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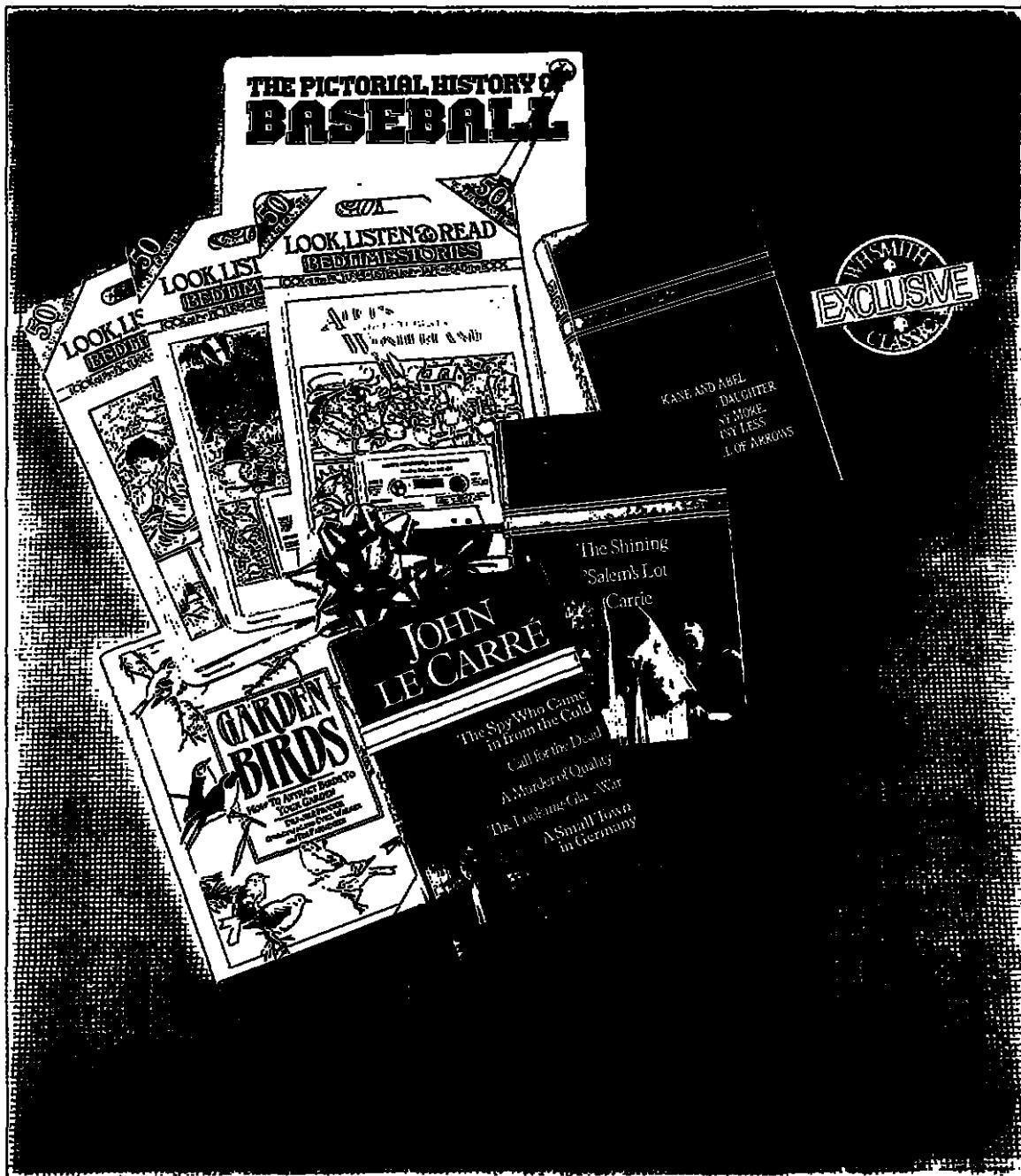
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West of
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Books In Canada is published nine times a year, with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, by the Canadian Review of Books Ltd., 366 Adelaide Street East, Suite 432, Toronto, Ont. M5A 3X8. Telephone: (416) 363-5426. Available in selected book stores and in all W.H. Smith and Classic Book Shops. Individual subscription rate: \$14.95 a year (\$17.95 elsewhere). Back issues available on microfilm from McLaren Micropublishing, P.O. Box 972, Station F, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2N9. Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index. Member of the CPPA. Material is commissioned on the understanding that both parties are bound by the terms of the standard PWAC contract. The editors cannot be held responsible for unsolicited material. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2593. Contents © 1986. Typesetting by Jay Tea Graphics Ltd.

ISSN 0045-2554

A place in history

Though one of the country's most prolific historians, Jack Granatstein is more notorious for his opinions than for his books

HE PRICE IS awful," says historian Jack Granatstein of his book *Canada 1957-1967: The Years of Uncertainty and Innovation*, published last spring by McClelland & Stewart at a hefty \$39.95. "I protested like crazy. I offered to take a cut in royalties. I argued as long as I could, and lost. They argued, crudely, that the people who wanted to buy it would pay that. The previous book [in the Canadian Centenary Series] had sold its print run at 599.95; therefore this one would probably also sell its 4,000 print run, and then they'd bring it out in paperback. I said to them that they could sell 15,000 if they promoted it and priced it reasonably. But that didn't seem to matter."

Dealing with uninterested publishers is not an uncommon thing for historians, even for Granatstein, perhaps Canada's best-known historian since Donald Creighton. Still, a print run of 4,000 — about twice that of most new history books — is pretty good in a country where the division between popular and scholarly publishing seems unusually deep. As Douglas McCalla, editor of the *Canadian Historical Review*, points out, Granatstein attracts far more attention than the vast majority of historians: "As Peter C. Newman is to J.L. Granatstein, J.L. Granatstein is to people like me in terms of sales."

At 47, still a young age in the historian's game, Granatstein has written or co-written 25 books in the last 20 years. His books, says University of Western Ontario historian Peter Neary, should rank with work by Newman or Pierre Berton. Yet, like most academic books, they seldom get the same kind of promotion or sales. Both Ken Adachi of the Toronto *Star* and William French of the *Globe and Mail* — two of the country's most influential book reviewers — say they know little about Granatstein. Adachi, who has reviewed some of Granatstein's books, says that although he finds their style readable and accessible they aren't aimed at a mainstream audience. "I don't think they are meant to be very popular."

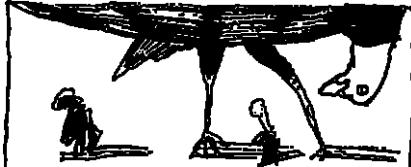
To some extent, Granatstein agrees with this. But though much of his work

consists of research studies and textbooks, he specializes in Second-World-War and post-war political and military history, which often interests general readers. Bloody Victory, a volume on the Normandy invasion co-written two years ago with Desmond Morton, has sold more than 15,000 copies. And Granatstein's biography of Norman Robertson, A Man of Influence (1981), and The Ottawa Men (1982) — both of which deal with top civil servants during and immediately after the Second World War — are held up as two of the better-known historical books of the 1980s.

"I think the purpose of history, the kind of history that I quite deliberately write, is to reach the literate public, the great general reader out there," Granatstein says. "I recognize that if *The Ottawa Men* sells 5,000 copies, it is not really reaching the general public. But it is reaching a substantial portion of the book-reading public in this country, which is pathetically small. At least you can try to reach them."

"But the simple fact is that Pierre Berton sells a lot because, one, a lot of people like to read his books; two, he's very well known; and three, he becomes the Christmas book for people who don't read books, which is absolutely critical for good sales. I don't think you're ever going to see academics with that. It seems to me that it will be a sad day when academics start writing books only for a mass audience."

"I don't have enormous regard for Peter Newman as a researcher or writer," says Granatstein with his reputed bluntness. "I thought Newman on the Hud-



son's Bay Company was an embarrassment. But I've developed some regard for Berton, who I think is a pretty good researcher and quite a good writer. I mean, I've actually seen Pierre Berton in the archives going over stuff, and I think that's a good sign."

Indeed, what Granatstein may be most

notorious for is his penchant for bluntly and loudly expressing his opinions when he sees something that bothers him. In 1984, for instance, he and two other historians, David Bercuson and Robert Bothwell, wrote *The Great Brain Robbery: Canada's Universities on the Road to Ruin*, a short polemic that took controversial stands on a number of issues, including the declining literacy of students, underfunding, abuse of the tenure system, and the precarious state of academic publishing houses.

This fall he collaborated with Bercuson and William Young in *Sacred Trust? Brian Mulroney and the Conservative Party in Power* (Doubleday), which takes a critical look at the first year and a half of the Mulroney government. "That one's a continuation of subjects that have concerned me," Granatstein says, "and quite frankly it's also a chance for me to stick my oar into current policy debates. I happen to think free trade is wrong, and I suspect my chapter on it will reflect that."

As McCalla puts it, "Granatstein seems to have taken on a significant role as a kind of historian's monitor of current concerns, and I think it's an important role that historians in the trade will thank him for as they realize it down the years. The style of seeking to be engaged in current political debate as well as to be a serious historian is a tricky balance to manage. I think Granatstein has ban good at that."

"I've got a big mouth," Granatstein replies. "I've never thought of myself as a crusader." But his reputation as a battler is hardly new. In 1970, when his neighbourhood was threatened by a proposed apartment-ma.8 complex, he joined Toronto's anti-development lobby. (He says that although some accuse him of having a "mainstream liberal" bias in his writing, he's always considered himself a good NDPer.) The Marlborough Avenue residents' successful fight against the developer, Marathon Realty, became a cause célèbre for the city's reform movement. Shortly afterward, Granatstein wrote *Marlborough Marathon* — as he calls it, "a little piece of engage history" — about the campaign.

He and his wife of almost 25 years, Elaine, who works at the University of

Toronto Engineering Library, live in a small, semi-detached, stucco house on Marlborough Avenue. Granatstein, who grew up in the College-Bathurst area, has an affinity for the city: "I get nervous when I'm not surrounded by concrete:

Though his reputation for productivity is legendary, he takes pains to point out he is not to be found at the keyboard eight hours a day. "I have lots of spare time actually. I read a lot. I quite like drinking and shouting and carrying on. I own a farm north of Kingston. I do not by any means spend all of my time working. I'm basically a morning person. I do most of my work in the morning, and I like to read novels in the afternoon."

He's particularly fond of spy stories, tries to read as many new Canadian novels as possible (he recently read Scott Symons's *Helmet Of Flesh*, which he didn't like), and has even tried his hand at fiction.

"I once tried to write a thriller with a friend and went so far as to have three chapters read by a publisher, who pronounced it a piece of trash, so I abandoned it. I've always felt the height of a writing career would be to get a piece published in the New Yorker. I've always thought that if I could do something like that, it would mean that I could write."

-STAN SUTTER

As others see us

IT WAS A heart-warming sight for CanLit supporters, despite the resolute banality of the setting, a Holiday Inn salon in downtown Montreal: a line-up of literary translators who have helped our writers find foreign-language editions everywhere from Mississippi to Peking, Hungary, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Holland, China, Japan, Norway, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Sweden, and the United States were represented on the line-up, all invited by Canada's Literary Translators Association to a conference entitled "Literary Translation and Literary Identity."

The foreign translators were asked to address themselves to two questions, one aesthetic, the other more social in scope: what are the difficulties of translating Canadian writing (either English or French) into their languages, and how is that writing received in their country? In other words, *What do they see in us?* The session was rich in instructive anecdote, and sometimes levity, as when L.M. Montgomery's classic work was mispronounced "Ann of Green Grapes."

"Danes think that Canadian literature is written exclusively by women, especially those with the first name Margaret," reported Annelise Schonemann, who has put a few Margarets

into Danish herself (Atwood, Laurence, Drabble). Danes are avid readers, apparently, and the most avid among them are women in the 25-40-year-old range, so Atwood and Laurence find fertile ground in that group.

As they do in this country, titles and covers can sink a book. When Aritha van Herk's *Judith* was published in Denmark, the cover

with one, complete

"There-away gaze."

Schonemann said "and the people who would normally want to read *Judith* open

coveromy, sinister

Yves Beauchemin's *Le Matou* in Finland, according to the Finnish translator Jukka Mannerkorpi, Duran and Marguerite

Fin-

"Finland problems too.

regimented Mannerkorpi said, "and the amoral, marginal life portrayed in *Le Matou* is unimaginable to most Finns. Finland, like people endul in prison!" noteworthy Mannerkorpi lives in Paris, not Helsinki.

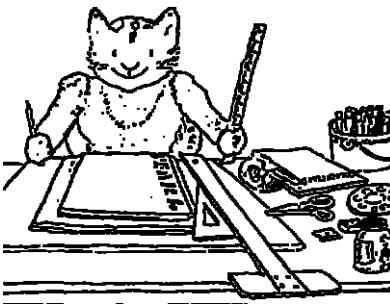
of québécois language, *joual* or not, obsessed those working from French, like Mannerkorpi. In *Le Matou*, there is a short episode wherein expletivemerde! "Marde," he is corrected québécois purist. Since now here the Finnish language is there any distinction that could stand for the one between merde and marde, Mannerkorpi wisely declined translate the joke.

The Yugoslavian translator of Michel Tremblay's *Les bellesseurs*, Borjanka vainly scouring French dictionary for the everyday Quebec contraction *pantoute*, from "pas du tout." During her stay in Montreal, she was sent to nearest

Léandre Bergeron's *Dictionnaire la langue québécoise*. This glossary, which many consider a curiosity or a amusement, finds its true vocation among foreigners who want understand, lexically at least, the québécois language. The complex political and linguistic issue of *Anglicisms in French* continually discussed and solved.

Tai-Lai Wong, ova from her native Peking to spend several weeks in Quebec. spoke openly problem greatest in the writing she translates: censorship in her own country. Any portrayal of sex "al relations or amours abnormaux" is enough to kill a project. In the case of Marcel Dubé's play *Au retour des oies blanches*, the guilty passion of a uncle for his niece was veiled enough to permit publication, yet on the stage revealed

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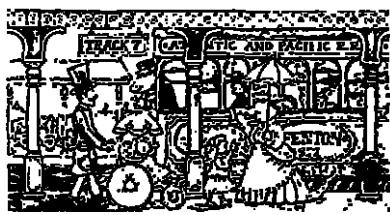
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Doctoral Research on Canada and Canadian, 1884-1983, by Jesse J. Dossick, lists doctoral dissertations on Canada or Canadians, written in English or in French, accepted by universities in Canada, the United States and Great Britain, as well as some in Ireland and Australia from 1884 to the spring of 1983. Entries are organized by subject in 29 subdivided sections. An author index follows, including the special numbers of the theses microfilmed by the National Library of Canada. 559 pages. Catalogue number: SN3-223/1986, ISBN 0-660-53227-1. Price: \$38.75 in Canada, \$46.50 elsewhere (prices subject to change without notice).

Theses in Canada: A Bibliographic Guide, by Denis Robitaille and Jocn Walser, records by subject areas the documentation on theses completed for Canadian universities. It includes bibliographies, theses lists by university, and specialized bibliographies with National Library call numbers, a list of data bases with Canadian theses entries, an author index and a subject index. 72 pages. Catalogue number: SN3-87/1986, ISBN 0-660-53228-X. Price: \$8.50 in Canada, \$10.20 elsewhere (price subject to change without notice).

Both publications available from the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9. Telephone: (613) 997-2560.

Those who would like to learn more about the political, cultural, economic and social issues which have been a main priority of the provinces since they joined the Canadian Confederation, will salute the publication of **Provincial Royal Commissions and Commissions of Inquiry: A Selective Bibliography** compiled by Lise Maillet.

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The selective bibliography can be ordered from the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, \$15.00 in Canada or \$18.00 elsewhere. Catalogue number: SN3-219/1985, ISBN 0-660-53123-2.

itself through the play of the actors, and the piece was never actually produced.

There has been much talk about the Westernization of China, at least from the economic point of view, and Wong attested to it in her discussion: a book must justify a 20,000-copy print run, she said, for it to be published in China.

After a few days in Montreal, their minds softened by late nights at the P'tit Bar on the rue St-Denis, the translators were loaded into trains bound for Toronto. There they witnessed the Harbourfront readings ("It is as traditional as Moscow," the delegate from Belgium said at halftime on Sunday night), and several fortuitous meetings occurred: Annelise Schonnemann ran into Margaret Drabble, and Kristiina Rikman from Helsinki shook hands with Alice Munro, who is well regarded in Finland because of Rikman's work. (A shame that the Harbourfront Festival could not take advantage of any of these natural pairings for its session on translation.) At a luncheon with the Writers' Union and the Association of Canadian Publishers, Torstein Hoverstad of Norway, a science fiction buff who had read Judith Merril many years back, found himself seated on the same couch with the writer he admired so much.

The Canada Council's funding program for translations of Canadian literature overseas has made it relatively profitable for foreign translators to be interested in our writers. But beyond that manufactured interest, something else was happening during these translators' stay in Canada. They were hunkering down around barroom and restaurant tables, they had their pencils and pads in hand, they had their publishers behind them, and they were wanting to "go beyond the Margarets" as one of them said, and get at what is really new in writing in this country. The tell-tale, book-sized bulges in suitcases making the return trip across the Atlantic — or Pacific — are eloquent bulges indeed:

— DAVID HOMEL

Acorn's Wake

OVERLOOKING BOULEVARD ST-LAURENT on the second floor of a left-leaning building, a Milton Acorn tribute drew the first full house ever for Librairie Alternative — known locally as "the anarchist book shop."

In Montreal, where Acorn had lived for three years, from 1956 to 1959, a postage stamp of a notice acknowledged his death in the bottom corner of the *Gazette*. Respectful as a slap in the face.

Some Montreal poets decided to make Acorn's passing more of a seismic event. Norman Nawrocki began the evening



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with a tumultuous rendition of "I Shout Love." Peter Van Toorn unleashed a running commentary on "The Natural History of Elephants." Renato Trujillo read primarily Spanish elegiac verse, and played a beautiful flute solo during Raymond Filip's song "Angels."

A "open reading followed, involving the significant others: the audience. Walls in creative writing workshops reverberate with the ultimate aesthetic question: who is your audience? With Acorn them was

never any doubt. The people, Emanuel Lowi, Sonja Skarstedt, Howard Tessler, Arielle Gabriel, "Bicycle Bob" Silverma", Judy Shakespeare, Laurence Hutchman, Kathleen Hickey, David Leahy, Lance Cooper, Phil Moscovitch, friends and strangers who had never even met Acorn but had been touched by his work, came up to recite their favourite poems from a communal copy of *Dig Up My Heart.*

Their collective voices were a moving

farewell to a man who had talked with shuttle power, like a red train wanting to turn left, but knowing it leads backwards; the destination being forward: Common Nobility.

Ennobled, slightly inebriated, mostly feeling good, people continued to reel off anecdotes, laughing into the night — the way old Milt would have loved it.

Like his presence, Milton Acorn's absence will be felt for a long long time.

— RAY FILIP

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Collective guilt

There is lots to say about collectives. If one cannot emulate the experts, one can at least attempt to follow their logic

By Bob Blackburn



COUPLE IS seeking to regain custody of **their children.**"

"General Motors unveils **their 1987 models.**"

"The family is jubilant over their good fortune."

And so on. The writers of these sentences probably would argue that it is terribly difficult to figure out how to treat collectives, and they would be right. But it isn't all that difficult to be consistent.

These examples, as do most such lapses, go from the singular to the plural. It is not uncommon to hear a politician say, "The government has **their hands full,**" but, so far, I have been spared hearing, "The government **have** its hands full." It is as though the speaker or writer is content with having decided that a collective should be treated as singular until he is faced with having to refer to a group of fellow humans as *it*.

There are guidelines that are of some help in dealing with this problem, but I doubt that they would be of much use to anyone unable to grasp the idea that having decided to treat a noun as singular one should not change it to plural in the same breath, let alone in the same body of writing. Authorities allow the writer some discretion in the matter, but, of course, insist on consistency. Says Fowler:

But if the decision whether a noun of multitude is to be treated as a singular or as a plural is often a difficult business, and when ill made results at worst in a venial blemish, failure to abide by the choice when made, and plunging about between *it* and *they*, **have** and **has**, **its** and **their**, and the like, can only be called insults to the reader.

A writer who has grasped that point can then go a long way toward solving the problems presented by collectives,

including nouns of multitude, by continuing to apply logic, which is often the only recourse. It makes sense to say, "The committee **have** discussed the matter and **are** agreed," because we are referring to the actions of individuals. We do not mean that the committee as a whole discussed the matter (with someone else?). Logically, we would say, "The committee **is divided**," because something must be a whole before it can be divided.

