

# BOOKS

The People  
of the Cutter

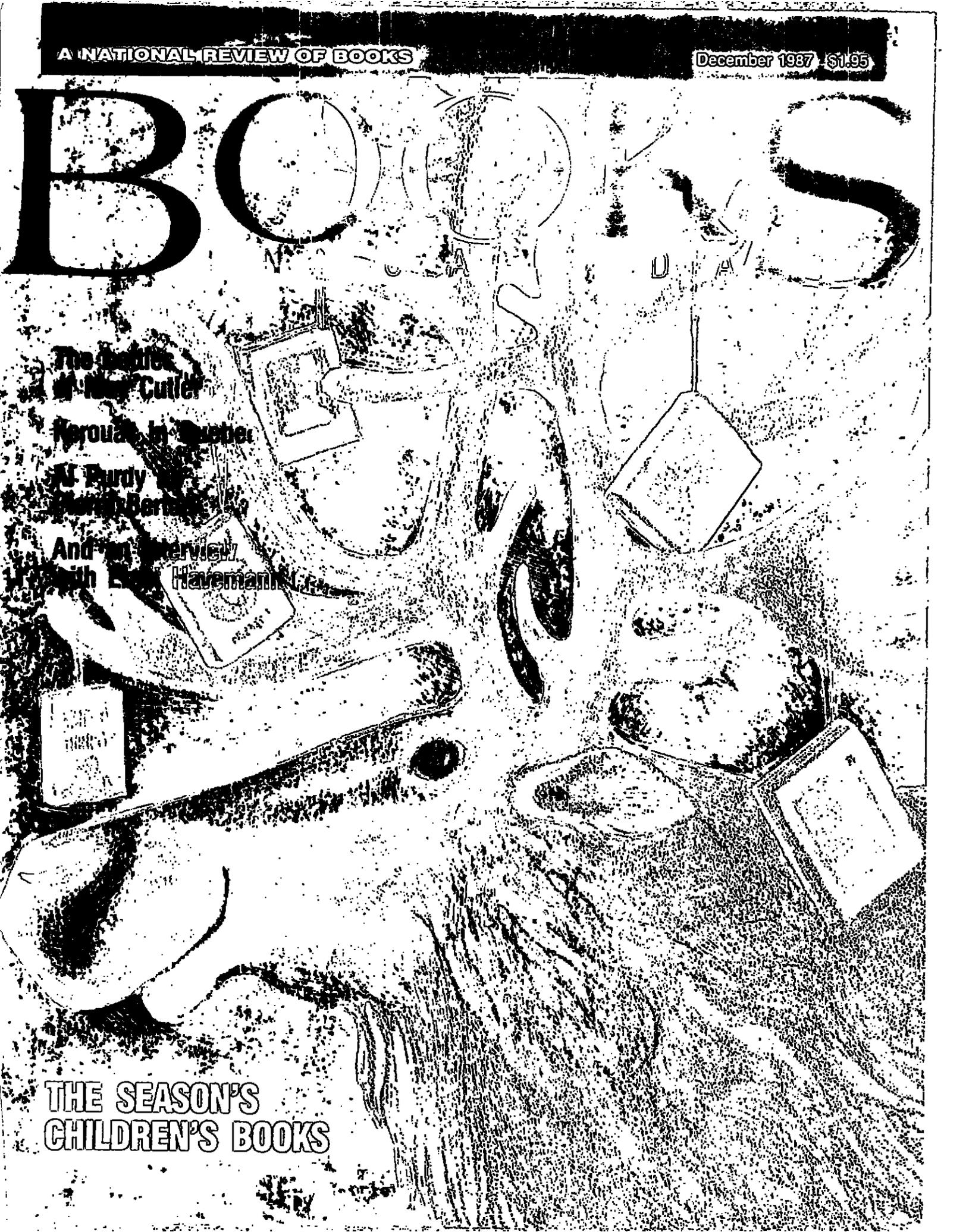
Perouat, by Dieter

Al Purdy  
North Berwick

And an Interview  
with E. J. Havemann

THE PEOPLE  
OF THE CUTTER

THE SEASON'S  
CHILDREN'S BOOKS



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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., 386 Adelaide Street East, Suite 432, Toronto, Ont. M5A 3X9. 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 © 1987. Typesetting by Jay Tee Graphics Ltd

ISSN 0045-2564

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY LASZLO GAL

## Free verse

Beyond the new openness of glasnost, says exiled post Igor Pomerantsev, is the need to disentangle literature from the corruptive influence of politics

**F**ROM TRAVELLERS to the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union come increasingly enthusiastic reports of the opening up of cultural and intellectual life after the long and bitter seasons of Brezhnevian repression; of the publication, at last, of Dr. Zhivago, for instance, and the release of long-suppressed films, and of lively debates in the republics on language policy. one can only cheer this sort of thing.

But beyond the immediate benefit of the relaxation of censorship lies a more subtle one for literature: the release from a certain social role peculiar to oppressive societies — literature as prophecy, literature as politics. or even, in the words of exiled Russian poet Igor Pomerantsev, literature as "ersatz freedom."

Writing in *Index on Censorship*, Pomerantsev recalls the heady days of the 1960s, when poets like Andrei Voznesensky and Yevgeni Yevtushenko packed them in by the tens of thousands in Moscow's Luzhniki stadium: "What went by the name of poetry — versa declaimed and trumpeted to crowds — wasn't literature so much as a biological urge on the part of both listeners and declaimers for freedom." In a society in which the normal pluralistic play of politics is contained within a single party and its bureaucratic organs, one must be grateful, as Pomerantsev is, for the "fur of freedom" poetry can provide outside the party system. But he also warns of the penalties literature pays to fulfil such a function. the "corruption" that writers are heir to when they begin to see themselves as political and moral "leaders." "Poetry," he writes, "bears no relation either to the forced of good or to the forces of evil, either to tyrants or to fighters against tyranny; it relates only to itself."

This is a provocative view of Soviet literature especially, which the liberal West is all too fond of seeing, not a little enviously, as the repository of profound meaning thanks to the torments of its practitioners. Piqued, I arranged to meet Pomerantsev in London a few weeks ago to hear more of his views.

Born in 1946 in the Volga region, Pomerantsev spent his childhood in Siberia and his youth in Ukraine, and graduated in English from the University

of Chernovtsi. He worked in Kiev as a technical translator, managing to publish his poetry in a few official journals until, in 1978, he came to the attention of the KGB for "spreading anti-soviet literature" (he had lent friends his copies of Solzhenitsyn and Nabokov) and was given the "option" of emigrating. (He has no doubt that, had he been a Ukrainian, he would have been arrested.) He now lives in London, writes widely for emigré journals and the BBC, translates Durrell and Beckett, and notes with a certain bemusement the difficulty that local critics have in "reading" him: "They don't know how to respond to my texts because I spoil the image of the Russian writer-in-exile. They look for moralism, for instruction in how to live, and I give them aesthetic puzzles."

The disentangling of literature and politics has been the leitmotiv of Pomerantsev's life, beginning with his student years in western Ukraine when student cafés were hives of literary argument, the most important publications were the "wall newspapers" — posters of poems and stories — and he and his circle, buffeted by Carpathian folk music, Polish rock, and the Beatles, studiously digested Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, and — Pomerantsev's "big discovery" — Faulkner. (His first published novella, "Reading Faulkner," was a tribute to the "passion and poetry" of the American southerner.)

At the same time, he was reading samizdat publications — Solzhenitsyn, Brodsky, the Ukrainian dissidents Stus and Dziuba — and appreciating, if not their literary value as such, the strategic importance of their polemic. Active in a discussion club, he committed himself to the dissemination of Czech materials during the "Prague Spring," a activity that first brought him the attention of the



KGB and which would come back to haunt him a few years later when he tried to have a collection of his poems published in Moscow: he would be turned down as an "unreliable element."

By 1970, when he moved to Kiev, the atmosphere bad f-. It took him a

while to adjust. He remembers asking, in a too-loud voice, at the offices, of a literary journal, if a friend had read the memoirs of Nadezhda Mandel'shtam (the widow of a poet lust to the Stalinist terror), and being looked at very peculiarly: he had broken a code. "People were afraid. The longer I lived there, the more I became aware of the empty spaces in the air of Kiev, empty spaces which took on the profile of certain literary critics and poets who had been arrested. It was as though some neutron bomb had hit the city, sparing the museums and publishing houses and cafés but eliminating certain people."

How one should behave in such circumstances was a crucial question: how to go on living a literary life while friends and colleagues were arrested, committed to psychiatric hospitals or the labour camps, their works suppressed and their families harassed. By his own admission, Pomerantsev is not a "maximalist," but he found "morally inadequate" the activities of certain poets who, in the midst of terror, went on state television to read poems in honour of Lenin and the Party: "I felt very depressed."

At the same time, however, he argues that in any such situation it is important not to yield everything to the state — not, in other words, to fall silent and give literature over to them. He decided to try to get published officially but without agreeing to change a single word of his manuscripts. He did manage to get two sets of poems published in mass-circulation magazines, and "not a word" of these poems is he ashamed of, from a moral or political point of view. He passed his work around among friends and read theirs, Ukrainian and Russia", little of which was published.

Even while the furies of repression raged around them, they found the means to read the Austrians and the Americans. haiku and Lorca and Rilke. The borders between official and unofficial literature were not so distinct as we in the West have believed: some official writers continued to be admired in unofficial circles, some official critics made a point of keeping up with samizdat publications, and Solzhenitsyn, remember, had been on the brink of receiving the Lenin Prize. One's status was in a state of flux: "Yesterday you were an official writer, today you are

in *samizdat*, and tomorrow you will be an emigré!”

One did “hat one could to keep the Muse talking, but in retrospect Pomerantsev sees that the atmosphere “as unhealthy and deleterious in its effects. Writers were extraordinarily sensitive. Living under enormous psychological tension, they felt very vulnerable and, in a situation where others were attacking them, they could not do likewise to each other. They got together and read each other’s work and discussed it, but no genuine criticism “as possible: kindness, not piercing comment, “as required. He feels his own work suffered. Under great pressure, he stopped “reviewing” himself — his acts, his words — and invested too much in uncritical “individuality,” the only means he could find for himself to oppose the situation. “Self-criticism is only possible “hen you are alone, without the state for company.”

He saw ho” easy it “as for a writer to feel a hem for having feelings and thoughts that in more open societies would be merely normal: “You feel yourself to be ‘gifted’ just because you write something that &es not coincide with official style; your social status is high because you have *samizdat* at home, and becomes simply fantastic if you read Nabokov. You are one of the ‘chosen.’ This obscures your perception of elitism and hierarchy, and you are corrupted morally in the end.”

Pomerantsev argues that such corruption can be avoided only by restoring literature to its proper, modest place: the elaboration of text. Of course, literature does have a social dimension: reading is a social event. But the only success a writer can lay claim to is in the text itself. All other claims — political, national, ethnic, moral — arise from an “artificial, unhealthy situation” in which nothing, not literature nor politics nor morality, is “in its place.” As the Yugoslav writer Zoran Glušćević put it, “politicisation [of literature] is not the result of poor work in literature but poor political work.”

“Among soviet writers,” Pomerantsev told me. “there is the idea that they should be loved because they have been arrested. Soon they are proclaiming on everything, on philosophy, on history, on politics, because of moral duty and a certain self-conceit. Some of them get Nobel Prizes for proclaiming “bat is essentially historical kitsch. Whether there is a way out, I don’t know. I’m merely diagnosing.” In emigrating, Pomerantsev does not feel cut off or isolated from Russian writing (he cites Bunin and Nabokov as other exiles “ho continued to contribute to Russian literature) but, placed in London, he obviously feels freer than the Russians not to have genuflect to certain literary sacred cows.

Pomerantsev would prefer that Garcia Lorca be loved for his poetry, not for the fact that he “as murdered by the Fascists. So, I suppose, would Lorca and Mandel’shtam and Stus. As for the current generation, flexing their muscles in *glasnost*, he can only hope that they, and he, will be able to spend an ordinary day, struggling for the m&t apt word, the best metre, the inspired simile.

— MYRNA KOSTASH

## Laughing on the outside

AT ABOUT 5:30 p.m., on October 24, the American playwright Edward Albee found himself moved to ask a small group of journalists and others if there “as “anything interesting going on in theatre in Toronto right now?”

It “as the last day of Toronto’s eighth annual International Festival of Authors. Albee had been one of more than 40 writers who had read from their works and, in some cases, taken part in panel discussions. He had also agreed to sit still for a press conference, to be held in a meeting room at the Harbour Castle Hotel. It had not gone well.

Most of the people seemed to have come only for a look at the guy who “mte *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, with little or no knowledge of the rest of his work. Ken Adachi, the Toronto *Star’s* book critic, did a yeoman job, trying to keep the questions flowing. And Albee himself did his best to salvage the event, suggesting liner of inquiry and topics for discussion, the last of which “as that question about interesting theatre in Toronto.

It “as met by a long embarrassing silence, which lasted until Albee finally said, “Sony I asked.”

He needn’t have been sorry. There’s always a fair bit of interesting theatre in Toronto. And, a few hours earlier, in the Premiere Dance Theatre, about 200 yards west of the hotel, the Festival itself had given birth to a minor but enormously satisfying form of theatre: the on-stage interview.

At one o’clock, the writer and social activist June Callwood had interviewed the novelist Jane Rule; and at four, the literary journalist Paul Kennedy had talked with the English thriller-writer Dick Francis.

That’s all each session “as: your basic interview, but without the intervention of TV cameras, radio technicians, or magazine editors, conducted in the presence of a large, adoring audience, who had lots of questions to ask when the opportunity came. In each case, the event

was, more than anything, a meeting of a community, a celebration of a bond between writer and reader that had developed over the years.

Rule proved to be a frank, forthright, very sane, very funny person. She “as particularly amusing about her nomadic childhood in the U.S. and her long struggle for literary recognition. Regarding her feelings about herself and her work in the seven years it took to get *Desert of the Heart* published, she said, “If you’re published, you’re a writer. If not, you’re an idiot — it “as painfully obvious.”

That got a good laugh, which “as topped a minute or so later, when Callwood asked Rule what had kept her going.

“Being an idiot,” she said.

The audience roared, then burst into applause, when Callwood added, “You were born to be a Canadian.”

The only louder burst of laughter and applause came toward the end of the question period, when Rule said she “as thinking about sponsoring a heterosexual pride march.

If anything, Dick Francis’s audience “as more enthusiastic than Rule’s.

• Paul Kennedy began by correctly referring to the people as “great friends of Dick Francis,” and asking him if he was feeling any strain after writing a novel a year for 26 years.

“It’s getting a bit of a job,” Francis allowed.

“You could try spacing them oat,” Kennedy said.

“No!” gasped a woman near the back of the hall.

Kennedy’s questions, as any discussion of Francis’s work must, quickly got to the matter of the physical pain he inflicts on his heroes. “These characters are not going through anything I haven’t suffered myself,” Francis said.

He explained that, in his days as a steeplechase jockey, he had lived with the reality of 30 or more falls a year, many of them bad. “I mde many times with broken collar bones,” he said, and then got his biggest laugh of the afternoon, when he added that that wasn’t too terrible. “It’s when they part,” he said, his hands simulating separating bones.

Kennedy also tried to question Francis about the brutal handicaps and psychological pain that afflict the heroes of his later work. Francis hedged around the matter for a bit, then changed the subject. “I include things like that to till the book up,” “as his last word oil the subject.

It sounded lame. But, although he is not quite the performer she is and has nothing like her academic credentials, Francis was in effect doing the same thing that Jane Rule had done in her interview.

For instance, a member of the

audience, echoing the title of one of Rule's critical works. asked what lesbian images a reader might find in her books. Rule replied with a joke ("I was once afraid someone would write a thesis on my use of helicopters") and shortly afterwards laid the issue to rest by saying readers would, at this stage, know more about the images in her work than she does.

In other words, frankness has its limits. What happens at any author's desk is a private, largely unconscious thing, which cannot be violated, even in a room packed with enthusiastic friends who have gathered to share their enjoyment of your work and rejoice in your ability to laugh at the pain and frustration you seem to have learned how to deal with.

The interviewers were, of course, not there to strip the authors bare, and the audiences certainly hadn't come for any such thing. These interviews were not inquisitions. They were, above all, celebrations — comedies, if you will.

The tragic possibilities of this new theatre form have yet to be explored.

— PHIL SURGUY

## On the road to Vieux Quebec

SOME CALLED IT an old-style "happening," others a "rip-roaring four-day wake." Celebrated poet Allen Ginsberg declared, "I haven't met anything like this since the 1960s," and Ann Charters, a renowned authority on the Beat Generation, dubbed it "a true rebirth, a renaissance."

They were describing the Rencontre Internationale Jack Kerouac, which attracted roughly 200 people — among them poets, novelists, and scholars of international reputation — to Kemuac's ancestral homeland to celebrate his work. The occasion had as many meanings as participants, all of them underscored by its historic significance: the confluence of two great rivers of thought on Kemuac — one essentially American, the other French Canadian — each roiling with tensions and contradictions, all of which were contained in the author himself and many of which were in a sense personified here.

Brilliantly conceived by the Secretariat Permanent des Peuples Francophones as a way for French-speaking Quebecers to affirm themselves as North Americans, the rencontre took place in the back moms and bars, the streets and small hotels of Vieux Quebec. It featured lectures at an international youth hostel, lunch-time debates at a downtown pub, and late-night show at an aptly named

bar, Le Grand Dérangement. There was a five-man Kerouac reading by the Toledo Poets Centre; an evening of Kerouac and jazz with San Francisco bop artist Mark Murphy; and a night-long poetry extravaganza broadcast live on radio in both French and English. Videos, film premières, book launchings, slide shows, hook-and-photo exhibits, posters, cassette tapes. T-shirts — for five days this fall Kerouac virtually took over Quebec City.

The controversial American novelist, who died in 1959 at age 47, was born Jean-Louis Lebris de Kerouac in Lowell, Massachusetts. His parents were French Canadian, born in Quebec and raised in New Hampshire. Kerouac didn't speak English until he was six, and even in his teens spoke with a French accent.

He published his first novel, *The Town and the City*, at 28 and went on to conduct audacious experiments in his adopted tongue, most notably in *Visions of Cody* and *Old Angel Midnight*, though he is best-known for *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums*. Kemuac wrote more than 20 books, most of which are autobiographical novels in his great *Legend of Duluoz*. He lived both hard and religiously, and eventually drank himself to death — but only after he'd been lionized as King of the Beats.

Virtually all serious discussion of Kemuac has treated him in an American context, as one of the Beat Generation writers who rebelled against U.S. consumerism and conformity in the 1950s. The issues have all been well-articulated — spontaneous prose, Zen Buddhism, autobiography, colloquial language, ideafication with the underdog — and most perspectives were represented in Quebec.

Besides Charters, author of the first biography of Kerouac, the U.S. participants included Gerald Niia, author of the biographical *tour-de-force* *Memory Babe*, and Regina Weinreich, who recently published a brilliant textual study called *The Spontaneous Poetics of Jack Kerouac*. Californians included Kemuac's friends Jack Micheline, a white-haired, work-shirted street poet who proudly declared, "I'm coming out of Jack's closet!"; the bookish and distracted John Montgomery, who figures with Gary Snyder in *The Dharma Bums*; and poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who publicly wondered if the gathering "might be exaggerating Jack's Quebecois-ness too much," noting that one of the great problems for all immigrant Americans is "the fantastic speed" with which they lose their roots.

Carolyn Cassady came from England, where she resides to indulge her love of theatre, and offered what was for many the most moving testimonial of the gathering. An elegant, well-spoken woman, Cassady is the m-wife of Neal

Cassady, real-life model for Kerouac's most famous hero, Dean Moriarty. In describing her long, complex love affair with Kerouac, Cassady evoked an indisputable truth: Kemuac was distinguished by his great spirit, his great heart:

Among those scholars who came from Europe, Yves Le Pellec of France, author of a book on the Beat Generation, emerged as a particularly sensitive interpreter of Kemuac. Le Pellec reviewed common criticisms of the author — his sentimentality, naivety, mysticism, and lack of understanding of women — but insisted on the greatness of much of his work, citing particularly the virtuoso description of "Joan, Rawshanks" in *Visions of Cody*. Great collectors of Kemuac's works were represented by Joy Walsh of New York and Dave Moore of England, both of whom edit magazines exploring the author's life and work, and by Rod Anstee of Ottawa, whose first editions formed the basis for a museum exhibition.

The second great river of interpretation flows directly out of the decades-old Quebec independence debate and focuses on Kemuac's French-Canadian heritage. Franco-Americans from Lowell have insisted for years that the traditional Beat interpretation of Kemuac is inadequate, but no heavyweight intellectual has arisen from among them to state the case con-

### THE SECRET PLAGUE

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vincingly or to explore its implications. AU that changed in Quebec City, as French-Canadian poets, novelists, and scholars exploded into the debate, challenging Kerouac buffs to explore questions about "Le Grand Jack" that, as Ferlinghetti observed, "nobody in America has ever asked."

The crucial document in this revival of interest was a videotape of an interview with Kerouac conducted 20 years ago in Montreal for the French television program *Le Sel de la Semaine*. The truth was there, in gesture and expression and, despite a unique accent, for all to see: Kerouac was a French Canadian — *un de nous autres*.

Novelist Victor-Ly Beaulieu reiterated the intransigent, Quebec-nationalist position he developed 15 years ago in his book *Jack Kerouac: a&p&et*, insisting that Kerouac should be read not because he has anything to do with Quebec but simply because he is a great artist. Award-winning poet Lucien Francoeur depicted Kerouac as a minor writer experimenting in a major language, and stated flatly that Quebec has no place for him as a Beat writer. And Denis Vanier, a Montreal pop poet who sports tattoo, red scarves, and a black-leather jacket, described Kerouac as a literary Elvis, and seemed bent on celebrating his self-destructive streak.

Others countered these dark visions. Geographer Jean-Maurice Morisset drew parallels between Kerouac and Louis Riel, and argued that Kerouac could not return to Quebec during his lifetime because the province wasn't mature enough to accept him. Conference organizer Eric Waddell elaborated, claiming that until now French-speaking Quebecers have not been secure enough to perceive themselves as Franco-Americans, and thus to accept Kerouac. He described Kerouac as a universal genius who wrote a unique blend of literature and lived truth: *vécriture*.

Three people who had hoped to attend the gathering were absent for health reasons: Father Armand "Spike" Morissette, who knew Kerouac as a boy; John Clellon Holmes, one of Kerouac's best writer-friends, and Pierre Vallières, author of *White Niggers Of America*, a Kerouac buff whose quest has taken him from politics to Buddhism. A fourth would-be participant, Pradip Choudhmi of India, was refused a visa by Canadian authorities.

Some observers felt the *rencontre* might have ended acrimoniously had it not been for Ginsberg, best-known as the author of Howl. The celebrated poet, who has long been the target of anti-homosexual and anti-Jewish sentiments, was present throughout the gathering, and for some he embodied that largeness of spirit which

in the end made the occasion what it was.

