eating habits). But there is also little attempt made to draw out descriptions and turn lists of recipe-makers into real people.

Which is a pity, because occasionally Wine, though no Calvin Trillin, tells a nice little tale. Showing more pushiness than most of our food writers, she forces herself into a B.C. lumber camp, in itself part of the Canadian Myth. Here is carefully prepared, unmeretricious food, such as clam chowder, cod in butter, Swedish meatballs, roast beef, eight pastries, a dozen ice creams. "It has to be good enough," says one chef, "so that the guys don't throw it back at you." The lumberjacks eat in silence, without evident pleasure, and depart after 20 minutes. Wine's request for a picture of these tough regional eaters at

table is denied. Camera-shy, she assumes. "Camera-shy!," laughs the boss. "Hell, they're wanted." No doubt the fare in prison is much less satisfying.

The journalistic format that strives for the easy generalization and gives undue prominence to a colourful but inconsequential event does allow for a few ironic pictures, especially where the sophisticated author seems distanced from her mainstream subjects. When experienced fishermen in the North land several dozen northern pike, visions of butter and garlic sauce dance in her head. Instead the fillets are wrapped in Shake 'n' Bake and sizzled in margarine. Then there is the modern method for peaching salmon en papillote in the dishwasher, of which Wine says: "You must have a dishwasher with a drying cycle, because the new ones with energy-saving features don't give off enough heat." Canadians still have to adapt to their environment, after all. □

REVIEW

Great expectations

By Paul Wright

The Red Fox, by Anthony Hyde, Penguin, 321 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 670 80353 6).

THIS BOOK IS the sensation of Canadian commercial publishing: a first novel by an unknown author, it made more than \$1 million in advances before a single word was seen by the public, and is contracted to appear in Europe, South America, Mexico, the United States, and Japan.

Such success is as easy to explain after the fact as it is difficult to duplicate before. To begin with, Anthony Hyde has written an espionage story, a genre that bids to become the dominant form of popular fiction because (it is said) of its consonance with the moral ambiguity of the times and the chronic standoff in East-West relations. Second, the story rests on a foundation of research into modern Russian history that provides a level of interest independent of the plot while adding to its credibility. Third, it has an American hero, a Canadian heroine, and action in Canada, the United States, France, Austria, and the Soviet Union — something for nearly everyone. Finally, Hyde's Toronto agent, Lucinda Vardey, skilfully deployed the manuscript to capture the attention of foreign publishers, and manipulated their interest into a high-bidding auction of rights.

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The long-awaited second edition of *Canadian Subject Headings* (CSH2) has been released. This basic reference book for librarians, information scientists and people interested in Canadian studies has been considerably revised and augmented to reflect changes to *Library of Congress Subject Headings* since 1976 and the publication of the second edition of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*.

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Canadian Subject Headings: Second Edition/deuxième édition may be ordered from the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9. Telephone: (819) 997-2560. Each order must be accompanied by a cheque payable to the Receiver General for Canada. Price: \$18.50 in Canada, \$22.20 elsewhere. Catalogue No.: SN3-106/1985. ISBN 0-660-11786-X.



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Yet hard work, calculation, and good management are notoriously insufficient to ensure success in the final transaction — that between the book and its readers. There remain questions whether the book transcends these mechanics to emerge as, at minimum, a well-told story, or whether it soars out of category to take on the larger moral significance of a mainstream novel, or whether it must be consigned to the lot of mere literary carpentry, a lifeless, contrived artifact.

At first, the indications are not promising. The prose seems at times too wooden, and the same is true in another way of the characters. They seem drawn from the conventional stock established by benchmark works stretching back through Graham Greene and Eric Ambler to John Buchan and Somerset Maugham. At the centre is an American journalist-turned-academic whose specialty is the Soviet Union. He has been summoned by his lost love, the adopted daughter of a wealthy Canadian fur merchant with business connections in Russia, to discover the fate of her missing parent. Soon rises a reference to Moscow gold and a desperate race against the agents of the GRU to find it.

Before we have learned this much, however, Hyde's plot has taken over, and we are off at a brisk clip from Toronto to Halifax, Detroit, and Washington, finally ending in a stretch of action within the USSR. Paradoxically, though the author has never set foot in Russia, this sequence is the most believable in the novel.

Each stage offers its own enigma that, when stared upon with sufficient intensity by the hero, grudgingly yields a meagre clue sufficient to carry the action forward to the next. The dénouement provides a solution not only to the mystery of the missing millionaire but also to a problem that has troubled the protagonist for the whole of his adult life. And through these private matters is woven a skein of Russian history that hints at a connection with one of the most famous historical myths of our time.

All of this is symmetrical and satisfying, ingenious, even compelling to some degree. To judge it in absolute terms, one would have to fault it for extreme complexity and for lacking a sense of inevitability, which results in the need for an epilogue to tie up loose ends. There is a risk entailed in the writing of genre books, that they get stuck in the formula and thus become books about other books.

I am confident, however, that Hyde's work will not disappoint its backers. He is quoted as saying, "I've put a lot of my time and energy — in fact, my life —

into learning to write." *The Red Fox* is proof that he has learned his lessons. Reports that he has used his advance money to help finance a research trip to California and East Berlin indicate that he intends to keep on putting them into practice. □

REVIEW

Intimate pleasures

By Douglas Hill

Overhead in a Balloon: Stories of Paris, by Mavis Gallant, Macmillan, 208 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9687 1).

Various Miracles, by Carol Shields, Stoddart, 183 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7737 5036 3).

STATISTICS USUALLY mislead, but there can hardly be doubt that in any comparative assessment of story writers and stories and story collections published — per capita — Canada is in the international forefront. It's not just that this has been an especially good year. It has, of course — strong collections by Bharati Mukherjee and Katherine Govier, a wonderful valedictory volume from Marian Engel, several books from first-timers.

No, this year is not an exception, but part of an observable trend toward prolific excellence. Two recent volumes attest to our solid position on the international story exchange. Mavis Gallant, Canadian by birth, Parisian by choice since 1950, has made a selection from her work of the past five years (all but one of the tales first published in the *New Yorker*) for *Overhead in a Balloon*. Carol Shields, originally from Chicago, now resident in Winnipeg, has put together her first collection (after four well-received novels), *Various Miracles*. Both books are good; both may surprise even those readers familiar with Gallant and Shields by the multiplicity of their accomplishments and by the adeptness they show with that most risky of attitudes, humour.

Overhead in a Balloon contains 11 stories. The two longest, "Speck's Idea" and "Luc and his Father," are each 40-odd pages; others are fewer than 10. Most are infused with an inventive playfulness. These are dissections of illusion and pretence, send-ups of the seekers and strivers who try to write, paint, collect, run galleries, who exist somewhere on the periphery of creativity, on the "fringe," as Gallant puts it.

The stories succeed primarily through characterization. The members of Gallant's repertory company take turns with the major roles. The art maven Sandor Speck and his assistant Walter figure in two of the tales; critic and novelist Henri Grippe wars against the Philistines in three; a young man who marries once for convenience (not his) and once for love turns up to narrate three quite touching shorter pieces. With all of them, a reader has the impression that Gallant is deliberately exploring the self-generating possibilities of fictional character, emphasizing the ways men and women (especially men) view themselves and talk about themselves as they attempt to fit into the lives they imagine they have chosen.

Style, as should be expected, counts for much here. The prose is elegant, ironic, now and then rather arch. But Gallant is consistently, relentlessly funnier than a reader might anticipate; her humour, the quick perceptions of social skew and moral skulduggery, has the bite of sophisticated cynicism. The stories she has picked for *Overhead in a Balloon* are given unity and coherence as much by tone of voice, the sharp subtle smile behind the words, as by characters and setting. Afloat on laughter, it's a book of delights.

So, in a different way, is *Various Miracles*, with (for this reader anyway) the added pleasure of discovering in Shields's 21 stories a formal diversity, a range of tone, and an overall liveliness markedly greater than anything her novels have achieved. The book is boldly arranged, with the best pieces at the end (the last one, "Others," is particularly fine), so that a reader feels pulled along on a crescendo of talent. There's a wise sense of timing to many of the separate stories as well.

The situations Shields works with are straightforward enough — a woman cutting grass, a young girl accidentally locked in an ancient French church, a letter from the narrator's friend about a visit to a doll factory in Japan. Each is an occasion for consciousness. A few — "Pardon," for instance — border on fantasy; a few seem like parables. Whatever their mode, the stories seem as they establish themselves almost to flaunt their smallness, their clear sympathy with the ordinary and undramatic. And then the disarmingly simple takes a leap, in plot, structure, or insight. It's as one of the characters (in "Scenes") says of the crucial moments in her imagination: they are "much too fragmentary to be stories and far too immediate to be memories. They seem to bloom out of nothing, out of the thin, uncoloured air of defeats and pleasures."

Language is a central concern for

Shields. Many of the stories are about the process of naming and describing a character's inner and outer worlds. Shields is no Updike, but her attention to people (nearly all of them women) who have a gift or a love or just an attraction for words pays high dividends in this collection.

The stories in *Various Miracles* are upbeat. There certainly are no pulpy sentimental thrills, nor scarcely a true happy ending anywhere, but Shields manages regularly to project some significant lift of the spirit, some lurch of the heart toward joy. Even the "unhappy" stories — "Fragility" is one — are moving in a positive way.

In one of her briefer pieces, Shields discusses the importance of parties, the opportunity casual gatherings afford "to possess, for a few hours at least, a life that was denser, more concentrated and more vigorous than the usual spun-out wastes of time that had to be scratched endlessly for substance." A reader of Gallant's and Shields's short fiction is given that chance at intimacy many times over. □

REVIEW

Rusty tubs and ferry tales

By Roy MacLaren

In *All Respects Ready*, by Frederick Watt, Prentice-Hall, illustrated, 224 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 13 453630 4).

Ferry Command, by Don McVicar, Airline Publishing (Ad Astra), illustrated, 213 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 906393 12 4).

North Atlantic Run, by Marc Milner, University of Toronto Press, illustrated, 326 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2544 7).

U-Boats Against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters, by Michael L. Hadley, McGill-Queen's University Press, illustrated, 400 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7735 0584 0).

HERE ARE FOUR books about the Second World War, two by scholars who were too young to have been there themselves and two by participants. The two scholars win hands down. Indeed, in the case of *In All Respects Ready*, one wonders why Prentice-Hall decided to undertake the expense of publishing such an inconsequential book.

The inconsequential first. Frederick Watt served throughout most of the war in the Royal Canadian Navy's Boarding

Service in Halifax. Originally intended to help deter sabotage on ships arriving in Halifax from neutral U.S. ports, the Boarding Service evolved into something of a Sally Ann for Allied merchant seamen, occasionally disgruntled or even recalcitrant in their hazardous role in the vital flow of supplies to Britain. Watt tells his story of harbour duty with an abundance of reconstructed dialogue, but in the end the book fails simply because its content is so slight.

The other book by a participant is also by a non-combatant of sorts — a Ferry Command pilot — and it too suffers from reconstructed dialogue, although far less. Don McVicar is a Canadian, but his war memoir was published in Shrewsbury, England, in 1981; it is now available in Canada. It is ephemera of a type: Ferry Command unquestionably played an important part in delivering U.S.-built aircraft to Britain, but one is left with the impression of being on the sidelines, certainly far from front-line combat. Nevertheless, the book breathes a certain welcome immediacy whenever the bemused and self-deprecating McVicar turns to reporting the challenge of opening sub-Arctic air routes to Britain or of delivering across the Atlantic new and unfamiliar aircraft from the burgeoning factories of the U.S.A. The uncertain world of the Ferry Command pilot is well conveyed, but curiously, the book suddenly stops in 1942 with McVicar on the eve of the daunting task of delivering Catalinas from Canada to Scotland. As a result, *Ferry Command* is only a half-book.

Not so with *U-Boats Against Canada* and *North Atlantic Run*. They are complete, authoritative and analytical accounts of the RCN's troubled anti-submarine role during the Second World War, and what an extraordinary story they tell.

Canadians have, since the war, rightly prided themselves on the achievements of those rusty little rollers, the corvettes, that almost unintentionally made the navy's principal contribution to victory. Gilbert Tucker, in his post-war official history, had fuelled the pride of Canadians in their achievements. But only in recent years have the first intimations appeared in print of what every officer and rating must have known: that Royal Navy corvettes and frigates were better equipped, their crews better trained, and their collective record more impressive. Douglas and Greenhouse in their *Out of the Shadow* of 1977 probed some of the shortcomings, but it is only thanks to the more recent burrowings of Milner and Hadley that a full account has become available.

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the case of Hadley) to German naval archives as well as to survivors, and with the knowledge of the role played by Ultra, a far more complete picture now emerges. Neither book is particularly notable for its felicity of style. However, those who are prepared to plough on, like the persevering corvettes themselves, will be rewarded by a fascinating story of hardiness and incompetence, endurance and innovation, and above all, sheer courage on bridge, mess deck, and engine-room.

Milner, a defence department historian, concentrates on one time and one place: he tells in detail the story of how a wholly unprepared and undermanned Canadian navy was pressed into assisting the Royal Navy in attempting to counter the U-boat threat against convoys crossing the "Black Hole" — that mid-Atlantic gap where anti-submarine aircraft could not reach — from the beginning of the war to mid-1943. Thereafter, the advent of long-range aircraft, the increasing sophistication of technical equipment, and the attrition among the brave U-boat crews ensured growing safety for Allied convoys. Not that it was suddenly plain sailing: ships were still sunk, men drowned, froze to death, or were torn apart, but the Battle of the Atlantic was essentially won by

mid-1943. The only thing that had ever really worried Churchill had become a major Allied victory.

The role of the RCN remained secondary to that of the Royal Navy and eventually, with the advent of escort carrier groups, to the U.S. Navy as well.



But for Canada, the scramble to build the corvettes in every yard that could conceivably do so, to man the ships with volunteers, some of whom had never before seen salt water, to officer the ships with the "90-day wonders" who had not long before been working in banks or schools or law firms was a formidable task. In addition, an industrial incapacity to manufacture promptly radar and other technical equipment (that in any case was still in its infancy) meant a challenge that strained and occasionally exceeded the capacities of the naval headquarters in Ottawa and the bases in St. John's and Halifax (especially given the continuing preoccupation of much of the senior staff

with creating quite another fleet than the corvette navy). Milner sums up:

The significance of the Royal Canadian Navy's contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic lay in its successful efforts to hold the line until the Allies could assume the offensive. There can be no doubt that the fleet was inefficient prior to 1943 and that this inefficiency can be measured in lost lives and ships. However, one can only speculate on the number of lives and ships saved simply because the Royal Canadian Navy somehow found the escorts necessary to establish convoy routes and support operations. . . .

Hadley, a reserve naval officer and professor of German, limits himself to a smaller canvas, the bold operations of German submarines in the coastal waters of eastern Canada, including the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The result is, however, not so very different from Milner's. Here too a portrait of courage (German as well as Allied), improvisation, and perseverance soon emerges. Hadley also includes lively accounts of two wholly incompetent and badly equipped German spies being landed from U-boats, of the establishment of automatic weather stations, and of an elaborate effort to spirit away German naval officers who were to tunnel their way out of a Canadian P.O.W. camp (supplementing John

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Melady's *Escape from Canada*). But the main burden of Hadley's book remains essentially the same as Milner's: the pre-war naval staff, unlike the German naval staff, did not foresee the possibilities of

trans-ocean submarine warfare.

The result was that the RCN was woefully ill-equipped to assume the major anti-submarine role that was suddenly thrust upon it. Its subsequent contribu-

tion was largely the result of the commitments, the bravery, and sheer obstinacy of the "wavy navy," the wartime volunteers who manned those far distant, storm-beaten little ships. □

FEATURE REVIEW

Truth and illusion

Just as Alden Nowlan used fantasy to escape from the real world, two new Maritime poets rearrange reality to explore their experiences

By Al Purdy

An Exchange of Gifts: Poems New and Selected, by Alden Nowlan, Irwin Publishing, 284 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 7725 1525 5).