This approach is of limited help. One would not want to say, "The committee are in agreement on extra **billing** but is divided on increasing fees." The solution is simply to say it another way: "The committee **are** agreed on **extra billing** but not on increasing fees."

Theodore Bernstein, ever practical, suggests (*in The Careful Writer*):

If the idea of oneness predominates, treat the noun as a singular. ("The number of accidents is larger this year" — because number is thought of as total.) If the idea of more-than-oneness predominates, treat the noun as a plural. ("A great number of accidents are preventable" — because number is equivalent to many.) With number or total, incidentally, a simple

rule is possible: preceded by *the*, if is singular; preceded by *a*, it is plural.

There is lots to be said about the subject. There are lots of things to be said about it. I have just said one of them: Lots, used colloquially to mean a great amount, should be treated as singular unless followed by *of* and a plural noun: "There is lots of wine, but there aren't lots of glasses."

Fowler, among many others, writes extensively on collectives, and gives many examples. I suggest reading him and remembering, if nothing else, his summing up, in which he says, "In all these matters, good sense is the key. . . . And it suggests a rule. . . . Once you have made a proper choice, stay with it."

HERE ARE THREE words that are being destroyed. Some dictionaries will (or, if not read carefully, will seem to) condone their misuse.

Alibi does not mean excuse. Without going into a full legal definition, it is the fact or condition of being in a different place at a certain time. It is ridiculous to say a child does not have a alibi for b&g late for school; obviously if he was not there he was somewhere else and does have an alibi. But it's not an excuse.

Value and cost are not synonymous. The value of something is its worth; its cost is what you pay for it. **Money** is not necessarily involved. A valuable experience may or may not be costly, and vice versa.

Emulate may mean imitate, but there's more to it than that. To emulate someone is to imitate him with the intent of rivaling or excelling him, or, to put it colloquially, to try to beat him at his own game. Rich Little does not emulate George Burns, he imitates him. □



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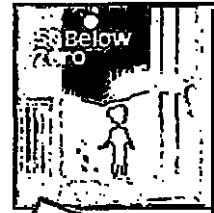
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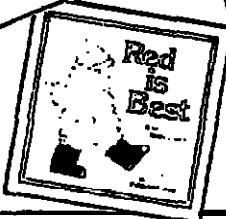
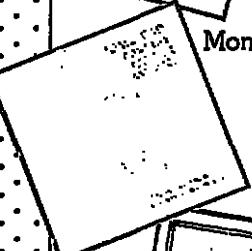
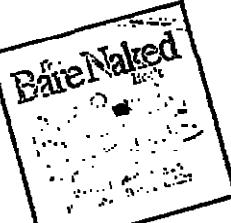
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Edifice complex

The antiquated, sometimes disembodied voices in Tim Wynne-Jones's books reflect, in part, 'the novelist as former architecture student'

By John Oughton

NOT EVERY WRITER can buy a house with the proceeds of his first novel. But in the case of Tim Wynne-Jones, whose thriller *Odd's End* is as much about a house as it is about the characters who fight for it, it seems fitting that the book's earnings paid for the small house in Toronto that he shares with his wife Amanda West Lewis and their family.

The Seal First Novel Award of \$50,000, which Wynne-Jones won in 1979, represents so much more money than most novels ever earn that each winning book gains a lightly mythic aura from the publicity it generates — not to mention the gimmickry of the prize's mastermind, Jack McClelland. The launching party for *Odd's End* was held at Toronto's Sutton Place hotel, where McClelland had Wynne-Jones

Tim Wynne-Jones



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROSEMARY KOBRYN

anonymously serving drinks behind the bar until his name was announced. After the party, a column in *Quill & Quire* quoted Wynne-Jones as saying, 'At last I can think about buying a car.'

"That was my fit lesson in talking to the media," snorts Wynne-Jones, his eyes lively behind the clear plastic frames of his glasses. "What I did say was a metaphor — something about the book being a vehicle. When I read that story in the paper. I thought, oh God, it sounds just like one of those people who won the lottery."

Of course, writing the manuscript selected from 320 entries took a bit more skill than winning a lottery. *Odd's End* won praise both from critics and readers with its tightly controlled suspense and unusual theme. A psychotic known only as Mr. X is obsessed by a vision of the perfect house, reminiscent of his childhood home and yet a work of art in itself. When he finds one, in rural Nova Scotia, he attempts to drive out the couple who own it, without revealing himself or his intentions. He secretly changes things around the house and builds suspicion between Malcolm and Mary Close, the owners, eventually murdering one of their friends in an effort to frame the husband.

What sets *Odd's End* apart from the usual run of thrillers is the originality of its conception and the wealth of visual brushwork. Mary Close is an abstract painter, who unknowingly uses a photograph of Mr. X watching the house as an element in her work. One of his methods of disconcerting has is to sneak into the house and advance the work on her paintings until she begins to doubt her own sanity. The house is described in loving detail, down to the curtains and the art on the walls. "One reviewer said I had written a Gothic House and Garden."

The visual details came naturally to Wynne-Jones. In a career varied even for a writer, he has a master's degree in visual arts from York University and has taught drawing at the University of Waterloo, run a graphic design firm, and worked as a book illustrator. The day of our meeting, he arrived with a framed drawing by Ken Nutt, illustrator of two of his children's books, tucked under the arm of his oversized purple sweatshirt.

The first hints of grey show in Wynne-Jones's beard, and traces of his native England (he was born in Cheshire, in a house called Ravensheugh) still surface in the precision of his diction and the way his voice rises for emphasis. He has also been a rock singer and an actor. He is perhaps the only Canadian writer to have appeared in a George F. Walker play: slimmer than he is now and girded in black leather, he performed a punk duet with Susan Purdy in Factory Theatre Lab's production of *Rumours of Our Death*.

Yet, for all his versatility, Wynne-Jones says that being able to make a living solely from writing is "a fantasy come true." In addition to working on his third novel, he is writing lyrics for a musical commissioned by Theatre New Brunswick, *Mischief City*, and the libretto for a opera commissioned by the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus with music by Harry Somers. He also writes radio plays and continuity for the CBC and a fortnightly column on children's books for the *Globe and Mail*.

Odd's End took him just five weeks to write. "I was alone, my wife had gone away for the summer, we had no children, I had no responsibilities. I took out a bank loan because I had a teaching job in the fall, so that I didn't have to work all summer. I sat down and wrote *Odd's End* mostly for my own amusement. It was fun, it was entertaining."

After winning the Seal Award, he mentioned that book's brief gestation period to Anna Porter at Bantam: "I watched the

***Odd's End* took just five weeks to write.
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dollar signs appear in her eyes, as if she were going 'Boing, boing, boing — can this man do this at five-week intervals? Of course I couldn't.'

In fact, after the ease of his first novel, he had a more typical experience: two novels that refused to get up off the operating table, although one got as far as his agent before he recognized its flaws. "Dennis Lee told me you lose a book per kid, and he's right so far. I've lost two novels. In fact the one called *The Listmakers* is fraught with what I was going through waiting for our second child to be born, which really has nothing to do with the book." He shrugs: "But so what? Writing has its purposes other than publication. It's a way of working through things."

In fact, he finds that his children aid his writing tremendously. "My children are a second chance at getting my own childhood right. It isn't just nostalgia, it's something else. I really feel that childhood is a renewable resource and a wellspring. It's not a junk-heap."

LONG AGO, in the days when Opportunities For Youth grants still flowed freely, Wynne-Jones worked on a project researching non-sexist children's literature. As well as inspiring his first publication, a children's book called *Madeline and Ermadello*, it left him with a precious insight: "A child learns everything at first as a story, by narrative. As a writer, I really have to be in touch with that period of my life."

Although the characters in *Odd's End* are childless, children (or at least a childlike sense of magical possibilities) are central to Wynne-Jones's other books. In his second novel, *The Knot*, an unsuccessful actor finds a more rewarding role as Gob, a seemingly harmless Cabbagetown loony in a wheelchair festooned with slogans, who in reality directs a gang of children and adolescents — "The Knot" — who prey on the neighbourhood. Rum Crawford, a temporarily invalided-out Youth-Bureau detective, is commissioned to investigate their crimes. Caught between the two forces is Crunkscully, a former news announcer who has lost most of his memory through Alzheimer's disease.

Wynne-Jones says that Gob was consciously modelled after Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, and the curious slang the gang uses ("scrogglings," "wreaks and twinkles") are drawn from Victorian dictionaries. Although he "loved the book," he regrets that "it fell between stools, both in its promotion and in what one might expect from it — it is not a straightforward thriller." He also regrets "the disappointment to those who expected it to be the same as *Odd's End*.

"Every book for me — both my children's books and my

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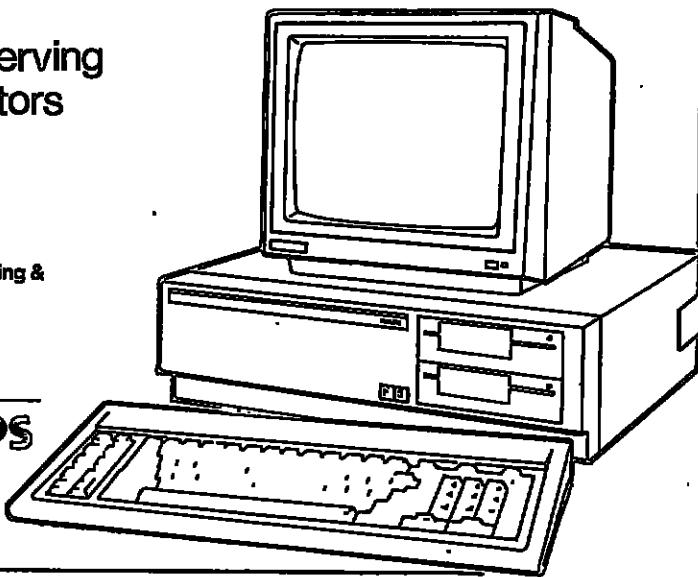
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adult books -is a **unique** experience," **Wynne-Jones** says. The exception is the Zoom **trilogy**, about a **seafaring cat** (patterned after **Wynne-Jones's** water-loving cat, Montezuma), which began with *Zoom at Sea*, continued with last year's *Zoom A way*, and will end in two years with the publication of *Zoom Up-stream*. "Zoom is a very special situation for me. I still think of each book as entirely unique and yet they do form a series."

A U.S. publisher offered to buy rights to *The Knot on the*

Wynne-Jones's third novel, which is to be published this spring, is a combination romance, adventure, and horror story with a device reminiscent of a fairy-tale: a character who is a hole leading to a secret dungeon in an abandoned castle

condition that **Wynne-Jones** produce another "Rum Crawford" book. He declined, not wanting to be confined by a series early in his career. But now feels he has a crime that "Rum might be called in to help solve." Help is an important clue to **Wynne-Jones's** intentions: a former secretary of the Crime Writers of Canada, he hates to rely on the police to untangle the crimes that he imagines: "In a perfect world, there would be no police, and we'd be able to solve our problems and mysteries ourselves."

In *The Knot's* epilogue, Crawford says: "I don't solve cases . . . they resolve around me while I take a bullet in the leg or a smack across the back of the head. . . . I am part of each case, not above it or outside it."

WYNNE-JONES admits he is beginning to feel the need to move on to a nice straightforward mystery after the complexities of his (still untitled) third novel, which he is polishing for publication in the spring. He describes it as a combination romance, adventure, and horror story with a device reminiscent of a fairy-tale: a character who is a hole leading to an **oubliette** (secret dungeon) in an abandoned English castle.

"In the first chapter a young nurse breaks up with her husband and goes to England to find a consolation prize, preferably a baronet. Instead of falling in love with someone, she falls in love with the hole, who speaks a lot like Mr. X or Oscar Wilde on a dark day. The first time it speaks to her, she stats to flee, as any sane person would, and the hole says, 'If you cannot learn anything from a hole, I suggest you have not looked at your life closely enough.'"

The hole provides "an extremely extended and pushed image and metaphor to examine thoughts that I couldn't explore otherwise," **Wynne-Jones** says. "What happens when you throw a talking hole into a real world? It upsets the balance of things and obliquely you can look at the world in another way. The potential for so-called realistic novels to have these fantastic overtones is increasing, probably because of the South American writers like Marquez."

Fantastic as it may be, as **Wynne-Jones** notes, the hole resembles his earlier characters, Gob and Mr. X. "The hole is 700 years old. I long to have a voice that speaks in overblown, 19th-century language like Gob -someone who speaks in a way that is not entirely the way we speak."

An hour-long CBC-Radio version of *Odd's End* was a wasted effort in his view, except for the voice of Mr. X, played by Douglas Rain, the voice of the computer HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. "Rain's voice was exactly what I had imagined for Mr. X. Mr. X is the kind of man who probably can't talk to anyone, but stands in front of a mirror and imagines himself talking to thousands of people."

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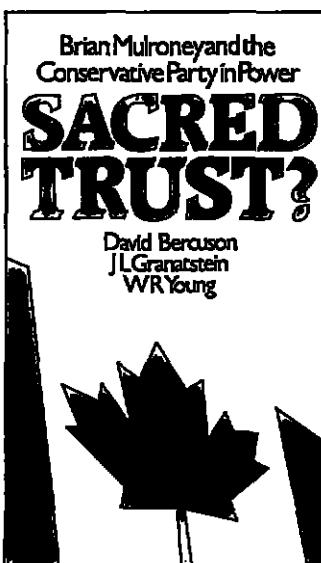


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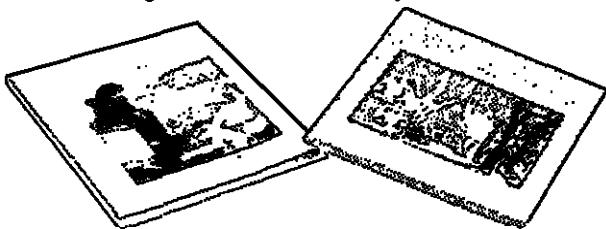
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THE IMAGINATIVE possibilities of houses also form a thread that runs throughout Wynne-Jones's work. In *The Knot*, a gang member, Stink, who often sneaks into strangers' homes, reflects that "there was . . . nowhere as peaceful as an empty house." In *Zoom at Sea*, *Zoom* finds the ocean in a house belonging to a woman named Maria; she turns a big wheel and a wall melts away, to be replaced by the open sea. The hole in the castle is a "voice" for the building that surrounds it.

"Mr. X is a mirror of the novelist as former architect stu-

'I studied architecture for three years, and worked for several architects as a draftsman. It's been my habit that when I get depressed I design a house. Sometimes I go as far as building a model of it, because I pour my dreams into it'

dent,'" Wynne-Jones concedes. "I studied architecture for three years, and worked for several architects as a draftsman. It's been my habit for years that when I get depressed I design a house. Sometimes I go as far as building a model of it, because I pour my dreams into it."

That fascination with houses is, he feels, part of what made *Odd's End* work, because "a lot of people read mysteries for all those other things that aren't really part of the mystery story. Michael Innes, for one, spends pages describing Palladian mansions."

Wynne-Jones has kept a list of every mystery he has read for the last 15 years. He enjoyed most of them, but found that only a handful satisfactorily provided a "solid core of meaning." One was *The Name of the Rose*: "It has something that very few mysteries have: a very real and imaginable motive. You seldom find a motive that gives you the feeling that, given that time and place, I could have been that murderer."

He was pleased to have his story, "The Woman with the Lounge-Act Hair," in *Descant* magazine's "detection" issue. He recites the quotation from *Through the Looking-Glass* that editor Karen Mulhallen used in her preface: "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas — only I don't know exactly what they are! However, somebody killed something: that's clear, at any rate." Wynne-Jones says, "That's exactly the way I feel about my story."

In his tale, a travelling salesman named Winchell spends the night in the motel from *Psycho* — except this time it's located on the Yellowhead highway in Saskatchewan. The narrator encounters a blonde bombshell he eventually places as his imaginary childhood friend, Maxine. The only problem is that Maxine insists that she is real and he is the imagined buddy.

As in the first half of *The Knot*, the reel mystery is not whodunit but what is happening here? Wynne-Jones moves from the mystery of facts to the mystery of reality and how we detect it. The act of giving up an imaginary friend often is a watershed for a child as he learns to adopt adult definitions of what is real and what is imaginary.

"When I'm right in the middle of writing a novel, I think all the time about imaginary people. At this moment, I'm thinking about someone named Alexis and a saw player named Howl and a bunch of other people." Wynne-Jones says. "I think my mother's responsible for my schizophrenia because when I was young Grizly Windger was the person I became when I was in a bad mood. I'd come in whining and my mother would say, 'Grizly Windger, have you seen my lovely son Tim?'

"I'd say [she whines], 'Come on, Mom, it's me.'"

"And she'd say, 'No. Tim is the nice one.' □

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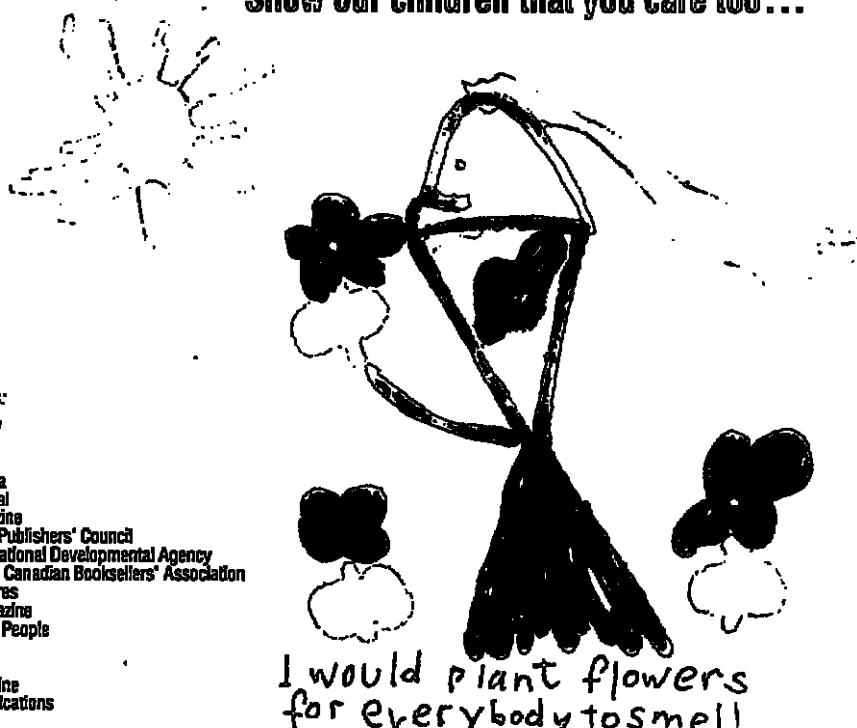
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The young and the naked

This year's children's books run the gamut of self-discovery, from dealing with death in the family to the joy of belly buttons

By Mary Ainslie Smith



QUEST AND DISCOVERY are recurring themes in Canadian children's books this season. Picture books for the youngest children encourage the exploration and enjoyment of the immediate environment while stories for older readers feature heroes and heroines in search of treasure, freedom, answers to mysteries and, ultimately, self-knowledge.

Colours, written and illustrated by Shirley Hughes (Douglas & McIntyre, 20 pages, \$9.95 cloth), shows a little girl, who looks a bit like one of the urchins from a Giles cartoon, in various settings, each two-page spread featuring a different colour. Red, for example, is depicted by a brilliant son, illuminating a winter street that the girl is walking along, holding her father's hand. Her mother and little brother lounge in the dark green shadows of a bright green tree-filled park. Finally at night she cuddles under the white covers of her bed. Hughes has several other books in this series (all the same format and price), including AU Shapes and Sizes, in which the same little girl begins to perceive that the world is made up of all different sorts of objects and people.

Kathy Stinson's The Bare Naked Book (Annick, 32 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper) deals with another topic of fascination for toddlers - their own bodies. All the interesting parts of the body, from hair to toes, are examined separately, including runny noses, slurping tongues, and lumpy belly buttons. By the last pages the parts combine to celebrate the fun of being two or three years old and bare naked. The illustrations by Heather Collins join in the fun and add layers of subtlety to the text.

And I'm Never Coming Back, by Jacqueline Dumas, illustrated by Iris Paabo (Annick, 20 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), is an escape story that many children and their parents can relate to. Little Louise, fed up with being told by her father and big sister that she is in the way, announces to her mother that she is running away from home. To her surprise, her mother decides to come with her. Their gentle adventures are good for

Louise, and for her mother, and also help to change their minds about "never coming back."