Ginsberg, 61, stressed during a" extemporaneous, hour-long discourse that Kerouac was not only his friend but also his teacher, and that he himself was in Quebec City not to confound the critics but to pay homage. He the" offered a stunning Zen-Buddhist interpretation of Kerouac that highlighted the author's spiritual greatness.

Ginsberg described how, when Kerouac was attacked, he never fought back. He talked of the author's "panoramic awareness," of his Zen-monk tactics, of his ability to empathize and hold contradictory Ideas in his mind. While admitting the author's faults, he argued that Kerouac was not a minor writer but a major one who in his lifetime was misunderstood and disparaged, and who even today is not properly appreciated.

Whm Ginsberg was finished, even his detractors were silent. And nobody had any doubt: Kerouac is still on the road.

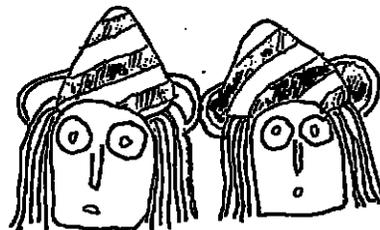
— KEN McGOOGAN

## Kid's stuff

STRUGGLING WITH A novel will do it to you. I was becoming frustrated trying to dig up new post-modern plots and subplots, wrestling with the sempiternal and the ultra-temporal, reconstructing the deconstructed, like M.C. Escher's hand drawing a hand.

The", just at the right time., I received a" invitation to collaborate on a children's book from Edita Nazaraite. She is a super illustrator, painter, poet, and woman, recently defected from Lithuania. I accepted the challenge. A cinch. A snap. Kid's stuff. Besides, some critics would say that all of my writing is childish.

As a baby boomer, I fed that I am falling behind in the generation sweepstakes. My fellow boomers are producing boomettes. Their offspring are old enough to answer the phone and say, "Yeth, my mommy is in her woom." Some eve" have teenage brats who no



longer threaten to run away from home but actually do, leaving a single lonely parent to wallow in post part 'em depression.

I can only relate to these leaders and losers of tomorrow as a friend who gets called "uncle." I often find myself wishing that I could have a so" or a

daughter to show off, as my boomer buddies proudly display a report card from their little genius. They are all little geniuses. When I get their names mixed up, I cover up by calling them Jason or Jesus or Sarah or Madonna; that usually comes close enough to saving me from pleading complete memory loss in my old age of 37.

I already had an idea for a story filed away for future reference in the back of my head. As a youngster, I used to be fascinated by the instruments hanging in music-store windows. I imagined weird hop-o'-my-thumb gnomes living inside the sound holes of guitars, next-of-kin to boogie men under the bed. Now I had a chance to express those figments.

The Man in the Mandolin became the title. It was a take-off on the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe. But the more I toyed with the notion, the "mmm I realized that a female character would have more exploratory depth. I wanted to avoid those sexist games too. So I switched the title to *The Woman in the Mandolin*. As a feminist twist, she would be a young woman who lived in a mandolin and did not want any kids — only to be independent and to concentrate on her own career as a mandolin spook.

But now, adult thinking processes interfered again. The important thing was to be simple without underestimating the intelligence of children. Mushroom clouds are as much a part of the imaginary landscape of today's child as are faces in cumulus clouds or bugaboos inside sound holes. Almost every day, kids hear about acid rain, bombs, murder, or hunger in a place" out there beyond the supermarket called the Third World. Reality is unbelievable enough.

So the question I kept asking myself was: do you write another funny froggy fantasy with castles and dragons for tots? Or do you boldly go where no six-to-10-year-old has ever ventured? How do you maintain the sense of wonder and hope?

Well, the Woman in the Mandolin became the bearer of the last bit of magic in the universe. Thicken the plot with a villainous music tycoon called Spit Sharp, who wants to steal the mysterious mandolin from two kids who discover it in a" underground cave. Add bodyguards to protect her in the form of Chuckling Knuckles, who can shrink or grow into giants at will and whom only good people can see. Throw in monsters such as Walking Eyeballs, created by Spit Sharp inside a bubble-gum machine as tall as a skyscraper. The bad guys try to make the Chuckling Knuckles stop laughing because that is the only way to get past than. In the end the good guys win, and magic is saved.

Within two weeks, the 11-page text was

ready for the toughest of all critics: children. I tried the tale on some of my friends' kids of various ages and class backgrounds. The decision was unanimous: *yuck*.

I spent days picking up the pieces of my shattered ego. The Walking Eyeballs had disgusted one six-year-old girl. She couldn't fall asleep. *The Woman in the Mandolin* would not make a good bedtime story. But boys didn't mind the

critters. The language was above the heads of all of them: "Laughter suppressant" or word-play such as "chortle warfare" turned them off. Too much vocabulary destroyed their interest in the story. "What's happening?" was the common complaint.

There was too much action cluttered with too many kooky "on-human characters. Children want children as heroes, not Chuckling Knuckles. The

writer should not keep the illustrator in mind while writing, or allow a colourless paragraph to be rescued by pictures. But! The same six-year-old girl who couldn't shut her eyes envisioning Walking Eyeballs also drew fantastic sketches of the Woman in the Mandolin and Spit Sharp!

Gawd, I didn't think being six years old was so complicated.

Back to the novel.

— RAY FILIP

## ENGLISH: OUR ENGLISH

### Art of the state

If our linguistic malaise is a result of excessive exposure to American English, why is our writing inferior to the U.S. product?

By Bob Blackburn



DISPATCH FROM the Reuter news service, as printed in the *Globe and Mail*:

LONDON

British novelist Penelope Lively was named the unexpected winner yesterday of Britain's top literary award, the Booker Prize.

I can't think of anything to say about that, but it prompted me to look back at the summer, 1987, edition of the delightful international En&h-language quarterly, *Verbatim*, which contained a piece by Brian Cahill of Ottawa that compares British and Canadian newspaper writing. Cahill quotes the following excerpt from an editorial-pap column in the *Globe and Mail*:

Allan MacEachen, Hecate-like, whispers a beguiling exorcism into the trembling ears of the Liberal Party's platform committee on the weekend, 48 hours before two by-election votes, neither of which the party has a hope of winning. No need to be spooked by Brian Mulroney, the Deputy Prime Minister incants. Right. Not until Birnam wood comer to Dunsinane hill. Besides the Prime Minister's office has moved to a political war-footing.

He the" quotes "a similarly-intentioned paragraph" from the London *Sunday Telegraph*:

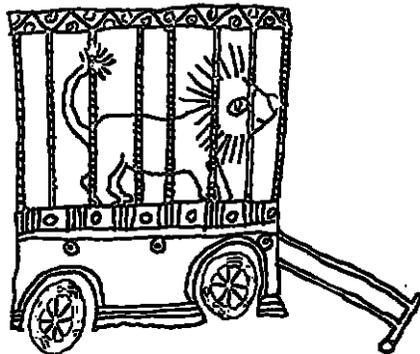
Neil Kinnock would seem to be the best choice to lead Labour towards its historic destiny as a minor tourist attraction. He gives the impression that he believes most of the rubbish he talks and it is certainly not his fault that he has the face of an incontinent schoolboy.

As political put-downs go, I think the choice is clear, and I think Cahill was fair enough in his selection of samples (them were several more). His conclusion: "Good English still flourishes in Great Britain and to me this presages the resur-

rection rather than the death of English in America."

I can only guess why he said *America*, since he had bee" talking about *Canada*, but no matter. It made me start thinking of the persistent delusion that the reason the mother tongue is in decline in English-speaking Can&la is our proximity to the United States. The theory is that Canadian English in the 20th century has been corrupted by the invasion of our culture by the United States media. There may be some truth in this, but I have a problem with it. If our linguistic malaise is a result of excessive exposure to American English, why is our writing inferior to the U.S. product?

You may say this is not so, and I am not about to argue. I'm making a subjective judgement, and can't attempt here to support it. I will do no more than invite you to make some comparisons between *Time* and *Maclean's*, between the *New*



*Yorker* and *Toronto Life*, between any of the good, grey U.S. dailies and the *Globe and Mail*, or between specialized magazines in any field. It is my opinion that, in general terms, the writing in Canadian publications and broadcasting services is sloppier than that in their U.S. counterparts. Believing this, I am confused by the suggestion that they have

bee", and are, corrupting us.

I HAD HOPED to be the fist kid on my block to have a copy of the new Random House unabridged dictionary. Having ordered it some time ago. It still isn't here, but I have bee" reading about it, and am angry already. It is the same sort of anger I felt more than a quarter-century ago, v/he" the third edition of Webster's unabridged was published. I can no longer seethe as furiously as I could the", and I have not yet read a review of the Random House that matches the indignation with which Dwight Macdonald, writing in the *New Yorker*, carved up the then-new Webster's.

The problem is the same. Both dictionaries are descriptive, not prescriptive. Both duck responsibility for offering guidance in diction. They are content merely to catalogue the way in which words are being used, and fail, for the most part, to comment on the advisability of imitating that "se. They are of considerable value, but them is a desperate need today for a haughtily prescriptive dictionary of this scope, and this does not seem to be it. At almost \$7 (U.S.) per pound, it should offer some advice instead of merely adding to the epidemic blurring of vital distinctions.

I" his review of the Random House dictionary for *Time*, Christopher Porterfield notes a" entry for *kudo*, and asks, "What next? Will a single instance of pathos be called a patho?"

FINALLY, to those who asked, yes, that was a leg-pull in August when I snarled at the misuse of participial phrases and then misused one. just to see if anyone was paying attention. (The typesetter got even with me by leaving the third / out of *participial*.) O

# The good fight

From her rough-and-ready upbringing to her 20 years as a children's-book publisher, life has been a battle for May Cutler

By David Homel

**I** HERB'S A WEEK to go to the municipal election in the well-off Montreal suburb of Westmount, and May Cutler, better known as a children's-book publisher and founder of Tundra Books, is narrowing the gap between herself and the incumbent candidate in the race for mayor. In Quebec, Westmount has always had an image of the oh-so-English home of the rich and powerful, the land of cucumber sandwiches and high tea. If Cutler, publisher and journalist, daughter of an Irish-Protestant cop, and child of Montreal's East End, wins the election, the old Westmount image is going to have to be revised.

Running for mayor is one in a series of Cutler's good fights. Along the way, she has acquired a rather justified reputation for what she calls "orneriness." Anyone who witnessed her attack on U.S. book

reviewers at the February, 1986, United States-Canada publishing conference in New York would agree with her self-appraisal. She attributes that side of her character to her rough-and-ready childhood and her questioning of her parents' ideology of Irish-Protestant intolerance: "A lot of my orneriness comes from my rejection of my parents. When you reject your parents you question all world views." Many people who have known Cutler at her most wrathful might have trouble reconciling that image with the beautiful children's books she publishes. But there's more than one May Cutler; the trick is to get them all to stand up at once.

Growing up on Rue Cartier in Montreal's Fast End is guaranteed to leave you with a combative streak. Cutler's *l'est de Montréal* was nothing like Michel Tremblay's Plateau Mont-Royal, where alleycats have souls and comment on the dramatic proceedings in the community. Her father was a policeman whose beat was downtown, around the old Mount Royal Hotel, and his job ensured the family a steady income during the Depression years, when most people's rent on Cartier Street was being paid by the city — \$12 a month — which was the form of welfare at the time. Cutler characterizes her father as the archetypal good-natured laughing Irish cop — who wouldn't say a word to anyone around the house when he finished his shift, and paid virtually no attention to the family. "He liked to be around the house, but he would just sit there and not say a word, then occasionally laugh to himself about something that had happened during the day," she recalls. "Brian Moore once told me that it was common in Ireland that the man who was extroverted at work could be almost morose at home." Her mother's home county had been the site of much violence during the Troubles. "It was a little like growing up with someone who had come from Beirut."

It seems like a long way from the East End to Westmount, but Cutler has taken her scrappy side with her. She got involved in politics out of reaction to what she calls the sheer inertia of municipal policy in Westmount. She wanted to buy a building in a mixed residential and professional neighbourhood on Sherbrooke Street West, but found that the authorities would not let her put Tundra's offices in her property. Simply put, book publishers did not fit into the city fathers' category of "professionals." From that moment onward, Cutler was in the race, and she has been enjoying every minute of it. "I never realized politics was so much fun," she says with a sense of wonderment. "But what happens if I actually win the election?"

Though Cutler is known in Canada and around the world for her children's books, she is truly a journalist at heart, and approaches life like a difficult story that at first refuses to yield its truth. She started her career in 1947 at the *Montreal daily Herald* after studying at Columbia and working a stint in the information services of the United Nations. "It was a good time for daily papers back then," she recalls. "How many dailies did we have in Canada? Ninety? Today we'd be lucky if we had 30 left! It was a lively time at the *Herald*, too. Well-known murderers were giving themselves up to it, that sort of thing." The nightlife in town was thriving; you could see Edith Piaf and Charles Trenet along with all the American stand-up comics.

May Cutler



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GODDARD

It was also a good place to be a **columnist**, which is what she was at the paper until she wrote an item headed "If Women Ran the Province of Quebec as Men Do." The column described a **society** in which women spent the day arguing cases in the courts (women were not **allowed** to **practise** law until 1940 in Quebec), then **relaxed** over a **few** beers at the tavern before returning home to heat their husbands. "Real **obvious** stuff when you look at it today," Cutler laughs, some 40 years later, but it was enough to end her **career** at the *Herald*.

In the early 1950s she went on to **work** at a weekly called the *Standard*, which was to become *Weekend* in English and *Perspectives* in French before it **finally** went out of business. "The *Standard* was fun too," she **remembers**. "We had Mavis Gallant working there. But **when** it was turned into a **national magazine**, it ended up getting watered down."

With a family of four boys, **Cutler** found the newspaper-woman's life a bit too hectic: "I couldn't **make** **daily** paper **deadlines** any more so I became a publisher." That **decision**, 20 years ago, started a new chapter in **Canadian** publishing. Tundra, a house best known today for children's books, did not start as a kids' publisher, and it still **continues** to publish adult trade books. Cutler's role as a publisher of fiction is one of her less-known sides.

Tundra **first** saw the light of day in **Expo** year in Montreal, 1967, a fertile year for a great number of things in Quebec. Canada was celebrating its centennial; the separatists were **writing** *Cents ans d'injustice* on the walls. As a reminder of those early days **Cutler** has the **colour** separations for the covers of her **first** books **hanging** **alongside** her **awards** and citations in her crowded office.

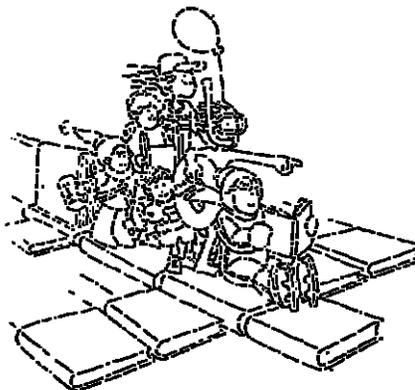
Selling at 50 cents or a dollar, these **first volumes** were **more** like pamphlets than books. They were about the arts at **Expo**, a sort of guide to **what you could** find at the various pavilions. Though primitive **in** their production **values** compared to what Tundra does now, these little books set the tone for what **was to come**: they alternated between French and English (Tundra pioneered bilingual books in this country); they used the city's resources end spirit to the utmost; and they **were** published in white heat (the entire series **was** put together in six weeks) to respond to what Cutler felt was a need and a potential in the **community**.

A book on architecture **was** what propelled Tundra onto the international scene: Moshe Safdie's *Beyond Habitat*, about his signature **apartment** complex built **near** the **Expo** site. "It was my learning book," Cutler says. "It taught me that I could do more than just muddle through." As did Safdie's **project**, the book caught the eyes of the **architectural** community **worldwide**. In **honour** of Tundra's 20th anniversary — which Cutler celebrated by winning the Eve Orpen Award — **Safdie's** book is being reissued.

Around the same time, a novella, a kind of **memory** piece called *The Last Noble Savage* appeared, penned by a **certain** Ebbitt Cutler — a.k.a. **May** Cutler. **Now** titled *I Once Knew an Indian Woman*, the 72-page **memoir** recalls her childhood summers in a **Laurentian village**, and the Indian woman she encountered there. It is recommended reading for anyone who wants to get to know the **authorial** side of May Cutler.

**Right now** she is excited about her new **William Kurelek** book, scheduled for next June. Ever since **Kurelek** spent four hours in his father's village **in** the **Ukraine** in 1970, he had been **trying** to return. "I'm going to go back if it kills **me**," he told Cutler in a letter, and in 1977 he did go back. Several **weeks** after his return to Canada he died. Despite **his** illness, he was able to **leave behind** some 38 pages of letters and diary material about his trip, all showing the **artist's** acute sense of observation, as well as drawings of what he saw. **Kurelek** remembered his **father's** description of the **village** (his father immigrated to Canada around 1910), and hews shocked to see that it perfectly matched those memories. There were the rutted roads, more

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like seas of mud than roads; there were the chickens flying into people's kitchens to eat the food off the table — the kind of thing that is being toned down in the book, for fear of insulting friends and relatives if the book ever finds its way back to that village. Kurelek describes his relations with the authorities who allowed him to make the trip, and their disapproval of the time he spent in the village church.

Among Tundra's children's titles, 27-year-old Stéphane Poulin is currently the author in the forefront with his *Josephine* books, which star a cat of the same name. Poulin is both writer and illustrator, and the 24-page, four-colour books come out in simultaneous French and English editions. In *Can You Catch Josephine? the cat stows away* in young Daniel's school-bag and creates havoc in the classroom, leading Daniel, his friends and teachers on a merry chase through the school, which is modelled after the ones found in East End Montreal. The delinquent cat is finally cornered, captured, and sent to the principal's office. There, the unexpected happens: the principal has her cat Tiger on his desk. Apparently Tiger stowed away just as Josephine had done. The next thing we know, the principal's office has become a haven for the neighbourhood cats.

Tundra is reaching back to the classics in another current book: Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*, illustrated by Quebec artist Gilles Tibo. The illustrator has set the work in the Gaspé landscape, with the rock of Percé acting as *Annabel Lee's* sepulchre. The French edition of the book uses Stéphane Mallarmé's version of Poe's poem; its bard to get a better literary match than that.

Like the Poe/Tibo collaboration, a good number of Tundra's books are cross-overs between children's illustrated albums and collector's items for adults. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of James Matthew Barrie, the Scottish creator of *Peter Pan* born in 1860, Cutler has put out three versions of the Pan story: the book, first published in 1911; the play, based on a 1904 London production; and an art book for adults with illustrations by Susan Hudson. The Barrie/*Peter Pan* story is intriguing: after the death of his older brother David, whom his mother adored, the young James Barrie literally tried to become his mother's memory of David, becoming, in the process, the boy from Neverland who never grows up.

Cutler has had her disappointments in the book trade too. "I was broken-hearted over my failure to convince people that Fred Ward is a literary genius." Ward is a black, U.S.-born writer, musician, and lonesome traveller who composes "literary jazz," as Cutler calls it: "You think it's black talk but it's not — it's something completely different. No one can get into the hearts and bodies of the poverty-stricken and the retarded like he can."

Ward's *Riverlisp*, which came out in 1974, is about Africville, the black community that existed outside Halifax until 1970. It got positive review in *The Globe and Mail*, and the late novelist Juan Butler wrote in *Books In Canada* that "Frederick Ward is a man to watch for." Two other novels followed: *Nobody Called Me Mine* and *A Roomful of Balloons*. Despite the good reviews, Ward's books went nowhere in terms of sales, but Cutler is still determined to keep publishing him. "I just got a new Ward manuscript: it's marvellous. I can sell 10,000 kids' books compared to a few hundred of a book by Ward. But I can't not publish Fred Ward."

Such defiance of the odds is typical of Cutler's "orneriness" and, in politics as in book publishing, as often as not the gamble pays off. On November 2, the people responded to Cutler's election slogan, "May in November," by giving her 60 per cent of the vote in what was only the third mayoralty election to be contested in Westmount's 113-year history. (The rest were all won by acclamation.) Her opponent, Brian Gallery, said after his defeat, "I'm going to take a long rest and then quietly reflect about how a woman can take a qualified veteran of municipal politics and defeat him in five weeks." □

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

# Ways of escape

The season's children's books offer a variety of releases from everyday reality, from time travel to snakes in the basement

By Mary Almslie Smith

**I**F THERE IS a motif common to books for older children this season, it is escape — escape from today's real world through dreams, fantasy, or travel to a "lore comforting past. There also seems to be a" effort common to the authors of these books to show that escape of this sort can be beneficial, can help children recognize their reality and come to terms with the problems it may hold for them. This is not to suggest that these books have therapeutic value only; many are written with careful attention to dialogue and setting and skilful character development. But some of the plot devices are rather well-worn.

Two books that make use of all the exhausted mechanisms of time travel, but nevertheless manage somehow to keep fresh and entertaining, are *The Doll*, by Cora Taylor (Western Producer Prairie Books, 125 pages, \$8.95 paper), and *Who Is Frances Rain?*, by Margaret Buffie (Kids Can, 192 pages, \$4.95 paper). Taylor's first children's story, *Julie* (1985), was about a little girl with extra-sensory abilities becoming aware of the mixed blessings that these gifts brought with them. Meg, the 10-year-old heroine of *The Doll*, is also extremely sensitive, especially to all the little signs that point to the disruption in the world of the adults around her.

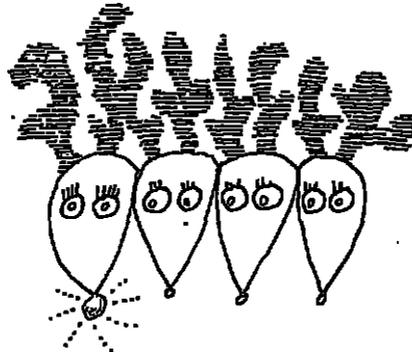
Convalescing at her grandmother's home from a serious bout of rheumatic fever, Meg becomes aware of the problems between her parents and waits in suspense for the inevitable news of her family's break-up. Her grandmother lets her have an old china-head "invalid" doll that for several generations girls in the family had been allowed to play with only when they were sick. Meg feels that she is too old for dolls, but finds this one strangely appealing. When she falls asleep holding the doll, she wakes up in another time where she is no longer Meg but Morag, a 10-year-old also convalescing from fever, but travelling with her parents, brothers, and little sister by Red River wagon across the prairies.

Although the work is hard and the journey arduous, Meg enjoys her trips to the past, mainly because of the love and

warmth of Morag's family and their feeling of striving toward a common goal. Still, she is glad to know that if she falls asleep as Morag holding the doll, she will wake up safely in the present, back in her room at her grandmother's. Thus the climax is desperate and exciting when the doll becomes lost in a prairie fire and Meg might be trapped forever in a dangerous past.

Lizzie, the 15-year-old narrator of *Who Is Frances Rain?*, also feels that her family is disintegrating around her. Her father, a successful lawyer, has left the family, and with her mother, also a lawyer, working harder and later than before, Lizzie has struggled to keep things going at home, especially for her little sister Erica. When her mother suddenly remarries, many of Lizzie's responsibilities are lifted, but she resents the intrusion of the big, good-natured Tim, and she and her brother Evan conspire to make his life with them as difficult as possible. By the time Tim decides that the whole family should go together for a summer holiday to Lizzie's grandmother's cottage north of Winnipeg — a holiday traditionally taken by the children alone — his new marriage is on the verge of breaking up, and no one in the family can speak a civil sentence to anyone else.