The Gray Islands: A Journey, by John Steffler, McClelland & Stewart, 174 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 8242 8).

Love in Flight, by Gregory M. Cook, Ragweed Press, 87 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 920304 42 7).

IN THE COURSE of my own wanderings across Canada, I encountered Alden Nowlan several times. He worked for a newspaper in Saint John, N.B., in 1965, and was almost too shy to speak to me: I was embarrassed into a thunderous silence that seemed as much my fault as his. At Fredericton, when he was writer-in-residence at the University of New Brunswick, we sat together in a fancy restaurant where Sunday booze was *verboten*, and he plied me with not-very-surreptitious drinks from a 40-ouncer of rye under the table. At the Blue Mountain Poetry Festival near Collingwood, Ont., a few years ago, Milton Acorn, Nowlan, and I ate lunch together, Acorn ranting untranslatable P.E.I. lobster jargon, Nowlan making sounds like an air conditioner badly in need of repair, me listening, shocked into a rare silence.

And now Nowlan is dead. I knew him and yet never knew him. The newspapers said he died of heart failure, but I think the cancer that haunted the last 20 years of his life was the real killer. And here in front of me are the essential poems that made his reputation. What reputation? How long will his poems endure and survive into the future? And never having reviewed him before, what do I really think of his poems? Where would I place them on the eternity totem pole?

But a word more about Nowlan's background. He was born near Windsor, N.S., and regarded his childhood there as "a pilgrimage through hell." At 12 he left school to work as a pulpwood cutter. (His father was that as well, a

labourer and mill-hand.) His childhood was — much of it — an escape from reality and into a fantasy world, in which he dreamt of being king of Nicaragua like the legendary William Walker; he even ordered a book from Eaton's catalogue, *Spanish Self-Taught*, in order to speak to his subjects.

Such fantasies permeate Nowlan's poems, even the later ones. He started writing them at age 12. At 19 he finagled a job as a newspaper reporter in Hartland, N.B., and began corresponding with poet-editor Fred Cogswell of UNB. He worked as a reporter in Saint John, then, in 1968, became writer-in-residence at UNB. And a reputation grew; a star rose in the East.

That background seems to me a necessity for understanding Nowlan's poems, and the man himself. He was self-educated, an autodidact, and escaped poverty through the fantasy-land of his poems. Robert Gibbs has edited them for this book, and written a long introduction. They begin with 23 new poems, then work forward in time from the past to near-present, including selections from each of his books. The result is a compendium that seems to me representative of Nowlan's best.

Most of his early poems are metrical and rhyming, but not all. Subject matter is backwoods and small-town incident, or comes from family and university environment and the books he read. Hero-fantasy is still present; it even usurps reality at times. For Nowlan was a romantic, a believer in sentiment (which I think permissible and even necessary in a poet), but was also very often sentimental in poems (which I think is not permissible — there is a tightrope between sentiment and sentimentality that a poet must straddle precariously).

Many of his poems are obvious and pointless, with small reason for existence. However, over the years Nowlan developed a facility and ingenuity with words, a strange kind of "knowing"

how to write poems, which is partly instinct. (It is also a mental habit, not something that shrieks from the guts and shivers in your soul.) He developed a conversational, near-prose style that was easy to read; he talked of things in such a way as to allow the reader to feel that he too had sensitivity and feeling. No fireworks. I suppose that he mistrusted them, and fantasy worked well in their stead.

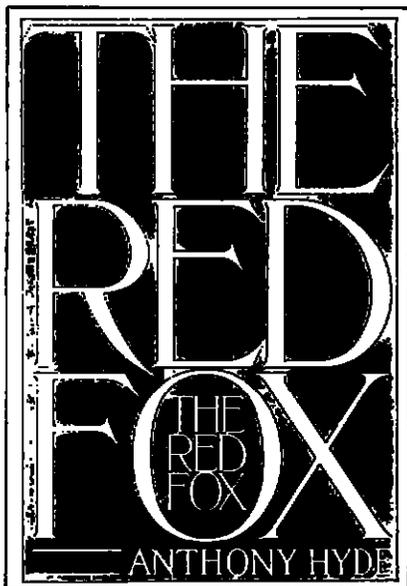
Nowlan wrote a certain kind of anecdotal poem extremely well. As insight into them: he admired Ray Souster, and he spoke well of John Wayne, the actor who loved violence and died of cancer. I believe he stopped developing, stopped changing from man to beast and beast to man. What remained was a poet who could write very good poems with practised ease.

You have to be a little nuts to write the best poems — I will not say great ones. Like Milton Acorn, a ranting madman who wrote shit, then marvellous stuff in the next breath. Nowlan never wrote shit, but never rose above a certain practised mid-excellence either. (But few can do that.) This review is a way of saying farewell, and I say it now more personally: Goodbye.

THE SUBJECT MATTER of a book sometimes commands respect, even before the book is read. Such as the themes of these next two books: spending the summer on a deserted island off Newfoundland, searching for something valuable in yourself, and the search for vestiges of a long-dead father. Such themes unite philosophy and human emotion; they almost demand that the writer be given a fair chance to expound them.

John Steffler tells of a summer spent by a young man on one of the Grey Islands near Englee and the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. I believe the place was Bell Island, although it is nowhere named apart from a map. The narrator's reasons for doing so include boredom with his job, a

A spine-tingling treasure hunt of a thriller



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marriage that seems precarious at the time, and probably also the feeling that such a book as this one is possible. (A writer almost always has a double motive for doing anything, the surface reason and another that he may not admit, the exploration of an experience in his writing.)

A fishing village once nested on 10-mile-long Bell Island. For unknown reasons (probably scarcity of fish) the people left. Their abandoned houses mouldered and decayed in the ceaseless breezes, gales, and cyclones, not to mention passing seasons. An old man named Carm Denny became the island's only occupant; but Denny was removed by Newfoundland authorities before Steffler's protagonist arrived.

In adventures like this, there is the sense of being Robinson Crusoe (despite the deserted village), of stripping yourself down to basics, and wanting to push yourself into some kind of ultimate condition you suspected in yourself but couldn't be sure existed. (The old questions: Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing here on earth?) Steffler assumes the personae of dozens of people inside his character's body, as well as those of people he meets or has heard about.

Carm Denny, the hermit of Bell Island, becomes real fantasy. Then reality as mundane as codfish takes over. The fisherman-ferryman, Nels, tells stories; Cyril and Ambrose Wellan, fishermen visiting the island, speak in Steffler's voice. Ghosts flit here and there among the ruined houses. A girl named Jewelleen slips into the character's bed at Englee in a dream and becomes real enough to leave daylight bruises.

This story that was real-life experience alternates in the telling between prose and verse, and slips naturally from one to the other without any jar of literary transition and changed rhythm in the reader's mind. Anecdotes, musings, remembrances, and time that is a clear liquid into which we insert our floating, mind-suspended impurities of self — these are the fabric of *The Grey Islands*.

Excerpts will not convey a completely accurate impression (when do they ever?) of the book. Still, they are fragments of Steffler's reality. Icebergs: "you suddenly see them as giant polar bears craning their necks to spy on you. Shamans' creatures. Come from a far time." A Carm Denny fantasy:

The dozen or so ducks I still had, skinned and cleaned from the ones I got in the winter. I had them froze out in the pantry in a big wooden tub. At least they used to be froze. That damn south wind. So I lit a candle and went to the pantry and lifted the lid of the tub, and the stink that came out of there belted me like a loose boom, and there was a

white flash at my hand and the next thing I knew I was down on my arse on the kitchen floor with a dozen skinned ducks zipping around the room with long blue flames shooting out of their hind ends.

About codfish:

We are possibilities they cannot admit. We have broken the one train of thought they are capable of, and now they wallow sideways to the surface gaping and gulping like sleepwalkers fatally awakened. Even those that have slipped over the net and are free remain too deeply astonished to ever use their gills and dive again.

This is a book of such excellence that someone in future is liable to say about the author: "Steffler — Steffler? — oh yes, he wrote *The Grey Islands*, didn't he?" Yes, he certainly did, and reading it I feel like a "deeply astonished" codfish.

"IN 1983, Gregory M. Cook travelled to Europe 'to search for the spirit of my father.'" The quote is from the back-cover blurb of *Love in Flight*, and it scares me a little. If the poems aren't good enough, does one then say that the father's spirit is mediocre? I mean, I'd like to know more about my own father, who died when I was two, but the astral lines of communication are faulty, and the spirit medium I used had a bad stutter.

But the subject is intensely serious. What passes from father to son or daughter, and what can we identify as coming from him in genetic inheritance, as apart from environmental commonplace? No answers possible. But I suppose that's what Greg Cook was in search of, the recognition of himself in another, some metaphysical insight from a life-journey whose meaning and dignity can be abstracted from the journey itself, something conferring meaning and dignity to one's own life.

In the resulting poems, I think Cook wishes to employ that kind of stripped-down prosody that enables a seldom-used image to flash its wings and take off into the rarefied upper air. It doesn't, I'm afraid. And I've seen my own images flap ragged wings and fall too often not to mourn when Cook's are not airworthy. Because, in reviewing these poems, there is a sense of probing into deeply heart-felt things.

Speaking of his dead father, in the book's last lines, Cook says:

*My favourite photograph
is the one of you holding me*

*Now I hold you, rock you in my lines
hammock strings, singing your rest
on winds of peace*

That comes a little closer to what the son was looking for in his dead father. □

CRITICAL NOTICES

ARTS & CRAFTS

Still Life Draped Stone: the Photographs of Michael Flomen, edited by Peter Sibbald Brown, Paget Press, 63 pages, \$20.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920348 40 8) and \$120.00 deluxe (ISBN 0 920348 41 6).

By Ross Skoggart

FLOMEN, AN ACKNOWLEDGED darkroom wizard, makes photographs that live or die by nuance. They benefit greatly from being printed in duotone as they are here. He makes images of what you don't normally look at, but see out of the corner of your eye nonetheless — figures from the neck or knees down, backs of heads. His pictures work against photography's story-telling potential by focusing the viewer's attention on formal arrangements of light and shade. In one of the simplest shots, made in Montreal in 1979, we see a rear view of an elderly gentleman in a beret seated on a bench by the side of the road. Almost every element in the photograph runs horizontally from left to right — from the dot-dot-dash of the pointed line in the road to the curb to the back of the bench and its shadow. The exceptions are the shield shape of the man's back, his neck, and round little head.

In an image with few details, satisfaction for the viewer comes from seeing how each detail contributes to a formal theme. All the more disappointing, then, is the introduction, three-quarters through the book, of the previously taboo human face. It's as if in the last



movement of a string quartet the composer suddenly introduces a bass guitar and xylophone. The painstaking evolution of a symbolic language is nullified by the introduction of an anecdotal element — a young girl smiling and waving at the camera.

Editor Peter Sibbald Brown doesn't like this picture either. In his self-

absorbed foreword he calls it "merely a well crafted photograph." Why did he include it? In the end, the quality of the reproductions and the mystery and power of most of the images make this book worth the money. At only \$120, the handbound edition of 26 signed copies, each with an original print, looks tempting, too. Especially if you get to choose the print you want. □

BALANCE SHEETS

Power from the North, by Robert Bourassa, Prentice-Hall, 182 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 13 688367 2).

By Guy Stanley

THIS BOOK, BY the man who might just become the next premier of Quebec, presents a challenge to Canadians: two gigantic engineering projects in continental water management.

Bourassa devotes about 80 per cent of the book to a comprehensive argument for expanding the James Bay hydro-electric power complex. This would supply the Northeastern United States with enough electricity to meet the anticipated needs of the region for the next generation, while still leaving enough power to satisfy Canadian consumers.

Then he provides a *tour d'horizon* of the Grand Canal concept, first developed in the 1930s by Thomas W. Kierans (cousin of former federal cabinet minister and economic nationalist Eric Kierans). The plan calls for the conversion of James Bay into a freshwater lake with roughly twice the flow of the entire Great Lakes watershed, linked by canal to the Great Lakes for the benefit of the major urban and agricultural areas of North America.

There is a special romance associated with giant alluvial projects, as former U.S. energy (and defence) secretary James Schlesinger points out in his introduction. No account of the stupendous engineering feats accomplished in the first phases of the James Bay project could fail to make the blood run faster in admiration of the courage and ingenuity involved, not even in Bourassa's dry technocratic prose.

Besides the sheer "technological sweetness" of the schemes, there is last summer's water crisis in Canada and the U.S. and the ongoing uneasiness about cheap and available power. These considerations lend a critical urgency to these projects which, Bourassa asserts

(in discussing James Bay), a provincial premier has the power to implement under the Canadian political system.

Is this book therefore a provincial election manifesto? Is that why ideas with profound national and continental implications are discussed almost entirely from the perspective of a single province, Quebec? Are Canadians ready to contemplate such megaprojects with irreversible consequences for future generations?

Bourassa has rendered a public service in advocating these projects as ideas for action. Now, while there is still time for broad consensus, Canada needs to develop a responsible water policy. That is the overwhelming implication of Bourassa's one-sided advocacy. □

BELLES LETTRES

Mirror of a People: Canadian Jewish Experience In Poetry and Prose, edited by Sheldon Oberman and Elaine Newton, Jewish Educational Publishers, 250 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 920657 00 1).

By Joel Yanofsky

THIS IS A competent anthology that provides an overview of the contribution made by Jewish writers to Canadian literature. But it falls short of fulfilling the promise of its title: to reflect the ambiguous and tenuous connection between being a Canadian and being a Jew. Although the editors have done an adequate job of including the obligatory selections from the best-known Canadian Jewish writers, there's still something academic and staid about the book: as if it is intended — it may be — for high-school and college students.

As is the case with most anthologies, this collection is a combination of good and bad choices. Although stories by writers like Sondra Gotlieb ("The Wrongies") and Ed Kleiman ("The Handicap") seem incomplete or trivial, the first selection, an excerpt from Adele Wiseman's novel *The Sacrifice*, is an effective opening. Wiseman subtly conveys the uncertainty and hope of Jewish immigrants arriving in a strange land.

Selections from the work of Mordecai Richler are also consistently good. (Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for selections from Leonard Cohen and Irving Layton). Richler's short story, "This Year at the Arabian Nights Hotel," is one of the few pieces in the

book that explores new territory as it tells of the encounter between an old-fashioned Canadian Jew and his new and improved Israeli counterpart. Other bright spots are Matt Cohen's "The Universal Miracle" and Jack Ludwig's "Requiem for Bibul." Concerned with the tension between tradition and assimilation, both stories are moving and well-written, as is A.M. Klein's grim account of a Holocaust survivor, excerpted from *The Second Scroll*. Despite its unevenness, *Mirror of a People* demonstrates the range and influence of Canadian Jewish writers. For the uninitiated, it's a good place to start. □

In the *Second Person*, by Smaro Kamboureli, Longspoon Press, 87 pages, \$8.00 paper (ISBN 0 919285 29 5).

By Lorne Ellaschuk

KAMBOURELI LEFT Greece in 1977 to do post-graduate work in modern American literature at a U.S. university. She met Robert Kroetsch there, married him, and now lives in Canada. This book is a fascinating journal she kept of her experience as an immigrant in Canada. The immigrant is shown as being two very different selves within the same body watching out for each other. Each has its language and culture to maintain in the face of the other. The journal entries often consist of occasions when one self reports seeing the other, feels its presence or absence, or addresses it.