The young hem in Franklin in the Dark, by Paulette Bourgeois, illustrated by Brenda Clark (Kids Can, 30 pages, \$10.95 cloth), is afraid of small dark places. And that is a problem because he is a turtle and afraid to crawl into his own shell to sleep. As the story progresses, Franklin trudges along, dragging his shell behind him, seeking help for his problem from other animals. He discovers to his surprise that he is far from the only one who has to face up to serious fears.

Also for young readers is The Cake that Mack Ate, by Rose Robart (Kids Can, 24 pages, \$10.95 cloth), a progressive story with a structure similar to The House that Jack Built:

*This is the mm
That fed the hen,
That laid the egg,
That went into the cake
That Mack ate.*

Illustrations by Maryann Kovalski suggest that Mack, the dog, found it well worth his time to eat the cake, although he was exiled to the doghouse as punishment.

The Short Tree and the Bird that Could Not Sing, by Dennis Foon (Groundwood, 30 pages, \$10.95 cloth), is a charming story about an unlikely friendship and how enriching it became. The tree, shorter than any other tree and filled with self-pity, learns that being too is important when the bird adopts him as her particular tree. And the bird needs the stable centre that the tree provides for her scatty adventures.



Cheerful illustrations by John Bianchi infuse both the tree and the bird with very believable personalities.

Two new books seem to be following the Dennis Lee-Jelly Belly school of

poetry for children: if it's grotesque and grotty children will likely love it. Judith Fitzgerald's Whale Waddleby (Black Moss, 36 pages, \$5.95 paper) depicts a monster that is horrible to everyone and by the end of the book is alone with only himself to bully. The reader is told over and over again that Whale Waddleby is mean until the i&a wears pretty thin:

*Whale Waddleby was so big, fat and mean,
He was the meanest mean you've ever seen.*

Illustrations by Maureen Paxton show a lumbering and uncoordinated giant, pathetic rather than frightening.

Tim Wynne-Jones's book of verse, Mischief City (Groundwood, 36 pages, \$12.95 cloth), is marred by the garish and distorted illustrations by Victor Gad. Some of Wynne-Jones's verses, "Monster Parents," for example, are funny and strike close to home, but generally the text is overpowered by Gad's vivid reds and blues and, in particular, his nightmarish yellows. These verses are apparently part of a play for young people by Wynne-Jones, but the reasons for using a stage setting in the illustrations is not at all dear, and anyone seeking a coherent pattern to the poems will be confused.

Also by Tim Wynne-Jones and more traditionally presented is I'll Make You Small (Groundwood, 28 pages, \$10.95 cloth). Mr. Swanskin is a mysterious old recluse who lives in a decaying mansion next door to Roland's house. When Mr. Swanskin doesn't appear for several days and Roland is sent by his mother to check on him, he has a strange and scary adventure. The frightening Mr. Swanskin, however, unlike Whale Waddleby, can be redeemed with a little help from a friend.

Another version of this story, along with minimal illustrations, appeared in the recent anthology of writing for children, The Window of Dreams (Methuen). In the Groundwood version, full-colour illustrations by Maryann Kovalski dominate each page and undoubtedly will affect children's interpretation of the story. Wynne-Jones's text for the illustrated version is more streamlined; it is interesting to compare his two versions and speculate on the relationship

between text and illustrations in a picture book for youngsters.

Another recluse is the subject of **Budge Wilson's Mr. John Bertrand Nijinsky and Charlie**, illustrated by **Terry Roscoe Boucher** (**Nimbus**, 36 pages, \$5.95 paper). The main character of the story, Mr. Nijinsky, has withdrawn from his friends and neighbours, neglects his appearance and health and feels too old and depressed to bother about anything. His life changes when he is adopted by a scrawny black kitten, **Charlie**, as unloved and unattractive as himself. The changes are not dramatic, but are subtle and convincing as Wilson shows us how small things can make big differences in a lonely person's life.

A cat is also an important character in **A Christmas Tree from Puddin' Stone Hill**, by **Elsie Hadden Mole**, illustrated by **Sylvia Hahn** (**Penumbra**, 30 pages, \$6.95 paper). The story celebrates one of the rituals of Christmas, finding the **Christmas tree**. Timmy at last persuades his mother that he is old enough to climb into the forest to cut one himself and he succeeds in bringing home the perfect tree. He and Black Cat share the secret of how frustrating the task was, and how she helped him locate the tree and then find his way home again.

Another seasonal story is **A Candle for**

Christmas, by **Jean Speare**, illustrated by **Ann Blades** (**Douglas & McIntyre**, 30 pages, \$10.95 cloth). It is **Christmas Eve on a reserve in northern Canada**. Little Tomas has been staying with Nurse Roberta while his parents have gone to their cattle range to help his uncle. The suspense builds for Tomas as he waits for them to return for **Christmas as they promised**. Speare's story simply shows that the best thing about Christmas is being with loved ones. Ann Blades's pictures of swirling, falling snow are perfect.

The Short Hockey Career of **Amazing Jany**, by **Robert Priest**, illustrated by **Ross MacDonald** (**Aya Press**, 30 pages, \$8.00 paper), is a tall tale that will provide lots of fun for young readers. **Jany Singh**, born in Nipigon, Ont. in 1992, exhibits amazing hockey skills when she is still very young. In fact, they are so amazing that she has worked her way through all the minor hockey leagues before she is five, and has to decide between a career in the NHL and kindergarten. **Jany** resolves this conflict by hiring a private tutor and leading her NHL team to victory. Then, despite attacks of measles and mumps, she goes on to help Team Canada to a crushing victory over Team USSR in the World Cup. **Jany** gives up hockey to go on to something more challenging, and so readers might get

more adventures from this Canadian **Pippi Longstocking**.

Different Dragons (**Penguin**, 123 pages, \$12.95 cloth) is Jean Little's most recently published book for children. **Ben Tucker** is a shy, insecure little boy who is very worried when his parents leave him for a weekend with an aunt he hardly knows in her big old house in a strange city. That's bad enough, but then he discovers that his aunt has arranged for a huge golden Labrador retriever to spend the weekend with them.

Ben is terrified of dogs. To make matters worse, a mouthy little girl from next door, who doesn't seem to be frightened of anything, announces that the dog is intended as an early birthday present for **Ben**. **Little** deals sensitively with Ben's attempts to come to terms with his fears, and shows how he gains a great deal of self-respect in the process. Black-and-white illustrations by **Laura Fernandez** mark Ben's changing reactions to his situation.

The main character in **Plan B Is Total Panic**, by **Martyn Godfrey** (**Lorimer**, 101 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper), also has to battle against his own timidity, but in a much more critical situation. **Nicholas**, who lives in northern Alberta, has been invited by a native friend to participate in a moose hunt. Although Nicholas hates and fears the bush, he accepts in order to escape from the school bully who is planning to beat him to a pulp for dancing with his girl-friend.

In the course of the weekend, Nicholas treks through the bush, plunges into icy lakes, confronts a grizzly four times, and rescues the town doctor from the wreckage of his downed plane. No wonder by the end of the story he feels he can scrape up the courage to confront the bully. Godfrey's story is by no means complex — a straightforward adventure yarn if there ever was one — but it is fast-paced, entertaining reading.

The Mystery of **the Hemlock Ravine**, by **Dorothy Perkins** (**Lancelot Press**, 92 pages, \$4.95 paper), is another straightforward adventure. Set in Nova Scotia, it tells how David and his two new friends from **Toronto**, Stephen and **Mary**, try to discover what their mysterious and solitary neighbour is hiding in an isolated ravine. Some of the children's exploits as they expose a smuggling ring are pretty far-fetched, but the flavour of life in a small Nova Scotia community comes across nicely.

The characters in these adventure stories have other problems to face as well — the sorts of problems that seem to be requisite to stories about adolescents. In **Plan B Is Total Panic**, Nicholas's father drinks and his mother has left them and lives in Calgary. In **The Mystery of the Hemlock Ravine**, Stephen and Mary's

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parents have also split up, and that is "by they have moved from Toronto to the Maritimes. But these problems pale before those of the main characters in *I & Chance Summer*, by Diana J. Wieler (Western Producer Prairie Books, 114 pages, \$7.95 paper).

The setting is a small farm near the badlands of Alberta, a home for 10 young boys, all in trouble with the law. In their short lives they have all been severely damaged by physical and mental abuse, drugs, and neglect. Social worker Cecile Martin places one of her cases, 12-year-old Marl Silversides, at this farm in the hope that here he will at last fit in. As all attempts at living in foster homes have failed, this will be his last chance before being placed in an institution.

Things do not go at all well for Marl at first, but then, slowly and tentatively, for the first time in his life, he makes a friend — an older boy called Goat "who also has almost passed all hope of mak-

ing human contact. In this well-written first novel, the portrayal of the boys' problems is almost unbearably grim, but Wieler makes the readers grasp desperately with Marl at the one straw of hope offered by this friendship.

Jessica's family in *The Baby Project*, by Sarah Ellis (Groundwood, 144 pages, \$6.95 paper), is a secure and fairly ordinary one, although it is rocked somewhat by the parents' announcement that they are going to have another baby. Jessica, 11 years old and until no" the youngest in the family, is delighted and enters wholeheartedly into preparations for the baby's arrival, even undertaking a "Baby Project" as research for school. The much-loved baby finally arrives, but then suddenly dies, and Jessica's world is thrown into chaos. The description of how the loss affects the family and how they help each other cope with their sorrow is the main strength of this sensitively written book.

Hawthorne (Thorny) McCall, the main character in Welwyn Wilton Katz's *Sun God, Moon Witch* (Groundwood, 176 pages, \$7.95 paper), is another child of a broken marriage. She has been sent from Canada to the small village of Wychwood Mount in England to stay with her aunt and cousin Patrick while her father honeymooned with his new wife. Thorny arrives just in time to witness the desecration of a ring of standing stones. Squire Belman, the new and evil owner of the estate on which they are situated, plans to break them up and move them, supposedly because the stones are in the way of a new cement factory he is building.

Thorny has a strange encounter with a mysterious and beautiful lady, all in white, who has some magic affiliation with the stone circle. She also meets a wise old man who seems to be a student of the stones and who gives her an amulet that she must be careful never to allow Belman to see.

East meets West

Concerned by 'the lack of articulate voices in my highly-visible minority,' Paul Yee writes books that combine social sensitivity with story-telling flair

IT'S ENOUGH to set me adrenalin pumping in any 12-year-old mystery fanatic. The sinister-looking thug on the cover of *The Curses of Third Uncle* points his finger accusingly at the beautiful young heroine, who has just been caught peeking at a suitcase: it must contain a secret. But the thug is not a spooky old Scotsman, the heroine is not Nancy Drew, nor is the scene a contemporary, fog-choked New England seaside town. The characters are Chinese, and the setting is Vancouver in 1909.

"It's based on the memories of my own Aunt Lillian, who 'as born here in 1895,' explains the book's 30-year-old author. Paul Yee, born in Spalding, Mao., where his immigrant parents ran a cafe, was sent to live with his aunt in Strathcona, Vancouver's Chinese community, after his father abandoned the family and, soon after, his mother died. Lillian, in her early teens in the story, died at the age of 90 last year.

Raised on Aunt Lillian's stories about her childhood in turn-of-the-century Vancouver, Yee had become curious about his Chinese-Canadian identity by the time he finished high school: "I was concerned at the lack of creative, articulate voices in my highly visible minority." He majored in Canadian history at the University

of British Columbia ("I was unusual for going into the arts — most of my Chinese-Canadian contemporaries were encouraged to become lawyers, doctors, and dentists"), and in 1983 he received his master's degree.

The same year UBC's education department recommended Yee to James Lorimer & Co., "who were looking for someone to write a children's book about Strathcona for a series about ethnic communities in Canadian cities. The result was *Teach Me to Fly, Skyfighter*, a widely acclaimed book



Paul Yee and friends

of short stories that explore life and family problems encountered by Chinese children growing up in present-day Vancouver.

The Curses of Third Uncle was Yee's idea: "I felt I could hold my own as a children's writer." After in-

tensive research and five rewritings, he has created an eerily realistic portrait of what it "as like to be Chinese in British Columbia in 1909. The revolution raging in China at the time plays a major part, and through Lillian, the 14-year-old heroine, Yee attempts "to explore the age at which kids start to make political decisions."

Yee now is at work on a history of the Chinese in Vancouver, funded by a Canada Council grant, and he continues to write "one major short story per year" — one of which, a superb, solemn recapturing of his Spalding childhood, appeared in the recent Pulp Press anthology, *New: West coast Fiction*. He also has a contract with Lorimer to produce two more novels which, if *The Curses of Third Uncle* is any indication, will combine social sensitivity, professional research, and story-telling flair in such a way that his readers won't even know they're being educated.

"When you grow up Chinese or in any other visible minority in this North American culture, you can't help feeling different," says Yee. "You notice little things missing — no Asians on television, in comic books, in literature — and these feelings are rarely dealt with. I guess I try to address these differences in my fiction."

— DONA STURMANIS

Much to the envy of her cousin, who likes to be at the centre of all action, as the story progresses it is revealed that Thomy has special powers. Although she seems to be shy and tentative, she done will be able to prevent the unleashing of terrible destructive forces on earth if the stones are moved. Katz's story is intriguing up to a point, and Thomy is a sympathetic character, especially as she strives to use the hidden resources in her character. But the complex pattern of good and evil, of light and dark forces, doing battle for the world stretches the reader's acceptance too far.

An even more complex fantasy, also involving stone circles, is *The Singing Stone*, by O.R. Melling (Penguin, 206 pages, 316.95 cloth). The heroine, Kay, who has been raised as an orphan, travels to Ireland in search of an answer to the mysterious dreams that have haunted her sleep for a long time. She also hopes to solve the mystery of who she is and where she came from.

She is transported far back in time to an Ireland called Inisfail, the home of legendary ancient civilizations. The rulers, the Danaan people, have had their power corrupted by Druids and are on the brink of being overthrown by invaders from some distant land to the south, in alliance with other people the Danaan have conquered and held in bondage. With the companionship of a young fugitive, Aherne, a Danaan girl, Kay is charged with a quest; she must find the four ancient Danaan treasures in order to redeem the Danaan people.

In the tradition of such quests, the two girls encounter all sorts of hardships and trials, but also discover friendship and love. As the story develops, each girl grows wiser and learns to use the special powers that she has within her.

Another quest is undertaken by the hero of *The Emperor's Panda*, by David Day (McClelland & Stewart, 109 pages, \$14.95 cloth). The story is set in ancient China where Kung, a young musician, with the help of the magical first panda, rescues his uncle, restores balance to the kingdom, and wins the hand of the emperor's daughter. Black-and-white illustrations by Eric Beddows, also known as Ken Nutt, add to the magical quality of the story.

Two fine historical novels are good choices this season for fairly mature readers. Paul Yee's *The Curses of Third Uncle* (Lorimer, 139 pages, 812.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper) is set in the Chinese community of Vancouver in 1909. The main character, 14-year-old Lillian, is frustrated in many ways by her Chinese heritage. She is painfully aware of the way most whites treat the Chinese, but she is impatient that some Chinese living in Canada are not as anxious to assimilate

as she is. She is also frustrated by the curtailed roles assigned to mere daughters, and wants to live her own life in spite of these restrictions.

Lillian's life is disrupted by the distant revolution in China. Her father — who, as she finds out, has been secretly collecting money in support of the revolution — disappears, and the family, having no livelihood, might be sent back to China. Lillian sets out to discover what happened to her father, and in spite of herself comes to understand more about what special gifts her heritage can give her.

Blaine's Way, by Monica Hughes (Irwin, 215 pages, \$9.95 paper), is an ambitious departure for this well-established children's writer, probably best known for her science fiction. This novel spans Blaine's life from early childhood on his parents' unsuccessful farm in Southern Ontario during the Depression of the 1930s through his growing up on his grandparents' farm after he has lost his own home. The climax of the story takes place on the beaches of Normandy where Blaine, having lied his way into the army at the age of 16, finds himself part of the horrors of Dieppe.

Throughout the book, the connecting symbol is the train. The New York Central races past his parents' poor farm bringing to his mother, and thus to Blaine, dreams of escape from poverty and drudgery to the bright lights and excitement of the cities. When Blaine moves to his grandparents' farm, there is only the "Toonerville Trolley," the slow-moving milk run that links the towns and cities in Southern Ontario.

But it moves so relentlessly along its track, rarely bothering to slow down or even whistle for crossings, that it often leaves tragedy behind. As Blaine's grandfather explains, two or three people a year in their area are killed by this train, which has also been nicknamed "The Grim Reaper." Blaine learns many lessons as he grows up about the inexorability of death and disaster, first of all in a rural community and then, more dramatically, in war.

When Blaine finally gets to ride on a train himself, it is to a basic training camp away from what he eventually realizes he loves and values more than bright lights and adventure. Blaine is seriously injured at Dieppe, and in his delirium recalls an accident at home with the old Toonerville Trolley where canning tomatoes were spread like blood all along the line.

One last train brings Blaine back home, damaged but hopeful that he can reestablish a natural order to his life. Hughes's characters seem very real, and her sympathetic writing provides a glimpse of a past that many of her readers can explore further just by asking older relatives and friends. □

REVIEW

Fighting Words

By Gary Draper

The Bumper Book, edited by John Metcalf, ECW Press, 238 pages, 320.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920763 92 8).

IN HIS INTRODUCTION, John Metcalf expresses the hope that readers will be irritated or amused by the essays collected here. He is tight to the extent that it is impossible not to experience a variety of responses. As I read I was by turn annoyed, interested, provoked, enraged, engaged, and bored. Metcalf has gathered more than 30 essays, poems, and burlesques (most of them in print for the first time) dealing with Canadian culture and above all with Canadian writing. The topics range widely, from literary criticism, through explorations of the Canadian psyche, to arts funding and cultural politics. The contributors write in tones that are variously provocative, objective, derisive, and amused.

What holds the book together? Perhaps it is its collective iconoclasm, its collective pose of attack. There are, to be sure, a few critics here who have a few good things to say about a few Canadian writers, but by and large the knives are out, and what they're cutting isn't bouquets. In "The Quest for the (Instant) Canadian Classic," W.J. Keith addresses the issue of nay-saying critics:

I agree that the time has come for a more rigorous scrutiny of the Canadian literary achievement; some apparently established titles may well be ripe for toppling.... Fair enough. But we need some yea-sayers as well.

In fact Keith's essay typifies what's best in this collection. In the first place, his subject is a little offbeat - a closeup view of two attempts to define Canadian classics. Keith participated in the 1978 Calgary Conference on the Canadian Novel (notable for the controversial lists of "best" Canadian novels that emerged from it), and subsequently served as a member of Jack McClelland's Canadian classics committee. Naturally, such participation allows him to speak in personal terms about the issues involved, and the result is a familiar essay of the best sort. He speaks candidly, and he makes a strong case for approaching Canadian novels in a spirit that is generous without being mere puffery.

Yea-saying, as Keith demonstrates, does not mean Pollyannaing. Along the way, he attacks "the general sloppiness

of student texts in Canadian literature courses," and takes a swipe in passing at such sacred cows as *Wacousta and Bear* and at "the vulgarities of *Books in Canada*." But he also has the courage to believe, and to say, that "We cannot afford to wait until all the academics are convinced of the existence of a Canadian *Middlemarch*."

Brian Fawcett's essay, "Some Proposals for the Reification of Poetry in Canada," also makes good use of the opportunities presented by such a collection. I suspect (as Fawcett does) that his proposal for a 10-year moratorium on the publication of books of poems by all published poets in Canada will not gain wide acceptance. But his arguments are clever, provocative, and interesting, and he raises some important questions about the current state of poetry in Canada and in the world at large.

Two very interesting papers review, with jaundiced eye, the "classic" status of *As For Me and My House and The Mountain and the Valley*. I like both these books, but was glad to read both essays. If a classic can't stand up to such scrutiny as this, it deserves to fall. Besides, such detailed assessments assume a literature that's worth examining and worth taking seriously.

Naturally, all the nay-saying here is not of equal quality. John Mii's "Notes of a Natural Son" is typical of the worst that Metcalf has gathered. If literary criticism were a sporting event, Mills's specialty would be mud-wrestling. He seems at first to be dealing with the messy business that developed last year over the refusal of the English department at Simon Fraser University (where Mills teaches) to accept nationalist literary critic Robin Mathews in a year-long teacher exchange. He charges off, however, on a wide-ranging attack on Canadian nationalism.