Lizzie, made even more resentful by



this disruption of what has always been a special time at the lake with her beloved grandmother, seeks refuge by exploring a nearby deserted island. There, on the ruins of a long-abandoned cabin, she finds a pair of old-fashioned spectacles. When she pats them on, the scene in front of her subtly changes. The cabin becomes

entire again, occupied by two mysterious female figures who move ghost-like into Lizzie's view. As soon as the spectacles come off, all is back to normal. Lizzie, determined to learn the identity of her ghosts, soon finds out that the older woman must be Frances Rain, a reclusive prospector who died alone in his island cabin in 1925. But it is harder to learn anything about the younger figure, a girl close to Lizzie's own age — who she was, what her relationship to Frances could have been, and why they were so unhappily separated.

As Meg does in *The Doll*, Lizzie acquires an understanding from her glimpses of the past that helps her put her current problems into perspective. But although her exploration of the island's mysteries occupies much of the story, it is really of secondary interest to the parallel story about the clashing of the strong wills in Lizzie's own family and their working out of a tentative truce.

As time-travel books, both *The Doll* and *Who Is Frances Rain?* do a good job of re-creating the past — both convey the challenge and isolation facing people alone in the wilderness. However, both books have even more value for their sensitive and realistic treatment of the problems and tensions facing modern families.

Kevin Major's *Dear Bruce Springsteen* (Doubleday, 135 pages, \$14.95 cloth) is about a teenager, Terry, who is also finding life difficult to handle. His father too has walked out, and Terry finds it increasingly hard to get along with his mother and little sister. He is picked on by his teachers, has trouble making friends, especially with girls, and can get little sympathy or support for his ambition to become a musician.

Terry pours all his problems out in a series of letters to Bruce Springsteen. He knows as he mails them that there is little chance of his idol ever answering or even reading them, but he has "no one else to talk to. Through these letters Major skilfully shows us how Terry manages to turn his life around and gain confidence in his own abilities and potential for success.

What readers familiar with Major's earlier books are going to miss is the wonderful sense of place that he created through his use of dialogue and descrip-



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tions of setting. Terry, unlike Major's earlier heroes, does not obviously live in Newfoundland, although he might as possibly live there as anywhere else. Terry's home is a sort of universal city, his school any school, his landscape any place. Because of this, the story lacks the depth and focus of Major's earlier work.

The setting for *Jacob's Little Giant*, by Barbara Smucker (Penguin, 101 pages, \$12.95 cloth), has all the warmth and security that so many of the young protagonists in other novels seem to lack. Jamb is the youngest, much loved child in a Mennonite farm home in Ontario. But often overwhelmed by the adult world in which he lives, even Jacob sometimes needs escape, causing his practical family to lose patience with his tendency to daydream and to confuse fact and fancy.

The opportunity to escape from family surveillance and at the same time take on responsibility comes when Jacob is made the guardian of a family of giant Canada geese, placed on the farm pond as part of an effort to save the species from extinction. Jacob feels a special affinity for the smallest gosling, and his ingenious, brave, and sometimes misguided attempts to protect these geese make a gentle and reassuring story for younger readers.

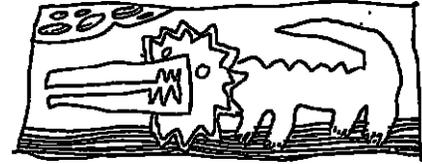
Also likely to appeal to readers in the seven- to 10-year-old range is *Greenapple Street Blues* (Kids Can, 90 pages, \$4.95 paper), Ted Staunton's third book about Maggie, the Greenapple Street genius, and her friend Cyril. In the five connected stories in this book, Maggie and Cyril construct a series of improbable schemes to get the better of parents, teachers, and classmates. Readers will sympathize with Cyril, always tentative and unsure, always wanting to do the right thing, always hoping that someone will notice him and think that he is special. They will also share with him a certain smug and guilty satisfaction when very occasionally the schemes of his dominant and confident friend Maggie backfire at her expense.

FOR VERY YOUNG readers, picture story-books that deal with escape through fantasy seem very common this season. There is a fine line between what works as fantasy for youngsters and what is just rather silly, and that line is, of course, drawn subjectively. However, a successful book in this genre clearly needs a harmony between the text and the illustrations, both working to draw the children, through their eyes or their ears, into new worlds. A number of these new books develop that harmony very successfully.

There are different sorts of fantasies. Some books present bizarre adventures; others are more child-controlled, featuring gentle dreams or flights of the imagination. Little Jesse in *Full of*

Babies, by Richard Thompson (Annick, 24 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), has perfect control over his imaginary adventure as she conducts her father on a tour of outer space in her homemade spaceship. Eugenic Fernandes's round and comfortable illustrations show us Jesse's sky fall of gently twinkling stars and round and comfortable babies being rocked to sleep by loving adults.

The hem of Albert's Bed, written and illustrated by Herve Baudry (Black Moss,



32 pages, \$5.95 paper), also knows what he is doing and where he is going. Confined to his bed because he is ill, Albert is able to tow it into many wonderful things — goal posts on a hockey rink, a boxing ring, a dogsled, a plane. Best of all, when he is ready, it can become his bed again and he can go to sleep.

In Marie-Louise Gay's *Rainy Day Magic* (Stoddart, 32 pages, \$12.95 cloth) two children playing in the basement on a rainy day are ready for adult rescue — a call to come to supper — after their imagination has taken them to strange countries where they encounter snakes, tigers, and child-eating whales. Gay's illustrations are bright and funny, but somehow have sharp lines and busy details — especially the round, frenzied eyes of her creations — suggest that there is panic and loss of control not too far below the surface of make-believe.

Gay does not have a monopoly on frenzied eyeballs. They are also a trademark of Michael Martchenko's illustrations for Robert Munsch's out-of-control situation stories. The latest book from this unbeatable team, *Moir's Birthday* (Annick, 28 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), depicts every parent's nightmare fantasy — a child's birthday party gone completely wild. Moira has ignored her parents' instructions to invite just six children to her party and has asked "grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, grade 4, grade 5, grade 6, aaaaand kindergarten." Of course they all come.

The children in *A Tail Between Two Cities*, written and illustrated by Andrea Wayne von Königslöw (Annick, 24 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), use the product of their communal imagining to provide them with a summer's worth of fun together. Their concern for the giant cat whose long tail stretches right across their playground culminates in a grand party just before they must all go back to school.

Deirdre Kessler's *Lobster in My Pocket*, illustrated by Brenda Jones (Ragweed, 36 pages, \$5.95 paper), is

about a lonely little girl looking for a friend. Lee rescues a talking lobster from her parents' lobster crates, and he promises her friendship in return for his freedom. This friendship becomes extremely important to Lee and helps her to feel control over her life and her surroundings.

In Maryann Kovalski's *The Wheels of the Bus* (Kids can, 32 pages, \$10.95 cloth), the basic situation is a very mundane one — two little girls and their grandmother wait on a downtown corner for a bus. As they wait, they decide to fill in the time by singing the traditional action song about the wheels on the bus going round and round. In the following pages, Kovalski creates a wonderful double-decker bus filled with pompous snobs, crying babies, harried parents, and a wonderful, scrawny little English schoolgirl (Grandmother as a child) taking it all in with wide bespectacled eyes.

CHILDREN'S IMAGINATION COMES into play in other everyday situations as well. Sarah in Paulette Bourgeois's *Big Little Boots* (Kids can, 30 pages, \$10.95

cloth) is convinced that her old yellow boots are the only ones right for her, and when she finds that they no longer fit she is very "happy. But when she discovers that her new boots go "whoosh," although they can't seem to "squish" like her old ones, she is happy again on rainy days.

I" Ben's *Snow Song*, by Hazel Hutchins, illustrated by Lisa Smith (Annick, 24 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), the little boy, taken along with older family members on a ski expedition, uses his imagination to hear the song the skis make on the snow. He also uses all his senses to absorb the happiness of this day with his family: "AU around so cold and bright/Warm my feet on Mommy's tummy/Feed the grey jays/Time to go."

The main purpose of *Can You Catch Josephine?*, by Stéphane Poulin (Tundra, 24 pages, \$12.95 cloth), is to delight its readers. When Daniel discovers that his cat, Josephine, has smuggled herself to school in his bookbag, he doesn't know what to do. Ordered by his teacher to "Catch that cat," Daniel chases her through the school. The fun comes from following through the book from picture

to picture, joining in Daniel's wild pursuit. Josephine reaches a sneaky paw out through the inkwell hole in Daniel's desk, hides on the taxidermy shelves in the science room, sits behind some books in the school library (under J for Josephine), and eventually eludes Daniel in the girls' washroom. This book is also available in French as *Peux-tu attraper Joséphine?*

The humour and subtlety of the illustrations is also the main strength of Dayal Kaur Khalsa's *I Want a Dog* (Tundra, 24 pages, \$14.95 cloth). More than anything in the world, May wants a dog. But in spite of her best efforts to convince them, her parents will not let her have one until she is older. So May comes up with an ingenious substitute to help her practise caring for a real dog and show her parents that she will soon be ready for that responsibility. Khalsa's illustrations are filled with colour and detail and show an amazing number of dogs doing a" amazing "umber of things. The funniest picture is of May's classroom. She is so obsessed with dogs that she sees all her classmates with dog's heads on their shoulders — spaniels and hounds are the most numerous.

## Elephants in the bath

WHEN PAULETTE BOURGEOIS is writing a story, her first audience is her own children. Natalie, 4, and Gordon, 2, and whatever neighbourhood kids are around. "If they walk away, I know I don't have a good story." But if they stay and listen to a picture book without the pictures, Bourgeois knows she's on the right track.

Rather than preaching to children ("I intensely dislike children's-issue books — kids are smarter than those books give them credit for"), Bourgeois disavows any mission but humour in her approach to children's predicaments. "If they chuckle," she says, "it makes my day." In her stories she aims to give children a sense of their own power to achieve solutions within their own world, without always having to depend on adults.

The charming ingenuity displayed in her 1986 Kids Can Press book, *Franklin in the Dark* — about a young turtle afraid of his own shell — is typical of Bourgeois's attitude. After encountering many similarly afflicted creatures in his travels — a lion afraid of loud noises, a polar bear afraid of freezing to death, a bird afraid of heights — Franklin eventually takes a night light with him when he crawls into his shell to sleep. "I picked up the idea from an old episode of

*M\*A\*S\*H*," Bourgeois says, "when Pierce, who is claustrophobic, says that if he were a turtle he'd be terrified of being in his own shell. I thought, what a wonderful concept, and just built on that."

The child of a Russian Mennonite mother and a Franco-Manitoban father, Bourgeois, 36, remembers devouring "junk" books as a girl — *Cherry Ames* and *Nancy Drew* adventures. She finds the image of parents reading such classics as *Charlotte's Web* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (which she didn't discover

Paulette Bourgeois



until she began reading to her own children) "dramatically different" from what her family was like. "My mother says she read to me as a child, but I have no memory of it. And if there were children's plays being put on in Winnipeg, we couldn't have afforded to go."

What she does remember is a "truly eccentric" French-speaking grandmother, who "lived in" the worst part of Winnipeg and spent every day rocking on the porch of her white-and-pink house, in the middle of this squalor, underneath the railway tracks and the Fort Garry Hotel. She would tell us stories — I don't know if they were real or not."

Today, Bourgeois relies on the stories she hears from children for much of her inspiration. "I listen a lot in parks, or to my daughter and her friends. For instance, I overheard this exchange between two kids on the swings. One looked at the other and said, 'There was an elephant in my bathtub this morning.' Understandably suspicious, the other one said, 'How'd it get there?' 'Well,' said the first one, 'the bathroom window was open.'"

She laughs. "If you can't do something with that, what can you do?"

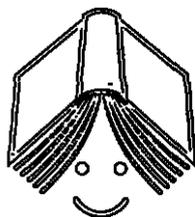
— NANCY WIGSTON

## THE CANADIAN CHILDREN'S BOOK CENTRE'S SERVICES AND PUBLICATIONS

The Canadian Children's Book Centre is a national, non-profit organization founded in 1976 to promote the reading, writing and illustrating of Canadian children's books.

The Centre produces and distributes written and audio-visual information about Canadian authors, illustrators and books; provides reference services; maintains a library of current Canadian children's titles; plans book displays nationally and internationally; offers workshops for aspiring authors and illustrators; and organizes the annual Children's Book Festival, a national celebration of Canadian children's books.

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**The Lucky Old Woman** (Kids Can, 32 pages, \$10.95 cloth) is Robin Muller's retelling and illustration of an old Irish folktale. The impoverished, but good-natured, old woman meets up with the Grumpleteaser, a malevolent gnome, who mocks her with the promise of good fortune and then takes these hopes away. The old woman's simple goodness finally shames the Grumpleteaser into granting all her wishes. The story is lively, and Muller's old woman, right from the toes peeking through her worn shoes to the three bouncy points on her old hat, is a sympathetic creation.

Much more serious, but also appealing, is another legend, **The Goodman of Ballengeich**, retold by Margaret Crawford Maloney, illustrated by Laszlo Gal (Methuen, 32 pages, \$14.95 cloth). James V of Scotland, a young king anxious to know more about his subjects, often travelled among them in disguise, sometimes dressed as a yeoman, the Goodman of Ballengeich. This story tells how the king was able to regain a favour to a simple farmer who, though ignorant of his true identity, came to his assistance. Gal's misty and romantic paintings evoke an idealized time when the distinctions between right and wrong were easier to make.

**Courage in the Storm**, by Thomas H. Raddall (Pottersfield Press, 50 pages, \$8.95 paper), is a Canadian legend in the making. It tells the true story of Greta, a young Nova Scotia widow who struggled many years ago to support herself and her small son on their poor farm. One winter, to try to supplement their income, she makes brooms, hoping to sell them down the river to outfitters for the fishing fleets. When, after many difficulties, she manages to sell the brooms, she, her horse and sled lose their way during a heavy snowstorm on the rotting ice of the river, and only her great courage and determination to return to her little boy save her. Grainy, snowswept drawings by Nova Scotia artist Are Gjesdal take us with Greta right into the heart of the storm.

CHILDREN WILL WELCOME the return of the **Canadian Children's Annual**, this 12th issue edited by Brian Cross and published by Overlea House (128 pages, \$16.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper). It presents an entertaining collection of short fiction, poems, non-fiction articles, puzzles, and riddles. ("Do rock collectors buy milk in litres? No, in quartz.") The articles concern such subjects as the last Beothuk, the hunting of fossils, the hibernation of bears, and a strange legend about a man who died and was buried in Galveston, Texas; but whose coffin mysteriously returned by sea to Prince Edward Island, the place he loved most in the world.

For children who like puzzles and books that explain things, there are some new, reasonably priced books from Hayes Publishing. Part of a series for children from ages four to six are **Fun With Opposites** and **Fun With Nature**, both by Dymphna Hayes and Melanie Lehmann, illustrated by Annelies Davis (both 32 pages, both \$2.95 paper). **Fun With Opposites** contains pictures of animals in amusing situations, illustrating such basic concepts as day and night, in and out, back and front. **Fun With Nature** suggests a number of simple outdoor activities for children, such as making a daisy chain, collecting and pressing leaves, and making snow angels.

Another series from the same publishers for somewhat older readers includes **Picture Puzzles** and **Word Teasers**, both by Dymphna Hayes and Melanie Lehmann, and **Brain Twisters**, by Paul Hayes (all 32 pages, all 83.95 paper). Bright illustrations add to the attraction of these small books, which present such familiar types of puzzles as finding the difference between two similar pictures, unscrambling words, breaking codes, following mazes, and trying tongue twisters.

Children who enjoy books with lots of factual information will appreciate a new title in the **Looking At ...** series by David Suzuki and Barbara Hehner, **Looking at the Body** (Stoddart, 96 pages, \$9.95 paper). The book is filled with interesting facts about how the human body functions, in chapters dealing with such parts as the lungs, the digestive system, the bones. There are suggested experiments to see, for example, how activity can affect pulse rate, how enzymes in saliva help to digest food, how the sweat glands in the palms of the hands work.

Another book for young readers with an interest in science is **Exploring the Night Sky**, by Terrence Dickinson, illustrated by John Bianchi (Camden House, 72 pages, \$15.95 cloth, 39.95 paper), a beginner's version of the material presented in Dickinson's astronomy books for adults, **Night Watch** (1983) and **The Universe and Beyond** (1986). Although not so detailed as these, it shows the same majesty and excitement of the sky — describing planets and stars and explaining such phenomena as black holes and supernova. It also puts our own planet into its galactic context.

Finally, Meguido Zola has compiled the charming **By Hook or By Crook: My Autograph Book** (Tundra, 48 pages, \$14.95 cloth). Zola has collected more than 100 autographs to use as example verses, and Richard Pelham's amusing little sketches leave room on some of the pages for the owner's own collection of autographs. Now: "By fish or by bird/ That's the last word!" □

## GIFT BOOKS

# Never too late

A selective look at the season's gift books turns up some first-class ideas for last-minute shoppers

By Paul Stuerwe

**W**ERE STARTING TO talk panic city here. You've delayed, lingered, and put it off, and now it's single-digit shopping days before Christmas and you're still bating .000 in the present department. But yes, Virgil and Vi, there is a place where most of these problems can be solved, and it's as close as your friendly neighbourhood book store. Amid the following examples

of the glossy pictorial volume, there should be something for just about everyone who's behaved well enough to deserve Santa's largesse.

Those with a keen eye for imaginative photography should be delighted by Freeman Patterson's *Portraits of Earth* (Key Porter, 180 pages, \$40 cloth), which belies its misleadingly mundane title by offering a stunning selection of extra-

ordinary tableaux. Patterson's photographs are often made up of broad, vivid splashes of colour reminiscent of much abstract art, although in his case the natural origins of his portraits give them an authority denied to studio-bound experiments with paints and brushes. The book also includes some spectacular views of Canadian and African landscapes, which similarly exhibit an acute awareness of how interactions between forms can generate an overall sense of vibrant composition. Anyone still skeptical about photography's claims to be an art as well as a technique should have their doubts resolved by the exceptionally artful images captured in *Portraits of Earth*.

Another variety of unofficial Portraits (Doubleday/Art Gallery of York University, 173 pages, \$24.95 paper) is on display in what may be the most unusual

*Flora MacDonald, from Unofficial Portraits, by Andrew Dan*



current-affairs opus of the season. Andrew Danson somehow convinced a bevy of political notables to take a photographic self-portrait in the privacy of their respective offices, and the results are often surprisingly interesting. Not so much for any startling revelations of character — these are, after all, professional politicians, aware of being always on stage — but more for its depiction of how its subjects would like to be seen, whether as rock-jawed leaders, relaxed sophisticates, or just one of the boys/girls. Thus Flora MacDonald's what-me-worry? insouciance and Brian Peckford's face-obscuring big cigar are probably as central to their personae as, say, any Electra or Oedipus complexes they may have picked up, and it is precisely these provocative suggestions of quirkiness that make *Unofficial Portraits* a generally entertaining picture gallery of who's what in the Canadian political establishment.

If you've had enough of politics in any form, the movie stills, personal photographs, and illuminating text of *Truffaut* by Truffaut (Prentice-Hall, 240 pages, \$60 cloth) outline a world of personalized film production that exerts great evocative force. Editor Dominique Rabourdin has put together a fine tribute to one of the cinema's great directors, as candid about his occasional failures as it is informative about his many successes, and pictorially almost as good as a viewing of the films themselves. The book isn't cheap, but then neither is the quality of its words and illustrations; and for those of us who grew up on *Jules and Jim* and *Shoot the Piano Player*, *Truffaut* by Truffaut is 8 wonderful chance to relive the days when you didn't need a bank loan and a barf bag to venture forth for a night at the movies.

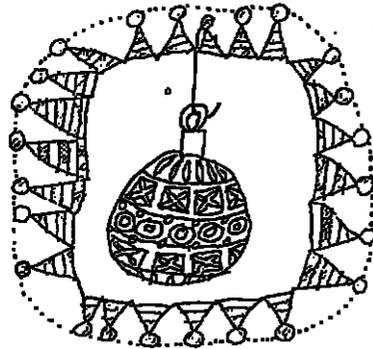
That hardy perennial of the illustrated-book sweepstakes, the graphic portrayal of nature's wonders, is represented by three recent titles. Two are for the birds: John P.S. Mackenzie's *Seabirds* (Key Porter, 144 pages, \$29.95 cloth) and Candace Savage's *Eagles of North America* (Western Producer Prairie Books, 127 pages, \$24.95 cloth) present numerous colour photographs that should make fanciers of our fine-feathered friends

straighten up and fly right. *Seabirds covers* a wide spectrum of penguins, pelicans, and their kin, whereas *Eagles of North America* focuses upon one particularly fascinating species, but their vivid images of birds in their natural habitats should recommend both to the ornithologically inclined.

The *Muskoxen of Polar Bear Pass* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 191 pages, \$50 cloth), by David B. Gray, is a scholarly ethological study of animal behaviour rather than a coffee-table book, but it is amply illustrated and has an interesting story to tell. Gray spent many years observing muskoxen in their stark northern environments, and what he doesn't know about them probably isn't worth knowing. This isn't an appropriate choice for mere dabblers in animal appreciation, but its thorough documentation of the lives of its subjects ought to appeal to correspondingly serious students of the field.

You can usually count on something for old salts turning up on the season's publishing lists, and this year John Dyson's *Spirit of Sall* (Key Porter, 176 pages, \$35 cloth) will almost certainly please readers for whom canvas has nautical rather than artistic or pugilistic associations. Its subtitle is "On Board the World's Great Sailing Ships," and that's exactly where Peter Christopher's excellent photographs take us. Concentrating

upon those tall ships which offer a modern course in the traditional sailing verities, the book graphically conveys the constant alertness and rigorous routines required of those who dare to meet the oceans on relatively even terms. This attractive volume is guaranteed to arouse



a strong urge to get away from it all in those who get their highs on the sea.

Adventures of a different kind are among the many things chronicled in *The Harper Atlas of the Bible* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2.56 pages, \$69.95 cloth), a massive compilation of information edited by James B. Pritchard. Like the Bible itself, *The Harper Atlas* divides pretty sharply between the Old and New Testaments: the Old Testament material is related in the dry-as-dust tones of historians and archaeologists, whereas the

New Testament section is presented in the more avuncular chat of professors of theology. Since the contributors aren't credited with their specific assignments, this is just one reader's impression, but there's no doubt about the disparity between the book's text and its maps and illustrations. The latter are attractively presented and clearly identified, but the surrounding text is often riddled with academic jargon and rather haphazardly edited: thus the phrase "rare storage facilities" left me uncertain as to whether it referred to the infrequency of storage facilities, storage facilities for rare objects, or (what seems to be intended) facilities for preserving foodstuffs, and one of the contributors has made the not uncommon but nonetheless mistaken assumption that a negative correlation is the same thing as an absence of correlation. As sometimes happens in projects of this kind, no one seems to have defined the audience for which *The Harper Atlas* was intended, and the result is a book that shifts uneasily between scholarly monograph and pictorial popular history.