Much of the journal is taken up with a long visit Kamboureli made home to Greece in 1981. There the extent to which she has lost connection with Greece/Greek and not transferred that connection to Canada/English becomes evident. But far from despairing she sees herself as no longer a person with a place and a language, but as "a place of language" itself, "living on the edge of two languages, on the edge of two selves named and constructed by language." She is liberated "from a monologic existence." The joy she takes in the doubleness of her language, that war within, is infectious. □

FICTION: LONG & SHORT

Another *Sad Day at the Edge of the Empire*, by Stephen Guppy, Oolican Books, 116 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 86982 061 9) and \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 86982 060 0).

By Rupert Schieder

I SUSPECT that a writer would like to have his first collection of fiction considered independently, not in relation to

that of an established writer. But the similarities between Guppy's book and Jack Hodgins's first work, *Spit Delaney's Island* (1976), are too striking to be ignored. Both writers live "up Island," having taught in the Nanaimo area. Both originally found markets in small periodicals. Both, endowed with extravagant imagination and invention, present eccentrics in peculiar situations. Both are fascinated with religious cult figures. Both are aware of psychical and psychological separation — the phrases "on the edge" and "at the edge" keep recurring. Both speak in their fiction with a curiously oblique, "local" voice. Both produced in me, by the end of the first paragraphs of the first short story, the instantaneous reaction: "This is the real thing."

The comparison can't be continued too long; for Guppy's collection, about half the size of Hodgins's, intensifies only one side of Hodgins the writer: Hodgins the fabulator. Most of the people in Guppy's tall tales (very tall) are not only eccentrics, but downright bizarre.

Walleye Jackson, the remittance man on his stump ranch, is obsessed with flight — human flight, that is. Jake Leafly, the bee-keeper, is obsessed with patterns. Lemuel is "a man with a mission." Blicter, the history teacher, seeks Gunnar Johanson, a prophet. Boy Fury, the coal-miner's son, pursues the phantom daughter of a defrocked parson turned rat-catcher named Pearly Death. Dr. Grimaldi, in his rotting Georgian hillside mansion, alcoholically alternates between his two Amelies, his mad wife and his exotic mistress.

In his plots — with one exception — Guppy deliberately sets out to strain the listener's acceptance, loading his tales, heavily at the end, with the mythic, the legendary, the fabulous. Walleye's fat nephew does take wings. Leafly's wife is metamorphosed into a bee swarm. Lemuel sprouts buds and takes root. Dr. Grimaldi's whole landscape is transformed when the Pacific recedes. Boy Fury may have found his Pearly Death down the mine shaft. The border between dream and reality, between drowning and walking on water, is narrow. For the reader who is willing to accept or has been persuaded by Guppy to accept these endings, most of this invention succeeds. One exception, "Calm Creek," is a conventional tale of familiar characters in which he risks a trite ending. For me, it is the least convincing.

A greater cause for concern, however, is Guppy's uneven expression. He can endow his weird figures with wild curses and splendid similes that startle the reader into admiration. ("Them chops'll

be blacker than hockey pucks by now.") Then a phrase will follow that either misleads the reader or means little. The narrative voice speaks with a baffling mixture of evocative phrases and banal clichés — some perhaps intentional — like "a merciless fate," "unspeakable lusts," "clear as crystal," "a hare-brained theory," and even old "brown as a berry." These distracting flaws might, I believe, have been purged from Guppy's stories.

I put down this first collection with mixed reactions: a great deal of admiration, reservations about the confusion of voices and inconsistency of style, and a curiosity about what direction Stephen Guppy will take next. □

The *Blue Ontario Hemingway Boat Race*, by David Donnell, Coach House Press, 120 pages, \$8.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910 302 X).

By Anthony Bukoski

THESE 23 linked stories, most of which are actually vignettes, concern Ernest Hemingway's years in Toronto. In one story, Hemingway dwells on the vicissitudes of history, especially the "mixed character" of the 1920s, which he finds difficult to accommodate; in another, he ruminates on Torontonians' provincialism toward art; in still another, he finds playing the horses at Woodbine less enjoyable than playing them in Paris.

For Hemingway, strolling down King Street in the rain lacks the excitement of a similar walk in Paris. "The weather in Toronto felt less social, less historical, less clement, something he associated with the nature of the city, bleak and loveless and commercial." Unfortunately, Hemingway complains too much in Donnell's book. How often must one be reminded that in the 1920s Toronto was neither Paris nor Chicago? At other times, the fictional Hemingway sounds much too precious, as when he thinks of the "failed writers with the broken apple pie and New England ice cream in their hearts." *What?*

But these are minor annoyances in a rich, well-researched book. (For example, the "Art" vignette is based, I believe, on an actual scheme for renting works of art that the real Hemingway satirized in the *Star Weekly*.) In the end, Donnell's book deals as much with Canadian identity as with Hemingway's time spent here. The stories build to an apocalyptic boat race during which

NOTE

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

Toronto — taken from the Indian word *tor on to*, "place of meeting" — ends up somewhere, well, other than we're accustomed to finding her on the map, and Hemingway himself gathers the strength to begin writing in earnest. During the boat race, the apocalypse, the city finally becomes the "place of meeting" for Hemingway's past experiences and his dreams and visions of the future. □

Chasing Her Own Tail, by Nora Keeling, Oberon Press, 112 pages, \$21.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 563 5) and \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 564 3).

By Michelle Heinemann

THE SEVEN STORIES Nora Keeling tells in *Chasing Her Own Tail* are about angry middle-aged women who have been hurt by their husbands, their lovers, their children, and each other. They are bitter, and trust virtually no one. The most striking thing about these women — and their stories — is that any of them could be your mother or even your grandmother. Keeling's characters are endearing because they are so hopefully human. Yet, however insecure, neurotic, and frustrated they sometimes are, they show strength and dignity through their dramatic actions.

Keeling's characters carry heavy emotional baggage. In a curious way, she has captured the essence of what many resentful, angry women haven't faced up to yet. They are both the oppressed and the oppressor, a decidedly lonely occupation.

The loneliness is apparent throughout the book. Many of the characters ache for a definite peace of mind, a calculated calmness that often comes by means of premeditated acts against those they blame for their years of suffering. Keeling's character development is sharp. It's easy, almost natural, to know what happened to her characters before the reader meets them. And it's easy, if somewhat unsettling, to comprehend their daily actions as they unfold in seven sometimes bizarre, sometimes eerie, and always moving stories. □

Double Exposures, by Diane Schoemperlen, Coach House, 104 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88910 280 5).

By Debra Martens

LIKE this book. It works. Schoemperlen has taken photographs discovered at her parents' house in Thunder Bay and has arranged them, in the mode of commentary, into a story. Two stories, actually: one about Susan's parents and her childhood, told through photographs supple-

mented by the text, and one about the adult life of Susan, the narrator. (Although the photos belong to the Schoemperlens, the story is not theirs.)

One link between the photographs and the text seems to be the continuity of experience, because the photos inform us about Susan's present and future, and her present situation reopens the past of the photos. For example, the pictures of Susan's step-brother, unlike the others, are commented on in detail. It is through a conversation in the present, however, that we learn how Davey died. Another example is the account of her husband Martin's birthday party, held when Susan is five months pregnant. It is accompanied by three photographs of a party with children and adults.

Schoemperlen brilliantly records time the way our memories do — well, mine does, with "This is from the time when the kitchen cupboards are red." She combines naïveté (her grandmother died "of blood poisoning which she got from pricking her finger while darning her family's socks. I still have no idea whether such a thing can really happen or not") with maturity ("I will never know what my father did in the war and won't want to ask until after he doesn't want to talk about it anymore.") Further, she is skilful at cutting in the spoken voice; describing a man, she writes "he was a troublemaker from day one, that one." In a situation ripe for sentimentality, Schoemperlen's style is simple, honest, and dryly humorous. ✱

Duet for Three, by Joan Barfoot, Macmillan, 264 pages, \$23.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9680 4).

By Sherie Posesorski

IN A BREATHTAKING story by Delmore Schwartz, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," a young man imagines watching the courtship of his parents unfold on a movie screen. Just as his father is about to propose to his mother, the young man cries out, "Don't do it. Nothing will come of it, only remorse, hatred. . . ." That same impulse will move readers of Barfoot's novel, where both a mother and a daughter make ludicrously bad matches. The potency of Schwartz's story is generated by his ability to make us feel the force of the parents' attraction for each other, while showing us that the elements of discord are also extensions of it.

However, it is nearly impossible to generate sympathy or even mild curiosity over the blatantly obvious mismatches of Barfoot's novel. June is the 60-year-old daughter of 80-year-old Aggie, and the predictable, banal plot hinges on June's rationalization of her decision to

institutionalize her mother. How mother and daughter arrived at this impasse is related in alternating chapters of tidy linear history. Aggie, an Earth Mother, (in capital letters) grew up on a farm, and weds an anemic, fastidious school-teacher: marital discord proceeds to his convenient death. The product of this union, June, a purse-lipped prude, illogically weds a sensuous happy-go-lucky salesman. He exhibits the only good sense shown in the novel when he quickly divorces her. Their coupling produces yet another candidate for divorce court, a daughter, Frances.

Where have we seen this all before? In this strikingly unoriginal novel, there is not one character, emotion, or even instant of authenticity. However, there is a quick antidote: a rereading of Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*. Barfoot's trio has about as much staying power as a Can-This-Marriage-Be-Saved? women's magazine column. □

Night Studies, by Constance Beresford-Howe, Macmillan, 240 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9681 2).

By Louise Longo

FANS OF *The Book of Eve* and its author will be pleased with this new novel, which provides a multi-faceted view of Simcoe Community College and the many characters who toil there nightly. Imogen and Tyler, the two chief players, are a couple of world-weary teachers, both struggling under the yoke of unhappy marriages. In chapters of varied lengths, Beresford-Howe surrounds them with a multicultural mélange of characters, members of the staff, faculty, and students of the Night Studies program.

In her creation of the rebellious Imogen and "quietist" Tyler (who tries and almost succeeds in keeping his first name secret) Beresford-Howe is at her best. She tells us their stories with compassion and depth, exploring Imogen's embittered hurt at her husband's homosexual liaison and Tyler's dogged loyalty to his wife, despite her bouts with mental illness. Their discovery of each other emerges in a series of scenes that are some of the most sexually charged in recent fiction, as well as some of the most restrained.

Unfortunately, the very excellence of the central narrative leaves the minor characters looking thin. There are too many of them, for a start, and Beresford-Howe cannot achieve the depth she is reaching for in such cursory portraits. We're left feeling that the Inuit parking-lot attendant, the Jamaican cleaning lady, the gay librarian, and the aging, dotty daughter

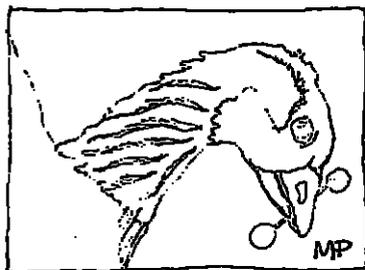
of a former college director — not to mention assorted students — never quite become real, and hover dangerously close to cliché.

But although *Night Studies* is not without its flaws, its warmth, wit, and memorable characters do make for enjoyable reading. □

Raspberry Vinegar, by Joan Fern Shaw, Oberon Press, 155 pages, \$23.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 561 1) and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 567 8).

By Helen Porter

THE LINKED short stories in this first collection are told in the first person by the young daughter of alcoholic parents. Many writers have romanticized alcoholism; fortunately there is none of that nonsense in this vividly moving but unsentimental book: "Mother over-



pronounced her words and her voice was up high. High. When people spoke of getting high I thought of that voice." The parents are abusive both physically and emotionally; in effect the child brings herself up. She saves herself from despair by escaping into the world of the imagination. Happier times await her at her grandparents' farm until farm and occupants disappear overnight. Catastrophes happen all around her. The last story in the collection is a chilling one; there is no escape. Even here, though, all is not black.

These stories are far from being all records of gloom and doom. Humour is here, and irony; Shaw has a gift for the telling phrase, the perfect detail. "Hair Wreaths" is a gem of darkish comedy. "Movements" provides an uncanny insight into a young adolescent's mind and is also very funny. In this story, too, mother and daughter share an all-too-brief period of companionship and empathy.

The book is not perfect; at times the narrative becomes didactic. The heroine's frequent references to her own cleverness are sometimes irritating, though perhaps this attitude is meant to be a compensation for the love and nurturing denied her. But, on the whole, this book is a little treasure: honest, perceptive and life-affirming, in spite of its shadows. □

FOLKWAYS

Mostly in *Rodneys*, by Cle Newhook, Harry Cuff Publications, 119 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 919095 72 0).

By Stanley Sparkes

FOR READERS unfamiliar with rural Newfoundland, Newhook's book has some value as a primer. He opens with an essay about Norman's Cove boats, overly emphasizing the role rodneys played in the life of outport boys. He concludes with a mawkish radio play in which a fisherman and his son are saved from drowning by singing a famous hymn and making the sign of the cross above the stormy waves. Sandwiched between are 39 pieces (some in verse) about simple outport folkways.

The book suffers from the inclusion of too much typical silliness. Writes Newhook: "Woodsmen [in central Newfoundland lumbercamps] . . . became infected with lice." However, he names no men, no camp, no foreman, no bunkhouse, no forepeak, no river, no pond, no year, no droke. Why? Because he has no evidence? Or does he fear that were he to name those hearty Newfoundland loggers who could not look after their own health he would have a horde of disbelieving descendants here in central Newfoundland haul him by the hair into court for libel? (I am one of these lumberwoodsmen, my father another, and we would haul off his hide for such accusations against us.)

Sophisticated readers will find most interest in the insight the book provides into Newhook himself. The most striking is his profound inability to grasp the reality of Newfoundland life. In the end, *Mostly in Rodneys* portrays Newhook as a writer unable to express the truth about the sophistication of the oil-slick society on Canada's East Coast, one more casualty drowning himself intellectually (like Harold Horwood and Farley Mowat) by floundering in a sea of traditional folklore. □

Spirit of the White Bison, Nancy Painter, Pemmican Publications, illustrated, 64 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 919143 40 7).

By Nancy Painter

THE DECLINE of Canada's huge herds of bison was part of an era of change for the Indians of the Prairies, which Culleton narrates through the eyes of a buffalo. Though not a true legend, the book reflects the special respect held for white bison by native people. No ordinary bison could tell the story, nor would it have access to the human reac-

tions Little White Buffalo learns from Lone Wolf, a human with whom he shares understanding and, finally, death.

The story takes a few pages to start moving, at first including background details that might have been incorporated more smoothly later on. The language seems formal, which suits the story of the fall of a proud animal and a proud nation. But occasional colloquialisms break the mood and lessen the impact. This inconsistency is unfortunate but not overwhelming in an otherwise well-told story of a time of change, taken from an unusual viewpoint. □

FOOD & DRINK

Growing Up on the Chocolate Diet: A Memoir with Recipes, by Lora Brody, Little, Brown (McClelland & Stewart), 320 pages, \$21.95 cloth (ISBN 0 316 108979).

By Volker Strunk

BRODY WAS BORN in 1945, and this is her largely autobiographical memoir. One may object that 40 is no age to publish one's memoir, but that's to underestimate an incorrigible chocolate addict's business acumen, informed by the desire for self-promotion. After all, if some Connecticut woman can put pen to paper and create a birthday card featuring birds, hippopotamuses, and sheep singing "Hippo Birdie Two Ewes" (and make a mint, as Brody approvingly tells us, by selling several hundred million cards, posters, note paper, mugs, and what have you — and follow this up with a best-selling book *Chocolate: The Consuming Passion*), then surely Brody can achieve similar feats. And bleats. After some 50 pages of Laura's lore you get the impression that the author could do *anything*, even sell hairball remedies to a barbershop quartet.