According to Mii, some nationalism is good, some isn't. The Vietnamese and the Nicaraguans have "the positive sort." Americans pass the test because they "struggled through a revolution." But Canadians have "a blankness of national soul." The straw nationalists Mills attacks are "caterwauling for the superimposition of Canadianism by an imagined cultural and intellectual elite." This kind of attack, in which the enemy is first invented, then caricatured, and finally savaged, is cheap and easy. Besides, if you're going to throw as many stones as Mills does, you ought not to erect sentences as shaky as this: "I think, in fact, that about half our department was born in the U.S., were hired when there were not enough Canadian scholars to go around, and who for the most part have been redeemed from their original sin by becoming citizens."

Another nay-sayer who makes a very

disappointing contribution to this collection is Louis Dudek. Among Dudek's offerings is a sequence of three lists of "Can Lit Notes." These little entries have the look and shape of epigrams, but too often they ring hollow. Sometimes they don't ring at all. Consider:

As for Canadian critics, they do not shape public opinion. They merely go along with it

O Canada — land of golden mediocrity.

In this country the real artist will always live in relative obscurity or neglect, while the journalistic carnival goes on.

An epigram ought, at best, to be brief, pointed, witty, ingenious, and amusing. Dudek's are brief.

The absence of wit is one of the book's major faults. There is no lack of trying. "Suzi Knicker's Book Bits" and "Calling All Writers" are plainly meant to be funny, but they aren't. The parody of "Lifestyles Journalist" fiction gives a whole new dimension to the word "sophomoric." Happily, there are a few exceptions. In a piece on Canadian humour Jack MacLeod gets some good lines off, and quota some good lines from other people. Sam Solecki, in an essay on editor Metcalf, offers a number of his subject's witty thrusts, some of which are quite good, though none of them, to my taste, quite as splendid as Solecki suggests.

A lot of the writers represented here wish that Canadian literature were better than it is. I wish that this book were better than it is. Metcalf threatens a second volume of *The Bumper Book* for next fall. I'm looking forward to it. □

REVIEW

Breaking away

By Brian Fawcett

The Immaculate Perception, by Christopher Dewdney, House of Anansi. 125 pages, 59.95 paper (ISBN 0 88784 151 1).

CONTEMPORARY POETRY, in Canada and elsewhere, has come to resemble a building without windows or doors. Inside it, the poets wander about, slogging the glories of the building's size and architecture and occasionally complaining about the terms of their confinement in it. The outside world more or less ignores the building's existence.

It is a very small building. Poetry now has a ridiculously minute audience. Canadian poetry's largest technical journal, to

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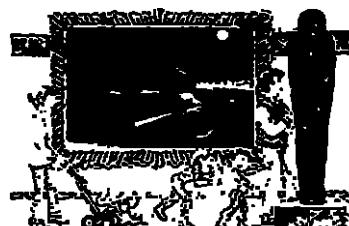


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give you an illustration of how small the audience is. has a circulation less than half that of the technical journal for the manufacturers of mobile trailers.

Some poets see their confinement as a problem, but few seem willing to attempt a break-out. Most have come to accept that poetry has no subject matter other than the techniques involved in writing verse. Oh, sure, poets express their feelings about a great many topics. But when a subject matter is approached, the dreg quotient of personality and idiosyncratic judgement is so overpowering that what gets said is either trivial or too obscure for non-specialist reader to follow. Most verse is about the act of writing, or about how it feels to write. Like most other artistic enclaves, poetry has become an intellectually mediocre technology cult.

When a book of poetry comes out that challenges this, there is cause for interest. In the case of Christopher Dewdney's *The Immaculate Perception* there is cause for celebration. Dewdney has solved the problem by choosing, and fully explicating, a subject matter.

The subject matter of *The Immaculate Perception* is neurobiology and human perception — how the human brain creates consciousness, how it perceives the phenomenal world, and the relationship of brain organization to the organization of the world. It is not about how Dewdney feels about his brain, or about your brain, or about his opinions concerning the world around him. The first person singular occurs just once in the entire book, and even then, it is a syntactical "I," not a personal one.

Dewdney's poetic skills are servants to his subject matter, not the other way round. He does not act out the ludicrous role poets have locked themselves into: he is "an idiot dancer brandishing his tools or exploiting the material world in order to convince himself of his mastery. There's none of the usual 'OK, here comes some philosophy. Watch this! Wow! There's a tree over there. Watch me colour it purple!'"

The result is an intensely informative and interesting book that could only have been written by a highly skilled poet. Science operates out of a series of complex glosses that are opaque to most of us. We don't understand what's going on unless we understand those glosses, and learning them can take years by conventional procedures. By creating a theatre of summary images, Dewdney allows his readers to bypass the scientific glosses, and the by metaphor to penetrate the processes involved. A example:

The sense of self, human consciousness, is like a virtual image: it exists solely by relation to the observer. Its singular disposition is determined by the observer hypothetically observing himself

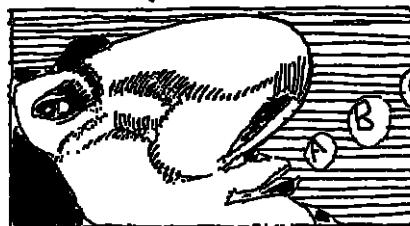
or herself in the act of self-observation. This is the double enclosure of self-consciousness. . . . Consciousness is a set of footprints in the snow which stop & then retrace themselves.

Dewdney's poetic method in this book is consistently equal to the best moments in his earlier books. He subtly shifts the directional plane of his discourse or description in order to examine objects and language from unexpected angles. This disjunction is aimed at disorienting the reader, and he accomplishes it by manipulating the staccato rhythms and melodies of scientific language.

That I' itself is almost unique: he does not translate, but rather searches out the music lodged within the jargon. As a reader, you think you're looking at a fairly conventional nexus of ideas, images, and processes, and suddenly you find that he's moved you to look at them in a new way. And the shifting create an openness that allows you to attach the grappling hooks of your own knowledge and experience.

The result is the first book of contemporary poetry I've ever read that makes me grateful to the author for having produced it. Dewdney's capturing of a zone of knowledge is a public event. By that I mean that this book can read well beyond the small enclave of professional readers of poetry. It is a serious text, and like most useful books, it is not the kind one can scan lightly and put down. Dewdney has even provided a glossary of terms as an aid to the reader. One could recommend this book to any curious person — stockbrokers, auto mechanics, sociologists, engineers. The working of the human brain is an interesting subject, and one that has been difficult — until now — for a non-specialist to penetrate.

It is also about time we stopped referring to Christopher Dewdney as one of our "lost promising, original young poets. This is the work of an utterly mature writer in full command of his language and his subject matter. I' fact it is arguably the first poetry to break genuinely new ground that has ever been written in this country — he has broken



out of the house without windows and doom, and there is much other poets can learn from his example.

There is no poet in the world who even faintly resembles Dewdney. There is no poet in Canada, certainly, who possesses

the intellectual torque and originality of language he wields so casually and unassumingly. It's time we began to acknowledge Christopher Dewdney as our first world-class poet. □

REVIEW

Too little too soon

By George Woodcock

Trace: Prairie Writers on Writing, edited by Birk Sproxton, Turnstone Press, 328 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88801 102 4).

I FIND THIS an interesting and also an alarming book. Interesting because like most critics I have a Peeping Tom inside me who enjoys spying when writers bare themselves: alarming because what I peep in *Trace* so often looks not like good healthy flesh but like an ill-fitting synthetic body stocking.

Birk Sproxton has put together a lengthy collection of essays by prairie writers on writing — mostly their own writing — interspersed with a few poems. It consists of more than 30 items, and is divided into two sections. The first contains mostly pieces written, at some time in the past, by established writers connected closely (Margaret Laurence, Rudy Wiebe) or remotely (Miriam Waddington, Dorothy Livesay) with the prairies. The second consists of some 24 statements by younger or less well-known writers; these are, generally speaking, much shorter than the those in the earlier part of the book — some of them hardly more than notations — and, as Sproxton tells us, "most were written specifically for this volume."

Contributors were invited to choose a form they thought appropriate, to make personal statements about writing, to focus on questions of poetics or matters of technique, how the writing gets written, to say what needs to be said, above all to be lively. In some cases I suggested subjects for exploration, or posed questions for consideration. I invited rants, manifestoes, arguments, a breaking down/up of party lines, a tracing of lines of descent and dissent.

The result is a strangely anticlimactic book, as if a show by the stars of La Scala or the Met were to be followed by Amateur Night.

The early essays are the reflective meditations of practised writers on their craft and their achievement. They include Henry Kreisel's by now classic essay, "The Prairie: A State of Mind," in which he takes a small writing experience in his past and builds out of it an imaginative

portrayal of attitudes to life and landscape that interconnect in prairie writing. There is that fine mock interview by Rudy Wiebe, 'The Blindman River Contradictions,' in which he lies splendidly and revealingly about himself and displays an unfamiliarly comic side to his talent. Robert Kmetsch's "Conversation with Margaret Laurence" is there — two splendid minds intertwining like the snakes of *Hermes* in a seminal interview about the nature of western Canadian fiction — and so is Eli Mandel's "Writing West: On the Road to Wood Mountain," in which he uses the perceptions of childhood as an opening for a study of the state of mind of prairie writers, which he sees as being predominantly through a tension between place and culture.

All these, in whatever circumstances they were written, are the result of notable reflection. They are afterthoughts, and it seems to me that only in afterthinking does the writer see his works as they are, or really begin to perceive how he created them. Recollecting emotion in tranquillity may NOT always inspire imaginative writing, but it does govern the way we understand it. The impulse of creation is not self-conscious, and into the later process of bringing the work to completion goes such a mixture of deliberation and spontaneity, of ice and fire, that only when it is finished and distanced can the creator see it for what it is. Only then can he be completely deliberate about his work.

With too many writers in the second part of the book one has the feeling of effort rather than ease, of saying something because they were asked, and ending up with talk about literary movements or about theories of poetics that seem to have little to do with their actual work as we read it. Often they are either wilfully obscure or lamely pedestrian. Where is the liveliness Sproxton sought to encourage in such costive prose (and thought) as this?

The reader deserves to know where I stand: on, in, under, and with language. Not just utterance — or speech, or communication, or system. All of them, new (old) paradigms. Everything (nothing) changes (recurs). The same but different. Suppose feeling were chemistry. Suppose thought were a function recursive in imagination. Suppose matter (particle) were a manner (wave). Suppose language.

Some, of course, are writers of no importance taking an opportunity to show off, but here and there a writer one respects disappointingly lets himself down, as that fine story-teller W.D. Valgardon does in a tedious step-by-step account of how he wrote a radio docudrama.

The really good pieces of this part of *Trace*, the ones that show a bit of fun and flesh, are by writers obviously out to guy



The gang from Vaudreuil High — before.



The gang from Vaudreuil High — after

— Photographs by John Reeves from *God's Big Acre: Life in 401 Country*, by George Elliot (Methuen)

the whole proceeding: such wilful and witty pieces as that marvellous collaboration contrived by Kristjana Gunnars, "Essay Parcels from Andrew Suknaski," and Aritha van Herk's spoofing essay on the West as "the kingdom of the male virgin," "A Gentle Circumcision." Jesting releases truth, and such assays tell us far more about writing and these particular writers than any of the solemn or strident chatter about deconstructionism or syntactical ambiguity — concepts that don't have much relevance when one is facing the writing as a piece of reading.

Perhaps the best of the "serious" pieces is by alphabetical accident the last, Christopher Wiseman's "Ideology, Obscurity and the Health of Poetry," a

gently reflective essay criticizing the cult of experiment for experiment's sake, the Canadian avant-gardism that is usually a breathlessly harrying late derivation from passing American modes, and bringing us back to what poetry is, rather than what — theoretically — it is supposed to do. But Wiseman has been writing poetry for many years and has taken time to reflect on the work he has done rather than rationalize, like so many of his fellow contributors, about the work he may intend to do.

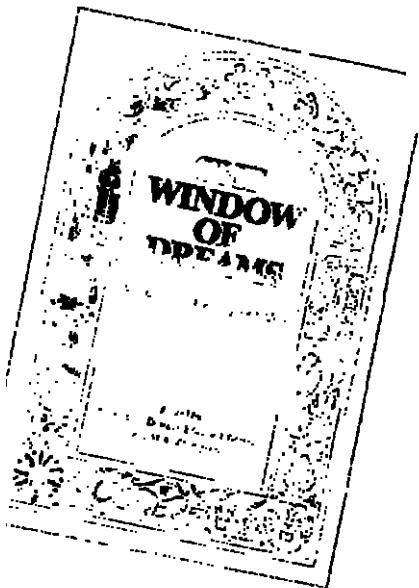
This is an annoying book, because so much of it is wise and genuine and so much of it is immature and self-conscious. But where there's annoyance there's life, and *Trace* at least shows that the prairies now — unlike the prairies two

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decades ago — contain an encouraging number of people who want to talk about writing, even if they sometimes talk like frustrated teachers rather than confident doers. □

REVIEW

Foreign intelligence

By Ray Filip

The Bottle and the Bushman: Poems of the Prodigal Son, by Mohamud S. Togane, *The Muses' Company*, 52 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 919754 07 4).

The Other Shore, by Antonio D'Alfonso, *Guernica Editions*, 160 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 919349 66 8).

In HIS PREFACE to *The Bottle and the Bushman*, Mohamud Togane mentions that the African Bushman was considered a demi-god by his fellow tribesmen since he served as an interpreter for the *Bwana*, or white master, in his native Somalia. In 1960, after independence, Italian, English, French, Arabic, and Russian were the foreign tongues learned by educated descendants of the Bushman. Somali was considered a "bush language." In this first collection of poems, Togane explodes the baboonery of it all with his own jive, "neither of the bush nor of the West."

Borrowing his diction from such diverse sources as Caliban, the Bible, Margaret Atwood, and St. Denis Street, Togane swings from one poem to the next with a momentum that would appeal to topless bathers in Thailand as well as your local Lions' Club.

"A Short Lesson in Comparative Languages" reveals the more inaccessible points of the Bushman tongue: "a seal is the stamp between Juliet's quivering thighs./Bushman prefer fat women 'cause they all seal/... In the British parliament/ a bill does not become law/ unless and until/ Her Majesty, The Queen, puts ha seal on it."

Prodigal in its most abundant sense, the book is filled with similar lusty and loud attacks on God, General Afweyne, John Barleycorn, and Money; as well as fragile poems about love and exile with an untraditional glaze.

Togane's belly-laughing style saves this thin volume from sounding like just another oppressed black mouth chewing on the same bone. It's so good to get the story first hand, and not from more spoiled white Canadians continent-hopping to Africa or to Asia to broaden their horizons on the backs of peoples

without freedom of mobility or speech.

Mohamud Togane describes himself as "a bastard of Western Civilization." We call him brother.

Antonio D'Alfonso is an Italo-Canadian "emigrant" born in Montreal. This contradiction is at the source of *The Other Shore*. The hyphen that hurts like a knife.

A quadruple tangle of tongues dictates his sense of being in the world, as in the poem "Babel":

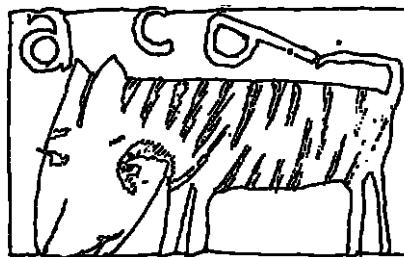
*Nativo di Montréal
élévé comme Québécois
forced to learn the tongue of power
vivi en México como alternativa
figlio del sole a della campagna*

Five lines, four languages: this is macaronic writing. In English Canada, it is unique. On other Anglo shores, John Milton wrote in Italian, as did Ezra Pound, searching for a cosmopolitan unconscious in his Cantos.

D'Alfonso's jottings are more of a personal "notebook without a beginning, without an end, only a flowing towards being a growing...." Illustrated with photographs by the author, it guides us through narrow tunnels, streets, doorways, passages of darkness and light, language and land, self and others, words that are centred, left to right, or read the same backwards or forwards as in the palindrome "Romamor."

With the intensity of a tracer beam, he explores his ethnicity through opposite approaches: surreal and documentary, didactic and questioning, loving and spitting, righteous and gauche. His "New Baroque" pastiche expresses a New World neurosis with shades of Jungian transference, cultural extendicare, Gaston Miron's "aliénation délirante," and the metanoia of contemporary Christian spirituality.

It's a hell of a trip. Canada is having a hard enough time just learning how to speak and write English. Whether *The Other Shore* sways or not depends on



where the reader is coming from. To the average plodder in the Pi Huts of this nation, the bwk smacks of Italian tunnel-vision. To polyglots (count 'em: 1, 2, 3) it is a transcendent twist on the theme of the eternal immigrant.

Antonio D'Alfonso is doing important work as a poet, publisher, and translator. An uomo pas comme les autres. □

REVIEW

Different Strokes

By Kenneth McGroogan

Not Enough Women, by Ken Ledbetter, Mosaic Press, 159 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 86962 299 X) and \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88962 298 1).

KEN LEDBETTER hails from the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, but he's really a Joycean descended via William Faulkner. *Not Enough Women* is stream-of-consciousness with a vengeance.

The voice of the novel is predominantly that of Mabel Nell Coker, a raunchy 80-year-old who makes Molly Bloom sound like an innocent, and Leon Rooker's Fat Woman like a model of middle-class respectability.

Mabel's lifelong mission has been to stamp out the notion, prevalent in Poplar Springs, that sex is dirty. Her method, practised obsessively over decades, has been to take "whatever twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy into whatever dark or musty place was handy and in thirty minutes teach him things he never would have found out on his own."

Almost incidentally, Mabel has outlasted three husbands and raised six children: One of her daughters, Faye, has turned into a grotesquely obese "thang" who seldom moves or speaks, and who lives with her almost to the end.

Mabel's story emerges not in pictures but in sounds. When Mabel isn't speaking, the voice of the novel is that of Poplar Springs itself. Ledbetter doesn't show us life in this backwater; he makes us listen to it.

And a sordid life it is. Rape, incest, buggery, and bestiality are commonplace here, and fathers sexually abuse their daughters almost as a matter of course. In this context, Mabel emerges as a kind of saint, a John the Baptist of feminist sanity.

Ledbetter's impressionistic technique keeps the reader at a distance — and probably, given the roughness of his material, was his only real choice. More clarity would have been repellent, unbearable.

But Ledbetter's approach brings problems. *Not Enough Women* is demanding and frequently confusing. Cecil? Let's see, which one was Cecil? or: "As Faye stood up and walked right out the door, she heard the bells again, the town no more awake than she had been. . . ." It's not Faye who hears the bells, but Mabel.

Also, the novel derives its energy almost exclusively from its language — and that isn't quite enough. True, terrible things happen. Mabel loses her leg in an accident. Her first husband is run out of town and later horribly murdered. But all of this is incidental. The one sustained action of the novel involves retribution for the killing of a boy. *Not Enough Women* is really an extended short story.

Occasionally, Ledbetter's prose turns purple: "eyes the color of the world's first wasted innocence." Uh, what colour? More often, it's specific and full of earned insight:

She had watched her boys — her pupils — grow to mea, get married, become fathers. Had watched them settle into middle years that left them strangers to themselves and to each other, strangers even to her. And these strange men of thirty-five and forty would lean against the store fronts of the town's main street and watch young girls go by, turning their heads with practiced nonchalance. . . .

Not Enough Women is a fine literary novel. It won't attract a wide audience, but aficionados of serious fiction shouldn't miss it. □

REVIEW

Suffer little children

By Leslie Elver

Children of the Volcano, by Alison Acker, Between the Lines, 176 pages, \$19.95 cloth QSBN 0 919946 66 6 and \$8.95 paper QSBN 0 919946 67 4.

IN 1969, the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, stating that children are entitled to such basic needs as education, food, housing, recreation, and medical care. But as the horrific information gathered by Alison Acker shows, Central America is still light-years away from fulfilling the UN's ideal that "mankind owes the child the best it has to give."

Since 1979, at least 150,000 people have been killed by violence in Central America. Using a mixture of commentary and interviews, Acker explores how this has affected the children of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. If the children haven't been felled by bullets, they are being felled by the ugly consequences of economic privation: malnutrition, disease, and illiteracy.

In Guatemala, for example, only 35 children out of every 100 reach the age of 18. In El Salvador, Acker met five-year-olds holding down fid-time jobs.