An analogous dichotomy between words and images occurs in Lance Morrow's *America: A Rediscovery* (Key Porter, 237 pages, \$35 cloth), although here it is the visual aspects of the book that fail to measure up to its literary qualities. Morrow has penned a thoughtful, eloquent essay on the meaning of the American experience, but his delicately nuanced observations are insensitively negated by some unbelievably unimaginative photographs culled from a variety of sources, among them the aptly named Stockphotos Inc. Imagine a CIA-sponsored tribute to the good ol' U.S.A. and you'll have some idea of the banality of these illustrations, which leave few clichés unsullied in a style one associates with picture postcards rather than serious documentary photography. Morrow's reflections are certainly worth reading, but I don't think it's going too far to say that America's photographs generally fail to reward a first, let alone a second, look.

And what does this mean with regard to the debate over free trade, you may well ask? Although it wouldn't be fair to fabricate a mountain of significance out of this molehill of a book, there's a definite subtext to be gleaned from America's schizophrenic amalgam of intelligent reporting and propagandistic selection of images: on view here is a country fitfully aware of its faults but congenitally incapable of escaping from its chauvinistic cultural mythology. I am going to hope for some more nice illustrated books in my stocking, but if I were limited to just one present I'd settle for a firm Canadian rejection of any closer ties with a nation that needs total reorientation rather than nostalgic rediscovery. □

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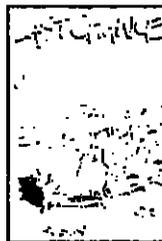
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## REVIEW

# Entering infinity

By I.M. Orven

**Enchantment and Sorrow**, by Gabrielle Roy, translated from the French by Patricia Claxton, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 426 pages, 824.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88619 101 7).

I'VE READ ONLY about half Gabrielle Roy's books, the earlier ones a long time ago: thus I can't say for certain that this one is the best of all. But it seems unlikely that she could ever have written a novel finer or more compelling than this posthumously published fragment of autobiography.

As fragments go, it's a big one — more than 400 well-filled pages — yet it ends in 1939, with the author just turned 30, and the publication of her first novel six years in the future. That novel astoundingly won the Prix Femina — the first Canadian book ever to win one of the bii French literary prizes — and from then on Roy was a celebrity. The present volume goes back to ha years of poverty and obscurity.

It's in two parts. The first describes — or rather, vividly re-creates — her life as the youngest of the large family on Rue Deschambault in St. Boniface. Her mother was 42 or 43 when she was born. Her father, considerably older, was a settlement agent for the federal government until he was dismissed just before he reached retirement age, without a pension — probably because he remained an outspoken Laurier loyalist even after Laurier's betrayal of the Franco-Manitobans over the Manitoba schools question.

The first chapter plunges us dii into the curious situation of the Franco-Manitobans by describing the child Gabrielle and her spirited mother walking from st. Boniface into Winnipeg on their many bargain-hunting expeditions to Eaton's:

When I was a child I rather liked the feeling of crossing a border and being in a strange place light years away but right next door to home. I think it opened my eyes, trained me to observe things and stimulated my imagination.

And as she grew up and became a schoolteacher she turned the hardships of the school system (not more than a" hour a day allowed for teaching in French) into benefits, achieving an enviable degree of bilingualism and a love of English literature without, obviously, losing a bit

of her love for and mastery of her native language.

This part is filled too with her love for the prairie landscape. Such a love is something of a mystery to most of us who weren't born in what she calls "the high country near the sky." but she makes me begin to understand:

When you came out of that little wood at the end of the farm road, you'd instantly feel you were entering infinity. From there the prairie stretched away as far as you could see; In one immense, rolling plain it unfolded in a series of long, fluid waves sweeping unendingly to the horizon. I've seen nothing more harmonious anywhere, except perhaps where the downs of Dorset flow down to the sea.

I find that unexpected comparison quite illuminating.

As the only one of the Roy children whose life was not more or less unfortunate, Gabrielle was an almost indispensable prop to her impoverished and widowed mother, but the time came at last when she felt compelled, at 28, to harden her heart and break away. She went to Paris, ostensibly to study drama. But Parisian life wasn't for her, with all ik petty annoyances like those timed lights that turn themselves off when you're halfway up the stairs — or, in her case, struggling into an elevator with one of those trunks people still thought it necessary to travel with in the 1930s. Having passed through London on her way, she realized (as did René Lévesque many years later) that it was much more her kind of place, and fled there. Her preference was confirmed even though she started ha stay, weak from seasickness, in one of the worst of the old kind of London fogs and in deeply depressing lodgings.

It was in London that she had her first love affair — at the age of 29. It was extraordinarily passionate, too passionate to last long. Shaken from this experience, she stepped one day, on impulse, onto a Green Line bus bound for Epping Forest. In one of those strangely remote-feeling rural districts on the edge of London she went for a long walk in the woods and ended up, exhausted, on the doorstep of an aged retired gardener and his daughter. Their name was Perfect — and so, improbably, were they. She stayed with them for a long time, writing and becoming healed.

In 1939, with her money running out and war obviously approaching, it was time to come back to Canada. She was ill with the beginnings of the respiratory troubles that would kill her 44 years later. A Harley Street specialist told her she must get out of the London climate., and suggested that she should spend a few weeks in Provence before going home. She jumped at the idea with her usual im-

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pulsive enthusiasm, and was soon on a" exuberant walking tour in the warm south, dragging with her a surprised and somewhat overweight nurse from Toronto named Ruby Cronk, met by chance on the Channel crossing. After this joyous episode, she came upon a camp for destitute Spanish refugees from Franco, and stayed a while to help them in their misery. Enchantment and sorrow.

The translation is as near to perfection as a translation can be. Patricia Claxton is always reliable, and this time the publishers wisely gave her as editor Joyce Marshall, a friend of Gabrielle Roy and herself the best of translators until she kicked that expensive habit. Gabrielle Roy didn't live to give her work her usual meticulous revision, and the translator has made a number of small factual corrections, which she specifies in a" introductory note. She doesn't mention that she has also tactfully improved the idiom in the many bits of English dialogue. □

### REVIEW

## Bound for glory

By Al Purdy

**Starting Out.** by Pierre Berton, McClelland & Stewart, 343 pages. \$26.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 1342 6).

READING PIERRE BERTON'S recent review of *The Illustrated History Of Canada* in the *Globe and Mail*, one gets a good idea of what his own writing standards are. He complains that the book's contributors also contribute "to the myth that Canadian history is dull," that their language avoids drama as if it were leprosy, and that "the authors wouldn't know a" anecdote if it were handed to them boxed and ribboned." What he's railing against most in that review is dullness, and I certainly agree with him.

Berton's autobiography is not dull. He has taken some of the fairly ordinary incidents of his own life, enlivened them with style and substance, anecdote and colourful prose. There is no philosophy or world-view, but they shouldn't be expected in the first 27 years of a lifetime. The aforementioned style forces a reviewer, in some strange way, to review Berton on Berton's own terms: short Hemingwayesque sentences, a breezy method that masks seriousness with fast-paced narrative and very nearly absolute clarity.

As must be obvious, I admire the man. In fact, my own life has many parallels to Berton's. The child Pierre watched Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, and Ken

Maynard at the silent movies of the 1920s (so did I); his parents were both over 40 when he was born (so were mine); his ancestors were United Empire Loyalists (so were mine). But one difference: the guy seems to have total recall of most of his life (or else very efficient researchers), and I'm memory-poor by comparison. (This personal note really doesn't belong in a review, and I apologize to the reader: but the resemblance of Berton's life to my own is uncanny to me.)

Starting Out spans three basic time periods: childhood and youth in Dawson City, Yukon ("the town looked warped, each structure adopting its own cockeyed position, like dying trees tottering in a swamp"); the army years, and a -- ingly continuous parade of training courses; newspaper life at university and with the Vancouver *News-Herald* and *Sun*. Then the flattering invitation in 1947 to work for *Macleans* in Toronto. Volume one of the *autobio* ends at that point.

Childhood in the North, with abandoned gold-mine machinery from 25 years before still uttering the permafrost landscape; a father who built boats and telescopes, identified stars, and named wildflowers for his children — a man bursting with vitality during those early years, and plenty of love for Pierre and sister Lucy — these were the prime ingredients for the later wise-cracking reporter and Well-Known Personality. Obviously one difficulty in reviewing this book is that you're liable to review Berton the Well-Known Personality much more than the man's life on the printed page. And was he, for instance, making notes about Dawson City at age two? And did he, at a later date, manufacture his own picturesque image, as I have been accused of doing? (No!)

At the University of British Columbia in the late 1930s Berton spent most of his time working on the *Ubyssy*, the student magazine, where he met his future wife, before graduating to the *News-Herald* as reporter and city editor. Classes he found pretty boring. When *Macleans* asked one of his professors what kind of student Pierre had been, the worthy academic replied that he would have been very good if he'd ever attended any classes. On hearing this opinion, *Macleans* hired him forthwith.

During the Second World War, our hem, the fast-talking, hard-drinking news-chasing prototype of Lee Tracy (a now forgotten fast-talking, hard-drinking, headline-hunting Hollywood newshound) became a boy-lieutenant hound for glory on the battlefield. But not so fast! First he had to take a course on how-to-do-something, a intelligence course (how insulting!), a course on how to operate the not-yet-invented electric

can-opener, etc., etc. When Berton finally got to England, the war was nearly over. (I was a non-humble aircraftsman in that same war, so I have some idea of what he went through.)

Pierre's father, Prank Berton, died after the war. The ex-lieutenant went back to his old job on the *News-Herald*, but was demoted from editor to reporter. Things were slightly uncomfortable around the newsroom. Workplace politics and a modicum of jealousy. (Who's this guy thinks he's such a big shot?) Pierre transferred to the *Vancouver Sun* (yeah, I too wrote for the *Sun*, I blush to say —

advertising jingles), and was in his element. The stories about those newshound days are marvellous. Just one: Berton had an already-composed headline waiting when and if safecrackers visited a small B.C. tow called Hammond again. It was HAMMOND YEGGS STRIKE AGAIN. But he didn't get to use it. Someone else, with no poetry in his soul, was on duty when the Hammond yeggs got cracking.

The public image of Pierre Berton is of a brusque and somewhat cold person. That's the feeling some people have about him anyway. But this book is very largely a celebration of his friends, many friends.

And the private man is still uppermost in his writing. There's somebody warm and alive behind these 27 bucks worth of cold print.

Literati — like what I am — have the idea that "popular" writing is somehow bad writing. But it ain't so in this case. It's expert, yes, and the ending is formula stuff (a play on the word "goodbye"). Sure, the writing isn't immortal prose, but it's exceptionally good prose and entertaining as well. I look forward to looking backward at Berton's future tales of his part life in volume two of the collected works. □

## FEATURE REVIEW

# Different strokes

'Maybe my sense of humour is different from other people's,' says Susan Musgrave, who has made her life more interesting than her writing

By Eleanor Wachtel

The *Dancing Chicken*, by Susan Musgrave, Methuen, 216 pages, 519.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 81180 7).

THE STORY GOES that Susan Musgrave is having trouble finding a publisher for her non-fiction book, *The Joy of Sexual Failure*. Apparently the chapter on masturbation, which features a distraught shepherd who splits himself open with a twig, is offputting to Canadian houses. Undaunted, Musgrave has included an off-scene character, Destiny, in *The Dancing Chicken* who masturbates with pens, knitting needles, a meat thermometer, and finally razor blades until he "splits his penis in half, from bead to root." That's the thing about fiction: there are no limits. Or, as Musgrave says, "Maybe my sense of humour is different from other people's."

Destiny goes on to murder his unfaithful wife. Well, not simply murder her, but cut her in half with a power saw. After all, he's a unemployed logger. He's defended in court by the beleaguered, middle-aged hem of *The Dancing Chicken*, a criminal lawyer named Cod. (Although it's-actually stated, Cod seems to have acquired his name because he was conceived in the bottom of a boat, after his father, Dodder, had just booked, "on his old rod," a 12-pound, 7-ounce codfish. Cod, we are told, weighed just that at birth.) Near the novel's end, Cod loses the case and Destiny is given a life sentence. (Get it?) The presiding judge, who always wears a kilt, has just revealed himself to be a pregnant transvestite.

Relying on sexual kinkiness for its laughs, *The Dancing Chicken* is being

promoted as a satiric, comic novel. And perhaps not surprising, give her flamboyance, its author is being promoted front and centre. In what must be a publicist's dream, *The Dancing Chicken* is described as having gone through "six drafts and three marriages. Susan was working on it when her second husband went to prison for importing 30 tons of marijuana into the country and while her third was being released from prison where he'd served 14 years for gold robbery." In a rare instance of restraint, the press release fails to mention that her second husband had been defended on an earlier drug charge by her first husband. Nonetheless, "during those seven years, Susan had a daughter, lived on three continents and in Waterloo where she was writer-in-residence for two years, and finally settled in a treehouse on Vancouver Island."

Musgrave, in a very unCanadian fashion, has made her life more interesting than her writing. While still in her teens, she left school, spent time in a psychiatric ward, had poetry published in the *Malahat Review*, and published her first book, *Songs of the Sea-Witch*. Imbued with mysticism, eroticism, and a shamanic impulse, these are poems that even Musgrave admits she doesn't understand much any more. It's that kind of candour, combined with a slightly flustered, scattered, and totally charming self-presentation that made Musgrave into a kind of Annie Hall of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Then she got married and married and married, and her writing about those marriages — especially the last one, behind bars, to Stephen Reid — has produced

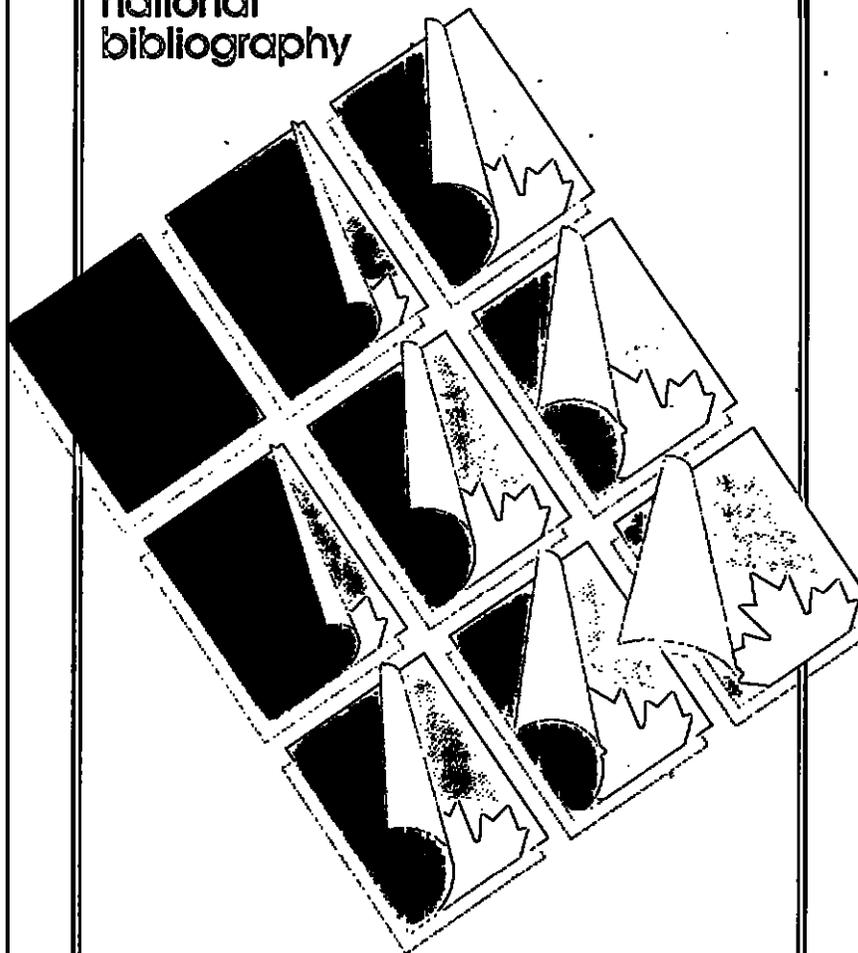
some of her most comic, accessible prose. Funnier and more ironic than the broad, exaggerated, fundamentally old-fashioned farce of *The Dancing Chicken*, where everyone is sex-crazed and no one is happy. In fact for a "comic novel," *The Dancing Chicken* offers a sordid and bleak vision that isn't leavened by sexual weirdness.

The story follows the harried Cod as he juggles three women, as well as his 86-year-old mother and 17-year-old daughter, over Christmas. One of the women is his wife, Nora, who is so frustrated and disgusted by Cod's infidelities that she takes up with his one-eyed law partner, Leonard Putz. (In a book of cheap shots, where do you begin?) Putz eludes Nora, settling instead on one of Cod's other women, the enormously obese nurse, Grace Trout, RN, Virgin. (Is it to Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* that we owe the grotesquely fat female as *femme fatale*?) Then there's Ursula, an unstable divorcée Cod has acted for, who is also clamouring for his attention. She's the kind of gal who leaves pubic hair in her ashtray, goes out in a fur coat with nothing on underneath, and whose ex-husband liked to dress up in women's clothes and "be taken, rectally, with the leg of a chair." In this book, even the car radio talks about copulating, cannibalistic insects.

Meanwhile, Cod's doddering mother thinks her long dead husband has returned to the woodshed. This, despite the fact that she ground his ashes in the blender — it blunted the blade — so she could use them in her egg-timer. But the "deceased" turns out to be a biker enemy of Cod's daughter's boyfriend. But just

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go down the checklist: there's incest, rape, a birthday cake in the shape of male genitals that's carved up and devoured at a party. Musgrave writes with confidence and bravado, but this is cartoon staff of a particularly nasty sort.

The novel's central image comes from a San Francisco peep show. A sucker feeds a quarter into the slot, a red light illuminates a small cage and slow striptease music is heard while a scrawny chicken hops around. It's rewarded with a few grains of rice when the music stops. But the chicken keeps dancing around. In case we miss it, Cod too hops blindly around trying to keep his sadsack life together. In *The Dancing Chicken*, Susan Musgrave has written *The Joy of Sexual Failure* after all. □

## REVIEW

### Larger than life

By Norman Sigurdson

**Caesars of the Wilderness: Company of Adventurers Volume II**, by Peter C. Newman. Viking (Penguin), 450 pages, \$25.00 cloth (ISBN 0 670 80987 5).

THIS IS THE second of Peter C. Newman's three projected volumes on the history of "the Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay," the name by which the Hudson's Bay company was originally known. This instalment covers the company's second century — "the century of its greatest glory and its deepest humiliation" — beginning in 1783 with the founding in Montreal of the rival North West Company and ending with the surrender of the Hudson's Bay Company's fur-trading monopoly in Western Canada in 1869.

The first volume of this history caused a heated debate among professional historians, who objected to Newman's rather simplistic view that the interaction between the white fur traders and the native people (particularly the sexual interaction) amounted to a case of "mutual exploitation." Historians also objected to Newman's preference for dramatization and sweeping generalities over the more ambiguous analysis of case studies. But the broad-brush technique did not keep *Company of Adventurers* from becoming a best-seller when it appeared in 1985, and in the acknowledgements to this volume Newman offers no apologies.

Stating that he never claimed to be a historian, Newman instead offers the reader "feisty characters and remarkable circumstances" and tales told "with the

bounce and bravado they deserve.; Newman is irresistibly drawn to larger-than-life characters, and more of the book is devoted to the lusty Nor'Westers ("the rampaging free enterprisers of the North American Frontier") than to the less doughty Bay men, whose "prevailing ethic was deference to authority inside their toy ramparts and deference to nature beyond them."

*Caesars of the Wilderness* does indeed read at times like fiction, with mighty clashes of opposing characters. Newman has a penchant for dramatic episodes cast in flowery prose ("No smear of their sweat or echo of their ribaldry reaches out to us, yet in their time they were cockle shell heroes on a sea of sweet water") and occasionally allows himself some contemporary analogies that may or may not be helpful. The voyageurs, for example, were "like a wild and worn out professional hockey team perpetually on the mad," and Alexander Mackenzie is "a legitimate Canadian hero, having been the first to pass the test of crossing the country that two centuries later would confer similar status on his handicapped successors: Terry Fox, Steve Fonyo and Rick Hansen."

Newman is obsessed by personalities. The bulk of the book is made up of capsule biographies of some of the outstanding figures of the era: Alexander Mackenzie ("Big Mack"), John Jamb Astor ("a monumental boor — a vulgar barbarian in morning coat"), Simon Fraser ("an awkward, uninspiring man"), Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk ("a frail Scottish earl with his lungs and soul on fire"), and Sir George Simpson ("a bastard by birth and by persuasion") among others.

Many of these biographies are quite good. Newman has a gift for compressing the details of busy lives into a single chapter or a single pithy line, as he has demonstrated in his paeans to Canada's financial elite in the two volumes of *The Canadian Establishment*. But, just as *The Canadian Establishment* gives the reader no hint as to how the majority of today's workaday mortals live their lives, *Caesars of the Wilderness* is less concerned with the everyday man or woman (especially woman) of 19th-century Canada than with the "power elite."

This is history from the top down, Thomas Carlyle's great-man theory expressed in a sprawling *Boy's Own Adventure* style, with plenty of whoring, drinking, and fighting on the side. The average voyageur is seen through Newman's eyes in a stereotyped, almost cartoonish way — much, one suspects, the way they were seen through the eyes of the HBC's corporate directors across the ocean.

The book is long on episodic depictions

of heroic adventures and dramatic feuds, and Newman is at his best describing such scenes as the mighty debauches at the meetings of the NWC's Beaver Club, with its staggering consumption of alcohol. The book is short on economic analysis and the tackling of thorny issues of moral right and wrong but, to be fair, Newman delivers what he promises: "a colourful, twisty yam."

Some would argue that this is the sort of myth-making that Canadians need. After all, the Americans can take ev' their failures, such as the defeat at the Alamo, and weave them into heroic tales of virtue and daring. We Canadians, some say, are too timid about romanticizing our past. *Caesars of the Wilderness* offers our history in black and white, with no shades of grey.

But who is to say that Canadians are wrong to feel ambiguous about their history — particularly as it involves the treatment of the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent? Native land claims, free trade, and refugees on our shores are still testing our self-image, and they are issues with plenty of grey areas to them. *Caesars of the Wilderness* offers a simple, uncomplicated, fireside story about the evolution of a young country, but beyond the door it is still a cold and complicated world. □

## REVIEW

### Dead end

By Brent Ledger

Heartbreaks Along the Road, by Roch Carrier, translated from the French by Shells Fischman, House of Anansi, 512 pages, \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0 88784 156 2).

A FRIEND OF mine claims you can judge a book by its first sentence. Other people say you have to read 40 or 50 pages before passing judgement. In the case of *Heartbreaks Along the Road*, Roch Carrier craves your indulgence for some 250 pages, half the length of the book. It takes at least that long before any sense of aesthetic form emerges from the tumble of incident, character, and digression that tills the pages of this garrulous, under-edited, endlessly repetitive novel.