Brody's tome rides rather shakily on the current chocolate wave. She has little to say and less inclination to say it elegantly, but for the price of some 40 Mars Bars you can read — if you care — about her twin teenage ambitions to get laid and to eat chocolate; how her husband the lawyer scalded (never a dull moment) horny New York alley cats; how she launched her catering career; the way she ran an "executive dining room for the officers of a bank in Boston"; why and how she opened a cooking school and later became a Chocolate Consultant. Along the way we discover that the experience of setting up a "Women's Culinary Guild" ("a sisterhood of caring individuals") made

her "a better, more secure business-woman." No question about that.

All this gossip is interspersed with recipes ranging from the truly delectable to the genuinely ghastly. Clichés such as "silky smooth texture," "sinfully rich," and "most heavenly smooth and rich" abound and point to the realm where Alka Seltzer salesmen fear to tread. For instance, "the richest, smoothest, deepest [?] chocolate mousse I have ever tasted" calls for so much butter that it should be named chocolate butter. For some of Brody's recipes it's wise to keep your Dante on hand; some are not just "deep" but bottomless, the pits. Do you associate a soufflé with something light and airy? Brody will see to that: "I used to hate chocolate soufflés. They never tasted chocolaty enough, and there was never enough substance to them — just fluff." By the time she turns soufflés into something "rich and substantial" you wish she had stuck to such rustic dishes as chocolate fudge, brownies, and (argh!) marshmallow topping, and never ventured into the area of *lumpen-bourgeois* gastronomic kitsch. But can she be trusted with simple recipes? "When it comes to chocolate cake, big is better." Oh.

A few years back there appeared advertisements in the *New Yorker* for Omaha Steaks with James Beard demonstrating that, with the aid of a fork and nothing else ("look Ma, no knife"), it was possible to penetrate an Omaha Steak as easily as a glop of mashed potatoes. Considering that food writers support the oddest ventures (I can be reached at *Books in Canada*, by the way), it comes as no surprise that Brody's undertaking had, in her own words, the "amazing support" of none other than Craig Claiborne. Although I'm dutifully amazed, I retain the right to be a trifle suspicious, because Brody also thanks for their support no less than five of her photographers. As fate would have it, there is not a single photograph in the book. □

Umberto's Pasta Book, by Umberto Menghi, Whitecap Books, 124 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 920620 62 0).

By Volkmar Strunk

THERE ARE SO many wretched cook-books on the market that a professionally produced guide to the world of the noodle is a relief and a joy. The indefatigable Menghi gives you a systematic and, within the self-imposed confines of the book's length, thorough introduction to the things you crave to know once you have decided that canned macaroni-and-cheese dinner is for the slobs who advertise it. Macaroni,

Umberto tells you with the hint of a sneer, before he produces a grand total of two macaroni recipes (fusilli and linguine, by contrast, yield six each), "is the generic name for pasta in North America, i.e., all pasta is macaroni."

The book's unsigned introduction, evidently concocted by a ghost writer (unless Menghi is cultivating the habit of speaking of himself in the third person), tells us that the recipes have been created by the maestro himself. Well, yes, but what does "create" mean? Invented? Luckily, most recipes are just replacement spokes on the wheels of classical dishes, though several go by some rather outlandish appellations. Rotini Shakespeare, for example, appears to be thus called for no better reason than that naming it after T.S. Eliot (remember *Ash Wednesday*? "Because I do not hope to turn again/Because I do not hope/Because I do not hope to turn") was out of the question.

The book is sensibly arranged by the noodle — 21 in all — rather than by the sauce. The recipes are straightforward and almost foolproof, though the maestro's call for certain ingredients (*petits pois* are a case in point) seems to be guided more by wishful thinking than by North American market realities. *Petits pois*, to my knowledge, are available only in cans (imported); though the jolly green monster on your supermarket shelf does his giant best to hawk canned small peas, to which he has added sugar, under the same name.

Ten of Menghi's recipes are accompanied by mouth-watering photographs of dishes prepared by John Bishop. ★

THE PAST

The Shaping of Ontario from Exploration to Confederation, edited by Nick and Helma Mika, Mika Publications, illustrated, 280 pages, \$75.00 cloth (ISBN 0 919303 93 5).

By Greg Gatenby

THE FIRST ASPECTS of this book to strike the reader are its dimensions and weight: at 15" x 12" it is annoyingly huge, equivalent to an 800-page college text, and although its size may be subliminal homage to the immensity of the province, it requires a large desk merely to be opened and read.

The book is an anthology of historical prints and of 31 commissioned essays by 28 authors. The articles range from the scholarly through to the informal. General articles dealing with the political history of a decade or two are followed by essays addressing more narrow topics, such as the discovery of gold at Eldorado.

A few contributions are so vague and poorly written that they insult through association the outstanding and original essays that make the purchase of the book worthy of consideration. Among the better of such papers are a survey of life in Upper Canada in the 1820s, an exhaustive overview of music and its performance in the province, and Maurice



Careless's account of the politics enveloping Upper Canada during Confederation. Other contributors write about a daunting array of topics: the French in Ontario, the Talbot Settlement, sports, pastimes, religion, agriculture, the military: the editors have striven to include as many aspects of Ontario as one book will permit without inducing hernia.

The editors do deserve praise for including in one volume so many important but hitherto widely dispersed illustrations, many of them reproduced in colour for the first time. Regrettably, however, most of the illustrations lack proper captions: dates, artists, and context are often omitted. Seminal maps are interspersed throughout the text, but their placement follows no discernible order, and they, too, are wanting of usable captions.

Reading this book is like working with a lazy but brilliant student — one is continually impressed by the potential, and depressed at the failure to achieve excellence when the constituents and goal are so easily within reach. More time spent on copy-editing, photo research, and commissioning all articles from acknowledged experts would have made this an enviable, durable, magnificent volume. As it is, *The Shaping of Ontario* is barely adequate. □

POETRY

Bloody Jack, by Dennis Cooley, Turnstone Press, 152 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88891 091 5).

By Steve Noyes

IN THIS BOOK, Cooley poses as post-modernist past-master, acknowledging then bending literary expectations, chatting with his characters, the reader, and himself. He even forestalls criticism by inventing a scholar to mouth our objections: "... there is no genuine effort to reach the best in us. There is, rather, an unremitting indulgence in whatever,

for the moment, appeals to the author." At times it's hard to disagree.

This epic metafiction, ostensibly about John Krafchenko (bank robber and "cunning linguist") is slyly complex but also an example of post-modernism's most grating excesses. Its structure, collage-like and multi-genred, resembles that of Michael Ondaatje's *Billy the Kid*. The few objective, almost surreal poems are perhaps most successful in giving us a sense of Krafchenko: the historical character: "his beard/ feeding/slowly/as quartz. . . a warm sponge/walking." However, many of the other poems lack Cooley's usually arresting metaphors, and wallow instead in their own "unprintable jokes and puns" like "trance crypt" and "Jack in/off." Such ironies provide, at best, two-dimensional insights; they are linguistic wickets through which we pass unmoved.

We sense in the folklore, dialect, and references to Robert Kroetsch's *Crow* that some exploration of Krafchenko as trickster-figure was intended; but all that ultimately gets explored is Cooley's game of hide-and-go-read: "to find me/ you must read be/tween the lines." Both clever and frustrating, *Bloody Jack* is a book for neither the easily satisfied nor the easily irritated. □

Champ, by Kay Burkman, Fiddlehead Poetry Books/Goose Lane Editions, 47 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 86492 058 X).

By Brian Fawcett

THE JACKET copy announces that this book is witty and unusual, and that it is a part-chronicle, part-meditation that deals with the life and professional career of turn-of-the-century Canadian boxer Tommy Burns. Actually, it is none of those things.

It is another book of self-conscious Canadiana, written by a woman who is clearly talented enough to write decent poetry but who can't seem to concentrate on her subject matter for 47 pages. Instead, the poems drift off into travelogue depictions of the Canadian landscape, or into depictions of the author's state of mind or her opinions about items in the news. The language of the writing is cluttered with third-rate creative-writing department metaphors that often aren't even connected to the following stanza, and further confused by idiosyncratic punctuation and line notation.

Burkman hasn't learned to write a book. Consequently, the reader is left wondering who Tommy Burns was, and why Burkman wrote about him, and probably why this totally amateur book

should be purchased and read. What does become abundantly clear is why poetry has such a small (and diminishing) readership in this country. And that raises the question of why we publish so many volumes of poetry. □

Motherpoems, by Susan Ioannou, Wordswrights Canada, 52 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 920835 00 7).

By Louise Longo

NOW THAT the baby-boomers have "discovered" the business of reproduction, the subject of motherhood is on more lips than ever. In this sense, Ioannou's new book is certainly timely, and successfully explores both sides of the process.

Most of us are pretty well acquainted with the romanticized picture of mothering, so poems like "Ambivalence" and "Three Women" present a refreshingly real alternative:

"Another child!" she complained,
"Another five years
madonna of clutter.
Birth!
Give life to a stranger
but shatter myself:
then months upon months
to remake a woman
never the same.
To have to go through it again. . . ."

In poems like "In My Morning Bed" and "Stefan," Ioannou writes about the personal riches of mothering, but often it's in the more objective "portrait" poems, like "Angelo" that she makes some of her strongest statements about parenting:

When he darts for the street
not looking, as always,
straight toward the maw of a speeding
car

and, always, cheats Death
by a mere shriek of tires,
shrapnel of brakes,
his old man, sweaty in undershirt,

hollers
"Whattsa matter, Stupid, you stupid?"
and smacks him one on the ear
hard enough to smash a beer bottle.

Ioannou's work, at its best, has a street-wise toughness, coupled with an eye for detail that is effective. Unfortunately, many of the poems are in need of ruthless editing. There is also a judgemental quality in a few of the poems, which is disturbing. "Foul" describes a cold, unresponsive mother from the point of view of three "good" moms; and "In Nathan Phillips Square" gives us another mom observing career women:

Women unhindered by children
I watch in the womb of the square.
They come and they go — everywhere
busy with books, bags and cases,

filling the emptiness up,
each day a routine of breaking
hours to passable minutes
while, home, all is silence:
no one growing up.

The suggestion here is that the only real fulfilment for a real woman is motherhood. This strikes me as an assumption we have made strides recently to dispense with. Still, the strength of the book lies in the range of emotional responses to motherhood that Ioannou captures. She's covering new territory, and saying something that needs to be said. □

Nanoose Bay Suite, by Kevin Roberts, Oolichan Books, 64 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88982 068 6).

By J.D. Carpenter

ROBERTS BEGINS his graceful epic by musing over the bones of Haida girl 300 years dead:

a half round dirt lead ball
rattles out of the ribs
onto the trowel

violence her brother, the act
mindless against the hips

He wonders who was responsible: "some white man walking/back to his tall ship." With this as his point of departure, Roberts takes us on an exploration of British Columbia's Nanoose Bay that is at once historical, mythological, personal, and political: "what can I imagine of this dominion/ this province of lost breath?"

Happily, imagination is Roberts's long suit, and although all the poems are linked by their setting, they vary widely in theme: the 1843 log of Captain Phillips aboard the *Swiftsure*; the arrival of the Portuguese goldseeker, João Ignácio d'Almada in 1862; the crash of a warplane in 1943 ("the white gout/and cromph/as the plane hit the Bay"); Sno'no'Huas, Sinekwa, Mimir, Yggdrasil; untidy tourists; deer hunting; sailing ("tilted at ease with the wind/ butterfly/angles"); dogs, seals; herons; love; war; and Nanoose Bob, an Indian whose dislike of whites was prompted by the crew of a Yankee sloop who, in 1840, hung him from the mainsail rope "like a gutted deer/till the blood ran to his head/crawled red as worms out his nose/and ears and mouth."

Roberts's love for Nanoose Bay is tempered only by his concern for its future in the face of possible global cataclysm:

what is the shadow of peace
but war?
Blessed are the peace makers
for they shall inherit
what is left
of the earth.

The final two poems of the suite are elegiac. In the first, Roberts is awakened by the singing of an Indian girl, but when he goes outside to speak to her she has vanished, leaving only a mound of stones "like a cairn [which] reminds me/ of other/bones." This parallel to the opening image of the Haida girl's



murder and the closing poem's depiction of loss through the melting of a "feather of ice" in the poet's hand ("I open my hand/all this imagining lost/to water without shape/like tears") bring home to the reader the poet's dilemma: his love for something he feels helpless to protect. □

SOCIETY

The Emerging Generation: An Inside Look at Canada's Teenagers, by Donald C. Posterski and Reginald W. Bibby, Irwin Publishing, 220 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7725 1522 0).

By Connie Jeske

BIBBY AND POSTERSKI, who have worked extensively with teenagers, have surveyed 3,600 young people between the ages of 15 and 19 about their values, pastimes, social concerns, family life, friends, beliefs, hopes — and, yes, sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. Their book adds flesh to the usual stereotype of teenage self-interest. Teens do worry about the senior prom, but they worry more about unemployment, child abuse, crime, and the threat of nuclear war.

We learn that although teenagers are worried about sex, their attitudes are remarkably close to those of Canada's adult generation. Some teens (the book estimates about 30 per cent) are involved with drugs, but Canadian teenagers also list drugs high on their list of social concerns. It's in the area of rock music that the results become really interesting. It seems that rock is the great retreat for teens from the pressures imposed by their peers, adults, and society. Some 90 per cent said they listened to music "very often," and cited more satisfaction from it than from the attention of their parents.

Basically a summary of the results of the authors' questionnaire, the book's approach is academic, much like a long sociological study. On the other hand, the information it provides is engaging and unpredictable — much like the youth of today. □

No Immediate Danger? Prognosis for a Radioactive Earth, by Rosalie Bertell, Women's Educational Press, 400 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88961 092 4).

By Lorraine Johnson

IN HER EXPOSÉ of the nuclear industry, Bertell argues that the cumulative damage to the earth and its inhabitants by nuclear production (whether for military or energy uses) has reached alarming proportions. Yet the most frightening aspect of Bertell's discussion is that the threat is virtually invisible; the silence and secrecy surrounding the issue guarantees a passive (or, if active, ill-informed) populace. The effects of nuclear production have permeated the environment but not with the general public's consent or its knowledge. In the context of this negativity, Bertell offers a program of action. With enthusiasm and optimism, she suggests that anger (a necessary by-product of the revelations in this book) can trigger constructive social change.

An interesting aspect of Bertell's study is that it states the relatively harmless but insidious ways in which marginal elements of nuclear production have entered our culture. For example, she notes that the bikini bathing-suit was named after the atoll whose middle was blown away during the Bikini Island bomb blast. And Bertell always accompanies the marginal with the tangible: the Bikini islanders were not told for two days that the white "snow" falling on the ground was contaminated fallout.

Bertell's study is insistently holistic; Third World politics, the energy shortage, global health issues, and workers' rights are all convincingly related. This kind of approach is necessarily reductive, and Bertell sometimes resorts to a kind of logical shorthand in order to make connections. However, such ellipses seem justifiable in the context of Bertell's unavoidably complex premise: "Nuclear technology has become the symbolic centre of the survival crisis." If for some readers this kind of rhetoric fails, then they have Bertell's potent drama and scholarly research to contend with. □

TECHNOLOGY

The Care & Feeding of Your Personal Computer, by Robert Rafferty, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, illustrated, 199 pages, \$13.95 paper (ISBN 0 03 001458 1).

By Gord Graham

THE UNINITIATED still believe you can take home a personal computer, plug it in like a toaster, and be swept away into

the 21st century. What a shock to discover that even getting the machine turned on can take the combined skills of a TV repairman and an undergraduate programmer.

So a new genre was born — the computer book that claims to make smooth this rough passage, by telling you "everything you need to know about getting started with your personal computer." Most of these are unmitigated *drack* that only add to your frustration: sloppy, slipshod works strung together by barely literate computer nerds, or barely computer-literate hacks desperate to cash in on the computer revolution.