Elsewhere, the sight of children living in cardboard cartons was commonplace; in one instance, a small boy's home was a squished box marked "Very Dry Sherry from California." Statistics and personal observations like these are the grisly threads that run through Acker's stories of the children and those who work with them.

We meet Mash, a seven-year-old former Guatemalan guerrilla, who saw his parents murdered; Veronica, an eight-year-old Honduran businesswoman, who earns \$3 on a good day selling tortillas; Juan Antonio, a 20-year-old guerrilla who cradles an M-16 rifle in his arms while watching *The Incredible Hulk* on TV.

The portrait of 20-year-old Eva Eugenia, Miss Central America and vice-president of a major pharmaceutical company, offers a chilling contrast to the portraits of parentless children who fight for survival on the streets of El Salvador. "the butcher's shop of the world." Eva, we are told, no longer has her six horses but still has time to enter a swimsuit contest in which a U.S. military attaché is one of the jurors.

We also meet some of the people who work with the children and hear what they have to say. José Rossi, a coordinator of the family centre that funds the widows' village of Caserio San Pablo, flatly commands, "See if you can find any children older than babies, younger than four. You won't, because they died of hunger."

A teacher to the same village kids. "We use what the children know. How would I explain 'father' to children who have no father?" A doctor points out a five-year-old girl who was "raped so many times her vagina and anus are now fused into one passage." The chief of social work at a large children's hospital admits hopelessly, "We don't core children, we simply revive them so that they can go out and starve once more."

However worthy her book, Acker's sensitivity toward those she is interviewing and her awareness of the danger they may face for having talked to her are sometimes brought into question. In her interview with Lorenzo Mejia, a soldier in the Guatemalan army who had been commanded not to speak to foreigners, Acker not only allows his name to appear in print but also augments the text with a photograph of him.

Acker's commentary is, at times, intrusive. Personal disclosures — "I was heartsick"; "I was indignant"; "My heart wrenched" — are repeated frequently, and rob the reader of the opportunity to wrestle with the hard truths embedded here. The stories of the children who live under extraordinary pressures in Central America are themselves eloquent testimonials and need no adornment. □

BRIEF REVIEWS

BALANCE SHEETS

Controlling Interest: Who Owns Canada?, by Diane Francis, Macmillan, 352 pages, \$24.95 cloth QSBN 0 7715 9744 4).

AFTER THE CONTROVERSY over the disparity between U.S. and Canadian gasoline prices earlier this year, an examination of the concentration of economic forces that create those differences is welcome. Diane Francis, a Toronto Star columnist, sounds a warning in her opening pages about the structures in this country that have allowed so few to control so much, resulting in an unfair tax system, overpayment for consumer goods, and a threat to democracy.

Unfortunately, the angry introduction is followed by 200 pages of innocuous portraits, detailing the boring lives and histories of Canada's richest dynasties. After telling us of the peril these people pose, Francis gives us a People-magazine approach to the Bronfmans, Irvings, Molsons, and others. We learn about their rags-to-riches progress, their alma maters, and their golfing partners, but the story of the Eatons completely ignores a significant strike, and the multinational politics of Bata Shoes are simply glossed over.

In the final third of the book, substantial issues such as paper entrepreneurship and people's capitalism are dealt with, and the chapter pretentiously titled "Solutions" offers some pretty facile conclusions. After hinting throughout about the evils of creeping socialism, Francis says the answers to our problems



are free trade, more competition, and antitrust laws modelled after U.S. legislation. Such a thesis conveniently ignores the current state of corporate wealth and concentration in the U.S. and the 40-million victims of the unfettered free-enterprise mentality who have been pushed below the poverty line.

Francis calls her book a one-woman inquiry, inspired by the works of C. Wright Mills (*The Power Elite*) and Peter C.

Newman (*The Canadian Establishment*). Though she is correct in believing we are headed toward economic and political feudalism, she urges we use the scalpel, not the axe, in determining our future. What she fails to acknowledge is the fact that mere reform of the present reality will only make our current maladies manifest themselves in newer, more insidious forms. — MATTHEW BEHRENS

BEAUX ARTS

One Man's Obsession, by Robert McMichael, Prentice cloth (ISBN 0 13 566 8).

WHEN FOREIGN visitors come to Toronto and want to see something "really Canadian," McMichael Canadian Collection is a

McMichael tells Canadian art rural scapeshim and wife's establish gallery, a

in rolling, wooded hills.

It soon becomes evident that the fervour McMichael's love

Emily Carr, native artists abilities originally giveaway brides for

donating (including to his old friend his vision of an There) e- n t i s t on are

Canadian art collecting, convincing people that Tom Thomson is buried at Canoe Lake rather than in a church cemetery at Leith, Ont.

The book suffers from a lack of the objectivity in assessing others that gives good memoirs their edge. To McMichael, artists are invariably lovable personalities, as are virtually all collectors and patrons. He does not even name the bureaucrat who (in McMichael's view) tried to destroy the vision behind their collection during his year as administrative director. In the 1980s, the gallery's history became a series of attempts to depose the McMichaels from their role as joint arbiters (with government appointees) of new acquisitions, and discredit the design principles behind the gallery's log buildings. As a result, an elegiac feeling

colours the last pages: of recent curatorial decisions, McMichael writes, "The most devastating changes have affected the display of our beloved art."

— JOHN OUGHTON

BELLES LETTRES

Northrop Frye on Shakespeare, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 192 pager, 823.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88902 743 9).

WISELY, PROFESSOR FRYE makes clear at the outset that this little volume is based on his notes for lectures to undergraduates (and maybe on some of his colleagues' notes as well). This explains a lot. Many years ago, a classics professor at the University of Toronto liked to compare teaching Homer to undergraduates to casting pearls before swine. He may not have intended to be so cruel as he sounded: after all, pearls are not the most precious of jewels, and swine are far from the stupidest of animals.

My point is that Frye does much the same thing with Shakespeare. He constantly flings handfuls of gems of thought into the air. If their glitter tends to exceed their substance, this may reflect both an awareness of students' limitations and the tyranny of the 50-minute hour. A brief, sometimes very brief, examination of some provocative point or other and — poof! — he is moving right along. (My little colloquialism is not out of place here: Frye seasons his own meat moderately with the same sort of thing — for example, "big deal" and "cool it" — possibly to afford his young audience some sense of security.)

Along the way, we find many achievements of exemplary economy in dealing with complex issues. For example, our lecturer dismisses in less than 10 lines the vexed — some would say vexing — question of mounting the plays in periods other than their own. It's by no means, he says, always bad, but some cases haunt his dreams.

The selection of plays to comment on is perhaps a little skewed. Among the dozen or so examined are Hamlet and King Lear, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest; but As You Like It and Twelfth Night get only passing mention. Perhaps there will be a second volume.

This one is a delicious feast, full of tasty morsels, as in wok cooking, but similarly far from a filling one. Call it stir-fried Shakespeare commentary, and enjoy.

— BERT COWAN

FICTION

In the Village of Alias, by Fraser Sutherland, Pottersfield Press, 137 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 919001 27 0).

EVEN THE "ALIAS" of the title suggests that this is a collection of portraits of the artist. The border between Action and autobiography has always been crossable. It is becoming a cliché of post-modern fiction, however, intentionally to confuse the distinction. This book of stories invites the reader to consider Fraser Sutherland the writer outside the context of his fictions. The back cover features a smiling photo of the writer, with five quotations describing "Fraser Sutherland and his work." They range from mildly positive through tepid to openly hostile. An afterword on the artist is equally coy. It speaks of "genetic deficiency," of ineffectual employment, of a "Went for making enemies." Obviously — much too obviously — the writer is playing a game with the reader. But is it one the reader wishes to play?

If not, then the reader is in for trouble inside the book, because the game goes



on, and only becomes more embarrassing. In many of the stories, a central figure is the nameless "writer," the details of whose life and character pretty much tally with the picture of Sutherland in the afterword. This character, unfortunately, seems in most cases to be self-conscious, small-minded, and generally unattractive. It's hard to work up much enthusiasm for a character who is described as "a prematurely jaded writer in his late 20s" ("Pears"), or to take seriously the various traumas of a character who, as the author baldly puts it, "had never been able to communicate with his father" ("Firewood").

Sutherland is capable of effective, engaging writing. He can summon up and sustain the mood of a particular place or character, and is sometimes very good at suggesting the complexity of relationships among his characters. Yet, at least for me, there wasn't a single story that was effective throughout, though "Eos" came close. Sometimes it's hard to know whether ideas or execution are to blame: in "A Sense of Beginning" Sutherland writes the opening lines for 10 different

stories; in "Brassieres" he explores the characters of three women through their . . . yep. The first, which might have been a moderately interesting exercise, is mechanical and dull. The second, for all its inertia es an idea, is not entirely without interest or inspiration.

Sutherland is plainly a writer possessed of a variety of abilities, but In the Village of Alias makes the least of them.

—GARY DRAPER

The Life of Helen Alone, by Karen Lawrence, Villard Books, 261 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 394 55228 8).

THIS NOVEL IS quiet and strong, filled not with wise conclusions but with wise observations. It is moving and enjoyable. It is a success.

The Life of Helen Alone, Karen Lawrence's first novel, is about family love and self-love and about the love of women for men and men for women. Karen Lawrence recognizes the circles of challenge and defence that surround each individual: self, mate, family, community. She sees the almost impossibly complex manner in which the threads of anyone's life are woven. She sees, but never claims to understand — and this is her greatest strength.

Paradoxical as it may sound, what this novel teaches is that there is nothing to be taught, and that grasping after profound lessons only causes confusion. For every answer there is a counter-answer. For every need to be independent, there is a simultaneous need to be a part of other people's lives. Families are essential and stand as fortresses, but "... how fragile a container a family is." Love is a source of human good, but "beasts" also emerge through the doors that love opens. Physical love is perfection, and physical love is fallible.

The story told in this novel is boring as life itself. It is the story of a person trying to cope. But this is life seen by a poet and laid before the reader in a style that is both lyrical and firm. Lawrence is unflinchingly sentimental, but never allows her descriptions of life's sentimentality to become parodies. She simply lays open the wealth of significant confusion that lies within day-to-day experience.

— TOM CARPENTER

Night Light: Stories of Aging, edited by Constance Cooke, Oxford, 224 pages, \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540552 8).

IN CREATING an anthology of stories on aging, Constance Cooke has taken a calculated risk. Youth is the currently fashionable window-dressing of commodity fetishism, mass prolonged

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adolescence its superficial offspring. Old age is not cherished in our culture as a living resource affording us an enlarged vision of the horizons of other eras. Marketing the past occupies a more privileged place than recognition of the historical insights the aged may be able to give.

Rooke states: "I began to feel a special radiance, an intensity resulting from the proximity to darkness, might characterize a good deal of the literature of old age." This radiance is wonderfully present in the 12 stories included in her collection. From such masters of short fiction as John Cheever and Alice Munro to Michael Ondaatje and Doris Lessing, the prose weaves an incisive, continuous web through varying stylistic treatments. The stories offer contrasts in setting and mood, from cabins in rural wilderness to condemned housing or nursing homes; yet they unfold as component parts of a universal, shared experience.

In Isaac Bashevis Singer's "Old Love," Harry Bendiner's solitary existence in a Miami Beach high-rise is interrupted by an attractive widow who brings reawakened hope into a colourless life of resignation. With his suicide, Harry must face the self she has revealed to him; he ponders meeting with her daughter, a recluse in the forests of B.C., and their meditation together. "on why a man is born and why he must die."

The idea of the meaning of a life, memory recalling yet simultaneously dreaming the past, recurs throughout the collection. The centrepiece, however, is Tillie Olsen's brilliant "Tell Me a Riddle." The cruel bickering and underlying resentments of an impoverished couple are deftly turned into patterns of compassion and sacrifice as we learn that the woman is mortally ill. Olsen's capacity to evoke the memories, fantasies, and introspective suffering of the dying women makes this one of the most powerful stories in the collection.

Night Light's portrayal of the loneliness, isolation, and silences of old age is not only thought-provoking but also gives us the satisfying pleasures of masterful prose. Constance Rooke's calculated risk pays off handsomely.

— JAMES DENNIS CORCORAN

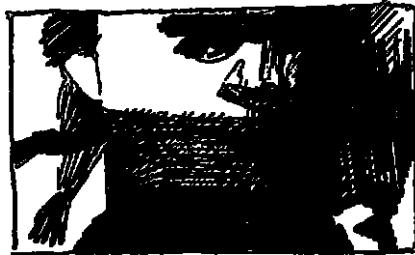
THE PAST

"More English than the English": A Very Social History of Victoria, by Terry Reksten, Orca, illustrated, 192 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 920502 03 6).

AS THE TITLE of this volume indicates, Victoria, B.C., now a retirement haven, has often been regarded as more English than Canadian. In this second book by

Terry Reksten (her first was a biography of Sir Francis Rattenbury, the renowned architect of Victoria's parliament buildings and the Empress Hotel), she refutes the notion that Victoria is, and always has been, "a little bit of old England." By chronicling the lives of eminent Victorians of varying nationalities, Reksten reveals the numerous cultural influences involved in the evolution of the city.

Originally a Hudson's Bay Company holding, expanded during the



century

experienced an immigrants, English also

black, Chinese, Scottish, Irish, German, and American. The American influence was particularly apparent during the Gold Rush years; both the flourishing economy and the American style of architecture in the city were reminiscent of the San Francisco of 1849. Although the appearance of Victoria after the Gold Rush was distinctly North American, the English theme persisted. Reksten attributes this to the fact that the majority of the city's population was still British in origin, and most English-born Victorians maintained the veneer of their English traditions. Unfortunately, some of Victoria's authentic historical buildings were demolished in the 1920s as the city's publicity commissioner reinforced the English myth by erecting Tudor-style structures and thatched cottages.

While "More English than the English" is a highly entertaining historical tabloid, the continuity of this book is occasionally marred by anecdotes that ramble. The tales of Lord Charles Beresford's practical jokes during his stay at Victoria's naval base in 1865 are amusing (they include accounts of goose-stealing and mock auctions at some of Victoria's finest hotels), but the narrative focus is temporarily lost as the author continues her profile of Lord Beresford with superfluous stories about his friendship with the Prince of Wales and his love affair with Lady Brooke when he returned to England. Despite these minor flaws, this convoluted history has been impeccably researched; it examines all aspects of Victorian society (including sewage problems and bawdy houses) in a manner that demonstrated the author's wit and perception.

— MARY DAVIS

POETRY

Hammerstroke, by Don Domanski, House of Anansi, 96 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88784 150 3).

THE COMPASSION once removed from deed that characterizes Don Domanski's poetry is well expressed in these lines, from his first book, *The Cape Breton Book of the Dead*:

*each death stops here to rest
to lay down its cracked head and dream.*

Looking back at that early work, to see how Domanski has developed or altered his work, what I notice is an expansion of narrative context; bigger, less cryptic poems; a confidence born of deeper trust in his own voice.

Hammerstroke is tremendous. It is not as dark as the previous three books have been. The cassock is still on, but the cowl has been pushed back. Even the insects are less horrific:

*they smell of lavender and almonds
and have eyes of watermarked paper
singing like castrati
high Kali-voices under the hill
cut apart by assorted winds*

The voice almost too long alone in its own head seems to have found the power and the will to heal by its Gothic dreaming: "an entire language/on the verge of sleep," and the little sense those transformations make when dragged into waking.

The compassion has intensified. Domanski says, "My heart makes the sound of eggs boiling away to the dark."

The preoccupations remain, and perhaps there are a few too many spiders and webs here, but the images have gotten more breath-taking; the images are taking more breaths.

*as if the war
were over
or the journey purged of its animal
smell.*

— PHIL HALL

Pieces of Map, Pieced of Music, by Robed Bringhurst, McClelland and Stewart, 127 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 1661 1).

z-m PRIDE OF infallibility, of knowing too much, is a sad characteristic in a voice that wants to sing of silence. Robert Bringhurst says, "I want a poetry of knowledge and of thought." And yet his poems endeavour to express that blank Eastern wonder where "What is/is what isn't." He says he is attempting to work in a "less egoistic sphere," but I find this poetry "brilliant," that is, extremely egoistic.

Each section is introduced, and there is an essay and an interview at the end.

Calligraphy, appendices, many quotes and typographical innovations make this a **generous** if righteous book.

And yet such **humble** and primitive music is being attempted. "The Blue Roofs of Japan" is a jazz duet for male and **female voices**, in which **pale blue** text is over-scored by black text to show the mixing of the voices. "Tending the Fire" is a wonderful native creation-narrative — a dog story. "The Book of Silences" gives **Indian**, Japanese, and Chinese "impersonations" of master "thinkers and singers." The grace and liquefaction of Bringhurst's poems are **sure** and hypnotic:

*Wind through the warp
of the waterfall, talking.*

"breathing
congruouslinesdull

in-

*To know is to hold no opinions: to
know
meaning thinks, thinking means.*

Bringhurst is certainly a power to reckon with and **respect** because he has developed his **method/theory** into a **completely realized musical-map-world** — but he is often working at odds with his **goals**.

Sometimes I hear a tune/tone in Bringhurst that startles me and leaves all my questions **gasping**; at other times I hear only a scholar's imitations of the primitive and **experimental voice** he admires.

— PHIL HALL

POLITICS & POLITICOS

Out of the Blue: The Fall of the Tory Dynasty, by Rosemary Speirs, Macmillan, illustrated, 2.56 pages. \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9897 1).

POWER, IN CANADA at least, is no longer taken with the sword, as in the days of Ulysses, say, or Richard III. But in **backroom** strategy sessions — poring over survey results and magazine layouts, instead of the maps of more old-fashioned **battlefields** — **cunning** still plays as pivotal a role as ever.

There has been no clearer instance of this in recent years than the epic collapse of Ontario's Big Blue Machine. Rosemary Speirs's account manages to do the subject justice, a lucky result of her combination of **backgrounds**. As an historian (Ph.D., Toronto), she shows a healthier respect for the facts than is common among **journalists**. As a **journalist** (political columnist, Toronto Star), she shows a very unhistorianlike respect for her reader's time, organizing her staggering supply of facts into fluid and confident prose.

Speirs's intimate knowledge of the personalities involved breathes life into her story. We see Frank Miller, intending to

break the grip of the Bii Blue Machine strategists on his party, overseeing instead the destruction of the Tories' 43-year grip on power — thanks mainly to not believing such a thing was possible. We want to shout advice to the **NDP's** Bob Rae after the cliffhanger election leaves, for a week, the government's fate in his hands. And we look over David Peterson's shoulder as he skilfully sets up his new Liberal regime, largely free of political debt (despite the Liberal-NDP accord) because nobody had ever expected he'd become premier.

We watch enthralled as the political warfare rages, and the ditches fill with wounded egos, mutilated agendas, careers cut down in their prime. The blood is mostly Tory blue but human drama, as in all epics, is universal.

Flow softly, sour Don, as she sings of the wrath of Prank Miller, Frank of the glad hand, of the tartan coat. . . .

— JEFF EWENER

SOCIETY

Telling Tales, by John Fraser, Collins, 218 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 217641 6).

IN HIS INTRODUCTION to this collection of anecdotal sketches of prominent Canadians, John Fraser invokes as model and inspiration the 17th-century writer John Aubrey's **Brief Lives**. However, unlike Aubrey's biographical notes, often patched together from legend and hearsay about his subjects, Fraser's profiles are drawn from his own first-hand experiences among the well-known of our day. In this, they are as much autobiographical as biographical, for his encounters with the eminent begin at an early age: his schooldays at Upper Canada College alone provide reminiscences — with apparent total recall-enough for four tales.

These youthful memoirs show both the author and his subjects at their most engaging, including portraits of potential eminences Conrad Black as a grimly mutinous schoolboy and John Sewell as a star-struck camp counsellor. Fraser's impressively extensive contacts with the mighty, personal and professional, continue unabated into adulthood, and in some of the book's less riveting passages we hear him discussing septic tanks over tea with Tuzo Wilson, underwear in the changing room with Pierre Trudeau, and the price of cheese in the market with Lord Thomson of Fleet.

As a highly versatile journalist, Fraser has had ample access to prominent figures in politics and the arts, and several of the more substantial pieces — such as those devoted to Edward Schreyer, Robert

Fulford, and Pierre Trudeau — provide opportunities for occasionally portentous musings on the peculiarities of the Canadian psyche. Briefer encounters with political luminaries such as Bill Davis and Brian Mulroney are fun, particularly Fraser's memorable description of the latter as "slurpy-looking." A few tales do fall flat: the inevitable Press Club squelches (Jeanne Sauvé and Allan Fotheringham) for which you probably had to be there, and one or two that seem to owe their presence to the sheer weight of the name being dropped (Kenneth Thomson) or to the author's uncontrollable animus toward the subject (Barbara Amiel, whose name pops up no less than three times).