All that's clear from the beginning is the general nature of the beast: *Heartbreaks* is a satire of the slapstick, slapshot school of hard hits to the head. In Duplessis-era Quebec the premier of the province, known only as Le Chef, calls an election and announces the construction of a road through the remote village of Saint-Toussaint-des-Saints. In this corrupt world both the governed and the governor know the mad is a *quid pro*

*quo*, and in return for jobs the villagers are expected to vote for Le Chef's party, the Right Party.

With thin the framework of this thin tale, the satire is sketched with broad, blunt strokes. Two old people are run over by a mower while defending their property against expropriation. The contractor in charge of the road kills himself and his wife. The editor of a provincial newspaper tries to expose the corruption behind the mad, but is blackmailed by the government and commits suicide.

The imaginative details are new but the notion of political corruption in general and Quebec corruption in particular is not, and one quickly grows weary of reading the same points driven home again and again with sledgehammer wit. Relief finally arrives in the second half of the novel with several linked tales of young love. As two of the younger male characters discover the paradoxes of sexual love, their sense of emotional release breeds a parallel sense of the imminence of change in Quebec society.

Carrier, however, doesn't usher in the Quiet Revolution with a choir of angels and an annunciation of the redemptive power of love. He dismisses love as a capitulation to political passivity and ends his novel on a bleakly comic note with an episode worthy of the Mad Max films. The shift in mood does, however, give the novel a jolt of movement and with it a much needed sense of form.

In the end the novel is too big and baggy to have much impact on any reader not totally innocent of the ways of politics. One is baffled by the endless parade of characters and the plethora of incident. Denomme Plante, Picotte Maillet, Guennolle Lamontagne, Magloire Cauchon — the names tumble out of the pages, turn into one-dimensional characters, do a short turn in one of Carrier's stories (and in some respects this is really more a book of related short stories than a novel), and then disappear. Many of the stories are digressions pure and simple, and while some of them, notably the fable of the lady who ate chocolate, stand on their own as powerful bits of writing, in general they don't add much to the central satirical point.

Worse yet, the device Carrier intends to pull the book together — the all-purpose metaphor of the mad — only serves to annoy. Roads crop up on almost every page and they're almost invariably dressed up in metaphors of stupefying banality: "Life is a one-way road"; "every road leads to death"; "all roads lead to a dream"; "Instead of choosing the mad of good, I chose the road of evil." So insistent are the clichés, so relentless the homage to conventional pieties that the book often has the sticky

moral tone of television evangelism.

And as with some of the more gruesome episodes of the *PTL Club*, one sometimes doesn't know how to react. By the end of the novel it's fairly clear that what Carrier is after is a literary version of Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights — 8 comic narrative throbbing with all the sins of a fallen world. Through sheer ambition he almost succeeds. The scope of the work, the multitude of characters, the detailed depiction of a village that is a microcosm of rural Quebec before the Quiet Revolution — all these are deeply impressive. But the enterprise founders on Carrier's odd sense of humour and a tone of voice that seems to mix sympathy and condescension in equal measure.

Carrier likes his characters, but his affection hides a note of contempt. In what is perhaps the book's quintessential episode, a young hunchback named Opportun is hit by a car and loses his ability to speak except for the words "election, election." Then he's hit by another car and regains his speech, only to fall into a vat of boiling french-fry oil. The villagers promptly proclaim him a saint. What is one to make of this? Should one laugh, feel embarrassed, express dismay?

Here as elsewhere in the book, admirers of the Latin-America fabulists will doubtless enjoy Carrier's deft manipula-

tion of myth; others with more old-fashioned tastes, or perhaps an easily irritated conscience, may wonder if Carrier's high reputation in English Canada doesn't rest largely on his ability to purvey French-Canadian stereotypes to an unthinking Anglo audience. □

## REVIEW

### Many happy returns

By Herschel Hardin

**Behind Closed Doors: How the Rich Won Control of Canada's Tax System . . . and Ended Up Richer**, by Linda McQuaig, Vii (Penguin), 365 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 670 81678 7).

ANYBODY WHO HAS been awake for the last 15 years knows that the Canadian tax system is a scandal. Loopholes, dodges, tax breaks, and sheer giveaways help to enrich a minority of people and to distort and diminish Canadian society.

Some of us, in the course of our work, may also keep tabs on the details. I have a whole series of files on the tax system, and have been known to cite Kenneth Carter's dictum: that for tax purposes, "a

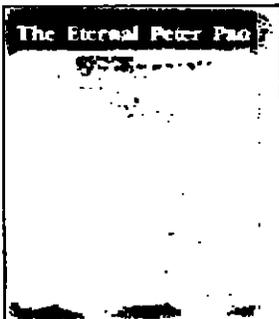
buck is a buck is a buck." So I expected to enjoy Linda McQuaig's new book. What I did not expect, hard-bitten observer that I am, was to be shocked and disgusted as if I were learning about the system for the first time.

McQuaig has not only put together a lively account of how weak and unfair the tax system is — an extremely useful service in itself. She has also described the behind-the-scenes story of how the system was captured and weakened. This is where the shock value of the book lies.

It should be mentioned, for a start, how important the tax system is. Virtually everything hinges on it—who gets what, what there is to be used and enjoyed, how society evolves, who accumulates power, how we think of ourselves and our neighbours, and also, in many ways, how we look upon life. Occasionally somebody will argue, just to make a point, that a government can accomplish virtually anything it wants through the tax system alone. Above all, it can curb inordinate power of wealth and property through a judicious tax policy. But what happens if the power of wealth and property — in families and corporations — captures the tax system instead? Of course, they "serve themselves an even larger slice."

McQuaig gives us the dope. The dossier on how a great many high-income earners pay little or no tax, and on how other tax

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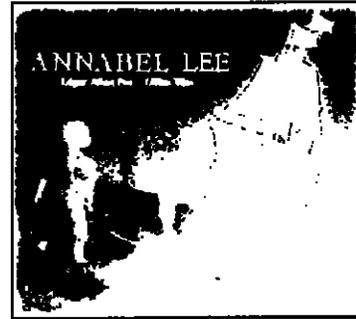
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breaks and concessions favour the wealthy generally, is laid out for inspection. so is the way that corporations have avoided or reduced taxes — the “corporate welfare bums” in action. (David Lewis, who fought the 1972 federal election campaign on the issue, hardly slowed them down.) The abolition of inheritance taxes — a key loophole, end impossible to justify in a democracy — is given a critical look.

There is a bravura chapter on the \$3-billion Scientific Research Tax Credit (SRTC) fiasco, and the ridiculous end colourful scams it generated. It's a tale that would be incredible if it weren't already a bit familiar to us. Revenue Canada opposed the SRTC plan. The finance department, originally suspicious of such schemes — blatantly open to abuse as they were — pushed the plan through anyway. Why it did so is in the book, too.

Remember the notorious “Little Egypt Bump,” since banned, by which the Reichmann brothers got a \$500-million tax concession gift, and were able to add Gulf Canada to their already huge empire, at our expense? Everybody who followed the affair was aware how cock-eyed that particular giveaway was, and how specious was the government's excuse that nothing could be done about it. McQuaig explains all. She also documents how deputy minister of finance Mickey Cohen, who soon left to join the Reichmanns, wasn't quite as clear on the tax deal as he had indicated.

The Scientific Research Tax Credit and the Little Egypt Bump were just the more exotic of the tax expenditure and tax avoidance gimmicks that have plagued us, and that continue to plague us, at an enormous cost every year.

What is most chilling, however, and meticulously documented, is the collaboration between the department of finance, including some ministers of finance, on the one hand and the tax lawyers and accountants on the other. “Collaboration,” as I have used the word here, should be understood in its pejorative, almost evil sense. The professional “tax practitioners” overlap and represent the corporate and investment-dealer community end, indirectly, the wealthy.

This consultation Family Compact-style, with eager Ottawa deference, has come to constitute a hidden government on tax matters — a parallel Parliament, unelected, highly unrepresentative, and with enormous leverage. “The Cosy World of Tax,” McQuaig cells it. She traces its origins back to the 1950s, but the damage really began in the 1960s and 1970s. It has been widely known that the huge government debt incurred since then has been caused not by alleged excessive

government spending but by problems on the revenue side, with the tax base being gradually turned into a sieve. Again, we learn exactly how it happened. “What do you guys tell your kids you do for a living?” a guest speaker caustically asks a conference of tax lawyers and accountants. This captures the sordidness just about right.

Large corporate business operates in tandem with the “tax community” in manipulating the government on tax policy. The need for most of the corporate tax breaks and tax expenditures is hoary myth, as McQuaig makes clear in a chapter aptly called “The Confidence Game” and in observations elsewhere in the book. McQuaig makes the point, further, that if a particular industry actually does need help, then the help should be allocated as a targeted subsidy or grant. The merits of the assistance would then be debated and everybody could see clearly that the public's money was being spent end could see, too, who was going to have the ownership benefits of that assistance.

There is an underlying factor here, a blackmail or extortion factor: the implicit threat that if the tax breaks aren't forthcoming, corporate business will invest elsewhere or reduce investment, and our economy will go to the dogs. McQuaig limits her analysis to the tax system. Perhaps Canadians should also be looking at ways of creating more democratic, community-centred ownership structures (crown corporations, co-operatives, and employee investment funds, for example), as a counterbalance to this private corporate leverage in the tax field.

The heart of the story? Kenneth Carter, Allan MacEachen, and Ian Stewart. Carter, the chairman of the Royal Commission on Taxation in the 1960s, was a prominent Bay Street accountant who turned out to have too much honesty for his own good. MacEachen, as minister of finance in 1981, introduced some modest tax reform measures, only to be abandoned by his colleagues when the special-interest barking began; his chances of becoming prime minister were lost, too, in the mêlée. Ian Stewart, MacEachen's deputy minister of finance, left government service, a disillusioned man.

The villains: Mitchell Sharp, John Turner, Marc Lalonde (who toadied shamelessly to private power as finance minister in 1984), Mickey Cohen, John Bulloch (small-business lobbyist), and Michael Wilson, among others, as well as the professional “tax community.” The brilliantly written chapter on Cohen is worth the price of the book by itself. As for Michael Wilson, McQuaig takes the time to explain how his ballyhooed tax reform is, in substance, really sham

reform. Liberal and Conservative governments both have sold us out.

One other thing that needs to be mentioned about *Behind Closed Doors* is how courageous it is in setting the scene. McQuaig talks about “rich” end “poor,” and even in a few spots takes the risk, as she puts it, of talking about “class.” She realizes the danger of breaking such a taboo about language, but does so anyway, because the tax system is indeed biased towards the “rich” as a class. It seems an ordinary enough gesture of journalistic boldness. As Kenneth Carter found out, though, calling a spade a spade publicly takes more guts than many people assume. □

## REVIEW

### God's little acreage

By Janice Kulyk Keefer

*Dancing on the Shore: A Celebration of Life at Annapolis Basin*, by Harold Horwood, McClelland & Stewart, 219 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 4202 7).

IN HIS PREFACE to *Dancing on the Shore* Harold Horwood announces his impatience with that “lesser” form, the novel, and his consequent decision to write a hook of “wisdom” instead, so as to be able to “present ideas stark naked, not dressed for a masquerade ball.” The result is a text fully as fine as Horwood's last hook, *Remembering Summer*, was dreadful. Yet the failure of *Remembering Summer* was not due to any innate inferiority of the novel as opposed to “wisdom literature” but to Horwood's own lack of the novelist's most important gifts and skills. Readers can therefore be grateful that Horwood has thrown in one kind of narrative towel — for which he was grossly unsuited — and grabbed hold of another, which would seem to be his native medium.

*Dancing on the Shore* is not, of course, the naked truth about the cosmos end our part within it: it is fully as much a fiction as anything a novelist might devise, if we take fiction to mean the expression, via that highly ambiguous medium, language, of a selective vision of reality through the creation of imaginative worlds. Horwood's chosen world is the Annapolis Basin, or rather, the few acres of that particular part of the world that he has been able to buy and transform into his own private Eden — one in which snakes are by no means extinct, but in which they turn out to be conveniently harmless. His celebration of the varied beauty and ravishing harmonies of this

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little paradise put one in mind of the magical world Ernest Buckler created in *The Crueltest Month*, a world he called Endlaw, a" anagram of that Walden which Horwood so admires. Maritime literature boasts a long tradition of celebratory narrative, in which the land and its people compose a" enviable Arcadia, acknowledging the presence, indeed the necessity, of death, and therefore chanting all the mom intensely the complexly balanced joys of the simple life. Horwood's book will take its place within this tradition, as one of its most provocative, contentious, and finest examples.

It is tempting to say that the best part of this book is its intimate revelation of wild life, or what we call, with a whole caboodle of connotations, "nature: Horwood does not so much reveal as gesture toward the mysteries of the natural world, treating the potentialities of earthworms with as much wonder and delight as he does the intricacies of the pink-purple fringed orchids or the mating dance of the great blue heron. Nor for him the objective, distanced tone of the omniscient narrator: omniscient he may appear to be, but Horwood's persona is also omnipresent, singing, scolding, exhorting and, most important of all, prophesying. Horwood, "as the book's dedication and its rather egregious author's preface make clear, has set himself up as an Ancient Prophet. and one can no more read his testament solely for the evocation of life-in-nature he so marvellously creates than one can read the New Testament for the Christmas story.

The fictive world of *Dancing on the Shore* depends as much on Horwood's speculations about a magically infinite, mysteriously unified cosmos as on his lovingly detailed "field notes," and the rhetorical devices he exploits to obliterate opposing view and theories as important to his narrative as are his descriptive skills. This is not, of course, to say, that one swallows, boa-like, the whole Gospel according to Harold: what makes this such an entertaining book is the contentious nature of the narrative, the prodigal assortment of bones there are to pick with a narrator who is so transparently egoistic, so utterly arrogant (for all that he admonishes us to humility) that he emerges as a fitting protagonist for this Book of Life.

This naturalist-cum-writer-cum-prophet-cum-priest, offering us "bread and wine" for the "communion of all life" with complete confidence in his own version of that Truth which, he cautions us, is "never whole, never complete," asserts his commanding presence from the book's dedication to its concluding appendices. To those who, for example, find repellent — or unconvincing — his vision of an extra-human evolutionary

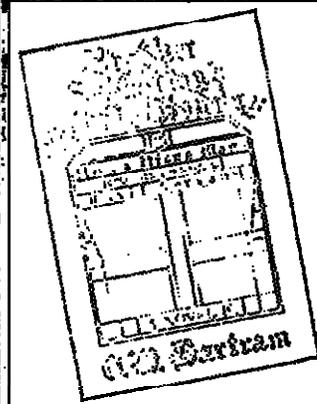
phase, electronic rather than biological, he utters a magisterial "Tut-tot" (page 207) and goes on not to out-argue his hypothetical opponents but rather to muffle them with the mantle of his rhetoric. One of the places in which that rhetoric performs most delightfully is to be found in the chapter "Of Men and Hunters," in which Horwood pummels any opposition to his view that man was designed not as predator but as prey, and that all his instincts as well as his biological makeup put him among the herbivores rather than the carnivores.

References to ma" and mankind abound in *Dancing on the Shore*, a curious solecism to be found in a book that sets out to abolish all value-laden concepts of difference between the species of human and animal, plant and insect. Sorely such exclusivist and patriarchal speech is out of place in a text attaining to cosmic vision and a celebration of universal harmony. But the" contradictions abound in Horwood's treat. In some chapters he extols the ability of nature to accommodate human activity, arguing that certain of our god-playing interventions — the Annapolis Royal tidal-power station, the Churchill Falls power station — are simply part of the eternal flux of the biosphere. In other chapters he rages — quite rightly — against the witless destruction of certain species. and reminds us of our enormous responsibilities toward the very survival of life — any life — on our planet. All-in-all, though, Horwood emerges as a kind of shaggy, cranky Candide, stating that for all the dangers humans are capable of and in the very act of posing, vis-à-vis the biosphere, "none seems to be beyond the capacity of the natural world to absorb, survive, and to some extent correct."

Oddly, the one creature Horwood conspicuously ignores in his account of life at Annapolis basin is the zoon politikon: he seems to feel that if each one of us will only quit the cesspool cities and get back to that land which is the antechamber of the kingdom of God, all manner of things will be well. The all-too-human fascination with the exercise and retention of power, over other humans as well as other species, and over the fate of the earth itself, is something he alludes to only in the vaguest of ways.

But that conundrum is, of course, no fit meat for any celebratory narrative. It is refreshing, if simplistic, to have such a" optimistic prognosis on our present condition, our origins and end. Harold Horwood has gone to great trouble to create this passionate fiction of reality: *Dancing on the Shore* is a singular achievement that will reward, provoke, challenge, mid enchant its readers. Fiat willets and beach fleas. fiat the many forms of fiction: fiat Horwood's art. □

# BookNews: an advertising feature



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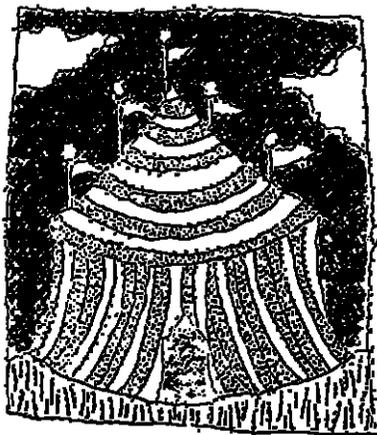
## BRIEF REVIEWS

### BELLES LETTRES

**Malcolm Lowry: Vancouver Days**, by Sheryl Salloum, Harbour Publishing, 179 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 92008042 1).

THROUGH THE recollections of his neighbours, friends, and literary associates, Malcolm Lowry's *Vancouver Days* examines what was perhaps Lowry's most productive period, 1939-1954, when he was living in the Vancouver area. Sheryl Salloum's introductory account of the creative and domestic aspects of his life at this time is flat and oddly naïve. Confronted with excerpts from Lowry's letters, one is struck by the extent to which this subtle and ironic mind has eluded his portrait.

Salloum is reluctant to draw much in the way of conclusions from her material. At moments, it seems as if she is afraid to say anything that could be construed as a judgement. Thus, she informs us that during the revisions of *Under the Volcano* Lowry used a new interest in the Cabbala,



inspired by conversations with a Dollar-ton acquaintance, "to deepen the spiritual depths of the novel." Salloum notes instances where local landmarks or individuals appear in Lowry's work and remarks that the Dollar-ton beach came to represent, both in his life and writing, an Edenic retreat from the modern world; the hellishness of which was embodied in the Shellburn refinery visible across the bay from his shack. However, she does not elaborate these insights into any sustained consideration of the impact of this region upon his art.

Similarly, the recollections of Lowry's contemporaries are presented without critical commentary. No attempt is made to assess the relative merits of these narratives, which necessarily involve a great deal of repetition, notably on the subject of Lowry's drinking. There is some im-

portant information here, but there is much that is not.

For those whose fascination with Lowry is consuming, for whom every scrap of gossip, no matter how slight, every photograph, no matter how blurred and distant, is of absorbing interest, this book will prove a real bean-feast. But even enthusiasts may find the picture of a bus "similar" to one Lowry took in 1939 of somewhat limited appeal.

— SHELAGH GARLAND

### FICTION

**A Friend from England**, by Anita Brookner, Jonathan Cape (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 205 pages, \$23.95 cloth (ISBN 0 224 02443 4).

ASKED WHAT SHE considers most valuable in a work of art, Anita Brookner responded "radiance," "vision." In describing a work that reflects these qualities, she explained "it is so articulate and has such integrity." These terms apply equally well to Brookner's fiction and, happily, her new novel is no exception.

*A Friend from England* could be construed as a response to critics who have expressed dissatisfaction with Brookner's heroines, finding women like Blanche in *A Misalliance* too passive and defeated, their lives dominated by the dream of love and shattered by love's eventual betrayal. Here, however, we have a narrator who has abandoned the ideal of romance in favour of the light of reason. With her work and her discreetly conducted affairs, Rachel's restrained and solitary existence represents a successful adaptation to "the real world, the world of deceptions." She eschews the depths, shuns introspection and emotional entanglements. Still, there are signs of an underlying malaise, her fear of water and her fascination with the Livingstones.

Oscar and Dorrie Livingstone, a wealthy, tenderly devoted couple in late middle age welcome Rachel as a friend for their enigmatic daughter, Heather. Although she dismisses the possibility of true friendship between such an inexperienced young woman and herself, Rachel is drawn to this decent, unworldly family. She succumbs to a nostalgia for their cosy, richly appointed suburban world and is intrigued by the wistfulness of Oscar and Dorrie, who seem to live in the shadow of the inevitable loss of love.

Heather's engagement to the ghostly Michael seems a travesty of the romantic

notion that passion culminates in domesticity, which is central to the Livingstone brand of bourgeois sentimentality. During the elaborate wedding preparations, Rachel wryly notes the emptiness at the heart of the affair, and is not surprised when the marriage is quickly revealed as disastrous. Unlike Rachel, however, Heather does not learn caution from her mistakes. Her decision to leave husband, parents, and career to join her lover in Venice constitutes a serious challenge to Rachel's sensible arrangements. At the final meeting of the two women, Heather's opacity has given way to her parents' melancholy. She has been transformed by a special knowledge, in the light of which she regards Rachel with pity.

Brookner described an earlier work, *Hotel Du Lac*, as a love story, not because it concerned a particular relationship, but because it presented the triumph of the ideal of love. In this wonderfully subtle and beautifully written new novel, she gives us another. — SHELAGH GARLAND

**Wide Load**, by Fred Bonnie, Oberon Press, 111 pages, \$25.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 666 6) and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 667 4).

FRED BONNIE is a New England short-story writer whose two previous collections, *Squatter's Rights* (1979) and *Displaced Persons* (1982), established him as a fine portrayer of the rural poor and working classes. The protagonists of the stories in *Wide Load*, like those in the other collections, are undistinguished figures who are suddenly faced with crises that both test and disorient them.

The narrator of "Name the General," for example, is a young soldier whose only ambition is to keep his stint in the army as "eventful as possible. But he finds himself favoured by a megalomaniacal officer, and must find some way to avoid joining General Sable on an inevitably disastrous assignment in Vietnam. In "Wide Load, Where Are You?" a trucker who enjoys the freedom his work brings him faces a potentially real end to his marriage. "In Another Language" — a variation on the *doppelgänger* motif — concerns two men named Stanislaw Pittstak who are irresistibly drawn to (and repulsed by) each other.

Bonnie emphasizes the ordinariness of his characters in order to highlight the extraordinariness of their crises. On the other hand, some characters have special

skills that keep them from being defeated: both **Private Jacobs** (of "Name the General") and **Howard Metts** (of "Take a Seat, Not a Solo"), for instance, are musically gifted. But they waste their talents, as if afraid to make the sacrifices necessary to transcend their banal, but predictable, lives.

Bonnie's prose is **direct** and clear, if at **times** staccato in rhythm. His plots meander at times, but his control of voices is always secure, and his stories never bore. And it is refreshing to find a **writer** who considers **characters** who are **not wealthy**, articulate, well-educated, or literate worthy of fictional treatment.