This volume, though, is a cut above the rest of this genre. *Care and Feeding* lives up to its cover blurb by providing sensible advice and carefully researched sources. Sections on planning your space, avoiding computer clutter, and finding help during your learning period are as pithy as anything in print on these topics.

Rafferty's chatty but informative style echoes that dean of popular computer writing, Peter McWilliams, but without so many irritating asides. The text is well-structured with chapter introductions, a thorough index, and many practical anecdotes. And — wonder of wonders — the author warms my heart with a half-page diatribe on poorly written computer books!

Although this book does not break any new ground, it does sift and tend the patch carefully, and might well help you bloom into a happy computer owner after all. ★

Hands On: A Compendium of Hundreds of Practical Tips and Useful Programs for IBM Personal Computers, by the editors of *PC World*, Simon & Schuster (Musson), 256 pages, \$24.95 paper (ISBN 0 671 492853).

By Arthur Fuller

COMPUTING MAGAZINES come in a variety of flavours, from *Programmer's Journal* (the *Paris Review* of the market) all the way to *Which Computer?*, a procrastinator's dream. *PC World* courts what is known as the power user — not a programmer but a natural nonetheless, someone with a feel for applications programs (word processors, spreadsheets, databases). Two of the magazine's most popular columns ("Hands On" and "User to User") are devoted to tips and techniques, nuggets of computer wisdom on everything from organizing a hard disk to customizing software.

Given the exponential growth of computer ignorance, this kind of information does not stale. Rather, the number

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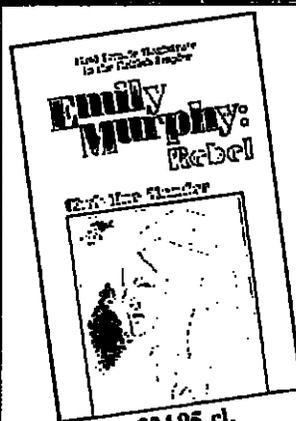
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of people who need it is always increasing. This book collects the best of the columns from the last two years, in nine main subject areas — the section on operating system tricks is the most universal in its appeal. Many of the remaining pieces concern *Wordstar*, *dBASE*, or *1-2-3*, the dominant programs in their respective genres. Other pieces address subjects such as customizing Microsoft *Word* for screenplay writing, getting the most out of *MailMerge*, and writing tiny programs to kill nasty bugs (for the uninitiated read “problems”) in printers.

Hands On, in short, is a very useful book. Definitely for computer enthusiasts (as distinct from experts), it will delight owners of *Wordstar*, *dBASE*, and *1-2-3* especially. Even for subscribers to *PC World* the book performs a valuable service, saving us from thumbing through back issues for that technique we knew we’d need someday. There are dozens if not hundreds of computing books not worth the paper they’re printed on: *Hands On* is at the opposite end of the spectrum — useful no matter how advanced the reader. ☆

REVIEW

The importance of not being earnest

By Jack MacLeod

Leacock: A Biography, by Albert and Theresa Moritz, Stoddart, illustrated, 364 pages, \$26.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 2027 0).

WE HAVE LACKED a truly fine and complete biography of Leacock. We still do. Possibly the man was too whimsical, too sly to be pinned down. Until a definitive volume appears, this painstaking work fills a large gap, but it is in several ways disappointing.

To criticize is easy, and to write a major biography is not. Still more difficult is it for ordinary humourless mortals to capture the essence of that most elusive rogue, the comic writer, the genius who laughs. Albert and Theresa Moritz waste no time in lurching off the rails. The first paragraph of their book reads:

Stephen Butler Leacock often was asked about the art of writing humor. While maintaining that humor was no business for amateurs, he willingly discussed his methods. . . . First, write down the ideas as soon as they come. Sometimes an idea could be a bit slow in forming, true, but writing it down was never difficult. The key to getting ideas, Leacock said, was a clear head, such as a person

could obtain from sleeping outdoors (in all weathers) and rising at five o'clock in the morning. At least, that was how he did it.

The heart sinks. Oh Gawd, spare us another turgid treatise on how to write funny! What Leacock once wrote — nowhere quoted in this solemn book — was: “Writing is no problem. You merely jot down the ideas as they occur. Now, the jotting down is simplicity itself, but the occurring — ah, that’s difficult.”

Relentlessly, the authors hunt the firefly with a blunderbuss: “The question that should be put to Leacock, then, is not simply how to make people laugh, but how to make people laugh and teach other people economics, all in the same lifetime.” Wrong again. Why can’t one be both a baseball player and a butcher, or a nurse and a novelist? Unless you subscribe to the dictum of Harold Innis that “The trouble with studying economics in Canada is that you may die laughing,” there may be no direct connection. The central question, surely, is how to comprehend the essence of the man, his motivations, the well-spring of his creativity. Here, the Moritzes, for all their diligent and admirable research, flub and fumble.

They are at great pains to argue that Leacock, as chairman of the department of political economy at McGill, was an important and influential economist. That’s debatable at best. They do give new and helpful attention to Leacock’s academic output. Considerable as it was in quantity, it was mostly slight in quality. And narrow — for it is clear that he was a racist, an imperialist, an anti-feminist, and a passionate anti-prohibitionist, who culminated on this latter jaunty but minor policy matter for hundreds of pages. His best (and most lucrative) book as a scholar was *Elements of Political Science*, a solid and thoughtful volume, but a textbook, and not the sort of thing that would have earned him tenure in more recent decades. Still, anyone who hired and defended Eugene Forsey wasn’t all bad.

If Leacock the academic was, for all his unfortunate Victorian biases, a humanist and an early “red tory,” how are we to understand him as a humourist? Robertson Davies has written that the Sage of Brewery Bay “. . . liked money. He liked it because it brought respect and the kind of living he loved . . . and security.” The authors skirt but tacitly acknowledge the fact that Leacock wrote too much too quick-



ly in his hunger for dollars. Oddly, they do not ask, *why?*

For all their impressive piling up of facts, evidence, and quotations, the Moritzes are strangely obtuse on this pivotal question. They demonstrate that the young and impecunious Leacock hated his father, had “a somewhat cloaked and dim family life with his wife, Beatrix, who predeceased him by many years, and was the devoted but worried father of an erratic son who stood only some four feet tall. Does it take any great leap of imagination to surmise that he was at root a sad man, a good but disappointed man, a man who knew and feared poverty, a tender if bibulous man who was no stranger to sorrow? We are not told. The mysterious source of divine comedy remains unexplored. A frustrated reader might turn to mull Mordecai Richler’s observation that humourists,

. . . away from their punishing work, tend to be a most melancholy, even morose, lot. . . . Humour can conceal or even heal pain. The best revenge on experience is writing well, recalling past humiliations not so much in tranquillity as with laughter, biting back the anger, making it all seem wonderfully absurd in retrospect.

That, to me, has the jab of truth. Consider for comparison what the Moritzes offer as a generalization on Leacock’s wit: “He avoided personal invective and destructive criticism of individuals or of types, but often the point of his humor plunged very deep. He questioned the validity of the most cherished attitudes and institutions.” That just won’t do.

Still, this workmanlike biography has some real merit. It is detailed, careful, and balanced. Although it fails to take risks or offer flashes of insight, it is the best biography yet available on this lovable man. Sometimes little anecdotes are included and the real Leacock twinkles through the book. My favourite:

. . . There were decidedly irregular aspects of his conduct as well. A young reporter who visited his Arts Building office was asked to wait while Leacock finished addressing a letter. She was shocked when he calmly drew together a small pile of the correspondence he had been finishing, walked to the window and threw it out on the lawn. He explained that it saved him a trip down to the mailbox; some passerby seeing a heap of addressed letters would post them.

The book is worth reading for such occasional nuggets, but they are regrettably few. Through the rather thick prose, I can almost hear Leacock chuckling, “Aha! Slipped away on you again, didn’t I?” □

Women in the moon

By Judith Fitzgerald

Domestic Fuel, by Erin Mouré, House of Anansi, 122 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 80754 143 0).

Cocktails at the Mausoleum, by Susan Musgrave, McClelland & Stewart, 151 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 6651 1).

IN HER SEMINAL work, *The Moon and the Virgin*, Nor Hall describes the moon as feminine, and "its trek across the night sky has been likened to the travels and travails of the feminine psyche." Given *Domestic Fuel* and *Cocktails at the Mausoleum*, Hall's notion of woman-in-the-moon (as opposed to the traditional male figure) bears fruit. Each poet turns and returns to lunar imagery and attempts an enunciation of the art of poetry against the craft of language. Mouré succeeds; Musgrave fails.

Mouré's fourth volume of poetry demonstrates an articulate consciousness in full bloom. Her earlier collections, particularly *Empire*, *York Street*, lacked a coherent ideology and tended toward fragmentation for fragmentation's sake. The results, predictably erratic, suggested a poet of terrific potential looking for a language, a frame of reference.

With *Domestic Fuel*, previous confusion yields to lucid synthesis: Mouré's fascination with the "making" of individual poems (in the Romantic tradition) has fallen away. The collection offers a body of work, not merely its severed head. An informed voice speaks eloquently; we cannot fail to listen.

The book contains four sections, including the title one. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Musgrave among them, Mouré recognizes exactly what a series of poems grouped together under one title constitutes. "Speaking in Tongues," for example, takes the act of communication as its starting point and spirals outward to include its opposite. Language, the sinner/saviour, dominates content while structure reiterates the dichotomy. True to form, "Spirit-Catcher" offers its message in broken lines:

*What I am is never clear, is the heart
lonely, is a word, dust,
bed-eaten
Love, I am the veined-blue iris in your
hand
when you clench fists
breaking over nothing. . . .*

Mouré's celebration of art over artifice in *Domestic Fuel* combines with a stunning purity of language and ideological location. Here, significantly, energy matters. She embraces the female, touches night, denounces blindness.

If the focus for Mouré's writing exists in dominant nocturnal images, then the focus for *Cocktails at the Mausoleum* locates itself in darkness. While the moon waxes in Mouré's work, it wanes in Musgrave's. Night's opposite — day — is not the same as the opposite of darkness, light.

The collection contains seven sections; unfortunately, their logic seems arbitrary and self-conscious. There are long poems and there are long sections. This collection consists of long sections, a series of disconnections.

Musgrave's natural poetic abilities are inestimable; when she wishes, she can write circles around circles. However, much of this volume displays an uncharacteristic laziness on the part of the poet (or her muse). The easy rhyme occurs again and again, almost as if the poem had asserted its own order, its own sense of control. Meanwhile, the absent author appears as an afterthought, a sort of literary joy-rider.

Paradoxically, although the writer is missing, the persona/I in these poems insistently prevails. On its own, confessional self-obsession has a place in our literature (circa 1960); combined with a "poetic journal in the form of Musgrave's own notes to the poems," such autism ultimately induces a severe case of boredom. How often do we need to be informed of the colour of the poet's dress, the make and model of some car or other, whether a given photographer was copacetic? Not only do we sit through the original, we must also suffer the instant replay. In "I Am Not a Conspiracy, Everything Is Not Paranoid, The Drug Enforcement Administration Is Not Everywhere":

*Paul comes from Toronto on Sunday
to photograph me here in my
new image. . .*

*camera goes on clicking, standing naked
in the
high-heel shoes I bought last summer in
Mexico. . . .*

And later, the note from this "I": "Paul Orenstein was the photographer. Obviously I felt uncomfortable in the cornfield, far away from the ocean I'm used to being photographed beside."

At bottom, *Cocktails at the Mausoleum* contains a handful of poems; the remainder displays what Charles Olson called "the lyrical interference of the individual as ego." As an exercise in self-promotion, it works; as a collection of poems, it doesn't. □

Class distractions

By Lucille King-Edwards

The New Canadian Poets 1970-1985, edited by Dennis Lee, McClelland & Stewart, 383 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 5216 2).

WRITING THIS REVIEW in Vermont one hopes will add clarity to an evaluation of a book that attempts to span a generation of publishing, for as Dennis Lee explains, the ages of poets are not the reference point, but rather the year they had their first book of poetry published. This volume contains Lee's choice from what is estimated as an average of 60 first books of poetry published every year since 1970. Immediately our hats must be doffed to Lee, who has gallantly waded through the deluge to select his survivors.

Not so fast; take a look at the index. Maybe I'm not your average reader, but with a couple of exceptions there's no one here who is unfamiliar to my eye, if not in book form, at least in poems read in journals. Despite this, Lee claims that many of these poets are unknown to each other. Not surprising to me as I watch them not buying each others' books day in and day out. I often hope there's an underground network, about which I know nothing, freely distributing these books to all who write poetry.

Complete with introductory essay, which can be read as an afterword, this anthology strikes one as a distinctly schizophrenic book; it's really two anthologies in one. The first section gives us, in non-partisan alphabetical order, 20 poets at length. Bravo! At last enough poems to make a reasonable judgement, enough to allow the flavour, style, and content of each poet to be developed.

I must admit to being an inveterate anthology-hater because inevitably, if one knows the writer's work at length, one balks at the typical anthology pieces chosen, and if one doesn't know the work one feels teased, but never satisfied. Part one of *New Canadian Poets* is commendable in that respect. But here's the rub: part two contains the poems of 25 more poets; these receive the usual anthology *coup de grâce* of two to three poems each. Lee decides who are the first-class citizens here, and who are the second. Of this latter category I would single out Robyn Sarah, Ray Filip, and

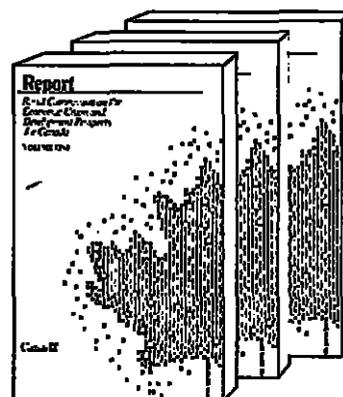
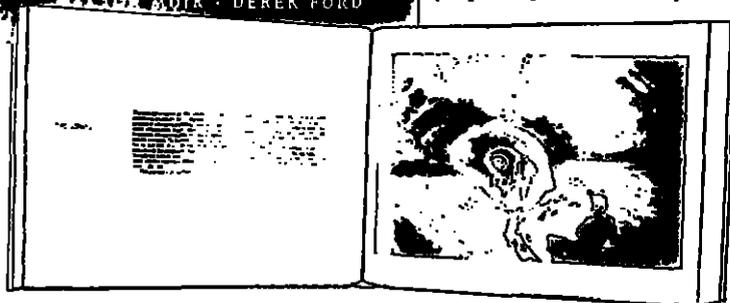
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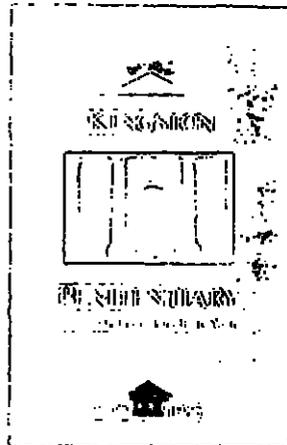
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August Kleinzahler as poets whose works deserve better treatment.

Filip seems to be cast in the "immigrant" role, not contrary to part of his image, but he has many more powerful pieces than "The Mighty Buck, . . ." I ache that Robyn Sarah's "Fugue" seems destined to become an anthology special when the poetry in her latest book, *Anyone Skating on That Middle Ground*, is far deeper and disturbing. Kleinzahler is represented by one aspect of his writing, his ear for slang. It is interesting that two of the three selections chosen have decidedly Canadian settings, while Kleinzahler's range is much broader. I am suspicious of a book that establishes a two-class ranking within itself.