The collection's most successful pieces recall Fraser's many journalistic adventures and misadventures, including his role in the defection of Baryshnikov, his confrontation in Peking with the diplomatic legacy of Zena Cherry, and his dispatches from the battlefields of Canadian ballet and theatre. In these and other tales recounting the yawning perils and fleeting triumphs of journalism, he grapples with the writer's inevitably ambiguous relationship to his human subjects, and occasionally even finds himself the victim. But even as he struggles to reconcile compassion with the demands of an impossible objectivity, Fraser manages to convey, like his model Aubrey, a contagious relish for the charms and follies of his victims, which enlivens the best of his tales.

— ANNE DENON

SPORTS & ADVENTURE

Beyond Everest: Quest for the Seven Summits, by Patrick Morrow, Camden House, illustrated, 176 pages, \$24.95 paper (ISBN 0 920656 46 3).

THIS BOOK RECOUNTS Canadian climber Patrick Morrow's tireless assault on seven of the world's most demanding summits — what he calls the "grand slam" of mountaineering. It's hard to go too wrong in books like Beyond Everest; there is a fascination in the adventures of those who risk their lives to stand, for a few adrenalin-pumped moments, at the top of the world. Morrow's account of the troubled Canadian Everest climb in 1982 makes for an especially good read. Inevitably, Everest is a hard act to follow, and the other climbs, ranging from Mount McKinley to Kilimanjaro, have less mystique and drama. There, the tension is off, and the account becomes travelogue.

The pictures that envelop the text are uniformly superb, and it is only because we have come to expect such high-quality

photography that so few of them dazzle us. But then some of them quits literally take the breath away, and drive home as no words can "hat the experience must have been like."

Morrow tells his personal story too, and we learn much about the sinewy psychology of climbers. Too often the effect is dulled: Morrow and his editors try to mimic dipped "right-stuff" prose. The text sways with lines like: "My body and soul were completely drained, caught up in a psychic decompression period." Ironically, both the strength and weakness of *Beyond Everest* arise from its roots in *Equinox*. Some of the material first appeared there, and the project bears its distinctive editorial stamp. The mix of slick gloss, trendy environmentalism, and first-hand adventure sells magazines; the recipe does not work quite so well in book length. Still, the magic is there: Morrow ends *Beyond Everest* with some advice on how to get to the mountains and when best to try an ascent. No doubt the base camps of Everest are uttered by no one with dog-eared copies of *Equinox*.

— B.K. ADAMS

REVIEW

Crossing the bar

By Barbara MacKay

Jump, by Debbie Brill with James Lawton, Douglas & McIntyre, illustrated, 192 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 502 7).

"DEBBIE IS NOT ordinary, not by any means. But then, people who jump higher than the average door frame at the age of thirty-three are not ordinary," says Lionel Pugh, Debbie Brill's coach for most of her career.

Brill's athletic record is the sort that allows sportscasters to "ax nostalgic at her participation in the 1986 commonwealth games in Edinburgh (it "as in the same stadium 16 years earlier that she won her first gold medal) and speculate on her chances at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul.

But Brill's fame owes much to her personality and life away from the track: Debbie Brill, the hippie, a spoiled brat, an athlete who choked under pressure, a wild young rebel, a drug addict, an unmarried mother. . . . She has rarely received good press, and in some ways this book seems an attempt to explain a life that she feels is continually misrepresented by reporters.

Brill takes nothing on theory — a high

jumper who refuses to take a leap of faith. For her, everything must be known through personal experience. Although at times her quest for self-knowledge seems, as she says, "ethereal, airy-fairy shit," the book seems to ring with her true voice.

She seems sincere and genuine in her desire to understand herself and others, but I had mixed feelings about sports columnist James Lawton's contribution to the book — an italicized narrative summary at the start of each chapter. At times it helps to put events into historical perspective, but at other points it sounds like a voice of omniscient foresight.

Brill recognized from an early age that she was a tough competitor; she and her four siblings, encouraged by their parents, regularly staged contests of physical skill. Her jumping career began on instinct, and her natural talent was quickly recognized. "Instinct," "nature," "feelings," "sense," and "intuition" are words Brill uses repeatedly to describe her love of the outdoors, her desire for a rural home, her athletic ability, her relationships, and her approach to life and learning. Although she does finally acknowledge Pugh's coaching, she criticizes Eastern nations for regimented, orthodox coaching methods that inhibit individual instinct.

But if Brill appreciates the freedom of innovation in Canada she is also critical of a sport policy that kept her and other Canadian athletes poor. She is adamant about the need for financial support and the impossibility of working full-time and maintaining oneself as a world-class athlete. But she also has harsh words for athletes such as Gary Carter, Bruce Jenner, and Renaldo Nehemiah, who she believes are primarily in sport for the money.

Brill's arrival on the international scene in 1968 at the age of 15 was not a triumph of natural talent. She went over the bar backwards, an unorthodox style later dubbed the Brill Bmd. She recalls at the time being seen as the Canadian clown, a gangling awkward teenager, lacking in poise and technique.

Despite her less than spectacular but, Brill continued to compete and succeed on the international circuit. But celebrity (her home town declared a Debbie Brill Day) confused her. She couldn't understand how strangers could have such strong emotional reactions toward her life when they didn't even know her. Increasingly her ability to high jump seemed to "obscure any sense of my own identity." She was horrified that the 1972 Munich Olympics continued despite the murder of Israeli athletes. Her disillusionment led her to drop out of competition for several years and live an aimless, vagabond existence.

When she returned to track and field

in 1975 she brought with her a changed attitude toward winning and losing. She had moved from the horror of being consumed by competition to avoiding it entirely, to a resolution to compete only against herself, and finally to a realization that she couldn't be an island untouched by competition without "building in a touch of complacency."

Years later, at the 1982 Edmonton Commonwealth Games, skeleton-thin after giving birth to her son Neil only four and a half months earlier, Brill's reaction to her performance reflects her evolved views:

After the jump in Edmonton, I took Neil back to the hotel, attended to his diapers and then slept for a few hours before he awoke hungry and wet. I had broken a world record, made the best jump of my life, but the world and Neil rolled on, wonderfully impervious to my epic performance. . . . I sensed, strongly, that the emptiness which had always followed great or disappointing performances would never bite so hard again. □

REVIEW

Art of darkness

By Alison Girling

KURELEK: A Biography, by Patricia Morley, Macmillan, illustrated, 338 pages, \$34.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9748 7).

WILLIAM KURELEK is remembered as a "people's painter," an artist who regaled Canadians with images of Prairie children playing hockey and ethnic communities celebrating their heritage. But he was more than merely a 20th-century Krieghoff. His paintings — of which there were hundreds — carry passionate messages: recollections of small details of western landscapes, warnings of impending nuclear holocaust, criticism of materialistic life. His obsession with the doctrine of the New Testament is evoked in a painting of Christ on a crucifix in a field.

He was also obsessed with his life story, of which he wrote a number of versions. James Maas, the Cornell psychology professor who had Kurelek's autobiography, *Someone with Me*, published for his class in 1973, remembered that Kurelek was too shy to look him in the face but was very keen to tell the story of his life when given the opportunity. The sensitive, introverted son of an immigrant farmer from the Ukraine, he had a difficult and unhappy childhood. His ineptitude with farm machinery and chores frustrated his father, who turned to William's younger

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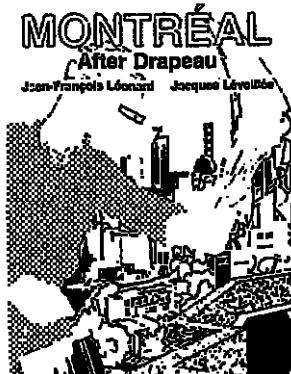
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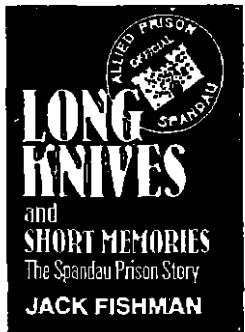


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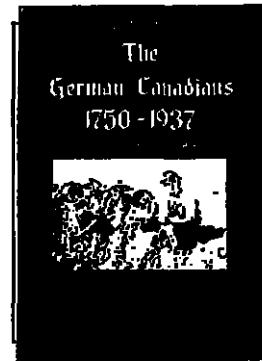
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brother for aid. His mother, with numerous other children, had no time left for William. Starved of affection, Kurelek withdrew from the family and applied himself to his studies.

Inspired by the example of James Joyce and by a biography of Vint Van Gogh, Kurelek dreamed of being a great artist. This meant he had to find an artistic mentor. He tried the Ontario College of Art, a school in Mexico, and finally, suffering from severe depression, he went to England seeking an art school and National Health psychiatric aid. Hospitalized in London in the 1950s, he produced some of his most powerful works of personal despair (*The Maze, I Spit on Life*). He converted to Catholicism while in hospital, recovered his health, and began a career as an artist-apostle.

In Toronto in the late 1950s Kurelek met Avrom Isaacs and became one of the dealer's artists and framers. In 1963 he decided that his shows at the Isaacs Gallery would alternate between happy and didactic themes. If viewers did not comprehend the messages in the paintings, Kurelek would help them with notes explaining the significance of the settings and characters. His autobiographies contain the same proselytizing.

Noting that Kurelek's various autobiographies contain discrepancies in fact and emphasis, Patricia Morley uses *Someone with Me* as her starting point. She brings to her biography years of examining what Isaacs described as "bags of his writings": diaries, letters, manuscripts, books, and films. Family, friends, editors, priests, doctors, collaborators from various projects, and Kurelek's art dealer were consulted. The result is an interesting, densely detailed account of his life and the prolific outpouring of his work.

Morley believes that Kurelek's principal motivation was to prove to his father that he could be a success as an artist, and therefore was worthy of his parents' love and respect. To Kurelek success could be measured in three ways: marrying, raising and supporting a family, and gaining widespread artistic admiration. She suggests that his marriage was not entirely successful. He lived a solitary, withdrawn life, and became increasingly interested in his Ukrainian heritage, effectively cutting off his Anglo-Saxon wife, Jean, whom he married in 1963.

In Morley's view, Kurelek was more like his father than he would have cared to admit. He was very concerned with earning a good living and did not provide much affection to his children. His painting isolated him and, in the same way as his father had done, he shut his children out of his life.

Kurelek's studio was a smell, windowless mom in his basement, where he

would work for 17 hours at a stretch, sustained only by coffee or orange juice supplemented by vitamin pills. He believed in the Okl Master approach to painting, and would hire assistants to help him with background grass or sky. His artistic influences included the contemporary British painter Stanley Spenser.

Such details, however, are subordinated to the broader themes and events in Kurelek's life: his religious commitment (Morley believes his devotion served, in part, as an emotional crutch), his ethnic interests, and the commercial promotion of his work in the 1970s. Morley provides a fresh account of Kurelek's life in Toronto in the 1950s and '60s, his contacts within the arts community and his close relationship with an understanding dealer. She is sensitive in her handling of his mental illness.

The shortcoming of the book is its small number of plates and reproductions. Instead, there are numerous photographs of Kurelek and his friends. This obliges the reader to take Morley's descriptions of the paintings on trust. She subjects them to an extremely literary analysis, placing the emphasis, as Kurelek did in his own notes, on their narrative rather than their artistic substance.

This is a very satisfying biography to pick up and read at a sitting. Morley convincingly portrays both the happy Kurelek of A Prairie Boy's winter and the apocalyptic artist who preached salvation through Catholicism and warned of the impending holocaust. □

REVIEW

Smaller than life

By Terry Goldie

Skelton at 60, edited by Barbara Turner, The Porcupine's Quill, 239 pages, \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0 88984 092 X).

IT IS VERY difficult to decide what to call this collection of 60 essays, poems, anecdotes, and squibs on/for Robin Skelton. The editor herself asserts that it is not a *Festschrift*, which she translates as a combination of "unpublishable essays", and "grave panegyric."

Is it then an "ana"? For those not steeped in literary history, this refers to that delightful unformed form which the Oxford calls "notable sayings of a person, literary trifles, society verses, items of gossip, etc." As in *Walpoliana*.

In part this applies, as witness the following titles: "Robin and the UFO," "Begging the Dialect, Attingham Park

1960," and "Meeting Robin Skelton." However, the last, by W.D. Valgardson, is much more about Valgardson than it is about Skelton. Which is one of the problems with many of the submissions in this volume.

But is it a problem? Are we really more interested in Skelton than in Valgardson? In most biographical reminiscences, the object of the discussion is more important than the subject who is writing it.

Here, I'm not always sure, although few of the contributions are from household names, even in literary houses. Most of the exceptions, like Margaret Atwood's bit of doggerel, are too ephemeral to be of much interest on either subject or object. Perhaps Susan Musgrave provides a bit more. In "A Beard in The Bay Pavilion" she tries to dismiss the literary gossip about her "relationship" with Skelton. She recalls their tour of Ireland: "there is no truth to the rumour (I heard it in Toronto) that Charlotte, my very blonde, very blue-eyed daughter, is a by-product of that tour. She doesn't have the same chin — though how can I say that for sure "ever having seen his?"

I also have heard various rumours about Musgrave and Skelton (although like most of us in "the regions" I listen to nothing said to me in Toronto). It's nice to hear a refutation from one of the "principal figures," especially when, given the flamboyance of those two figures, such a refutation is more likely to stir gossip than to stop it.

But-and I really hate to say this — who cares?

Which is, I am afraid, my reaction to all of this Skeltoniana. Back in 1968 the blurb for Skelton's Selected Poems, published by McClelland & Stewart, asserted that it would "establish Robin Skelton as one of Canada's most accomplished poets." Well, it didn't.

Why it didn't could have many answers. Skelton's poetic stance as the mystical visionary is something more in tune with an earlier age, which some of his friends seem to recognize. Thomas Kinsella calls him King Conchobor, a character from an eighth-century Irish epic. Ann Walsh, in a sardonic but friendly bit of pseudo-Biblical verse, calls him "the Prophet."

Another possibility. Christopher Wiseman, a Calgary poet originally from England, suggests that Skelton would have been given the Governor General's Award for poetry "had Robin been born in Canada or been from a more fashionable ethnic background."

Ay, there's the rub, or some other suitable quotation from BritLit. Skelton is like many British academic-poets whose reputations have languished rather than flourished in Canada. The reason might

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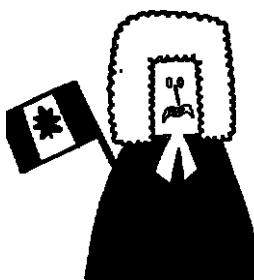
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be prejudice. Part of the attention for a "author such as Josef Skvorecky is certainly a result of his role as a" exile. At present we don't consider a poet from Yorkshire to be a refugee (although given Margaret Thatcher's policies this may change).

Might I offer a slightly different view? His poetry, for all the local references and all the energy he has put into the local culture of his adopted home in Victoria, isn't Canadian enough. For some 40 years the poetic form in Canada has been edging in a decidedly non-British, perhaps sprawling, perhaps even American, direction. Even when Skelton is at his most vigorous, it seems to be the vigour of the company of Ted Hughes, rather than the company of Irving Layton or Milton Acorn.

But even if my man is wrong, Skelton does not have the fame to justify this volume. The introduction states that Skelton's friends said "What a lovely ideal" and 60 of them followed with contributions. But that generous response is no reason why the collection should be inflicted on the public.

The opening contribution, from the eminent Shakespearean, the late G. Wilson Knight, seems a fine example of the reference letters British academics supply for candidates for university positions. Knight was clearly impressed by Skelton's achievements as a student and as a scholar, although his praise is presented in rather dry and lifeless phrases. If I had such a letter from a perso" of Kniiis stature I would cherish it, but I wouldn't publish it.

Still, there is another side to all this, beyond the question of Skelton's status as a Canadian poet. Toward the end of the volume appears a humble submission from the Canadian-Hungarian poet, George Faludy, about Skelton's work as a translator. Faludy refers to Skelton's



warmth and devotion in a way that demonstrates those same qualities.

If more of these pieces had been able to interest me in Skelton as a person, I might have a different reaction. I have never met Skelton but I sense that his persona could be his greatest creation. Don't read Skelton at 60. But some Boswell's Life of Skelton might be a" ana worth waiting for. □

REVIEW

Why shoot the messenger

By Paul Wright

Inside Seven Days, by Eric Koch, Prentice-Hall, 350 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 13 467416 1).

The Newsmongers: How the Media Distort the Political News, by Mary Anne Comber and Robert S. Mayne, McClelland & Stewart, 178 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 2239 5).

IN THE WHIRL of events known for short as the '60s, the television equivalent of rebellion in the academy, experimental relationships, beads, beards, sandals, and pilgrimages to the Far East was a program called *This Hour Has Seven Days*. Its qualities were theatricality, personality, impudence, and — for the first time in an information program — a sure and clever use of the medium. Now comes a" excellent account of the program's birth, rise, and fall, rounding out for the first time the story of its extraordinary hold on its huge audience, and the personalities and the clash of issues that led ultimately to its cancellation, to daily questions in the House of Commons, and finally to a government inquiry and the decline and fall of the main actors.

It is a story that transcends the limitations of a particular incident and becomes a parable for the times, of convention confronting originality, thus of the decade in which it came to be. It is also the tit faithful description of the CBC's inner workings yet written. Though Eric Koch had a r&side seat throughout the events, his version is scrupulously even-handed, a work of scholarship footnoted at every point to official records, internal memoranda or personal interview. The book is shapely and as compelling as a thriller:

A cautionary tale this, its ingredients the brilliant personalities of the producers and performers, notably, Patrick Watson, Douglas Leiterman and Laurier LaPierre; the exciting development of their virtuosity in the new medium; a group of managers attempting to govern by sedate maxims drawn from radio experience; and above all the high-octane volatility of television itself, pouting into the combustion chamber of an engine specifically designed for maximum performance. It is a" important book for media managers, producers, and journalists, and an exciting book for any of the two million who waited each Sunday night for the rolling cadences of Warren

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Davis intoning: "This hour has seven days."

There is no doubt that journalism tends to produce in its practitioners a view of the world that sets them apart from the rest of humanity, who are their audience. Despite its location in the world of reality, journalism resembles, in that sense, the theatre, with one group, more or less specially qualified, providing, and the other consuming. There is the same cliquishness, the same highly conscious development of skills and attitudes and submission to private disciplines, and — to a degree — the same hunger for fame, and cultivation of personal celebrity. Among these professional attitudes are a concept of fairness and detachment, the deliberate separation of the self from the subject, and conscious deference to particular assumptions about the audience.

Now from two seats in the auditorium come cries of complaint. The two authors of *The Newsmongers* claim that this process of detachment and professional discipline produces flaws in the coverage of the political process and thus restricts the ability of the electorate to participate. Chiefly their complaint is that representatives of "the media," a grouping given no further definition, interpose themselves between the politicians and the audience and prevent the latter from reaching its own conclusions on statements of the former. There are, in addition, complaints about the mischievous effects of public-opinion polls published during election campaigns, the "warranted weight given to irrelevant incidents of plain bad luck (Joe Clark's loss of his luggage), and the general tendency of Canadian journalists, unlike the French or the Americans, to attack prominence for its own sake.

Today there is increasing public



restiveness on the subject of journalism, and nowhere is it more marked than among journalists themselves. To say that journalism is an imperfect process would qualify as masterful understatement in the opinion of the trade. Journalists know

too well the harm done by deadlines falling before information is complete, of good stories truncated by the sudden time or space demands of later events, of the manufacture of ignorance by bad research and the distortion of fact produced by ego. They also know, or think they know, that mass audiences will not hold still for thorough ("in-depth") treatment of complex or abstract material, or those important but undramatic issues that require long periods of development.

Finally, there is the problem posed by the sheer volume of world events all jostling for space on the air, on the page, and in the consciousness of individuals. From this tumult the news-gathering and editing process must produce each day a report that is, at the very least, neat. In doing so it relies on a constantly evolving system of relative values that is "aver (cannot be?) written down. This is called "news sense." The question posed by *The Newsmongers* is how to reconcile the news sense of journalists with that of Mary Anne Comber and Richard S. Mayne.