— ALLAN WEISS

## FOOD & DRINK

**Margaret Atwood's CanLit Foodbook**, Collins, illustrated, 224 pages, \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0 00 217908 3).

IN **THE WRONG** hands this could be a dangerous book. Imagine the following scene: Christmas, 1987, and Aunt Martha from Moose Jaw has spied your new copy of **Margaret Atwood's CanLit Foodbook** ensconced upon the coffee table. She eagerly thumbs through it, and later asks if she might expand the guest list for the traditional Yuletide repast. "Fine," you answer, but you wonder why your **genial**

aunt refers to the potential guests as "extra ingredients." A new form of **prairie** jargon, perhaps? Unfortunately not. To your utter horror, Aunt Martha's bookmark gives her away — she's been **reading** Chapter Nine: "Eating People Is Wrong — Cannibalism Canadian Style."

**Yet in the right hands** the **CanLit Foodbook** could s&e as a form of pest control. On the night before Christmas, no sensible rodent **will stir** unless it wishes to become the next evening's appetizer, thanks to **recipes** from **Farley Mowat** (Creamed Mice) and **Michael Ondaatje** (Rat Jelly).

**Like a Gestalt goulash**, the personalities of the contributing writers are revealed in their **recipes**. What does one make of **Graeme Gibson's "Potroast with Chocolate"** a true marriage of **utilitarian** and exotic tastes? As for **Paulette Jiles's "Scrambled Pi's Brains with Fried Green Tomatoes"** — well, some **things** are better left alone.

It is unfortunate that **this** book (the proceeds from which are being donated to **Pen International** and the Writers' Development Trust) did not come out earlier **this century**. Had **J. Alfred Prufrock** owned the **CanLit Foodbook**, he would have dispatched the troublesome peach to the table with **Timothy Findley's recipe** for "Summer Peaches."

Now if we could only find a new hobby for Aunt Martha. ...

— TIMOTHY CHAMBERLAIN

## MIXED MEDIA

**Ritter la Residence**, by **Erika Ritter**, McClelland & Stewart, 198 pages, 819.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 7530 8).

**READING THIS BOOK** is akin to **watching** an iceberg: you know that most of the ice lurks beneath the surface, yet your attention remains **riveted** on the portion that **rises above the water**. In this **collection** of 36 pieces, roughly a **third** succeed in rising from the **briny depths** to the **realm** of comedy; unfortunately, **two-thirds** sink due to excess baggage.

Above the **main** portal in **Erika Ritter's** residence, the following motto must be **chiselled**: "Brevity Is the Soul of Wit." Too many of these pieces suffer from **the comedy-destroying virus of verbiage**. The concept of **Stephen Leacock's** works being written by his sister is a **one-line** gag extended for 15 pages in "Stephanie **Leacock**: Unmasked, Considered, and Appreciated." Similarly, "A **Canadian Dramatic Classic**" (subtitled "Lang Days Awake with My Sister Irene") is more a cure for insomnia than a satiric barb aimed at **Canadian theatre**.

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borrow a **phrase** from Ritter) can also sink the **fragile** vessel of comedy. In "Lorelei, Lucy, Lassie, and Lulu," Ritter bemoans the fact that the succession of dogs that played Lassie were actually male because "only boy dogs, it was understood, had the intellectual capacity to master all those stunts." Well, perhaps male dogs are easier to train; it seems pointless to quibble about the respective intellectual capacities of male and female dogs. Furthermore, such a discussion does not produce comedy.

In this same piece Ritter states that the comic-book character Little Lulu has "helped a whole generation of girls to begin to learn that the world that really counts is the one outside the clubhouse." Give me a break, Erika — feminist consciousness-raising from a 1951 comic-book character?

Yet when Ritter's work is trimmed of verbal flab and ideological cant, the resulting wit is marvellous to behold. "Pet Teachers" is a poignant and honest account of the author's early education on the prairies, and also very funny. "The Stream of Consciousness-Raising" and "The Realest Woman of Them All" deal with the dynamics of feminism in a truly humorous manner without becoming polemic. And anyone who sees a "prune in a sling" when Ritter meets a Pekinese wearing a kerchief, must surely have a comic soul. Despite the flaws, *Ritter in Residence* is worth reading for the portion that floats on the sea of comedy.

— TIMOTHY CHAMBERLAIN

**Back to Black**, by Arthur Black, Methuen, 229 pages, 919.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 81210 2).

IF YOU'RE THE kind of person to rise early on Saturday and busy yourself doing chores or even — God forbid — head for the gym, then you probably wouldn't know who Arthur Black is, and chances are he wouldn't want to know you. Those who get up at a normal hour and tune in to CBC Radio while the toast is burning will recognize Black as the host of *Basic Black*, a comedy-interview show that takes the groggy listener from 10:05 to 11:35 a.m.

*Back to Black* brings together a hundred or so of Black's brief monologues from the show and elsewhere. Favourite targets of Black's wit are irritating trends in sports, unpleasant weather and, in the familiar "stand-up" comic tradition, himself. Muzak, joggers, the move to metric, Daylight Saving Time, snud (that's when snow meets mud) — these are some of the ostensible topics through which Black is really building his character.

Unfortunately, the adaptation of

broadcast to book shows up some of the differences between radio and print (including the obvious: one is free, one costs \$20). Black's talent, as we know it, belongs on the air: in written form, his sketches are just so much stenography. His halting style of speech might be hilarious to some ears, but it's torture to the reading eyes: "Angus isn't speaking to me again. It's an annual trauma. Happens every spring. Angus is a sheep dog. Usually."

Small wit can become large in the mouth of a talented performer, but here it's served as is: "Ever gone for a swim in a quarry? To me, it's one of the most delightful treats you can give your body. With water, anyway." These last are the book's opening "sentences." If you went to read on, you're welcome to *Back to Black*. — MARTIN TOWNSEND

## THE PAST

**Citizen and Soldier: The Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Howard Graham**, McClelland & Stewart, 304 pages, 824.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 3390 7).

HOWARD GRAHAM had a high ambition for a poor farm boy from Trenton: he wanted to become a county court judge. As a good-looking war veteran, lawyer, prominent Tory, and mayor of his native town, he might well have fulfilled his ambition.

Instead, war in 1939 reminded him that, as a chronic joiner, he had become a major in the militia and his King and country needed him. Integrity, common sense, and courage made Graham commanding officer of his "Plough jockeys," the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment made famous by Farley Mowat. In due course the same qualities made him an infantry brigadier in Sicily and Italy, a post-war head of Canada's army, and president of the Toronto Stock Exchange.

George Renison, in his epilogue, wants us to believe that his old friend was "truly a great Canadian." In fact Graham was a pleasant man with enough stubbornness to defend himself. Victimized by his arrogant divisional commander, Guy Simon & Co., Graham had actually quit in the field when Montgomery himself intervened to save him. Eleven years later, the same qualities helped a Liberal defence minister choose Graham as Simonds's successor as Chief of the General Staff. Graham's useful virtues also won him a post-retirement job when the Toronto Stock Exchange needed a titular head during one of its less glorious interludes.

Graham's memoirs add a lot to our knowledge of life on a pre-1914 Ontario farm, rather less to the history of soldiering in Canada and overseas, and perhaps a little more than any but stout monar-

chists would like to know about encounters with the Royal Family. The memoirs of a thoroughly nice man are perhaps more comfortable than stimulating. The general and his editor, we are told, waged battle royal over the manuscript. The scars of battle include a large number of errors only a veteran might notice, from "warranty officer" to the "Straits of Massena."

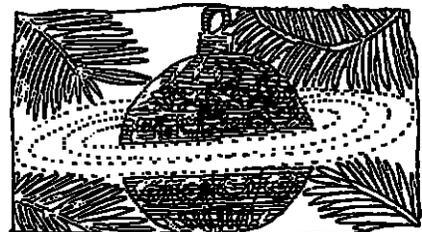
— DESMOND MORTON

**The First Albertans: An Archaeological Search**, by Gail Helgason. Lone Pi Publishing (10357 109th Street, Edmonton T5J 1N3), illustrated, 222 pages. \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 919433 19 7).

ONE BYPRODUCT of the oil-fired Alberta nationalism of the 1970s was a boom in the province's cultural bureaucracy. Unlike the regional banks and trust companies also born when Alberta thought it was rich, the cultural agencies have survived. They are even beginning to pay dividends. AU of Canada can be grateful for two magnificent new Alberta museums, the Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller and Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump near Fort MacLeod.

One of the new agencies, the Archaeological Survey of Alberta, now has decided to commemorate itself with a book about its work. Since neither archaeologists nor bureaucrats are renowned for their prose, the ASA commissioned a local publisher and an Edmonton journalist, Gail Helgason, to turn its data into something readable. The result, *The First Albertans*, provides lively, attractive evidence that Canadian history is 10,000, not 500, years old.

Helgason enjoys explaining archaeological terms and techniques, but she can also write imaginative scenes of prehistoric life, and she even conveys the fascination of classifying "projectile points" (or, as you and I would say, "arrowheads"). With the help of maps,



diagrams, colour art, and colour photographs supplied by the ASA, Helgason explores the sophistication of the bin hunters, the mysteries of medicine wheels, the skills of the stone-tool maker, and how to stalk a moose in the boreal forest.

Given its origins, it may be inevitable that *The First Albertans* promotes the

idea that early man" moved into the Americas via Alberta and derides the plausible alternate theory of a **seaborne** migration along the West Coast. The **neglect** of native viewpoints in native studies is disappointingly familiar. And it is unfortunate (if easily explicable) that the book celebrates **ASA** staff work more vigorously than **academic, museum-based**, and independent contributions to Alberta archaeology. But, **tinges** of regional and institutional **chauvinism** aside, *The First Albertans* is a book that could **please** anyone interested in Canadian **prehistory** or archaeology.

— CHRISTOPHER MOORE

**Winning** the Second Battle: **Canadian Veterans** and the Return to Civilian Life 1915-1930, by **Desmond Morton** and **Glenn Wright**, University of **Toronto** Press, 328 **pages**, \$40.00 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 5705 5) and \$17.95 paper (ISBN 0 8020 6634 8).

AS THE **FIRST** World War ended, Canadians found themselves **facing** a **puzzle**. Should they be **generous** to the **returned soldiers** in proportion to the superheated rhetoric of the **war years**? Or was it best to fall back on the **well-ingrained** Canadian custom of **governmental** thrift, and ease the soldiers with small sums of

money and plenty of well-thought-out advice into **self-supporting** jobs while ensuring that **the** pensions to be paid, then and later, to the veterans would be **kept** to the bare minimum? Those **who favoured** the less **generous** approach pointed to the **menacing** "pension evil" of the **United States**, where the veterans of the **Civil War** had allegedly **proved** as **successful** in raids on **the** treasury as they had bee" in pursuit of the **"Rebs."**

Canadian **veterans** fought the battle for increased benefits referred to in the title, but the victors, though **just** barely, **seem** to have bee" a coalition of icy civil servants, slick, frightened **politicians**, and disenchanting taxpayers. Sick **veterans** were hospitalized, **amputees** were supplied with artificial limbs and **job training**, pensions were paid where indisputably needed and, as a **single foray** into romanticism, the back-to-the-h" d sentiments powerful at the time saw an ambitious **but unsuccessful** project of placing **returned soldiers** on **farms** in the **West** and in Northern Ontario. But beyond this, the forces of prudence held the **line**, and **this** **massively** researched, absolutely **first-rate** contribution to **Canadian** social and military history **only cautiously** presses the exuberant claim of the blurb that in this struggle **"were** the roots of the modern **welfare** state:

— ROYCE MacGILLIVRAY

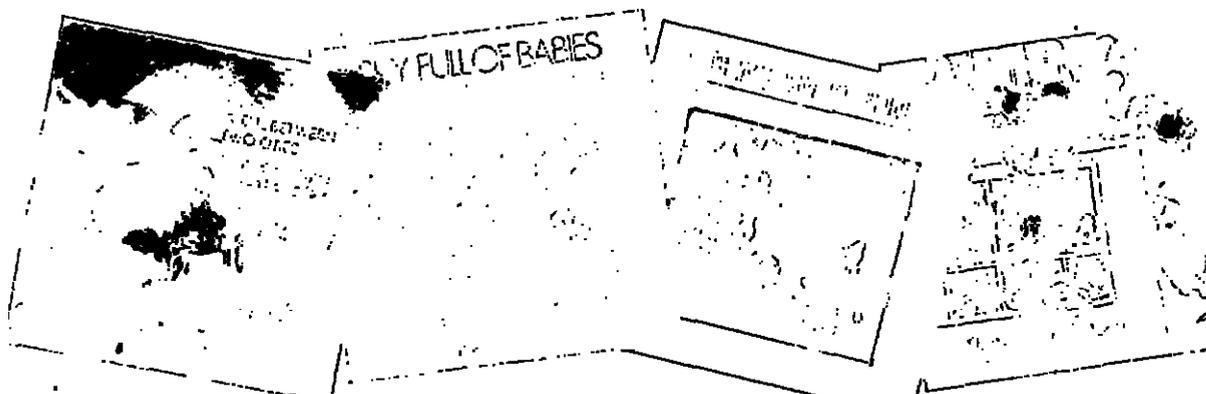
## POETRY

Selected Poems. by Patrick **Lane**, Oxford, 186 **pages**, 314.95 **paper** (ISBN 0 19 540599 4).

**THE COVER PHOTO** of this collection features the author, **blue-jeaned**, sleeves rolled up, as he stands, **cue** in **hand**, **intently** sizing up a shot on a pool table. Whatever Lane wants this image to **convey** (maybe the message that he has **remained** true to his working-class roots, despite his stints at universities as a **poet** of considerable stature), it **suggests** a regular-type **guy**, **slightly** macho, **tough**. *Selected Poems* presents work that spans **three** decades and **also** includes a **score** of **new poems**; and it **is** tough and gruffly masculine in part. But even **poems** that confront the cruelty and harshness of existence — whether in a logging camp in British Columbia or in a **Peruvian village** — **aren't** rough-hew". The raw material of **Lane's** work may **truly** be raw, but its sensibility is not.

The **first** section, "The Sixties," **centres** on Lane's experiences **growing** up in the West. The poems **are** uncluttered, **unsentimental**, direct as the stroke of a **hammer**: "Because I "ever learned how/ to be **gentle** and the country/I lived in was hard with dead/animals and men."

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Poems in "The Seventies" are more complex and possess a growing formal elegance. But they still spring from the gritty soil of ordinary working people's lives. In "Sleep is the silence darkness takes," for example, Lane writes of

*breaking forty acres to the plow  
pouring my blood into the sun  
pulling stone knuckles from the earth  
and walking bowed behind a spavined  
home*

Lane goes further afield in this section physically as well as thematically. His travels in South America are the focus of a series of poems: his deep respect for the values and cultures of indigenous peoples emerge strongly.

The ethic of Lane's work as a whole is concern with the crushing of the human spirit and redemption from that fate. Underlying much of his earlier work (bearing witness to that crushing) is a barely suppressed anger; in "The Eighties" and particularly in the concluding section of new poems, Lane combines that flesh-and-blood immediacy with a reflective quality that deepens the work.

Call it maturity, mellowing, the perspective of age, whatever-it makes for wonderful poems. The poet emerges from a detour into more abstract, philosophical work to deliver such remarkable poems

as "Brothers," which unfortunately I can quote only in part:

*We were brothers long before we were  
men,  
small, tough because the days kept  
hurting us,  
days when a word like beauty had to  
be learned,  
our mother making us spell it over  
and over  
until it seemed the word lost meaning  
and was only punishment.*

We can look forward to more from Patrick Lane. His new poems offer a sense of looking back, of taking stock (perhaps in the same manner as sizing up a pool shot) — and then moving on.

— BARBARA CAREY

**Poems Released on a Nuclear Wind**, by Allan Cooper, Pottersfield Press, 79 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 91900141~).

SOMEHOW THIS collection of poetry from Maritimer Allan Cooper took me off guard, perhaps because its title seems to suggest activism and strong social awareness. Cooper does express concern about the human race's capacity for violence and destruction, but *Poems Released on a Nuclear Wind* is imbued with "back-to-the-land" values and spirituality rather

than political zeal. In "The Sound of Falling Snow" (just one of many thematically similar poems), Cooper sets out the central tenet of his beliefs. Comparing snow with the human body, he writes:

*Thw is  
light inside  
each molecule  
and flake, calling  
to us, asking to be  
acknowledged,  
nothing more.*

This book is a catalogue of where, with hushed footsteps, Cooper has sought that illumination, mostly in fields and forests, flora and fauna: the voice of a crow in winter, the glint of orange mushrooms among damp fallen leaves, the stillness of a hidden pool. Cooper shows the same gentle wonderment in several poems about his daughter, but mostly this collection is inspired by a reverence for Creation itself. By contrast, human society seems to give rise only to sorrow and a sense of apartness ("I stop/listen/to the advance/of civilization").

There is little variation in how that "inner light" in all things is presented. But read sparingly, the book does offer many poems that, haiku-like in their delicacy, are truly moving. Overall, there is nothing earth-shattering about *Poems Released on a Nuclear Wind* but, to be

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fair, I don't think that Cooper intends to dazzle. His unpretentious conception of the poet's role is set out in "Light Shining on River Ice":

*the person who takes the time to listen, who walks and walks watching for the light that shines from the centre of all things.*

Like the fieldmouse whose slight existence is the focus of several of these poems, this collection moves unassumingly; like the mouse, it has a place in this loud, busy, dangerous world, even if it will be easily overlooked.

-BARBARA CAREY

*Becoming Light*, by Robyn Sarah, Cormorant Books, 40 pages, 37.95 paper (ISBN 0 920953 22 0).

READ THE POETRY of Robyn Sarah and marvel at the wonder in life; the incidental moments of which she makes poetry are invested with an uncommon and, yes, beautiful density.

"To Fill a Life" Sarah writes, "I know a man who photographs the bumps on faces, the tiny lines, who celebrates them with his sharpest focus." This is Sarah's sensibility, too; in *Becoming Light* her poems are rendered with precision and accuracy.

The material Sarah's poetry expands on consists of everyday experience, from her own backyard. Reminiscent of William Carlos Williams is her observation of the fly in the poem "The Thread," described with the same detailed rhythm as Williams's cat stepping over the jam-closet. Although Sarah also shares with Williams a careful economy of language — the words are measured out as if on a budget — she has developed her own voice, disciplined and distinct from any other:

*... I kick through leaves my stride churns into a sound like surf.*

Perception and perspective are important in *Becoming Light*. Seasons change, days become shorter then longer, a child pi&es his mother inside the circle of his thumb and forefinger, a hand obliterates a building. "I" and "you" hold up and down positions on a scaffold.

*... while higher still, on the hillside at the city's heart, visible in the clefts between buildings, show those first hints of the colours we are supposed to find so beautiful.*

All these moments, these glimpses, are rich and beautiful.

The poetry is not overtly and distractingly experimental. It is, however, strong

in engrav. the sentences set out musically to inspire the reader on. The cadences strike a chord: a sense of richness is always achieved.

Beauty is in many ways what this book is about: how to find the beautiful, the transcendent, in natural things. There are no Bii Ideas or issues in *Becoming Light*; these are unnecessary fillers, "bones," for a poet of Sarah's ability. The poetry itself is an opening to light, both physical and metaphoric. In "For Light" Sarah explains that she has come to realize that life is "... a struggle against the impulse to shut doors" and a struggle "... to find new openings, new windows."

Although Sarah's imagination is caught by the cam""", her use of language is anything but that; together, they are successful in producing poems that "... become light themselves" and remain with the reader gently, persistently.

- MARC CÔTÉ

*Islands*, by Ken Norris, Quarry Press, 123 pages, \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0 919527 05 6).

NO BOOK DESERVES to be dismissed out of hand as the worst of its kind. If the work between the covers doesn't please the reader, there must be a reason. Such a difficult book is Ken Norris's *Islands*, the most recent effort in his *Report on the Second Half of the Twentieth Century* — an ambitious title for a work (even if ironic) and hard to live up to.

Half the poems in the book are Norris's standard fare; lyrics about the ghosts of love, about a sense of longing and a sense of loss. The other half is made up of prose poems documenting U.S. imperialism and exploitation of the archipelagos of the South Pacific. Both sections are similar in tone, too similar as the border between poetry and prose blurs. The language is not tight and energetic — it's loose and a little pedestrian. But that is part of Norris's point: a democratic view of all things, which makes a coherent whole out of the observed world.

All the tools of the exotic are at hand, though. The book is full of tropical images, references to Melville and Gauguin, and documented local phenomena: the uses for coconuts, *fajines* (boys raised as girls by their parents), and the results of nuclear testing on Micronesia.

Norris alternates between the lyric mode and the documentary. At his best, as in "Last Night" and "Islands," he manages to strike a perfect chord. At his worst, he takes on an unnecessary editorial voice that drones flatly. The problem for Norris is stated in "The Touch of the Lover":

*It isn't a great age for art. ... them's no heroic voice, we have fatten into the pit of the low mimetic it is belches and farts, so it is the touch of the lover we rise up to record.*

None of this makes for particularly exciting reading.

Norris has been called "a 20th-century romantic." R's a great epitaph, but what exactly does it mean? Judging by *Islands*, he's not quite Wordsworth in the tropics, but is more a stunned Shelley at sea in the mildly turbulent 1980s. Norris seeks the permanently ephemeral: the fleeting ideal that becomes memory and thus art. He is dissatisfied with his place in the world. When he is in the South Pacific he longs for Montreal, when in the cities of North America he longs far the innocent and calm life in the islands. He identifies with Melville and Gauguin, and settles on neither.

Perhaps that's the problem: the book is about dissatisfaction, and so it seems to be dissatisfying. This is disconcerting and awkward but, finally, it might be what he feels suits the second half of this century best.

- MARC CÔTÉ

## SPORTS & ADVENTURE

Paddle to the Amazon: The Ultimate 12,000-Mile Canoe Adventure, by Don Starkell, edited by Charles Wilkins, McClelland & Stewart, 316 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 8240 1).

WHEN DON STARKELL'S marriage broke up he decided he needed a project, an objective to help stabilize his own life and to give direction to the lives of his two sons. Starkell spent 10 years planning for and dreaming about a marathon canoe trip from Winnipeg to the mouth of the Amazon. Then, in 1980, he had the temerity to put his 21-foot boat into the Red River and start paddling.

Starkell and his sons set out to cover 12,000 miles, strictly by muscle power, down the Mississippi River, around the edge of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, up the Orinoco River and; finally, down the Rio Negro and the Amazon. There was no particular logic to his route except that it was long and it covered some terrain visited by early explorers who interested him.

Starkell's carefully edited journal records a daunting litany of hardships and setbacks. One son decides the route can not be completed in an open canoe with a makeshift spray cover, and heads home from Mexico. The remaining father and son face 25-foot waves, relentless tropical sun, biting insects, coastal pirates, and gun-wielding soldiers. After two years on the water, thanks largely to the many

people who helped them along the way, from poor Indians to wealthy yachtsmen. they reach Belém, Brazil.