Of those who warrant "up to fifteen pages," Christopher Dewdney leaves most others far behind. The scope and passion of his poetry, and the unique use of language from technical to vernacular make the poems soar into form. They body forth their feelings and objects.

*This is of two worlds — the one diurnal
men know and that
other world where lunar mottled eels stir
like dreams in
shallow forest water. . . .
The secrecy of your voice behind me in
a crowd, remoras
vacuous and cold that lurk in the eddies
of your
passing.*

Roo Borson opens the anthology darkly, if well. Her poems ring Wallace Stevens in my mind: "Death is the mother of beauty," and this mood seems to move through the next three: Marilyn Bowering, Robert Bringhurst, and Don Coles. Bringhurst has mastered the ironic tone as well as a language almost as varied as Dewdney's, frequently as powerful. Coles was a find for this reader. He plays the small-town Ontario life out of its mundaneness with accuracy, while on his other string he gives the reader a touch of the European sophisticate. Other choices: Paulette Jiles, though I missed poems from her strong section, "Turning Forty" in *Celestial Navigation*; Don McKay for his range and virtuosity; Erin Mouré for her poetry, which cuts the heart.

Peter Van Toorn is not well-represented by the selection here. His "Wawa" section from *In Guildenstern County* is a must for anyone wanting to see his range in language, coupled with more of the *Mountain Tea* poems. "The Cattle" and "Shake 'n' Bake Ballad" are catchy but just that. My pans in section one are Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Susan Musgrave, and David Donnell. They are all too quick with the clever word, too ready to forgo poetry for superficial sheen. Donnell, in this selection, reads like an egomaniacal boor.

And now to do what everyone who has ever read any anthology wants to do: mention some of the poets who should have been there. Guy Birchard, whose first book, *Baby Grand*, has received little notice in Canada while meanwhile his work is being published in England, Australia, and the United States on a regular basis. Try his poems in *Four by Four, Origin, or Scripsi*. Patrick Friesen's *The Shunning* is the best of Prairie poetry, moving and faithful to the land; Anne McLean's *Lil* provides another dimension to the feminine voice — the poems there far outshine many of the selections in this anthology. I would add Brent MacKay, Jack Hannan, Bob McGee, Fraser Sutherland, and Stephen Morrissey.

The New Canadian Poets is a safe book. Not too many important toes have been stepped on here, yet I believe that readers and writers from each pocket of poetry across Canada will find at least one very fine poet neglected while someone with a bigger name in Toronto has taken their place.

A passing thought, a heretical thought: maybe, just maybe, as a literary editor remarked to me one day, too much money goes into publishing and not enough into poets' pockets for keeping out of print and writing and rewriting and editing, so that instead of a deluge we might have sparkling streams of poetry, major lakes of poetry, grand cataracts of poetry. The ground water may be too high. □

REVIEW

Two solitudes

By Douglas Glover

A Tale of Two Countries: Contemporary Fiction in Canada and the United States, by Stanley Fogel, ECW Press, 143 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920802 49 4) and \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 920802 51 6).

IT HAD TO happen, I suppose — the anti-nationalist backlash. The Liberals are out of power, the Conservatives are cozying up to the U.S., and now comes Stanley Fogel, a would-be iconoclast flailing at the idols of CanLit with his American post-modernist stick.

The argument of *Two Countries* goes like this: post-modernism, epitomized by William Gass and Robert Coover, is the dominant ("state of the art") fictional style in the U.S. today while we backward Canadians ("isolationist and

perhaps claustrophobic") continue to write "along more traditional lines," epitomized by the novels of Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies. The reason for this, says Fogel, is that Canada is at a stage of cultural development analogous to America in the mid-19th century: we are still creating our national myth while Americans, 130 years ahead of us, are busily "deconstructing" theirs.

One can perhaps sympathize with Fogel's impulse if not the product of his ruminations. He is plainly frustrated with the excesses of cultural nationalism; he believes, with reason, that it is time to reassess the merits of some of our most fame-bloated literary figures. He wants Canadian writing to be more courageous, both formally and politically, than it has been in the past.

Fogel, however, effectively emasculates what might have been a timely and salutary book by yoking his re-evaluation of CanLit to a trendy, self-congratulatory brand of U.S. academic criticism that deals mainly with writers who were *au courant* 10 to 15 years ago. He further loads his critical dice by comparing literary apples and oranges (a book on Canadian and U.S. post-modernists might have been interesting, or a comparison of Atwood and some prominent American women writers) and by confining his argument in a cage of simplistic dualities (traditional/modern, dominant/peripheral).

Two Countries is a veritable dormitory of Procrustean beds. And it is not helped by Fogel's portentous style which, veering wildly between the prolix and the incomprehensible, reads occasionally like a parody of the worst academese.

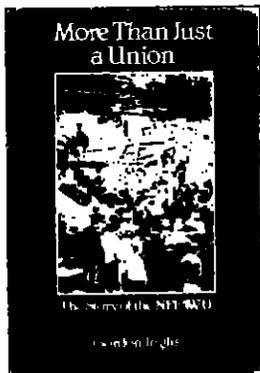
The oracular utterance, Shakespeare, for all that portends not intrinsically in terms of the plays, but rather as it adumbrates culture, good breeding, the cognoscenti, is a staple of many academics in English departments and other cultural institutions.

First, it's simply not true that post-modernism is the mainstream literary movement in the U.S. today. Last year William Kennedy, a writer publicly sponsored by Nobel laureate Saul Bellow, walked off with the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and a MacArthur Foundation grant for his novel about Albany bums. Now that's what the mainstream is.

Gass, Coover, and others like them have retreated to the universities where they teach and where they find an eager band of ambitious academics ready to dissect their theoretical utterances and programmatic fiction. Thomas Pynchon's most recent book was a collection of early stories; John Barth's was a novel

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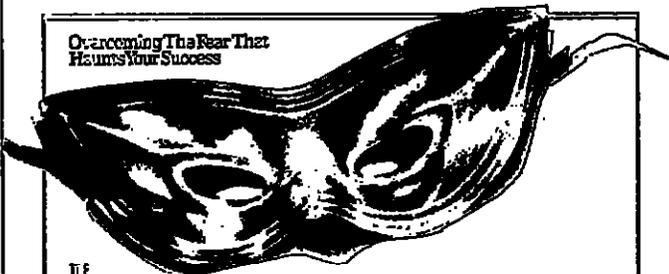
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of letters, a form employed by Samuel Richardson. They are hardly "the foremost contemporary American writers."

Second, what Fogel says about the dearth of experimental fiction in Canada is equally false. He ignores, for example, Leon Rooke, who is invariably tagged as a post-modernist of precisely the Coover-Barthelme ilk. The fact is that some of the best unconventional (I use the term advisedly, in the Fogelian sense) fiction published by commercial presses in the U.S. in the '80s has been written by such Canadians as Timothy Findley and W. P. Kinsella.

Fogel lists several other Canadian writers who, he says, lean toward post-modernism but for one reason or another don't make the cut. He likes to have everything his own way. If a Canadian — say, Ray Smith — writes meta-fiction, it's "derivative," "ersatz," and "neglected." It will be only "slightly metafiction" (is that like being half-pregnant?) or it will be an isolated, one-shot effort (whereas Gass, with two books, leads a movement). Fogel just can't bring himself to admit that there is a lively and interesting canon of Canadian experimental writing.

Third, yes, it's true that Atwood and Davies are not post-modernists, but this is like saying a horse is not a zebra and has nothing to do with whether it's a good horse or a bad horse. Fogel thinks Atwood's fiction is "glib and facile" while Davies is "clearly a gentleman first and a writer second." He brands both as old-fashioned novelists whose works are more akin to the "tepid British variations" of Iris Murdoch (why does he pick on Murdoch?) than to the American mainstream.

At least in Atwood's case, this is wilful and flippant chauvinism. Atwood happens to be about as mainstream in the U.S. (where she is grouped with such authors as Ann Beattie and Marge Piercy) as she is in Canada. *Surfacing* was a revolutionary novel when it broke on the American consciousness at a crucial stage in the feminist movement. To that extent, Atwood has most certainly had a more profound political impact, done more to subvert the language of male domination, than Fogel's "subversive" duo, Gass and Coover.

Fourth, in order to make the case that Canadian writing is categorically different from U.S. writing, Fogel ignores the fact that Americans who read what is published by mainstream commercial presses find a lot of Canadian writing quite palatable, thank you very much — not alien, stuffy, old-fashioned, or excessively parochial at all. The most paradoxical thing about Fogel's argument is that he chooses to pillory Davies

and Atwood as traditional and un-American when it is obvious that of all contemporary Canadian fiction writers they have achieved the greatest critical and commercial success south of the border.

The truth is that whatever differences exist between Canadian and U.S. writers, they do not reduce to such simplistic contraries as hidebound tradition vs. experimental post-modernism. (Fogel might better have addressed himself to the reasons why Canadian publishers take fewer chances than their U.S. counterparts.) Nor can we any longer accept the old cliché about Canada being locked ineluctably in a destiny parallel to that of the United States — only lagging behind a few decades. □

REVIEW

A question of life and death

By Wilfred Palmer

The Big Evasion: Abortion, the Issue That Won't Go Away, by Anne Collins, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 270 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 88619 060 6).

ANNE COLLINS INTRODUCES her discussion of the abortion issue by drawing an analogy with the legislation related to contraception. The law, which was in force until 1969, stated that anyone who advised the use of contraceptives was liable to a two-year term in jail. Because of accepted practices no prosecutions had been laid in the preceding 30 years.

Canadian public policy-makers are like dustmen sweeping the streets after the demonstration has gone by. They change controversial laws carefully, years after public practice has made them obsolete.

With regard to abortion Parliament is described as a passive observer, watching while the individual protagonists Joe Borowski and Henry Morgentaler test the reactions of public opinion.

The activities of these two men, repre-

sented the opposite extremes of the present debate, are described in the early chapters of the book. The position of the numerous pro-life and pro-choice groups are provided as interesting background information. The style is journalistic rather than judgemental.

The central part of the book is a "court diary" of the recent trial of Dr. Morgentaler and his co-accused in Toronto. The criminal charge was not that abortions have been performed outside a hospital, but rather the more general charge of "conspiring to procure an abortion." The crown argued in defence of the law, specifically Section 251 of the Criminal Code (revised 1970). The defence lawyer, Morris Manning, had to convince the judge and jury that this statute violated newly legislated constitutional rights. It became clear that the advisarial approach of the court would not produce a satisfactory solution for anyone.

This was Morgentaler's fourth trial and although the jury decided in his favour, the round of appeals and counter charges will continue. The battle lines in the court are the rights of women *versus* the rights of potential lives. This is also the substance of the public debate and the reason why it will always be a stalemate. Manning, after pleading in court for almost 18 days, confided to the author that the criminal law is the worst way to handle social problems of this kind.

With the trial completed, Collins turns to the more fundamental and philosophical aspects of the dilemma. When does a fertilized ovum become a unique human life? The pro-lifers claim that conception, by producing a complete genetic entity, is the point of no return. The author stresses the difference between abortion and infanticide.

Infanticide is a murder of a fledgling member of the human community. Abortion, until the point at which the fetus achieves functional integrity from its mother, is . . . interfering with a natural process, no different or morally freighted than birth control.

The necessity of a synergistic interaction between mother and fetus up to the time of quickening is beautifully described. Here Collins writes as a woman. Of the many authorities quoted, she seems to be closest to the position of Mary O'Brien:

The right-to-life say that abortion is a symbol of irrationality. What it may well be is evidence of a very hard-nosed rational perception of a woman's being in the world. No day care, no good jobs, the forcing into marital relationships that are often unsatisfactory. Women *don't* have abortions because they got carried away and opened their legs once too often. They have abortions because



they are sexual beings who are also reproductive beings who live in a world where there is no provision to be either of these things with dignity.

One is left with the feeling that the legislative history for abortion will be no better than it was for contraception. Meanwhile, the moral and social questions arising from the new technology of reproductive biology are becoming increasingly complex. How many unresolved legal cases will arise from surrogate motherhood, embryo adoption and artificial wombs? Anne Collins provides some insights toward answering these questions. □

REVIEW

Women in love

By Erin Mouré

Open is broken, by Betsy Warland, Longspoon Press, 56 pages, \$7.00 paper (ISBN 0 919285 26 0).

Touch to My Tongue, by Daphne Marlatt, Longspoon Press, illustrated, 54 pages, \$7.00 paper (ISBN 0 919285 27 9).

LONGSPOON RECENTLY issued works by two women that speak some exciting currents of poetic work in language today. Alongside these books it has reissued Marlatt's classic 1974 book *Steveston* (a place of lyric sanctuary, where I first felt the here-ness and breath of the West Coast), this time with Robert Minden's haunting people-photographs interspersed with Marlatt's text.

Marlatt's *Touch to My Tongue* is printed in a parallel format to *Steveston*; its wide pages are interworked with photograph-constructions by B.C. artist Cheryl Sourkes, a sequence of pictures called "Memory Room" that evoke the female body, trees and ocean, the alphabetic and the iconic. In this book the photographs and words have a reflective continuity: Marlatt's 14 love poems, too, are pictures, and are read as we read pictures, our eyes moving across the surface of signs, making visual and textural connections. Marlatt's poems, like pictures, respect not the line but just the limits of the paper, inside which her sounds are their own lines, beckoning us in.

Both Marlatt's and Warland's poems are tied by female erotics, by a sense of *place in the self*. Labyrinthine, Marlatt's language speaks the curves and maze ends that snag us away from and toward

meaning, and calls us into the rhythms of the body, dreaming memory, not the mere dictionary meanings of words. This poetry does not repeat (as so much poetry does) the clichés of sexual feeling for an objectified "other."

Marlatt's work is a dynamic of the self in dialogue not just with the lover, but in and through language. Dialogue is, after all, the process by which we grow and change. Through dialogue we displace what was inside us and lift it out, where it can be looked upon, named, and freed from silence. So many poets fear making that interior space *empty*, refusing what would speak there! Yet, as language theorists have shown us, we can only imagine what we have words for, and words are connected vitally to desire. In this, the poems in *Touch* are ecstatic, even in sadness, sickness, separation; the words glisten and flow.

Warland's book contains 14 short poems and the sequence "open is broken," in which the meanings of words themselves are addressed and intertwined with the body, finding their own female shapes and forces. Warland acknowledges that the locus of lesbian desire is not speakable in linear, male-defined "rational" language, and she finds the roots of words that "mark" her own desire "exceedingly": the original meaning of the word *taboo*, she tells us.

Open is broken seems to be a preliminary work: it breaks the conventions of meaning by asserting older lost meanings, but leads outward to something Warland does not reach, yet. Even so, Warland here is far from her earlier work; the surge of *open is broken* overshadows the poems that precede the sequence.

In Warland's "untying the tongue," the affective is not severed from thinking but includes it. *Thinking* itself is present as emotion. This challenges our old notions of the poetic, and Warland trespasses with her words to evoke so much of what has been forbidden women, especially lesbians. Her work speaks an eroticism rooted in the female body.

The ties in *open is broken* between eroticism/etymology, between tissue/text, are realized wildly in Marlatt's work. Marlatt's word-flow is a realization of meanings fragmenting, breathing, working out of silence, the writer/reader fused in a journey where one word/image invokes and provokes the next.

Both books ask us to take risks with reading, with what we know of reading and of the text, and of our own bodies' description. My only worry about this erotics is that it could become too focused on a "couple-ing" and turn in-

ward, making the world (socio-political-economic) outside and Other. Other it is, but that world too has to be redefined and opened in language; when it is it will incorporate the libidinal/sexual/erotic — and abandon ideology that fails us, in the cruise missile, in Reagan, in rational language, in the backyard of America. Identity is only interesting if there is change. The changes Marlatt, Warland, and others make in language help us identify our selves, so that the poetic is not an object, but says to us (as Marlatt says of her self):

*I can only be, no vessel but a movement
running, out in the open, out in the dark
and rising tide, in risk, knowing who I
am with you —*

The touch to her tongue is her lover's skin after an absence, female reflective, merging desire.