To a degree this can be addressed through their failure to discriminate between one kind of "media" and another. No doubt there would be some audience for an hour-long recitation of the budget speech by the minister of finance (sometimes the product of as many as 30 drafts, they report breathlessly). Conventional wisdom holds, however, that it would not be the maw audience for which news coverage is intended — hence the reliance on summary and reaction that Comber and Mayne find objectionable. Is this a example of the limitations of journalistic technique, or perhaps a argument in favour of a specialized minority viewing channel?

Over and over we are told that journalists control the political agenda by suppressing the substance of political statements in favour of their own versions. This charge is certainly true, though the motives the authors suggest — boredom and envy — seem less likely than the need to woo an audience. They give little weight to the problem posed by political statements that are less than straightforward, even conceived to avoid substance entirely — "The land is strong," for example — and surely it is not inappropriate for journalists to describe to voters the methods of image-building, including the transportation from place to place of the prime minister's lectern.

It would be less easy to answer the charges that daily journalism lacks historical perspective, that it fails to correct today, with equal prominence, yesterday's erroneous report of scandal, or, above all, that it reduces all events to the same level of importance, which is the

vice of detachment. Unfortunately these are not in the catalogue of complaints drawn by this book.

Journalists might also justifiably point to various motes in the eyes of the authors. For example, there is their "see of the fifth estate" (a television program) in place of the fourth estate, the traditional semi-facetious synonym for the world of journalism. Two successive chapters are headed with the curious device of a news story as it might have been written by the authors. So far, so good, but they then proceed to analyse and draw conclusions from it as if it were real. Later they follow the dubious practice, certainly not unknown among journalists, of extrapolating from American statistics to reach Canadian conclusions.

More seriously, there is a pervasive sense that the authors depend on the point of view of Ottawa officialdom as their benchmark for criticism. This compares badly with the detachment show" by Peter Trueman i" his perhaps overgenerous foreword to this attack on his profession. □

REVIEW

Between the Rock and a hard place

By Terry Goldie

Contrary Winds: Essays on Newfoundland Society I" Crisis, edited by Rex Clark, Breakwater Books, 186 p-ages, 89.95 paper (ISBN 0 919519 67 9).

ABOUT NINE YEARS ago, in the middle of a" election campaign, I was sitting with a friend in his kitchen (most great events in Newfoundland take place in a friend's kitchen) discussing what to do about the dire state of political commentary in the province.

We proposed a magazine, something vaguely left-wing but assuredly confrontational. And my friend said, if we were ever to get it off the ground, Rex Clark should be involved.

Well, we never did it. I went back to theatre and literature, and left politics to those more devoted and energetic. My friend went on to see politics from the other side, as a government consultant. And Rex Clark? He produced this book:

Some might think that anecdote should disqualify me as a reviewer. I am somewhere between a friend and a nodding acquaintance with almost everyone in this book. But then, that's the way Newfoundland is. It doesn't mean I can't attack them in print, if I see fit. Some of the great political skirmishes in New-

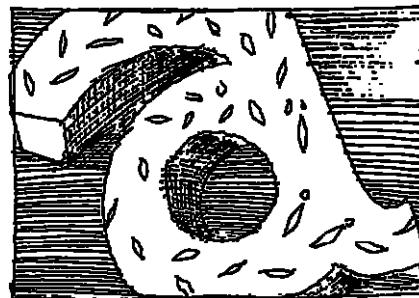
foundland have been between "friends."

I think this book is very much like the magazine we envisioned; More or less academic, a few of the contributors either are or were associated with Memorial University, inevitable in a one-university community. The one uniformity that perhaps is unnecessary is that all of the contributors are sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers. There are no economists, historians, or political scientists, although many of the essays are historical, and all are based on economics and politics. Also missing are overtly non-academic sources such as journalists.

That territory is to a certain extent covered by one anthropologist, Eliot Leyton. He is perhaps the only contributor with a non-academic reputation, from trade books such as *Dying Hard*, about silicosis in a Newfoundland min-

ing community, and Hunting Humans, about serial killing. As a result of the latter, he was profiled in *Maclean's* and Saturday Night.

It might have all gone to his head. His



piece on crime in Newfoundland reads something like Hunter S. Thompson's "gonzo journalism." He describes the

Newfoundland "myth" about the "Brut Prol. Ch'ters [British Proletarian Characters] bent on stealing the Official Collection-of-Silver-Spoons-of-the-Canadian-Provinces-Handsomely-Mounted-on-Felt-Covered-Fibreboard."

Leyton might be attacked for his misuse of "myth" or his facile comments on folklore or his highly questionable assertion that Newfoundland is an "alcoholic civilization" (sic — Breakwater's proofreading is no better than it ever was). But his approach is so freewheeling it seems pointless to question specifics. I was very entertained by the piece, but I'm still not too sure what it all means.

Such is not the case with Gordon Inglis's methodical portrait of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food, and Allied Workers' Union, or with Vince Walsh's

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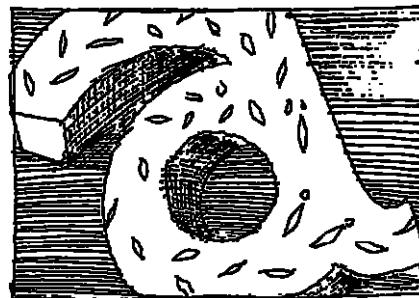
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TWO STUPID DUMMIES

Mark Thurman

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convincing although brief account of the history of the modern Newfoundland fishery. Still, the meat of this book is not the fish, as mainlanders might expect, but offshore oil. As a friend of mine cynically replies whenever someone laments the Newfoundland economy: "The Isle will save us, b'y."

All of the commentators here think it "tight not. J. D. House, recently chair of a provincial commission on unemployment, considers Newfoundland 1" the light of the Scottish oil experience. W.R. Hynd does the same with Alberta.

The most interesting oil discussion comes in one of those aforementioned skirmishes. Jim Overton and Rick Johnstone have both been associated with Memorial's sociology department, but they have trouble agreeing. Overton claims Johnstone and House, another Memorial sociologist, are too easily convinced by Premier Brian Peckford's Newfoundland rhetoric.

They see the primary dependency question as the Big Feds vs. the Little Province, and Peckford's answer as a implied socialism through provincial control, no matter how tied it is to local capitalists and multi-nationals. I agree with Overton that a transfer from the big to the little big, with many strings pulled by the really big, doesn't do much for the really little..

We have recently seen a example of that, as the downturn in oil prices has caused all offshore exploration to cease. The oil industry generated immigration to the province, and many Newfoundland workers switched to oil from now non-existent jobs in other industries. The result of the offshore oil boom in the immediate future could be more unemployment than before.

But none of that is considered here. In fact there is no reference to anything since early 1984 — not even to such essential concerns as the Mulroney government and the Atlantic Accord. For a "Society in Crisis" that seems rather a long gap.

Leyton is entertaining and the rest of the book is informative for those interested in Newfoundland, although somewhat out of date. But the real value in this book for mainlanders is in the essay by Clark himself. He connects mummering (an old Christmas tradition that incorporates disguise and visitation rituals) with basic economic problems through associations of various words from the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*.

At times his imagination seems to run away with him, but most of his analysis is extreme but convincing — that best of all combinations. As you sit in your Mississauga rumpus room, with little interest in cod tongues, offshore Isle or even, Lard tunderin' Jaysus (translation: Lord

thundering Jesus), John Crosbie, take a look at Clark. Even mainland professor-types might learn a bit from this one. □

REVIEW

The Italian Connection

By Louise Longo

Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian Canadian Writing, edited by Joseph Pivato, Guernica Editions, 255 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919349 53 6) and \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 919349 52 8).

Moving Landscapes, by Pasquale Verdicchio, Guernica Editions, 52 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919349 59 5) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 919349 58 7).

JOSEPH PIVATO MAKES the point in his introduction that because Italian-Canadian writing exists in English, French, and Italian and is influenced by all three traditions, it's best treated through a comparative approach. One would have to agree, judging by the 10 essays herein. They present a lively range of ideas and viewpoints that explore Italian-Canadian writing and writers, the immigrant experience in its broadest implications, as well as the examination of specific influential writers.

Pivato offers a good working definition of ethnic writing in his essay, "Ethnic Writing and Comparative Canadian Literature":

...writing that is concerned with the meeting of two (or more) cultures in which one of the cultures is anglophone or francophone. With this meeting there is often a tension or conflict between the minority culture and the majority one.

C.D. Minni goes further in "The Short Story as an Ethnic Genre," arguing that the entire short story genre has a lot in common with the immigrant



experience. At its best, the short story deals with outside or marginal people, who feel isolated because their emotional terms of reference are different.

Antonio D'Alfonso takes a fairly hard line in his essay, "The Road Between: Essentialism. For a" Italian Culture in

Quebec and Canada." He may sympathize with the Italian-Canadian writer's frustration at being marginalized, but he also confronts the writer's responsibilities:

If Italian writers in this country wish to be taken seriously, they will have to work very seriously at trying to render intelligible their complex traditions not only to other peoples in this land but to themselves. We should not take for granted that people comprehend all the intricacies of our popular myths and lifestyles.

One of the most affecting essays is Frank Paci's "Tasks of the Canadian Novelist Writing on Immigrant Themes," in which he makes a brilliant and passionate plea for writing that is firmly based in deeply felt experience. This for Paci is the immigrant experience, which resulted in his own powerful novel, *Black Madonna* (which is itself the subject of another essay in the book by Roberta Scif-Zamaro).

Paci's skills as teacher, editor, and writer converge here. He has much to say about the making of novels — the discipline involved, the dedication but also the magic:

Writing novels has to do with play — with arranging toys in a pattern, with creating some sort of meaning out of the apparent chaos of the world. This playing, in the end, releases joy because it's as if human beings have the gift of magic. We are co-creators. We love life. And we want to extend it.

The strength in Paci's argument is that, he's in favour of good, solid writing. For him, it's not important whether one is an immigrant or a third-generation Canadian; simply writing from those experiences one knows most deeply will produce work that is indigenously and authentically Canadian.

There's plenty of good reading in *Contrasts*, but I have one quarrel with its inclusion of excerpts from literary works in French and Italian. For readers who don't happen to be trilingual (say, second-generation Italian Canadians like myself) this is extremely frustrating. It could be easily solved with a short appendix of translations.

Looking at Pasquale Verdicchio's first collection of poetry, *Moving Landscapes*, in the light of some of the themes discussed in *Contrasts* only serves to enrich it. "Ancestors," for example, reflects some of the tension between the old world and the new:

Because we were the dreams
which ancestors carved in stone
and described in jewels
we are now lost and confused
as to whether these lives are our own
or if they will cease with another's
waking.
"Letter" captures the sense of in-

fluences traded between countries and generations:

*The wind has carried you far
and your feet
have touched many soils.
And when your memory permits,
pen in one hand
and all you have gathered
tight in the other,
you send me
what your sun-dark hands have held.*

The long title poem is the most ambitious and possibly the most successful in its ability to sustain the voice it establishes and in the authority it commands:

There is no language without deceit.

*A grammar of bodies and images
grown out of false form.
It begins here,
and must go on deceiving
to give words a chance to move
layer over layer.
They contain much like water
contains, is contained,
envelops, is displaced,
where form is content,
content form.
No sounds mark the air,
all lost in transformation;
escape
only possible in silence.*

Verdicchio demonstrates here the duplicitous nature of language and the

tension between the spoke" and the unspoken. His aphoristic images of water, wind, and stone are carefully interwoven" to illustrate the themes of death, identity and loss:

*This
not an anchor
to be carried down
into depth. This —
a stone, pumice,
with a memory of fire,
burning motion
above tongue-tied ruins.*

Moving Landscapes is a good first collection; Verdicchio will be a poet to watch. □

COOKBOOKS

At the plate

The season's cookbooks range from rustic simplicity to urban elegance, and from the innovative to the banal

By Douglas Hill

OPEN THE OYSTERS, spill the champaigne! Cookbook time is here, and as the festive season begins, there's much to celebrate. Last year the local pickings were slim; there was a handful of fundraising efforts, from church choirs and alumnae groups and the like, but most of the good cookbooks came from beyond our borders. Not so this year. The new Canadian titles range from rustic simplicity to urban elegance, and offer a buffet table of ethnic and regional and health-and-fitness cuisines. As might be expected, they all range from the innovative to the banal. "O" the whole, ho-, the quality is high. Loosen all belts, then, and get ready for a winter's good eating.

We'll begin with the most expensive production; not surprisingly, it's also the dullest. Canada: the Scenic Land Cookbook, compiled and edited by Pol Martin (Whitecap Books, 216 pages cloth, 141 pages paper, \$39.95 for the package), combines a lavish coffee-table picture-book with a small "kitchen edition" that repeats text and recipes. I don't really see the point of this exercise; the dishes are relentlessly miscellaneous and uniformly unimaginative, garnished occasionally with patriotic names (B.C. Clam Chowder, Montreal Vegetable Soup, Calgary Stampede Chili). and the photographs are tourist-bureau clichés. A potential gift for an American relative who doesn't like to cook?

Equally eclectic, though with an unusual ethnic focus, is Vancouver Entertains, edited by Larissa Hooley and Josephine Robinson (David Robin-

son/Whitecap Books, 192 pages, \$14.95 spiral-bound). Published by a faculty women's club group at the University of British Columbia, it presents a selection of menus and recipes from 16 of Vancouver's immigrant communities, from British to Pacific Islanders. The food is fairly predictable, but the volume, does provide a handy source for such treats as Taramasalata, Gravlax, and Pakoras. The dessert recipes are provocative, and the historical and demographic information worth reading.

Josephine Levy, Bacon's Jewish Cooking from Around the World (Baron's, 188 pages, \$28.95 cloth) is a more substantial book. History is implicit here; the recipes show how dietary laws have adapted to Jewry's migrations and dislocations over the centuries. There is a fund of cultural information in Bacon's text, and the international scope of her recipes should convince the uninitiated that there's more to Jewish cooking than chopped liver and chicken soup.

Two books are aimed at cooks concerned with physical fitness and sound nutritional principles. Chef & Doctor on the Run, by Diane and Dr. Doug Clement (Raincoast, 148 pages, \$14.95 spiral-bound) is former Olympic athlete Diane Clement's third cookbook: this time she's joined by her husband, whose specialty is sports medicine. The book is arranged by menus, with a long chapter on diet and exercise.

.Fit to Eat, by Ann Budge (Hurtig, 290 pages, \$14.95 spiral-bound), is an expansion of a work originally published for the Canadian Orienteering Foundation. The text is a bit self-righteously healthy, but

the guidelines (minimizing sugar, salt, and fats) are sensible and the food is hearty and appealing.

Either the Clements' book or Budge's would make a wise gift for a university student setting up a kitchen or for any young person who knows there must be more to life than Kraft Dinners or popcorn but doesn't know where to look for it. Cooks with small children will profit from the authors' suggestions, too.

Traditional country fare often makes good nutritional sense, as long as the modern cook remembers that the lives most of us lead today don't involve high-calorie manual labour out of doors. Followed to the letter, both Mildred Trueman's New Brunswick Heritage Cookbook (Hounslow Press, 165 pages, \$14.95 spiral-bound) and J.J. Sharp's Flavours of Nova Scotia (Breakwater Books, 111 pages, \$8.95 cloth) would put flesh on a broomstick.

The former is a gathering of recipes from many contributors, laced with nostrums and housekeeping hints and served up with illustrations and a bit of humour from the author's husband Stuart. The latter is more folklore than food; thickened with muddily reproduced archival photographs, it has fewer than a hundred recipes. Trueman scores with her baked goods (especially the old-fashioned cookies), while Sharp has a decided edge where seafood is concerned.

The Camp Cook Book, by the late Tom MacDonald (Boston Mills Press, 112 pages, \$19.95 paper), is a lovingly produced and attractive curiosity. MacDonald was a cook in the lumber woods and fishing camps of Quebec and the

Maritime; the book combines recipes (ponder Cod Fish Cakes for 50 Men) with reminiscences, and has illustrations by the author's son Norm. Carbohydrates rule the day. After some of these meals, you'd be ready (and smart) to chop up a cord or two of firewood; whatever you do, don't lie down.

Two more offbeat volumes are **The Harrowsmith Illustrated Book of Herbs**, by Patrick Lima, illustrated by Turid Forsyth (Firefly Books, 175 pages, \$19.95 paper), and **Manly Geller's What I Give My Wife for Supper When She Comes Home from the Office** (Peguis, 90 pages, \$9.95 spiral-bound). The first is a gardening book at heart, and a beautifully executed one, but contains considerable information about the use of herbs as well as their nurture. **Geller's** recipes are best passed over (lots of prepackaged mixes and sauces, heavy on salt and ketchup), and the writing is personal to the point of cutesy; the cartoons (in context) are sometimes amusing.

Now for the main course, four books that any contemporary cook will find room for on his shelf. The most uncompromisingly classical is **The Wine Lover Dines**, by wine expert and novelist Tony Aspler and master chef Jacques Marie

(Prentice-Hall, 243 pages, \$22.95 spiral-bound). Italian wines and French cuisine are the preferences here; these are rich (and often complicated) recipes that make few concessions to haste or high-fibre diets. The book is packed with information about mating wine with food, and reads like good conversation with two men who really know their business. Not for the beginner, but everyone can learn from it.

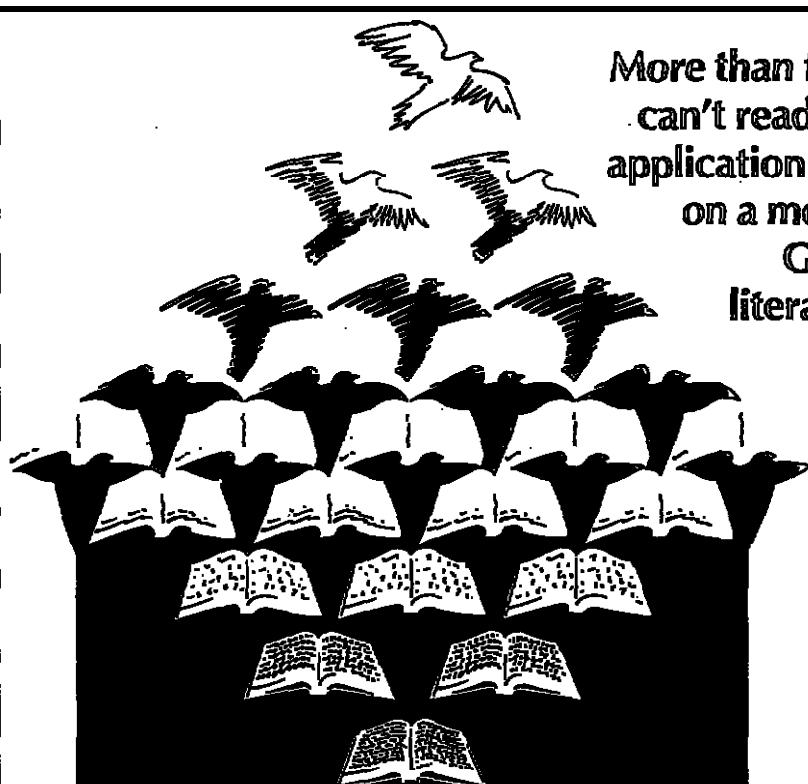
Cheese, by James McNair (Raincoast, 95 pages, \$13.50 paper), is a book of homage. There are only 40 recipes, but the photographs of cheeses and cheese dishes in all their sensual glory more than compensate for that lack. And the recipes, drawn from many countries, are first-rate. Try a few of the appetizers, soups, and salads; Parmesan Soup, Fontina and Roasted Peppers, or Grilled Cheese-stuffed Chilies with Avocado Sauce will enhance any cook's reputation.

Paola Scaravelli and Jon Cohen, whose first cookbook, **Cooking from an Italian Garden**, won deserved praise, have another winner in **A Mediterranean Harvest** (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 416 pages, \$28.95 cloth). Most of the recipes are from Italy, France, or Morocco, but half a dozen other countries bordering the

Mediterranean are also represented. Though the book is informative and thorough, there's an aristocratic, slightly self-congratulatory tone to the prose that's rather at odds with the assertive, often working-class food it presents.

The dii are strongly flavoured; spices, herbs, and garlic speak loudly; as in their previous book, the authors eschew meat. All the food is interesting, and some could be addictive: the sauces alone — Harissa from Morocco, Aioli and Tapenade from France, Skordalia from Greece (a spectacularly unsubtle concoction of potatoes, oil, lemon, and garlic) — are worth the price of the book.