The motivation for the armchair adventurer to join in this expedition is hard to muster for the first two or three chapters, but by the time Starkell heads his fibreglass craft past the U.S. border and into the open sea there's no turning back for the reader or the 47-year-old paddler. —S.R. GAGE

## REVIEW

### Just one of the girls

By Myrna Kostash

**Never Let Go: The Tragedy of Kristy McFarlane**, by Tom MacDonnell, Macmillan, 288 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9508 5).

AT THE HEART of *Never Let Go* is a mystery: why did 14-year-old Kristy McFarlane become a prostitute? The question resonates through the book as Tom MacDonnell and his readers confront the apparent enigma of a nice girl who, although no trouble to anyone, growing up a typical teenager in Toronto in the dotting care of a mother, herself something of a success story, suddenly, with no warning at all, takes off for "The Strip" and becomes a hooker, literally overnight. How could this have happened?

The distraught mother, Sheila, runs the same anguished questions around and around her brain: "Was it something I did? Was it something I didn't do? Was it something I said? Was it something I didn't say?" Whether Sheila McFarlane ever finds answers that satisfy her we are not told. MacDonnell gamely proposes a few, citing from the sociological and psychological data that link teenage prostitution to experiences of gross childhood abuse, physical and sexual (most of it within middle-class homes), and the resultant profile of a typical teenage runaway: a girl with a high incidence of anxiety, suicidal feelings, physical ailments, delinquent behaviour, violence, failure in school, bad friendships, and heavy alcohol and drug abuse. (The catalogue is so woeful, so desperate, that we might well ask how such a child does *not* become a prostitute.) He cites the camaraderie of the street, the "easy" money.

Yet, because he also tells us, repeatedly, that Kristy was a loved and fiercely defended daughter, a girl not wanting for material possessions, a girl who had

exhibited no signs of "aberrant" behaviour, his explanations bring us no closer to the resolution of the mystery.

As for Kristy herself, whom MacDonnell interviewed in 1986 when she was 16 and temporarily off the street, we learn that "it wasn't really excitement when I was doing it. But, when it's not them, you think it is." Whether she would have ultimately understood herself better we shall never know for, a year later, she was found dead in a hotel stairwell. (MacDonnell does not say so, but it is possible she was murdered for having testified as a crown witness in her pimp's trial.)

So, Kristy's tragedy is senseless, inexplicable. She is drawn into prostitution in an unbelievably casual way — simply left on a street corner by a young man who, only a few hours earlier, had seemed so suave, so sympathetic, so attentive in the mall bar, and who was now telling her it was SO bucks a blow job, 80 a lay, and to buy her own condoms. A" hour and a half later she had earned \$200, and a few hours after that she was smoking cocaine cigarettes. In spite of all the best efforts of her mother and Metropolitan Toronto's Juvenile Task Force officers and even a rehabilitated hooker friend, Kristy never really left the street again in her short life.

She couldn't say why she did it, only that she "had" to, that she wanted to be on her own, that the street was "now," was "real," that she wanted a piece of the action and that she would be "safe." Yet within a three-month period she had become deeply involved with drugs, had become pregnant and miscarried, had contracted gonorrhoea, and had escaped from hospital, leaving behind a little pool of blood when she tore the intravenous tube from her arm. She had handed over thousands of dollars to her pimp, boasting that she had paid for his sports car, and had been rewarded with his icy contempt and unpredictable violence. In the book's most astonishing, even grotesque sequence, Kristy warns her mother not to make jokes about becoming a prostitute herself. "Don't you ever get involved in this," she admonishes. "You're my mother."

MacDonnell does not judge Kristy or her mother, nor the police, nor the other hookers. He does not seem to pry. He writes a flat, pedestrian prose that refuses to lift off the page in indignation except when he writes about pimps — those parasites of young women whose masculinity is defined as a paradigm of the pornographic, the humiliation of women. Yet these are the men the prostitutes "love." Or at least cannot leave.

And here, quite unwittingly, we may have come closer to the heart of the mystery. The relationship of the hooker to her pimp is very similar to that of the

battered wife/girlfriend to her tormentor. The same isolation, the same cycle of abuse and reconciliation, the same repetitions of obscene insult and assault until the woman no longer believes she has the right to kindness. With more imagination, with more anger, MacDonnell might have been able to tell us why Kristy McFarlane, at 14, felt that blow jobs between soiled sheets on Jarvis Street was about all she was worth. □

## REVIEW

### A wonderful way to go

By Cary Fagan

**Memoirs of a Book-Molesting Childhood**, by Adele Wiseman, Oxford, 202 pages, \$13.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540637 0).

UNLIKE ADELE WISEMAN (because of good fortune and a generation's difference in age) I have never watched someone dear to me die. Sometimes I wonder how, when the inevitable does happen, I will cope with such a loss. Wiseman, the Winnipeg-born author of *The Sacrifice* and *Crackpot*, has witnessed not only the deaths of both her parents but virtually the whole generation before her end, as she writes, the "thinning" of her own. "Lucky Mom: On Suffering," the finest essay by a long way in this collection, is about watching people die.

Mostly it is about Wiseman's mother, about whom she has already written in *Old Woman at Play*. And it's not really about dying but, as Wiseman says, about living, for her mother's last p&t-riddled months brimmed with experience and the sharing of affection. It is a useful coincidence that Wiseman's essay should appear at a time when society is growing concerned with the quality of life of old people and the act of dying itself.

The efforts that Wiseman and her attended family go to bringing pl- to the end of her mother's life must make many of us hope that we would do es much. On one occasion she satisfies her mother's belief in the spiritually restorative power of nature by taking her to a lakeside cottage. Because the woman can no longer sit properly she must be transported on a stretcher, in the back of a station wagon.

Although her mother must finally die, Wiseman does not make her' death the end of the essay, for it is also "a social event and a responsibility," and we witness the "phalanx of squat, powerful Wisemans standing by the grave." Wii Wiseman's own mourning is anger at the

medical profession, which too often views death as a clinical procedure and has a shallow understanding of pain. When Wiseman's mother refuses certain treatments the daughter wonders, "Do we suffer less for being less conscious in our feelings of our suffering? Or only differently?" But in the end "Lucky Mom" is a cathartic expression of love, grief, and caring, and of the sense of meaning and continuity that family and friends em give to this ephemeral life.

If I have dwelt on just one of the 10 essays in *Memoirs of a Book-Molesting Childhood*, it is because of the value and the superiority of that one work over the others in the collection. Overall, the book shows a tendency toward sentimentality and a surprising lack of interesting or original ideas from such a provocative novelist. The tide essay is a rosy, idealized memory of a youth in love with books. While some moments are amusingly real (such as the left-wing Yiddish school where the teacher reads aloud such stories as "Lapzig, the Worker's Dog"), Wiseman's account of her own literary taste's maturation is a touch pretentious and suffers from a Great Books mentality.

"Old Markets, New World" is marred even more by nostalgia for an older generation's working life. "Word Power:

Women and Pmse in Canada Today" shows off an admirably feisty feminism but makes all too clear the hazards of generalization in its portrayal of the male writer's route to stardom as paved with gold. "How to Go to China," the record of a 1981 visit with several other Canadian writers, details Wiseman's imaginative response to that country but rarely rises above an ordinary travelogue.

An interesting comparison can be made of two essays, "And the Forest?" and "What Price the Heroine?" The former, prepared for a conference in France, attempts a creative rather than academic approach to the forest in Canadian writing and falls completely flat. The latter, a re-evaluation of Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*, is conventional in style but a very competent and lively work of feminist criticism. A feminist perspective also figures in "The King and Queen Had Two Sons," an amusing and pointed fable of the dangers of technological innovation that works both as a serious "SC of the form and as parody.

While more of the essays in this collection are failures than successes, the character of Adele Wiseman shines through, an enthusiastic and positive human being attempting to find genuine responses to literature and life. We all, at least, can appreciate that. □

## REVIEW

# Crossing the bar

By John Goddard

**Bloodsong and Other Stories of South Africa**, by Ernst Havemann, Houghton Mifflin (Thomas Allen), 134 pages. \$13.93 cloth (ISBN 0 393 43296 0).

ELABORATE, UNWRITTEN rules based on skin colour precisely define a person's place in South Africa, but South Africans are rule-breakers like everybody else. In the course of routine contact across the colour bar they sometimes violate the code out of curiosity, or sympathy, or by accident, to find themselves on shifting social terrain. It is terrain Ernst Havemann explores with sensitivity and skill in these 11 spare, suspenseful stories.

Havemann, now 69 and living in Nelson. B.C., spent his first 60 years in South Africa. He grew up on a farm in Zulu country, and although he is white of Afrikaans descent, his first language was Zulu; many of his boyhood friends were black. He studied social science at

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## WHAT HAPPENS AT THE NO NANCY SUMMIT



Moliere's  
TARTUFFE

adapted by  
BRIAN D. CALVERT

the University of Natal, worked as a civil servant, and later become a mining engineer. Drawing from his range of experience, he gives the reader a sense of the beauty, the complexity, and the richness of South Africa, covering everything from tribal legends to work songs to a polite but pointed police interrogation of a white woman said to have been generous to a black one.

Throughout the book is a sense of impending confrontation. In "A Farm at Karaba," the white narrator recalls his obligatory army duty in Namibia, a period he cherishes for having learned about "musketry and map reading and section leading, and who's what in these little frontline states, and the tribes and the various movements in Angola and Caprivi and Botswana." He refers to the enemy as "Swapies," members of the South West Africa People's Organization, and shoots four of them in a row one afternoon the way his father used to pick off impala. Inspecting the bodies, he finds the first three dead and the fourth wounded in the arm, with one leg stuck in a cleft in the rock.

"He was one of those yellow Hottentot types," the narrator says, "with spaces between his peppercorns of hair, about my age but as wrinkled as a prune." A former shepherd fired for stealing, the man had joined the guerrilla movement with only the vaguest idea of what the fighting was about: "He moved from one guerrilla band to another, depending on how he liked the band's leader and how much food or loot was available." The two enemies pass the night together in conversation, helping each other but not entirely abandoning the idea of killing each other.

In the title story, "Bloodsong," a farm boy rides off to witness a mass tribal ceremony. When the natives work them-

selves into a state of pride, they shift their regard toward the one white person in their midst, and approach him in ways he first interprets as threatening.

The book is Havemann's first collection. □

## REVIEW

### Lab's labours loved

By B. K. Adams

**Metamorphosis: Stages in a Life**, by David Suzuki. Stoddart, illustrated, 304 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 77312139 8).

DAVID SUZUKI has carved out a very special place in our lives. Through radio programs, television's *The Nature of Things* and the splendidly crafted series *A Planet for the Taking*, and through his writing, he has raised public consciousness about science, technology, and nature, and in the process become a widely recognized Canadian. We feel we know his owlish, nonconformist persona; we respect his cool, analytical intelligence; and we have come to admire his sense of wonder and moral passion. How he gets into our living-rooms and why his message takes the shape it does are the themes of this book.

At first glance, an autobiography seems premature: Suzuki is only 50, and we trust there are big projects, much work, and still further stages ahead. But this is really a more personal, introspective approach to causes and issues he has addressed in so many other ways.

As "self-discovery," *Metamorphosis* probes the contours of family history,

shuffling and ordering the private forces of Japanese-Canadian parentage and culture that shaped Suzuki. The forces were public as well. The sad tale of confiscation, evacuation, and relocation experience<sup>8</sup> by Japanese Canadians in British Columbia during the Second World War is known to us, but seldom has its lasting impact on one individual's life been as well told. In describing this and more subtle manifestations of racism, Suzuki writes openly and perceptively.

More than a family and private memoir, this is an *apologia* in the classic sense, explaining and justifying controversial decisions and departures. In the most important and valuable chapters Suzuki describes the twists and turns of a career in science, and it's a shock to learn just how much of it was in the United States. He took his undergraduate degree from Amherst College in 1958—it is unlikely that any Canadian university at the time could have provided as good and broad an education for the young Suzuki. After doctoral work at the University of Chicago he launched himself as a brash, dynamic young research scientist.

His research on genetic mutation in *drosophila*—the humble fruitfly—brought kudos, grants, and promise of a brilliant future in U.S. science. Instead, Suzuki returned to Canada in 1963. It was a baffling decision, explained in large part by his growing outrage at racism and violence in the United States. His career skipped a few beats, but a first-class lab was patched together at the university of British Columbia, and the research poured out again.

Slowly and then with quickening momentum, the world changed, this time in more fundamental ways. Some of the excitement of science at the "cutting edge" waned, and years of absolute

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dedication to the bench had taken its toll on his private life. Touched as well by the radicalism of the late 1960s and early '70s, he grew estranged from the university and he & to challenge the ethical implications of his own research. As Suzuki describes it in these pages, the change did not happen overnight; it was a unfolding process, a shifting and broadening of perspective, honed and give" voice by the new-found craft of journalism.

*Metamorphosis* is not without its problems. The metaphor itself is clumsy, the structure is often wooden and forced, and the writing is sometimes too clipped, as for a column. By the end there is too much pastiche—we cannot help but think that a autobiography 15 or 20 years down the road would have been so much more polished and satisfying. But stretches of this memoir are very good indeed. I a real sense, David Suzuki's audience has been at his side in this process of personal and philosophical growth and discovery; *Metamorphosis* makes the bond all the more intimate. CI

## REVIEW

### Kicking against the pricks

By Sylvia M. Brown

**A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing**, edited by Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli, Longspoon/NeWest Press, 420 pages, 319.95 paper (ISBN 0 920897 12 6).

BY SIZE AND weight alone, this compilation of 36 essays should make the purveyors of Canadian criticism more aware of the presence of women writers and critics. More complete than New French Feminisms (from which the editors may nevertheless have taken the idea), it might have been called New Canadian Feminisms for its array of theoretical perspectives. The book is in every way part of an international discourse, what Louise Cotnoir calls a cross-temporal, cross-cultural "writing and publishing effort of women everywhere, here and abroad, to reappropriate 'a woman's language.'"

What these essays have in common is their aim of recovering language and memory, giving women tongues "to speak our sexuality, with which to confirm its existence." Louky Bersianik tells us that the need to break the symbolic code is as strong as ever, where one sex still has greater value than the other. Her article is a declaration of freedom for the female subconscious after age-old

colonization. Witness the case of Lily Dougall, author of IO novels, eight philosophical and theological works, and countless stories and essays of which none is in print today. Yet, according to Lorraine McMullen, she is Canada's George Eliot, a writer of great moral and intellectual stature whose novel *Beggars All rivals Middlemarch* in its overview of a diverse society. Such resurrecting of lost works by women uncovers feminist subtexts that have long been obscured by masculine criticism which, Bersianik says, closed, condemned, and executed women's teats.

As Donna Bennett informs us, instead of driving wedges into mainstream literature, feminist criticism has set up a separate discourse of its own, independent of the linear, impersonal demands of traditional criticism. The feminine style is not to analyse but to elaborate or, as Bersianik expresses it, "transmit... and reconstitute the original signal." ED. Blodgett on Laure Conan's novel *Angéline de Montbrun* demonstrates the dead end of the patriarchal world, while Smaro Kamboureli discloses the female characters in Alice Munro's fiction who exhibit *jouissance* and the stories in *Lives of Girls and Women* that parody "the phallus as a privileged signifier." Helen Buss tells of autobiographers such as Susan Allison who wrote against incredible odds — the pioneer mothers of umpteen children writing with quill pens by candlelight after the day's domestic work was done. They do not follow the prototypes established by male autobiographers; their archetypal models differ in that women, as Mary G. Mason explains, are always conscious of their relation to the other.

Marni L. Stanley studies a genre often held in low regard, travel books, reassessing their portrayal of women in the countries visited. I some the traveller's developing persona indicates more about the teller than about the land into which she journeyed, while the travel journals of upper-class observers display a conspicuous absence of personality — a indication that the writer left British shores in body but not in mind, journeying across Canada to justify British imperialism. Nonetheless, the most enduring of these travel narratives still attest to the need women felt to escape "the conventions of female deportment."

In Anna Jameson's letters to her friend Otilie, Bina Friewald notes the existence not of rivalry but interdependence among 19th-century women writers. She also points out Jameson's subversiveness and understanding of sexual politics. Jameson termed her outlook on writing "femininely speaking," and is dearly a fore-e of contemporary feminist criticism based on "difference."

Heather Murray's overview of

women's place in wilderness writing relates the double colonization experienced until recently by those unlucky enough to be both Canadian writers and women in the Anglo-American world. Deemed even more subordinate were the writings of black women in Canada, whose attempts at self-definition were read, says Claire Harris, as self-indulgence — hence the preponderance of either surrealistic or factual techniques in their writing. Barbara Godard examines the oral narratives of native women, regretting our culture's over-valorization of the written word; the work of Alanis Obomsawin and other film-makers are effective sources for studying native storytelling, which is usually a communal per-

formance rather than a fixed transcription read in solitude.

Many of the critics write in the first person, implying a perception of their craft as an increasingly personal form of engagement — what Constance Rooke calls her "sense of 'knowing' the author through the text." Bersianik explains this strategy as a way to avoid using the inflated voice of authority. The sense of being part of a literary and social community is as strong among feminist critics as the writers they study; indeed, the borderlines dividing critical and creative writing are continually being transgressed. In the words of Gail Scott, "to express the shape of our desire, our prose must lean toward poetry. . . ."

There is one nagging hindrance about this "reticular" collection, to use Bersianik's term, and that is the high incidence of jargon that often besets new Forms of criticism and prevents all but initiates from garnering these new findings. For all that the editors and writers wish to break down the barriers between writer, critic, and audience, this is still a very academic book.

Perhaps the spiraling lines and fanning shapes of the seashell motif illustrating sections of the book could best chart the many directions in which these essays could go; what may appear to be a bewildering maze of thoughts is on closer inspection a network spreading out to protect the woman emerging from her shell. □

## FIRST NOVELS

### Heart of darkness

Amid the inevitable detective thrillers, Ssan Virgo's fictional marriage of heaven and hell is not a debut but a masterpiece

By Janice Kulyk Keefer

**M**AUREEN MOORE and Laurence Gough have both tackled the most inevitable of genres for their first novels: the detective story or thriller. Moore's *Fieldwork* (Women's Press, 191 pages, 95¢ paper) and Gough's *The Goldfish Bowl* (Gollancz, 186 pages, \$22.95 cloth), both set in Vancouver, are competently written works of fiction, although neither sparkles as a gem of the genre. Yet these are decent debuts, written by people who take some care for language and may even recognize that fiction is an art, not the literary equivalent of Trivial Pursuit. Read together, *Fieldwork* and *The Goldfish Bowl* raise some interesting questions as to the way detective fiction is currently being shaped by the realities of gender.

*Fieldwork* is "ot so much a detective story as the stage set and *dramatis personae* for one. Marsha Lewis is a" engaging heroine — a 28-year-old single mother, a top-notch graduate student in urban anthropology, doing a field assignment for criminology class, and a moderate as opposed to radical Feminist, hopelessly on the look-out for health-food items in the fast-food joints her detective work forces her to frequent. Even more engaging than Marsha is her plummy Aunt Ruby, who looks after Marsha's young daughter, Anna, while she's on the beat. Marsha's task is to be a" observer on a homicide case — the murder of a middle-aged breast surgeon — in which the prime suspects are the

members of a women's health organization.

What's particularly good about Moore's text is the tension it creates between Marsha's constrained association with the homicide team (it consists of two me" who are both unsympathetic and ignorant of the women's movement) and her urge to take the appropriate, innovative action she knows is needed to catch the killer. *Fieldwork* is not suspenseful in the usual whodunit way — what will interest readers is the way they are brought to recognize that any one of a large group of people would have had ample reason to murder. The list of suspects becomes, in fact, much more enthralling than the eventual discovery of the killer. There's a refreshing lack of gratuitous and titillating violence and a rewarding sense of relationship — between Ruby and Marsha and Anna, and between Marsha and Prank Martinelli, the cop to whom she's reluctantly attracted. We are even made to care for a "umber of the suspects, blubbering Lily and furious Jill Clark, the ex-model whom the murder victim mutilated in surgery.

What *Fieldwork* needs, however, is more of the suspenseful and skilful plotting that makes those little hairs stand up on the back of your neck; perhaps Moore's next novel will produce that. At any rate, one wants to see much more of Marsha, Anna, and Aunt Ruby. They make a delightful extended-family protagonist, a welcome change from the regulation macho copper or *femme fatale* investigator.

*The Goldfish Bowl* is a much more orthodox thriller. It gives us the man's world of crime — a sniper with the kind of gun that blows holes as big as grapefruits in his prey: at least eight gruesomely dispatched victims (one tends to lose track of them all); a laconic, tough, but vulnerable hero, Jack Willows; and a gorgeous, brainy, fearless co-investigator, Claire Parker. Thrown in for no apparent reason are a snip of a porno film, a glimpse of bare nipples in a taxi, and an erotic Fantasy.

Contrary to Moore, Gough gives us no more than the barest bones of either of his investigators' private lives — we get no sense of why they've chose" this singularly unattractive profession nor whether they possess any ideas or feelings about crime and justice. The motivation of his out-in-left-field killer is so sketchy it simply isn't convincing. The suspense Gough so successfully creates in his first chapters inevitably dissipates as the serial killings go on and on and on, in the same old way.

What does make this book work, though, is another staple of the thriller genre — the realization of "mod and atmosphere particular to a chose" locale. Vancouver lives and breathed — and yes, it rains — in this novel; one hopes that Gough's next thriller, advertised on the jacket of *The Goldfish Bowl*, is as good on ambience as his first, and that it is significantly better on plot and characterization.

*Children of Byzantium*, by Katherine Vlassie (Cormorant Books, 120 pages,

\$9.95 paper), is not so much a novel as a sequence of eight short fictions all dealing with related members of an immigrant Greek family in western Canada, over a period that spans the two world wars. There is a winning delicacy and naturalness to Vlassie's narrative: one is impressed not so much by her art as by her having found exactly what, as a writer, she needs to say—and by her having, for the most part, said it with freshness, directness, and simplicity. The stories that feature the girl Eleni as a young bride are as haunting in their portrayal of insistent innocence and too-rapidly acquired wisdom as is the extraordinary portrait featured on the cover of this book.

So beautifully is Eleni sketched in the first few fictions of the sequence that the reader is inevitably disappointed by the latter half of *Children of Byzantium*, when she disappears from any intimate view. "A Props Goodbye," the finale of this volume, contains a wonderful set piece—the coming-into-voice of Eleni's mature self, expressed in her reasoned and passionate resentment of her husband's having kept her in ignorance all her married life. But one feels cheated by this articulation: it is too much, too late, and too soon. It's at this point that one wishes *Children of Byzantium* had taken the form of a novel, keeping all the spareness

and lightness of narrative touch the short fictions possess but giving us a larger fictive world, one in which so fine a character as Eleni could have found full voice and scope.

The fictive world created in Seán Virgo's *opus maximus*, *Selakhi* (Exile Editions, 338 pages, U6.95 cloth), is mythic in form, intent, and ambition. This column is not the appropriate place to review a work that is not a debut but rather an apotheosis; nevertheless, it will serve to call attention to what can tightly be celebrated as a miracle in our midst, the creation of a work of literature that can be compared to Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* in the scope and passion of its art.