The two books, different in texture both of sound and of design, refer to each other in their dedication. Still their work is conscious of and open to the audience, and the reader they acknowledge is someone we have a passion to become. □

REVIEW

Blended scotch

By D.W. Nichol

Lean Tales, by James Kelman, Agnes Owen, and Alasdair Gray, Jonathan Cape (Academic Press), 192 pages, \$23.50 cloth (ISBN 0 224 02262 8).

SCOTTISH LITERATURE in general takes the slow boat to Canada. Few Canadians will have read modern Scots bards like Hugh MacDiarmid and Robert Garioch, let alone Scots novelists and short story writers. One example of transatlantic time-lag: James Kennaway's first novel, *Tunes of Glory*, was filmed in the early 1960s, yet wasn't published in Canada (by Lester & Orpen Dennys) until the 1980s. But being the resilient entrepreneurs and saucy exporters they are, three Scottish writers have struck on something new; or rather, an old idea inspirited with new life: a Glasgow jam sandwich.

Lean Tales is the remarkable collaboration of three distinctive and pungent talents. James Kelman sings of the low-lifer passively witnessing his body's decay, the punter who loses his pay packet on the first wager, the rogue who scores a knapsack in the British Museum loo; Agnes Owens spins bizarre tales of a local witch-cum-prostitute

pickling the Sanitary Inspector and of hooligan vendettas; Alasdair Gray writes mainly of himself.

The postscript tells it all: Philip Hobsbaum (a Leavis disciple sent to Glasgow University) started a fortnightly writers' group in 1971 that linked such diverse writers as Tom Leonard, Liz Lochhead, Alasdair Gray and Jim Kelman. The latter two initially had little in common: "Gray was writing a novel [*Lanark*] which used the devices of fantasy to overlook facts which were essential to Kelman's prose."

Off the two went, Kelman getting *An old pub near the Angel* published by a small press in Maine; Gray painting his graphic canvases and selling the odd script. Meanwhile, Liz Lochhead "discovered" Agnes Owens in a writing group in the Vale of Leven, an industrial vein north of Glasgow hit hard by the recession. "Westclox Limited went into liquidation and Agnes did what our dynamic prime minister would do if the Thatcher family had to go on the dole: she hunted for part-time cleaning jobs." Stories like "Getting Sent For" (a parent-teacher interview that backfires disastrously), "Commemoration Day" (about an alibi for the murder of a knighted horseman) and "McIntyre" (a suspect spokesman for tenants' rents) show which way Agnes Owens leans: with the three million unemployed.

Coasting on the critical acclaim of *Lanark* (1981), Gray has had more offers than he can fit on his plate. When offered the commission by Cape, Gray said he "had no more ideas for prose fictions," hence the apportioned parts to Kelman and Owens. Gray's concluding slice is less a matter of lean tale than a mix of autobiography, eulogy, protest, and apologia. Gray's contributions devolve from largest — a personal travelogue in the form of a report to an arts grant committee — to smallest — a droplet, "Ending," which reads *in toto*: "Having beguiled with fiction until I had none left I resorted to facts, which also ran out." Perhaps Gray has determined to return to wordless images.

The arrangement of his tales suggests the final decanting of a writer's talents. In "The Story of a Recluse" a minister's son gets drunk and finds himself in a familiar home but a strange bed. An entrancing lassie enters and almost undresses. Honour-bound, he says, "I beg your pardon." But mid-tale, the teller tells us what we have is one of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Unfinished Stories*. After some vivid analysis and discursive digressions on Stevenson's art, Gray decides to finish the unfinished off, once and for all. Such experimental image-building/image-bursting can be engaging up to a point, but Gray continues the

narrative brilliantly up until his own climax: conciliation of father and son. Then Gray finishes the romantic interest off in perfunctory fashion, the lad almost winning the lass who happens not to give a fig. . . . Gray candidly knots the end of his fictional tether.

Kelman, on the other hand, has just started. His first novel *Not not while the giro [sic]* attracted considerable attention throughout Britain and his second, *The Busconductor Hines*, has recently been published by the enterprising Edinburgh University student press, Polygon Books. One of Canadian readers' perennial problems with Scots writing is deciphering the dialect. When Kelman writes "At least fifty pee," he is referring to an amount of money, not to a crowded washroom.

Many of the short stories in this collection have been published elsewhere in small editions and scattered magazines (like *Chapman* and *Cencrastus* in Edinburgh) that are generally inaccessible to a Canadian readership. *Lean Tales* was published earlier this year in Britain and now is available here. This augurs well: although English writing seems in the doldrums — where has Ian McEwan gone after his morbid *Comfort of Strangers*? — Scots *scrievln* is thriving. □

REVIEW

Remembrance of agonies past

By Paul Stuewe

Anna's World, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated from the French by Sheila Fischman, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 176 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88619 058 4).

The Day Is Dark and Three Travellers, by Marie-Claire Blais, translated from the French by Derek Colman, Penguin, 183 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 14 007911 4).

IT'S A BANNER year for Marie-Claire Blais fans with the appearances of *Anna's World*, a 1982 novel now available in English, and *The Day Is Dark and Three Travellers*, the first paperback edition of two novellas originally translated in 1967. Both explore characteristic expanses of Blais's universe, that uneasy realm where exquisitely acute suffering impinges upon exquisitely acute sensibilities with captivating results.

Anna's World is a powerful portrayal of how the absence of love can lead to an abandonment of interest in life. Its teenage protagonist's rejection of traditional

values has progressed from open rebellion to covert apathy, a process that her stream-of-consciousness remembrances of agonies past make chillingly explicit. In lesser hands, this might have become a conventional tale of adolescent *angst* vs. adult authoritarianism; but Blais presents her indictment in such convincing detail that we instead come to admire the purity of Anna's intentions, which are placed in the context of a thoroughly compromised society where the *status quo* can best be negated through indifference rather than active defiance.

The interplay between Anna's loss of interest in what happens to her as an individual and her perception of the disintegration of society as a whole is at the core of the book, and it is beautifully handled. Anna shares the narration with several other female characters, whose accounts of their particular pain deepen and broaden our understanding of this world's malaise while also offering multiple perspectives upon Anna. Although men do not play an important part in this milieu, one of the subtlest and most touching narrative strands is Anna's obsession with her father's disapproval of her life, even though she seldom sees him and claims to despise everything he represents. Blais controls the varied elements of her story with admirable artistry as she sketches an essentially entropic environment in superbly animated prose.

Anna's World has, in the Sartrean sense, no exit: whatever ideals or fantasies they may entertain, its inhabitants can never evade a reality that condemns them always to be themselves. Unlike Sartre, however, Blais creates fully human characters whose suffering is emotively affecting rather than spiritlessly numbing, and as a consequence *Anna's World* is a notable example of how her work can touch upon the deepest psychological and intellectual levels.

The novellas *The Day Is Dark* and *Three Travellers* are cut from similar cloth, although only one of them approaches the same heights of inspiration. *The Day Is Dark* is a schematic, artfully artificial tale of lovers meeting and parting, with its characters impressing as mouthpieces for various philosophical points of view rather than as fully developed human beings. The reader is offered some sharp conversational repartee as well as many thoughtful reflections on the human condition, but the intellectual content of the novella hasn't been transmuted into compelling fiction. *The Day Is Dark* is of interest as a precursor of such mature works as *Anna's World*, but its intrinsic merits are less than overwhelming.

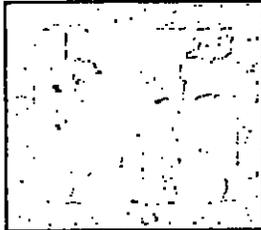
Three Travellers is a much more suc-

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cessful opus that blends lyrical sentiments into a dramatically charged love triangle. It is written in a style that effectively synthesizes prose and poetry into a coherent prose poem, while also making clever use of musical and artistic refer-

ence points. Basically, *Three Travellers* revitalizes a familiar plot situation by infusing it with a wealth of fresh aesthetic meanings, and the result is a brilliant novella that makes this volume a necessary acquisition. Penguin has

inexplicably failed to credit translator Coltman's contribution to the enterprise, which contrasts unfavourably with Lester & Orpen Dennys's prominent acknowledgement of Sheila Fischman's translation of *Anna's World*. □

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Home and native land

New books explore the role of Métis and native people in our history and their often troubled place in today's world.

By Mary Ainslie Smith

GENEALOGY IS AN ever-growing passion with North Americans. They flock to archives and registry offices, pore over old newspapers, and send hundreds of thousands of letters worldwide in the hope of establishing some link with their past for successive generations. Their research brings much satisfaction to individual genealogists, but few excursions into family backgrounds can explore territory as rich and exciting as that in *Tell Me, Grandmother*, by Lyn Hancock and Marion Dowler (McClelland & Stewart, 160 pages, \$9.95 paper).

The book is essentially a family history. Grandmother is Jane Howse Livingston (1848-1919), Métis granddaughter of Joseph Howse, a trader for the Hudson's Bay Company who explored and opened territory west into the Rockies in the early 1800s. Jane was born in the Red River settlement, now Winnipeg, but when her Métis parents saw that their way of life was being threatened by increased European settlement, they decided to leave. In 1863 they crossed the prairie in a Red River cart to Fort Victoria, near modern-day Edmonton. There Jane met and married Sam Livingston, an Irish-born explorer, adventurer, and prospector. Within a few years, they moved their young family south to the Calgary area, where they became prominent early settlers and farmers.

Jane had shared the memories of these early years with one of her grandchildren, Dennis Dowler. His wife, Marion Dowler, approached Hancock for assistance in recording the story, and *Tell Me, Grandmother* is the result. The story's structure is rather cumbersome. It presents young Dennis, at about 11 years of age, drawing the story from his grandmother bit by bit, interspersing her recollected adventures with comments about his own life in the Calgary of 1919.

The book is written primarily for children, and this structure has the advantage of relating the story from a child's perspective. But the double-distancing and the constant interruption of the main action are disadvantages that are not compensated for. Still, the story is well worth telling, particularly as it emphasizes the role native and Métis women played in the opening of the West, in spite of frequent discrimination toward them. The book contains black-and-white illustrations by Douglas Tait and helpful maps by Jack Bone.

The Hancock-Dowler book explains the role that fur traders played in the history of Western Canada. *A Breed Apart*, by Tony German (McClelland & Stewart, 272 pages, \$3.95 paper), is a fictionalized account of the fur-trading period and the violent rivalry between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in the early part of the 19th century.

The hero, Duncan Cameron, is the 16-year-old son of Angus Cameron, a full partner in the North West Company, and of Rose Flower, his Cree "country" wife. After an apprenticeship in Montreal, he returns to his home, a trading outpost in the northwest wilderness, just in time to be at the heart of the conflict between the two trading interests. This conflict is paralleled by the struggle within Duncan himself as he tries to reconcile the values inherited from his parents and to decide where he belongs.

Duncan's life is further complicated when he falls in love with Nancy Spence, also half-Cree, and the daughter of Magnus Spence, the neighbouring Hudson's Bay Company factor, just as full war breaks out between the two posts. Duncan's ill-judged attempt to help Nancy and her mother costs the life of one of the Nor'westers. He loses his father's confidence and is turned away from the post to make his own way as an independent trader.

During the next few months in the wilderness, Duncan learns as much from his Cree relatives as he did in 10 years of schooling in Montreal. But he cannot escape the company conflict. Some of his Cree cousins are murdered by Hudson's Bay men, Duncan is critically wounded, and it appears that he has lost Nancy to his bitterest enemy. But in the end, Duncan triumphs, proving his worth to his family and, more important, finding out about himself. He learns that he can be neither Scots nor Cree nor both, but is something different and worthwhile — a breed apart.

Tony German is a retired naval officer. *A Breed Apart* is his fourth historical novel for young people since 1977, when the first of his popular Tom Penny series appeared. He is a skilled and sure writer, his well-researched stories creating a wonderful sense of the violence, romance, and excitement in parts of Canadian history. School teachers should direct their classes to read *A Breed Apart*, perhaps along with *Tell Me, Grandmother*, and scrap all their old lesson plans on "The fur trade in Western Canada."

Lance Ducharme in *Let It Go*, by Marilyn Halvorson (Irwin, 223 pages, \$9.95 paper), is also part Cree, a fact that adds complexity and depth to the background and characterization of this 14-year-old Alberta boy. The story is told from the point of view of Lance's best friend, Red. When Lance's mother, who deserted him 10 years earlier, returns and throws his entire life off course, Red tries to help. Red has serious problems of his own, and during an exciting climax both boys move toward a better understanding of the adults in their lives.

As in her first novel, *Cowboys Don't Cry*, Halvorson deals honestly with issues facing young adolescents. Strained family relations, single-parent homes, peer pressure, reckless driving, drug abuse, child abuse, intense

boredom with school — all are touched upon in *Let It Go*. But the book is not just a depressing litany of topical problems, as so many books directed at the adolescent market seem to be. Halvorson's characterization and plot development are interesting and challengingly complex. She presents no facile solutions to any of the problems, but the general tone of the story is positive and hopeful, probably because of her portrayal of the firm friendship between the two boys and their love for rural Alberta.

Annick Press marks its 10th anniversary in publishing this year. It has become well-known as the distributor of many high-quality children's books from Europe, but it also continues to offer the fresh and original Canadian material upon which it made its reputation. Among Annick's recent releases are *A Time to Be Brave and Dancing Feathers*, by Christel Kleitsch and Paul Stephens (both 64 pages, \$6.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper), the first two books in the Spirit Bay series, which corresponds to a television series of the same name.

Both stories are told from the point of view of Tafia Shebagabow, an 11-year-old Ojibway girl who lives in Spirit Bay, a reserve in Northern Ontario. In the winter her family leaves Spirit Bay to run a trapline in the bush. *A Time to Be Brave* tells how Tafia must overcome her terror of trains to flag down help for her father who is injured at their isolated winter home.

In *Dancing Feathers*, Tafia travels to Southern Ontario to attend a powwow. She experiences a certain amount of culture shock, particularly in Toronto, and the problems of Indians caught between two worlds are explored. At the powwow, Tafia's appreciation for her heritage increases. Although she had initially rebelled against taking part in the dancing, she puts on the special costume her grandmother has made for her and dances with pride. The books are illustrated with black-and-white stills from the films. The cover art is native artist Don Ense's first work for children.

Murdo Scribe (1920-1983) was born on a reserve in Manitoba. He served overseas during the Second World War, then returned to a traditional life of hunting and trapping. In 1975 he joined the Native Education Branch of the Manitoba department of education and began writing stories and recording legends he had heard from elders on his reserve. *Murdo's Story* (Pemmican Publications, 44 pages, \$6.95 paper) is one of these legends, telling how the animals, long before humans lived on earth, made arrangements to divide the year into summer and winter. The book is illustrated by Terry Gallagher.

Also from Pemmican are two story-books by Bernelda Wheeler, who produced them at a native writers' workshop sponsored by the Native Education Branch in Manitoba. A Friend Called "Chum," illustrated by Andy Stout (30 pages, \$5.95 paper), tells how a little girl comes to appreciate the friendship and loyalty of her pet dog. Unfortunately, Wheeler tries to tell the story in verse form with rather awkward results.

Much more successful is *I can't have bannock but the beaver has a dam*, illustrated by Herman Bekkering (32 pages, \$5.95 paper), an amusing story developed along the lines of "The House That Jack Built." A little boy asks for some bannock, but his mother can't make it. After persistent questioning, the boy gets her to give him the complete reason why not:

The beaver needed the tree to make a dam, so, the beaver chewed the tree. The big tree fell and knocked the power lines down. Without the power lines, the electricity is off. Without the electricity, the oven won't get hot. And I can't make bannock.