The Dinah's Cupboard Cookbook, by Dinah Koo and Janice Poon (Collins, 207 pages, \$16.95), is Canada's response to the Silver Palate phenomenon from New York. This is serious dining with an absolutely contemporary touch. In one menu, for example, the authors include Shrimps and Scallops with Chevre Dressing, Radicchio Stir-fry, and White Bean Puree. All the ingredients of cuisine courante are here: sun-dried tomatoes, balsamic vinegar, shiitake mushrooms, white chocolate. Most of the recipes are intriguing, and there are extensive hints on party- and meal-planning and food



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preparation and presentation. The book's covers are an unsettling shade of Pepto-Bismal pick, but aside from that everything about it is mouth-watering. No matter what the reader's tastes or

dietary logic, be will find food to stimulate and delight in these cookbooks. My own wants are simple — fish half a dozen times a week, garlic twice a day, good wine and good desserts for friends.

Working from the pages of my favourites among the books assembled here, I've heard whispers of creamy pleasure and gasps of peppery pain, but so far no complaints. □

Eric Wilson

'I'm trying to say to kids, "Become involved." The kids who are reading my books are going to be voting pretty soon.'

By Alan Twigg

THE SON OF an RCMP undercover cop, Eric Wilson used to spend Saturday afternoons trailing suspicious-looking characters around downtown Winnipeg in hope of solving a crime. An avid fan of Hardy Boys mysteries as a youth, he wrote his first adventure story while teaching a class of "reluctant readers" in White Rock, B.C. Since then he has written 11 suspense books -the most recent of which is *The Unmasking of 'Ksan* (Collins) — and now is billed as "Canada's best-selling writer of fiction for young adults." Born in Ottawa in 1940, Wilson now lives in Victoria, where he was interviewed by Alan Twigg:

Books in Canada: Now that your books are appearing internationally, do you still see yourself writing for the reluctant reader?

Eric Wilson: Yes, I do. But my books have become popular with what you might call the bookworms as well. The nice thing is that kids in a gifted class will

have copies of my books, and kids who have a lot of trouble in school have them too. So there is no stigma attached to my books. The kid who is having trouble with his reading can feel good about himself. **BiC:** And making contact with those kids, knowing you're being socially useful, that spurs you on.

Wilson: Right. Last year I think I talked to 15,000 kids in school groups from B.C. to Quebec. That certainly creates the adrenalin for me. I'm also going into schools where teachers and librarians are using my books with social studies classes. A lot of teachers are telling me that because my books are specifically about certain places in Canada, and they have historical information, they're good ways to teach a unit, say, on northern British Columbia.

BiC: Have you gone back and looked at the Hardy Boys to see why they were so successful?

Wilson: No, but I certainly remember things that appealed to me about the Hardy Boys when I was a kid. Technical things, like getting off to a quick start. The fact that each chapter ends with a book: "Look out!" Frank cried." Also the fact that the story is contemporary. I get a lot of response from kids indicating they appreciate that my stories are about kids of today, urban kids. At the time, the Hardy Boys stories were supposed to be taking place in modern, urban settings. Also I think the series concept is important.

But there's at least one major way that my books differ from the Hardy Boys. As I recall, you more or less knew who the villains were in those books. It was straight adventure with no real mystery. The kids participate more if they have to figure out who is the villain. I try to combine mystery and adventure..

BiC: How long do you usually spend researching a book, staying in the location where it's set?

Wilson: About two months in each location, but each time it's a bit different. I went up to 'Ksan two summers ago specifically because I knew about 'Ksan

and the Indian museum there — it was a logical thing to do a story about a mask being stolen. The next book will be set in Prince Edward Island. When I went there for all of last summer, I had no idea what I would write. Slowly it evolved into a story about people in the local theatre production of Anne of Green Gables. It will be called *The Green Gables Detectives*.

BiC: You're known as a writer of simple, fast-paced adventure, but Vancouver Nightmare has moralizing about drug abuse, The Kootenay Kidnapper warns kids about public safety, and Summer of Discovery is about physically handicapped kids in an Easter Seal camp. You're a formula writer, but you do go beyond the formula.

Wilson: Well, I try. My most recent Tom and Liz Austen adventure was *Spirit in the Rainforest*. The starting point for that was the controversy around the logging of Meares Island on the B.C. coast. People were talking about occupying the island in protest. One of the characters with Greenpeace says, "You kids can help." Tom says, well, children don't have any influence. But the woman from Greenpeace says, "But it's your country, too." I'm trying to say to kids, "Become involved." Some of the kids who are reading my books are going to be voting pretty soon.

BiC: Another important aspect of your stories is that the central characters all have self-doubt. Perhaps reluctant readers can particularly relate to characters who have low self-esteem, like Graham in the 'Ksan story.

Wilson: I think that's true of all kids. It may be true of all people. Even a lot of kids who are gifted can feel like wimps or nerds. This is a good example of how I feel fortunate that I'm able to write. When I was a teenager I felt like the world's worst nerd. I had trouble dating and all that sort of stuff. That's why I had the guy in the 'Ksan story tell Graham not to worry -join the high school band or go skiing. It's standard advice, you and I know that. But when I was 15 it never

Eric Wilson



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occurred to me. I really feel that if I can put that into a book, it's going to affect some kids. That's the power of the printed word. □

LETTERS

Our misguided contributors

TERRY GOLDIE'S Field Notes on Singapore and its poetry (October) were, in the time-honoured tradition of parachute journalism, crude and skewed. Only a person completely in the dark regarding the nation's numerous domestic programs built on socialist principles mold even imagine describing it as "right wing." Only ignorance of history allows one to speak of the Malays as "more or less indigenous." Depicting the Chinese as the ethnic group that "rules" sound ominous only if one does not realize that they comprise 75 per cent of the population. Goldie's little bundle of preconceived ideas and shallow impressions was not worth publishing.

His complaint that Singapore poetry lacks iconoclasm makes one marvel. If social protest is one of the elements of poetry, somebody failed to let Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare (to name a few) in on the secret.

David Schreiber
Toronto

THE GREEK CONNECTION

ON BEHALF OF the Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, Varvari, Crete., I am attempting to locate and purchase for purposes of addition to its collection, any Canadian editions of the author's works.

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FAULTY ANALYSIS

THE TERSE REVIEW of Phyllis Grosskurth's Melanie Klein: Her Work and Her World (August-September) has not satisfactorily expressed how disappointed possible readers might be.

As Meagan Daley, the reviewer, states, "Grosskurth admits to a strong identification of herself with Klein." This is true. Unfortunately, it has resulted in a tremendous bias toward Klein and her work. For the psychoanalytic profession, a biography of Melanie Klein was greeted with great anticipation. She was indeed a giant in psychoanalysis and among the psychoanalytic pioneers, a great figure. However, this must be put into a context of careful research, correct source material, and a lack of bias. Grosskurth

does not achieve any of these goals.

For the psychoanalytic profession, it is my opinion that Grosskurth could have achieved a better result by writing a simple chronology of the life and work of Melanie Klein. Her interpretive, biased, revisionist pseudo-biography does not help the profession, nor the general public. There were other pioneers in psychoanalysis and child psychoanalysis who in Grosskurth's eyes do not even exist. Notably, in the last few years two biographies have been published about Anna Freud, and shortly a more complete and authoritative biography of Anna Freud will appear. I hope Grosskurth reads this literature. It might help relieve her bias.

George MacLean, M.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Psychiatry
University of Ottawa

RECOMMENDED

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

FICTION

The Telling of Lies, by Timothy Findley, Penguin. More like real life than a novel, this is an odd mystery, in which threads are taken up and let fall, trails are cold long before they are found, and bodies come and go with a kind of whimsicality that endears them to us as old Mends.

NON-FICTION

Memoirs, by René Lévesque, translated from the French by Philip Stratford, McClelland & Stewart. For a complete account of his life, political career, and government the best source is still Graham Fraser's *PQ*, but Lévesque's book by its very existence becomes at once a necessary part of the whole story, and a lively obligato it is.

POETRY

The Carpenter of Dreams, by W.D. Valgardsen, Skaldus Press. In the spirit of an uncompromising individualist, bent on doing things his way, Valgardsen uses his considerable craft to tilt the world to his own sensibilities, rather than employing his sensibilities to interpret the world.

RECEIVED

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

After the Fact, by Helene Holden, Oberon.
Against the Tide, by Jim Green, Progress Books.
Amanda Greenleaf Visits a Distant Star, by Ed Kavanagh, illustrated by Tish Holland, Moonstone Press.
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Argentine Cinema, edited by Tim Barnard, Nightwood Editions.

The Kettles: A Celebration, by Geoffrey Giuliano, Methuen. Defidlers, by C.J. Mason, Balmuir.

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The Birds of Canada (Revised edition), by W. Earl Godfrey, National Museum of Natural Sciences.

British Columbia: Visions of the Promised Land, edited by Brenda Lea White, Flight Press.

Capitol Offences, by Alan Fotheringham, Key Porter.

Camp X, by David Stafford, Lester & Orpen Demers.

The Canada and Hamilton Clock Companies, by Jane Varkaris and James E. Connell, Boston Mills Press.

The Case of Valentine Shortis, by Martin L. Friedland, U of T Press.

China's Country, Alberta South, photographs by Bill Simpkins, Totem Books.

Collier's World Almanac, Collins.

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The Cultural Imperative, compiled and edited by Shirley Mann Gibson, Association of Cultural Executives.

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Ed: Best Canadian Stories, Edited by David Helwig and Sandra Martin, Oberon.

Everyone's Almanac 1987, The Women's Press.

The Face in the Mirror, by Marion Crook, NC Press.

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Inheritance: Ontario's Century Farms Past & Present, by John & Monica Ladell, Dundurn Press.

It's Hardly Worth TALKIN' If You've Goin' to Tell the Truth, by Ted Stone, Western Producer Prairie Books.

Joseph Brant A Man For His People, by Helen Calister Robinson, Dundurn Press.

The Journal of Nicholas the American, by Leigh Kennedy, Irwin.

The Jungian Experience, by James Hall, M.D., Inner City Books.

Knot's & Dukes, Counts & No-Accounts, by William C. Heine, Hurtig.

Legacy of Valour: The Canadians at Passchendaele, by Daniel G. Dancock, Hurtig.

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Liturgy of Light, by Stavros Tsimalis, Aya Press.

The Long and the Short and the Tall: An Ordinary Airman's War, by Robert Collins, Western Producer Prairie Books.

Mafia Assassin, by Cecil Kirby and Thomas C. Reamer, Methuen.

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Merchants of Fear, by James Fleming, Viking.

Mice in the Beer, by Norman Ward, illustrated by Louis de Niverville, Western Producer Prairie Books.

Mildred Truman's New Brunswick Heritage Cookbook, compiled by Stuart Truman, Houston.

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Much Depends on Elizabet, by Margaret Visser, M & S.

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The 1986/87 Canadian Tax & Investment Guide, by Henry B. Zimmerman, Hurtig.

No Easy Answers: The Trial and Conviction of Bruce Cockfield, by David Hayes, Viking.

Our Land: Native Rights in Canada, by Donald Purich, Lorimer.

The Papers of Dorothy Livesey: A Research Tool, University of Manitoba.

The Patriot Games: National Dreams and Political Realities, by Peter Brimelow, Key Porter.

Pieces Of The Jigsaw/Puzzles: A Multicultural Anthology for Young Readers (3 Volumes), Pegasus Publishers.

Pirates & Outlaws of Canada, by Harold Horwood and Ed Butts, Del.

Portrait Liveliness: An Examination of an Individual Mind and Its Limits, Volume 1, by Donna Campbell O'Sullivan, Primary Press.

The Rocky Mountains, Crest of a Continent, by J.A. Krause, Key Porter Books.

Romanian and Pagan, by Richard Rohmer, Irwin.

Royal Alexandra/The Old Vic, by John C. Lindsay,

Boston Mills Press.

CANWIT NO. 116

WORD REACHED US recently that British educational authorities have banned "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" because its contents might be interpreted as racist. Contestants are invited to rewrite other well-known nursery rhymes to purge them of material that is racist, sexist, or otherwise unacceptable to right-thinking Canadians. The prize is \$25. Deadline: February 1. Address: CanWit No. 116, Books in Canada, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 114
AS WE HAD hoped (feared?), our request for closing sentences to the worst novels imaginable prompted an outpouring of turgid banality. The winner is Barry Baldwin of Calgary, for a list that includes:

It was still a dark and stormy night.

Theses crashed upon the rocks, counterpointing their amorous consummation.

And so to bed.

YOU know. Life's a funny thing.

As to what then transpired, gentle reader, ye shall learn in the sequel.

The thing on 'he floor was a man's testicle, although sheer blind horror prevented me from noticing if it was the left or the right!

Honourable mentions:

They left the building together and parted, and she went across the street to 'he beach where she saw a seagull lying dead on the sand. "Dreadful," she exclaimed, removing her earrings and placing them carefully in an inside pocket of her mackinaw.

-David Lawson, Westmount, Que.

And now, gentle reader, before I pm these final words and seal up these pages which, I trust, will not again be seen by human eyes before at least a century has passed, I must convey to you yet one more fatal secret, namely that the Phantom of the Moors, the dog which barked at Midnight on the first Thursday of each month, and the shadowy figure which Gwendolyn perceived each night outside her dressing room window — though you never would have guessed — were all none other than — myself!

— Philip Walsh, Kanata, Ont.

Smiling through her tears, and with all the brute force she could muster after years of training to be a lady weight-lifter, Marcia picked up her anvil and buried it after the departing figure of her husband, hoping against hope that he would be nailed to the wall and, if not knocked completely senseless, would have enough sense to realize, at last, that she was unhappy.

— Lois Grant, Calgary

So I had won the right to tell him "I told you so," and I did.

— Alan Sparkes, North Bay, Ont.

SOLUTION TO CANLIT ACROSTIC NO. 1

The wharf was packed with people. Even after five years in Newfoundland I found the whole climactic moment of the ship's arrival intriguing. This was the kind of welcome which had been reserved for winners of the Stanley Cup. Here it was offered to anyone.

— Claire Mowat, The *Outport People*

Boston Mills Press.

Royal Architectural Institute of Canada: 1986 Awards Program, Douglas & McIntyre.

Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1858-1939, by Alvin J. Austin, U of T Press.

School on Wheels: Reaching and Teaching the Isolated Children of the North, by Karl and Mary Schuster, Boston Mills Press.

Second Nature, by Libby Scheier, Coach House.

Selected Poems II, by Margaret Atwood, Oxford University Press.

The Shattered Bridge, by Bill Kankewitz, Methuen.

Ships Against the Sea, by Alan Easton, Nimbus.

Skull Riders & Blue Hands, by Jesse Glenn Boddy, Playwrights Canada.

The Slidingback Hills, by Peter Trower, Oberon.

The Spiral Way, by Aldo Carotenuto, Inner City Books.

Starting Quince Kumpel, by Betty Waterton, Groundwood.

Straight from the Lip, by Jean Deau, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Subtidal Galapagos, by James Cribb, Camden House.

The Tinderbox, by Marianne Brandis, The Porcupine's Quill.

To the Last Drop: Canada and the World's Water Crisis, by Michael Keating, Macmillan.

Tractors, by Paul Stickle, Kids Can Press.

Travelling Light, by Penny Kemp, Moonstone Press.

Trucks, by Paul Stickle, Kids Can Press.

Unnecessary Evil: An Answer to Canada's High Unemployment, by Ruben Belan, M & S.

The Unsettling of the West, by Gary Geddes, Oberon.

The U.S. or Us? What's the Difference, Eh?, by Eric Nicol and Dave More, Hurtig.

Victoria the Way It Was, by Michael Kluckner, Whitecap Books.

Virginia Science, by Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, M & S.

The Whirlpool, by Jane Urquhart, M & S.

Who's To Say!, by Liane Heller, Oberon.

Wild Men of the Woods, by Jean Clark, Puffin.

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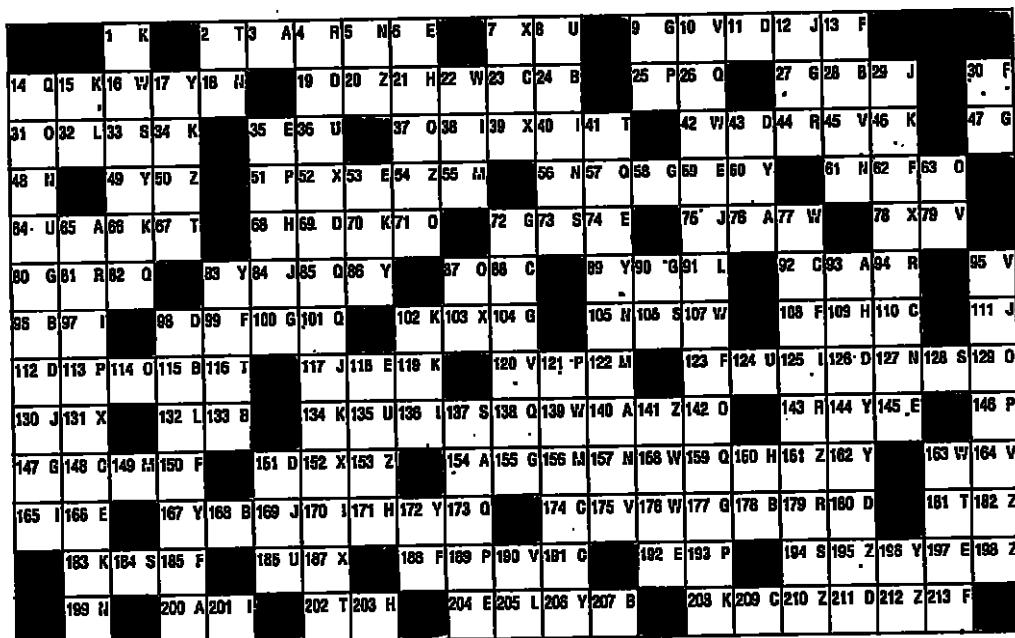
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CanLit acrostic no. 2

By Mary D. Trainer



When properly filled in, the letters in the box form a quotation from a Canadian book. Find the letters by solving the clues below and writing the answers in the numbered spaces provided. Then transfer the letters from the spaces to the appropriate squares in the box. The first letters of each answered clue form the name of the author and the title of the book. (Solution next month.)

The solution to Acrostic No. 1 appears on page 41.

A.	Expo '67 attraction	140	78	154	3	200	65	93
B.	Nervously concerned	28	133	98	178	24	115	168
C.	Boundlessness	92	23	174	146	110	209	68
D.	Northwest Territories lake: 2 wds.	180	69	112	151	43	19	98
						211		
E.	"—," dismantled aircraft carrier	35	156	118	192	53	145	204
						59	197	
			6	74				
F.	Quasi-political party	185	62	99	30	188	123	150
						13	108	
			213					
G.	"The —,—" Sir John A's nickname: 2 wds.	72	147	104	27	177	47	155
						100	80	
			90	58	9			
H.	"The —,—" NDP ultranationalist group	109	171	69	160	21	203	
I.	Insane asylum: stang	97	136	40	170	201	28	165
J.	Governor General 1893-1898	117	111	12	169	75	84	130
						29		

K.	1946 Supreme Court settlement on union security: 2 wds.	203	102	134	119	183	70	34	68	15
		48	1							
L.	"As I Was Going to St. —," nursery rhyme	132	32	205	91					
M.	"—," Varley portrait	149	122	55	156					
N.	Proprieties Of conduct	5	48	105	56	157	18	61	127	199
O.	Masses for the dead	129	31	37	114	87	83	71	142	
P.	Northwest Territories National Park	189	148	121	113	61	193	25		
Q.	Of rare and appealing excellence	82	85	14	57	159	173	138	26	101
R.	Disappear	4	143	179	44	94	81			
S.	"—," Air Canada's in-flight magazine	33	73	137	184	128	105	184		
T.	Cut of meat: 2 wds.	2	181	202	67	118	41			
U.	Composer of opera, <i>Louis Riel</i>	84	135	186	38	124	8			
V.	B.C. interior Salish Indians	45	175	180	164	79	95	10	120	
W.	Writers of literary compositions	22	139	107	163	77	15	176	158	42
X.	Theoretical physicist	187	7	103	131	78	52	39	152	
Y.	Newfoundland's floral emblem: 2 wds.	172	49	88	198	89	60	144	157	162
Z.	Important Ottawa thoroughfare: 2 wds.	208	63	17						
		210	54							



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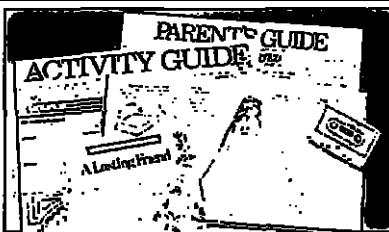
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