All three Pemmican books are attractively presented, their full-page illustrations showing native children in starring roles.

The Cree and Métis children who live in Moosonee and Moose Factory are the centre of attention in *Children of the Great Muskeg* (Black Moss Press, 84 pages, \$10.95 paper). Sean Ferris has collected their art work and writing, and his book presents their feelings about their home and traditions, their reactions to the cultural invasion from the south, and their concerns for the future. Here are some excerpts:

Me

*I am a girl I live in Moose Factory
I am an Indian
I like to eat bannock and spaghetti too
I am very happy.*

Untitled

*... Every fall and spring
people from Moosonee and Moose
Factory go hunting
for geese and moose. My favourite TV
shows are
Dukes of Hazzard, Battlestar Galactica,
Star Wars
and Incredible Hulk.*

Our Land

*... But today you came along you
while people
Our Land, our animals, were our friends
Our perfect friendship is all gone.*

The art is clear and strong, containing images from the world in which the children live, a world where snow-mobiles, planes, and outboard motors have as much place as snowshoes and canoes. □

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Janice Henke

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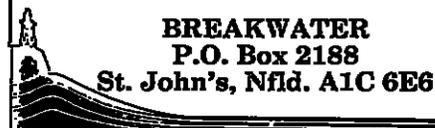
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Alexander Ross

'The dollar was a dollar until 1973. Now it is something different each day. People want to know about those mysterious forces that permeate their lives'

By Sherie Posesorstki

ONE OF CANADA'S leading business journalists, Alexander Ross has had a varied career as a writer, editor, and broadcaster. He has worked for United Press International in England, as a reporter and columnist for the Vancouver *Sun*, as managing editor of *Macleans*, columnist for the *Financial Post* and *Toronto Star*, and editor of *Toronto Life*. He is the author of four books, most recently *The Traders: Inside Canada's Stock Markets*, which was published in paperback by Collins last month. Ross now is the editor of a monthly investment newsletter, *The Moneyletter*, and is part-owner and consulting editor of *Canadian Business Magazine*. He was interviewed in Toronto by Sherie Posesorstki:

Books in Canada: What sparked your interest in business?

Alexander Ross: My first job after graduating from university in 1957. At my parents' urging, I got a job as a public relations representative with a gas company. In the year and a half that I was

with the company, it was embroiled in the largest political scandal of the 1950s. The president was a high-flying stock promoter whose actions ended up sending him to jail. Observing that tempestuous adventure hooked me on business. Business runs on our most primal emotions and desires: ego, lust, greed. Those passions create conflict and high drama.

BiC: How would you describe the style of business writing that was standard when you began writing in the 1960s?

Ross: Twenty years ago, business writing was incomprehensible to anyone outside a very narrow sector. It was flat, factual, black-and-white writing. In the early '60s, I was an editor at *Macleans*. Many of us there were excited and influenced by the style of feature writing that was appearing in *New York* magazine — the "new journalism," exemplified by the work of Tom Wolfe and Gay Talese. A feature by a writer whose pen-name was Adam Smith had a particularly strong impact on me. He wrote a piece on the movie industry merger between Paramount and Gulf and Western. His story was vividly descriptive, had a strong story-line, and was populated with characters who operated with raw ego needs. Smith's conclusion was that the real motivation for the merger wasn't money but lust. I thought that was a marvellous yet obvious insight — that business operates fundamentally on crude emotions. In 1968, I was hired to write a column for the *Financial Post*, where I began using such techniques. I wanted my business stories to read like those American features or like sports stories. There are really only four business transactions: buying, selling, borrowing, and lending. All business activities can be explained in terms of those four transactions and some common emotions.

BiC: What was the reaction of readers?

Ross: Very favourable. It has been demonstrated that businessmen like reading glitzy features, particularly about corporate screw-ups. That discovery was made in the 1930s by Henry Luce in *Fortune* magazine. There still is a fundamental division in business journalism between practitioners of the

traditional flat reportorial style and the new business feature writers, whom the reporters consider glitzyheads. However, some of the best journalism in Canada is being done by those feature writers.

BiC: What was the genesis of *The Traders*, and your interest in the securities industry?

Ross: Unemployment. Really. I had just closed a magazine I started called *Energy*. My agent suggested I write a history of Bay Street. I said, No, who wants to read about that? I went home, feeling discouraged. The next morning, I woke up with the book fully formed in my mind — chapter headings and subjects. I guess my subconscious had been working overtime. The rather obvious insight that came to me as a shattering revelation was that although nobody wants to read a *history* of Bay Street, they might want to read about the Canadian exchanges through the activities of current influential traders. I then decided to write a Peter Newman/Anthony Sampson-style book on the securities industry.

BiC: You state in your preface that you were concerned with conveying how the machine works, and not with judging its social utility. Did you feel that its social utility would be an issue of contention?

Ross: There is still a lot of rhetoric and imagery attached to Bay Street — you know, the fat-cat capitalists with dollar signs on their vests. As a business journalist, that's an issue and image that you confront. But *The Traders* is descriptive. It allows readers to reach their own conclusion about the market's social utility — which by the way, is not very high. Not enough Canadians invest to make it a significant social force.

BiC: Your approach is evocative of a film documentary.

Ross: I'm very attracted by writers with visual styles — writers who use imagery in every sentence. If you read a John Updike or Henry Miller sentence, there's almost always a visual image in every line — something you can picture. For me, that makes their work a joy to read. I'm always on the lookout for the tiny moment that crystallizes the subject. Years ago, I interviewed a doctor who

Alexander Ross



had been jailed for performing abortions. I went to visit him at his home. He had an organ in his living room and was playing these rather sweet melodies, which he composed. I asked him what they were. He said, "Lullabies." That was a perfect moment.

ED: *How do you account for the current growing interest in the business world?*

FOR: The dollar was a dollar until 1973. Since then it is something different each day. Businesses feel threatened, and most people want to know about those mysterious forces that permeate and shape their lives. On another level, business — or in general terms our work — is the only constant in our lives. Passion dies, our children grow up, yet through it all our work sustains us. □

LETTERS

Professors and poesy

I'M SO GLAD that in his letter (August-September) Associate Professor of Art History Christopher Carney recognized the tortured language in my review of *Adam and Eve in Middle Age* by Rona Murray (March). It evidently achieved the effect intended, which was to satirize Murray's use of language. Contrast that review with my review of *Confabulations* by Sharon Thesen in the same issue, and the honoured academic will be startled to note the dramatic difference in texture, diction, and tone — also deliberately gauged.

Carney thinks me arrogant, and accuses me of instructing an "artist" how the content of a poem should be "shaped." Is Carney now instructing the critic how the content, nay the language of her review should be shaped? Furthermore, does Carney imagine that content is immune from being as clichéd, insipid, shallow, and irrelevant as the language that tries to convey it? Judging by the substance and form of his own letter, he does.

Citing credentials — "Murray, a



former professor of English Literature, and erudite in the history of English poetry. . . ." — Carney presumes the Muse can be invoked by a pile of degrees. He complains that I have failed to note Murray's overwhelming dependency upon twisted borrowings from "archaic" sources such as Marvell, Marlowe, Eliot, and Yeats. (Shall we exclude the dramas of Sophocles, the intrusion of Greek myths, etc.?) May I suggest that hobnobbing with the accomplished dead through an excess of erudite allusion is no substitute for talent of one's own. If I borrow a line from Yeats, and hope to be mistaken for him, I may simply be mistaken. In such light, Carney may appreciate these golden words from another "archaic" source, John Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*: "He is one of those who, having had some advantage of education . . . knows better than the other what a poet should be, but puts it into practice more unluckily than any man. . . ."

Thus, do the books and letters of degreed poets and their degreed fans sometimes suffer from acute acanemia.

Kathleen Moore
Montreal

RECOMMENDED

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

FICTION

Dancing Nightly in the Tavern, by Mark Anthony Jarman, Press Porcépic. Mostly bleak-hearted and vividly physical, Jarman's nine stories reveal a sharp, sardonic sense of humour, a good ear for speech, a young poet's persuasive fondness for exuberant language, and a prose that (like Hemingway's) aspires mightily toward toughness and knowingness.

NON-FICTION

Vanished in Darkness: An Auschwitz Memoir, by Eva Brewster, NeWest Press. In most literature, one wants more plot; in Brewster's compelling account of Auschwitz life, one prays for less. Her book is a fitting reply to the teachings of Jim Keegstra, whose public statements prompted Brewster to resurrect her horrifying experiences in the shadow of death.

POETRY

Fables from the Women's Quarters, by Claire Harris, Williams-Wallace. With fine imagery and technical skill, Harris writes about injustice — from police persecution of a 15-year-old jaywalker to army executions of guerrillas. For a first book, the poems are refined and mature, and predict even better work to come.

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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:

- Acfton Eld, Volumes 3 and 5, by Kathryn E. MacKay, illustrated by Pamela Tate et al., Curtis Communications.
- Antaga, by Jon Furberg, Pulp Press.
- Arctic Animals, by Jonquil Graves and Ed Hall, illustrated by Gimmings Anakayuk, Northwest Territories Renew.
- Be le Quillag, by Polly Greene, Nova Scotia Museum.
- Bearin, by Rhonda Batchelor, Brick Books.
- Britain's Entry Into the European Economic Community and Its Effect on Canada's Agricultural Exports, by Barbara Nadeau, Institute for Research on Public Policy, Budget Reform, by D.A.L. Auld, C.D. Howe Institute.
- Canadian Book Publishers Directory: 1982, National Library of Canada.
- The Canadian Writer's Guide (9th Edition), The Canadian Authors Association, Fitzharry & Whiteside.
- Castleguard, by Dalton Muir and Derek Ford, Canadian Government Publishing Centre.
- Children's Problems, by Brian Lusk, Prentice-Hall Canada.
- Choice for Tomorrow, by Gerald Cosgrave, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
- Contact Lines, by Hikaru Hamano and Montague Ruben, Prentice-Hall Canada.
- Court Jobs, by Peter V. MacDonald, Melhuus.
- Different Occupations, Different Satisfaction, by John Nixon and Karen Kokoski, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
- Down My Road, by Winifred N. Hulbert, R & A Publishers.
- Fundy National Park, by Michael Burzynski, Douglas & McIntyre.
- Handbook of Canadian Mammals 2: Dats, by C.G. van Zyll de Jong, National Museum of Natural Sciences.
- In Flandre Fields: The Story of John McCrae, by John F. Prevost, Boston Mills Press.
- Indians in the Rockies, by Jon Whyte, Altitude.
- Jay's Animals and People, by Sofia Monton, published by the author.
- The Job For Me, by John Nixon and Karen Kokoski, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
- Lectures in Canadian Labour and Working-Class History, edited by W.J.C. Cherniack and Gregory S. Kealey, Committee on Canadian Labour History and New Hogtown Press.
- Nothing So Natural, by Jim Curry, Pulp Press.
- Old Fort William, by Arthur Black, illustrated by Greg Zlin H., Old Fort William Volunteer Association.
- Ontario Ghost Towns and Scenic Back Roads Atlas, by Ron Brown, Cannonbooks.

CLASSIFIED

Classified rates: \$8 per line (40 characters to the line). Deadline: first of the month for issue date following month. Address: Books in Canada Classified, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9. Phone: (416) 363-5426.

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VISIT OLD FRIENDS Bookstore, 428 Richmond St., London, Ontario, N6A 3C9 for quality secondhand books. 519-439-2608.

A Faean for Love, by Harry Giles, Primors Press.
Promoting Timber Cropping, by Paul B. Huber, Institute
for Policy Studies, University of Toronto.
The Teachings of Jinn
and much more in a series of books, edited by Catherine C. Shinn,
Is Five Press.
Silent Steeder: Cycling In Nova Scotia to 1900, by Heather
Watts, Nova Scotia Museum.
Skulking for the King: A Loyalist Plot, by J. Fraser, Boston
Mills Press.
Sunset on the St. Lawrence: A History of the Frederick
RUELIKY

CANWIT NO. 105

Mr. Mellors, the gamekeeper, married Constance Chatterley, but it
13-year-old jaywalker to army excursions
felt that she could have an orgasm
only on an army blanket, while
Mellors now insisted on "a proper
bed." Their sex life deteriorated to a

point where Mellors claimed that
Connie was "faking it," and he had
to escalate his sex fantasies from the
national average of seven daily. The
Mellorses had an amicable divorce
and Constance married Fairfield
Sturgeon, a baronet with a thousand
acres of uncultivated land in
Northumberland. On his wife's
recommendation, Lord Sturgeon
hired Mellors as gamekeeper.

THE EXCERPT quoted above answers
the question posed in the title of
Martin Levin's *Whatever Happened to
Lady Chatterley's Lover?* (Andrews,
McMeel & Parker), which also
describes the further adventures of
such fictional characters as Robinson
Crusoe, Eliza Doolittle, Blanche
DuBois, Christopher Robin, and
Tarzan. Sad to say, the book doesn't
delve into the future lives of any
Canadian characters, which led us to
wonder, for instance, what Anne (of
Green Gables) Shirley, Rachel (*A Jest
of God*) Cameron, or Dunstan (*Fifth
Business*) Ramsey might be up to
these days. Contestants are invited to
summarize, in 100 words or less, the
further adventures of characters
from Canadian fiction for a prize of
\$25. Deadline: November 1. Address:
CanWit No. 105, *Books in Canada*,
366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto
M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 103
WE WERE hardly prepared for the
avalanche of entries we provoked
when we complained that a recent
survey had turned up only a handful
of limericks based on Canadian
place-names. (Please stop. Now!) In
order to ease the task of judging
them, we tended to impose a second
criterion, present in most good
limericks: that their content be suit-
ably bawdy. Accordingly, the winner
is Mary Lile Benham of Winnipeg,
who alone entered 16 limericks, two
of which are reprinted below:

A hothead from St. Jean-Baptiste

Harris Music Co., Limited, by Wayne Gilpin, Frederick
Harris Music.
There's No Wife Like It In France I Tender
Thomas McCulloch: His Life and Times, by Marjory White-
law, Nova Scotia Museum.
Traditional Nova Scotian Double-Knitting Patterns, by
Janetia Dexter, Nova Scotia Museum.
With Other Words: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary
Dutch Poetry by Women, Netherlandic Press.

*Caught friend René with his wife
Felice*

*He shot them both dead,
And was charged with disturbing the
piece.*

*A maiden from Tuktoyaktuk
Would do almost anything for a
buck.*

*A buck called her bluff:
She said, "None of that stuff —
I'm no flower for young men to . . .
pluck."*

Honourable mentions:

*A solicitor bound for Alberni
Took a client along on the journey;
After passionate pleas
She sat on his knees
And gave him full power of attorney.*

*A rodeo buff from Kilbride
Attempted a bull to bestride,
But imperfect agility
Impaired his virility;
Now he couldn't sing bass if he tried.
— Alec McEwen, Ottawa*

*There was a young girl from
Vancouver
Who did curious things with a
Hoover.
With one end on her tum,
The other her bum,
She performed a most complex
manoeuvre.
— Barry Baldwin, Calgary*

*A schoolteacher north of Regina
Had some drinks with an
unemployed miner.
She lost him that night
But at the first light
She found he was in her gazebo.
— Ellen Field, Vancouver*

*A hopeful young cowboy from
Truro
Had horse-sense, but clearly not
thorough;*

*His desire for a colt
Was brought up with a jolt
When he mated his mare with a
burro.
— Joan Lennon
Newport-on-Tay, Scotland*

*A lady who lived in Kenora
Was locally known as Lenora;
She went south of the border —
A bride by mail-order —
Now everyone calls her Senora.
— Lois Grant, Calgary*

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