Virgo has reincarnated Arthur Rimbaud, that *génie terrible* of late 19th-century poetry, in the person of Darien Hughes, a 17-year-old English schoolboy with an obsessive appetite for the destructive element, for the forbidden experiences that will bring about that "systematic disordering of the senses" which was Rimbaud's chief poetic project. A new language, a new literature, a new world were to be the results, with the poet possessed of godlike powers and knowledge.

Rimbaud, a brilliant schoolboy, declared himself an outlaw and outcast

at the age of 17: for the next two years he literally lay down in and drank of the mire. The poems born of an experience that was the execration and denial of all the pieties and virtues not just of bourgeois but of civilized society were devastating, the literary equivalents of thunderbolts and lightning storms, and the adolescent Rimbaud was acclaimed as one of the most important French poets of his time. Yet at 19 he turned his back on poetry and Paris to take to the roads as a vagabond: he ended up in Africa, trafficking in arms, ivory, and slaves, before a gangrenous wound dispatched him back to France, to the embrace of the Catholicism he'd reviled in his adolescence and to death in delirium.

I recount Rimbaud's career in such skeletal form because *Selakhi* is in so many respects an intensely faithful recreation of it. Darien Hughes runs away from his father's stiff-upper-lippish house — he's a DCO on a colonial tropical island — to the purely savage island of Selakhi. Having lost all his books, he proceeds to build himself a shelter in the wilds and fill his notebook with revelations that derive both from his experience of the fertile heart of this illuminating darkness into which he's cast himself and from his memories of England, his family, the loathsome school to which he was sent,

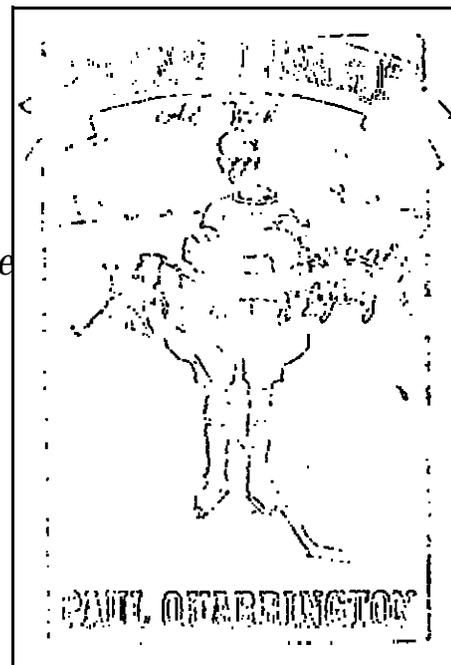
*"Clicks like a Gretzky pass..." \**

"Quarrington does for hockey what Ring Lardner did for baseball — he raises the vernacular idiom to the level of literary art ... A genuine joy to read."

*\*Montreal Gazette*

"King Leary, who narrates the story, is one of the most engaging and fully realized characters in recent fiction, and his colorful, inventive language is addictive ... A great deal of fun."

William French, *The Globe and Mail*



\$19.95

DOUBLEDAY CANADA

and the people he has loved, chief among them the Verlaine-like painter, Sandy Woolman. Darien loses his virginity in all possible ways, participating in the ritual murder of an Islander and casting him into the sea for the sharks to devour. He himself falls prey to fever and falls, whether literally or figuratively, into the same shark-tom, blood-tormented sea.

*Selakhi* is a novel that, like *Under the Volcano*, must be read several times in order for the reader to comprehend its allusive complexity and the intricacy of

its symbolic patterning. But the power and energy, the eye-splattering vision of its prose, seize one immediately. It is not easy to read — it is not so much a narrative as an immense Sargasso Sea of language and learning plunged full fathom five and turned into something magically rich, surpassingly strange. The reservations I have, on a first reading, about the actual structuring of the last part of the novel and, more important, of the manner in which Virgo treats — or perhaps funks — Rimbaud's anni-

hilating rejection of poetry, his turning to colonial greed, and his returning to the faith of his fathers seem niggardly compared to my wonder and delight in this fiction that declares itself "an arch conspiracy, a sinuous gift of the apple, the passkey to godhood/head." It is sacred and obscene. enormous and infinitesimal — it is language and imagination transfigured in a marriage of heaven and hell; one of the most demanding, difficult, compelling works of fiction it will be a reader's privilege to encounter. □

## INTERVIEW

# Ernst Havemann

'I see my stories as a sad commentary, not as militant propaganda. I'm sorry about that, because it's a situation that needs militant propaganda'

By Irene Mock

**B**ORN IN ZULULAND, South Africa, in 1918 and educated in Natal, Ernst Havemann moved to Canada in 1978, and began taking creative writing courses at the David Thompson University Centre in Nelson, B.C. Since then his short stories have appeared in such magazines as *The Atlantic*, *Saturday Night*, *Grand Street*, and *Wascana Review* and have recently been collected in his first book, *Bloodsong and Other Stories of South Africa* (Houghton Mifflin/Thomas Allen), which is scheduled for British, French, and German editions next year. Three times a winner of the CBC's literary contest, Havemann still lives in Nelson, where he was interviewed by Irene Mock:

**Books in Canada:** *Many of your stories* portray close bonds between blacks and

Ernst Havemann

*whites that are thwarted or destroyed by racial war. What was it like for you growing up in South Africa?*

**Ernst Havemann:** I grew up in the 1920s when Africans in Zululand still wore skins and were half-naked. It was the kind of society one doesn't think of in this century. All men carried two sticks. They were meant for fighting, on the expectation they might have to fight any time. Zulu society was quick to anger; people had strong self-images. I grew up on a farm, and my playmates were mostly Zulu children. The farm labour was of course Zulu. They petted me and spoiled me and talked to me. I could go along watching somebody doing his job stumping trees or ploughing and no one would ever shoo me away. Zulus are terribly fond of kids. I remember their horror when they found out that a missionary spanked his children — after that they wouldn't go to his church.

**BiC:** So you weren't aware of a colour bar?

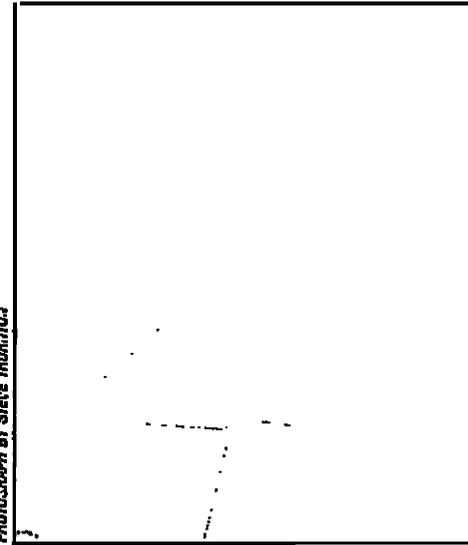
**Havemann:** Well, because I was white I was privileged. I was the landowner's son, the little master, but people were by nature very kind. They would take me home to the native reserve, and so I saw people in their homes and stayed there. When I was 12 or so I would sometimes go overnight. It was only in adolescence that I became aware that I was supposed to be superior; then the quality of ease that had existed, which you might call brotherhood, was lost, partly because it wasn't the done thing for a young man to have black friends of his own age. After the war, when I was dealing with African administration, I did have a few mature black friends. One of my cherished souvenirs is an autographed photograph of the Zulu royal family in-

scribed, "To our friend and a friend of our Zulu people." Another of my friends was Albert Luthuli, who subsequently became a Nobel Peace Prizewinner. At that stage, though, people like Luthuli didn't seem to be at all revolutionary or even militant, except in very modest amounts. The more I look back, the more distressing it is to realize how things have deteriorated under the apartheid system.

**BiC:** What led to your job in African administration and, finally, your rejection of it?

**Havemann:** I had gone to a little village school of 150 kids or thereabouts, then to university in Natal. Then the war came, and I joined the army and went to Libya and Egypt. During the course of the war South African Railways, a state concern that also dealt with harbours, were having a lot of trouble with their black labour. Constant strikes held up shipping, which was important because of the war, and the authorities were looking around for someone to advise their general manager. My colonel suggested me, so I was released from the army to go off to work for the railroads. The strikes stopped in a couple of months, merely because I got people talking and got the management to recognize the black unions.

I went from there to become the head of native administration in Durban, but this was just at the time when the Afrikaner Nationalist government took over, beginning apartheid, and things got more and more difficult for an African administrator. You had to be wholeheartedly for apartheid or else you were in trouble, so I was glad to leave and join Shell Petroleum, who absorbed me into their international staff. I worked and travelled all over the world — Israel, East



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE MORITZ

Africa. New York, London. I had a very interesting time.

**BiC:** *Why did you come to Canada?*

**Havemaaa:** It's the most civilized place one could go. I have **one son** and a limited number of grandchildren. When my son immigrated here to **take up a professorship** in Regina, my **wife** and I decided to come loo. **We** chose Nelson because its beautiful **and the fishing** was good and — this is the **thing** that amuses my son **and people in Regina** — **it was the nearest nice place lo Regina I could find.** And there was also David Thompson **Univ-ersky Centre.**

**BiC:** *You came quite late to writing — after retirement. How did you begin writing stories?*

**Havemann:** *I started going lo writing classes much the same way as someone might go to yoga or pottery classes. I was interested, but had no real expectations. At that time I wrote satirical verses, which I liked; I still think it fun to wile them. But I found myself in a class at DTUC that was writing prose fiction, so I started writing prose too. I owe people like Fred Wah a great deal because he encouraged my writing, and David McFadden and John Newlove, who were both good critics. Then we had Clark Blaise and Audrey Thomas, who were not only fine writers but who also spent a lot of time analysing what made good stories. I really owe those two instructors a great deal. I'm fortunate in having groups of writing friends in Nelson. What they say about a draft usually influences me a great deal. I sometimes wonder whether the byline of a story shouldn't be "Ernst Havemann and friends."*

**BiC:** *Your stories convey a strong sense of character as well as compelling situations. Do you generally start with people or with situations?*

**Havemaaa:** Mostly I begin with situations. Like, suppose a man's boyhood friend turns out to be a **crook** — or a **real revolutionary.** This is one of my stories. I then **work at the character.** As **one writes,** one is **saying,** What kind of person would get himself into **this situation?** They're stories about people primarily. I often find myself changing the situation **in the course of the yam** if **the nature of the people** dictates a different direction.

**BiC:** *Do you consider your stories to be about the human condition or about the South African political situation?*

**Havemann:** *The characters' problems are the human condition, but the context in which one is developing them is the South African political situation. I choose it (a) because I know it; (b) because it's with me in the sense that I'm constantly aware of **and** distressed by it; and (c) because this **clash of cultures and ideas and goals** is itself interesting, which makes it easier to **write the story.** I think Clark **Blaise***

*said something similar — that the most interesting situations occur at the margins of two cultures.*

**BiC:** *In several of your stories — I'm thinking of "Death of a Nation" and "Incident et Mhlaba Jail" — the main character, who is white, befriends a black man or women involuntarily. Can you talk about this?*

**Havemann:** *It's interesting that that's your interpretation. Those two stories are situations where I'm hinting rather than describing the position of the liberal white South African whose heart is in the right place and who is prepared to go to a certain distance in expressing his liberalism, but not too far. Hundreds of thousands of white South Africans are in that situation.*

**BiC:** *Are these stories polemics?*

**Havemann:** *No. I could almost wish them was a more positive message coming out of them. I see them as a sad commentary, not as militant propaganda. I'm sorry about that, because I think it's a situation that needs militant propaganda.*

**BiC:** *I'm interested in the humour in your stories. In particular in "A Form at Raraba," where there's such a ploy on words and ironic twist at the end.*

**Havemann:** *I don't set out to be funny. I set out to write yams about people in tense situations. There is possibly some cynical humour in the situations themselves, but I think the humour that readers find in my stories chiefly arises from the fact that I often get very fond of my characters and half sham their ineffectual or embarrassed or topsy-turvy reactions to the situations they find themselves in. Someone said, "Be kind lo your characters because one of them might turn out to be you." It's true.*

**BiC:** *Do you plan to continue writing stories?*

**Havemann:** *Well, I keep on writing stories because that is what I know how to do. But I would like to play around with other literary forms. I wrote a little play for the CBC years ago that worked, and I would like to write more drama, but so far it hasn't worked out. I've spent so much time going lo play-wiling lectures and courses that I know all about how to write drama but never do. Drama interests me because it is a non-narrative way of writing a narrative. One is seeing events happening and not describing what is happening.*

**BiC:** *Am you interested in writing a novel? Your stories suggest a whole range of conflicting attitudes and inconclusive situations.*

**Havemaaa:** *Isn't everyone writing a novel? The great thing about a novel is that you can use in a single container a great variety of thoughts and experiences, so it can be legitimately rich and complex. I suppose it's like having half-a-dozen*

short stories **all intertwined** — a lot of situations that one would have liked to use but that don't lend themselves to the quite **rigid** discipline and simplicity of the short story. But no, I'm not seriously working on a novel even though I've got a lot of material that could be harmonized into one.

**BiC:** *Will Bloodsong be published in South Africa?*

**Havemann:** *The U.K. edition will be on sale there. The intriguing question is whether any South African publisher will be interested enough to want an Afrikaans edition. I would be tremendously pleased if that happened. Though I am now far more fluent in English. Afrikaans is my mother tongue and is the mother tongue of many of my heroes and villains. □*

## RECOMMENDED

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

### FICTION

*Memory Board,* by Jane Rule, Macmillan. Traditional in form but not in subject, Rule's novel — which turns on the relationship between a recently widowed man and his lesbian twin — is essential reading for anyone who has failed to understand a sibling, for anyone confused by sexuality, for anyone confused by aging.

### NON-FICTION

*To Kill a Rabbi,* by Reuben Slonim, ECW Press. Notorious for his unpopular stands, Rabbi Slonim's only sin was that he followed his conscience instead of the "neatness and order" of Judaism. Apparently afraid of controversy, 20 publishers rejected these remarkable memoirs before ECW found the courage to publish them.

### POETRY

*Behind the Orchestra,* by Renato Trujillo, Fiddlehead Poetry Books/Goose Lane Editions. Born in Chile, the 45-year-old Trujillo writes with the wisdom of experience. His work is free of political posturing and stagy effects, and this first collection in English is often lo be admired for its graceful verse.

## 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:

*Appels Stories,* by Sandra Birdsell, Turnstone.  
*Allan Maclean: Jacobite General,* by Mar Beacock Fryer, Dundurn Press.  
*The Anne of Green Gables Storybook,* Firefly Books.  
*Beyond the Blue Mountains: An Autobiography,* by George Woodcock, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.  
*Blind Trust: Inside the Steinar Stevens Affair,* by Rod McQueen, Macmillan.  
*British Columbia: Its Resources and People,* edited by Charles N. Forward, University of Victoria.  
*Canada Not For Sale: The Case Against Free Trade,* General.

Canada-U.S. Free Trade, by D.L. McLachlan, Detsell.  
 Canadian-American Free Trade, edited by A.R. Riggs and Tom Veik, Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
 Canadian Studies on Hungarians, 1836-1936, by John P. Miska, Canadian Plains Research Centre.  
 China: Lives An Oral History of Contemporary China, by Zhang Xiaolin and Sang Ye, Irwin.  
 Cold as a Day Street Barber's Heart, by Chris Thain, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
 A Dasher Magic, by Michael Bedard, Collier Macmillan.  
 The Dkarming of Canada, by John Hasek, Key Porter.  
 Essays on New France, by W.J. Eccles, Oxford.  
 Explore Muchotla, by Susan Pryke, Boston Mills.  
 First Class Canada, by Mechtild Hoppenrath and Charles Oberdorf, Collins.  
 First Days, Fighting Days Women in Manitoba History, edited by Mary Kincaid, Canadian Plains Research Centre.  
 Four Doors by Four Artists, Dromilit Books.  
 Gable: The Editorial Cartoons of Brian Gable, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
 Gorilla in the Garage and Other Stories, by Don Hepworth, Boston Mills Press.  
 Hard Dampkins: My Life on the Line, by Bob White, M&S.  
 Hard Confections, by Alexandre L. Amorimov, Turnstone.

Head and Heart: Financial Strategies for Smart Women, by Arthur B.C. Drache and Susan Weidman Schneider, Macmillan.  
 The Heart of Joshua, by Dawn Winkelman Fuller, U of T Press.  
 The High Price of Health, by Geoffrey York, Lorimer.  
 How to Make Money Trading Stocks & Commodities, by George R. Sranko, Quantum Communications.  
 The Ice Eaters, by Bruce Allan Powe, Lester & Orpen Dennys.  
 The Insider: Government, Business and the Lobbyists, by John Sawatsky, M & S.  
 The Iran Contra Connection, by Jonathan-Marshall et al., Black Rose Books.  
 Is God a Racist, by Stanley R. Barrett, U of T Press.  
 Life, Love and Unions, by Helen Potrebenco, Lazara Publications.  
 The Life of a River, by Andy Russell, M & S.  
 Lisa, by Carl Matas, Lester & Orpen Dennys.  
 Living and Working with Bereavement, by Elsie Palmer and Jill Wait, Detsell.  
 Le Live Tout Ne, by Kathy Stinson, illustrated by Heather Collins, Annick.  
 The Mackenzie Panels, by Mark Frank, Red Robin Press.

Mortal Sin, by Anna Porter, Irwin.  
 Paris for Profit, by Leslie Bella, Harvest House.  
 Pay Cheques and Picket Lines, by Claire Mackay, Kids Can Press.  
 The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F.R. Scott, by Sandra Djwa, M & S.  
 Prime Time at Ten, by Knowlton Nash, M & S.  
 OEW: Canada's First Superhighway, by Robert M. Stamp, Boston Mills Press.  
 Resource Rents and Public Policy in Western Canada, edited by Thomas Guston and John Richards, Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
 Ringmaster, by David Gurr, M & S.  
 The Riot at Christie Pits, by Cyril H. Levitt and William Shaflir, Lester & Orpen Dennys.  
 Sambandas and Fanfares, by Giuseppe Minasi, Zero Press.  
 Schmucks Appeal: More Mennonite Country Cooking, by Edna Staebler, M & S.  
 Songs for All Seasons, by Brad McCrorie, Doubleday.  
 Space, by Christopher G. Tramp, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.  
 Spearhead to Victory: Canada and the Great War, by Daniel G. Dancocks, Harig.  
 Still Running, edited by Joy Parr, Queen's University Alumni Association.  
 The Supersconscious World, by Peter Reveen, Eden Press.  
 The Telling of Lies, by Timothy Findley, Penguin.  
 To Win a Nineswar War, by Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, Black Rose Books.  
 Transfigurations, by Janice Kulyk Kefer, Ragweed.  
 Trooper in the Far North-West, by John George Donkin, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
 True Crime Stories, by Max Haines, Toronto Sun.  
 The Umberto Menghi Seafood Cookbook, Key Porter.  
 Under Eastern Eyes: A Critical Reading of Maritime Fiction, by Janice Kulyk Kefer, University of Toronto Press.  
 Utensils Paradise, by Richard Truhlar, Aya Press.  
 The Violent Years of Maggie MacDonald, Prentice-Hall.  
 The Vision and the Game: Making the Canadian Constitution, by Leonard Cohen et al., Detsell.  
 Voices from the Vault, edited by Devendra P. Varma, Key Porter.  
 What's in a Name?, by Pauline Carey, illustrated by Lee Munroe, Aya Press.  
 White Circus, by Ken Read, Key Porter.  
 White Light, by Brian DeJoria, Aya Press.  
 Who's in Charge?: The Mixed Ownership Corporation in Canada, by Stephen Brooks, Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
 Windsor Hassle, by Paul K. Willis, CBC Enterprises.  
 A Woman and Catholicism, by Sheelagh Conway, Paper-Jacks.  
 Women and Education, by Jane Gaskell and Arlene McLaren, Detsell.

## CANWIT NO. 125

WITH THE SPECTRE of free trade looming, our old friends at McClarkan & Newspider have been preparing for the even greater domination of our culture by American influences. Recently they have issued the first three books in their North American Library series, in which famous Americans have collaborated with Canadian writers (sometimes posthumously) to bring their work closer to U.S. standards. The titles: As *for Me and My Mouse*, by Sinclair Ross and Walt Disney; *The Divinest*, by Margaret Laurence and Liberace; and *Bare*, by Marian Engel and Hugh Hefner. Contestants are invited to provide collaborationist titles of similarly questionable value. The prize is a *Books in Canada* sweatshirt. **Deadline: February 1.** Address: **CanWit No. 125, Books in Canada, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.**

### Results of CanWit No. 123

A *BOOKS IN CANADA* sweatshirt goes to Barry Baldwin of Calgary, whose science-fiction plot summaries for Canadian books include:

*Shrug: Trudeau in Power*, by Walter Stewart. A weird alien, incubated in Montreal, uses its superior intellect to destroy Canada. Happily, its metabolism is awakened by exposure to the poisonous Ottawa atmosphere, causing it to withdraw periodically, thereby giving its desperate subjects hope of survival.

*Post Mortem: Why Canada's Mail Won't Move*, by David Stewart-Patterson. A mysterious paralyzing disease, its symptoms so awful that no one dares attempt a cure.

grips one of the country's major nerve centres and threatens to absorb and destroy the land.

No Kidding: *Inside the World of Teenage Girls*, by Myrna Kostash. Zombies surround and invade shopping centres across Canada. Soon to be a major motion picture by George Romero.

*Survival*, by Margaret Atwood. On a planet so cold and barren that life as it is known on earth seems impossible, one intrepid woman discovers its black secret and attempts to rescue the creatures that lurk there.

*Madame Benoit's Cookbook*, by Jehane Benoit. A friendly-looking witch devises strange foods with promises of long life and health for those who consume them. But one day a curious and persistent English journalist discovers the true and terrifying nature of *pissenlit* and *tourtière*.

### Honourable mentions:

*Roughing It in the Bush*, by Susanna Moodie. What was it that lurked out there just beyond the edge of the clearing? Was it related to those humanoids who had landed at the next outpost, or was it related in some way to the sinister green that seemed to be everywhere on this alien planet?

-Mary Lu MacDonald, Halifax

*What's Bred in the Bone*, by Robertson Davies. A medical scientist discovers that microscopic space aliens have infiltrated patients during bone-marrow transplants.

*The Invention of the World*, by Jack Hodgins. Teenagers from the parallel antimatter universe accidentally set off the Big Bang during a birthday party fireworks display.

-D.A. Laidlaw, West Hill, Ont.



## CLASSIFIED

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

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**WANTED:** information, letters or papers concerning or by Graeme Taylor of Montreal who lived in Pads with John Glassco. Box 19 BIC.

**WRITERS' GROUP** seeks new members. Informal writers' group meeting in Toronto bi-weekly invites submissions. Send samples of writing plus a brief description of yourself to **Box 17 Books in Canada.**

## SOLUTION TO CANLIT ACROSTIC NO. 10

Long, suspicious negotiations then to cash my cheque and extort some change from it. Then a brief wangle when I discovered the gas stove had only one functioning burner. But finally I was blissfully, blessedly alone. The place was my empire. The door was locked.

- Constance Beresford-Howe, *The Book of Eve* (Macmillan)

# CanLit acrostic no. 11

By Mary D. Trainer

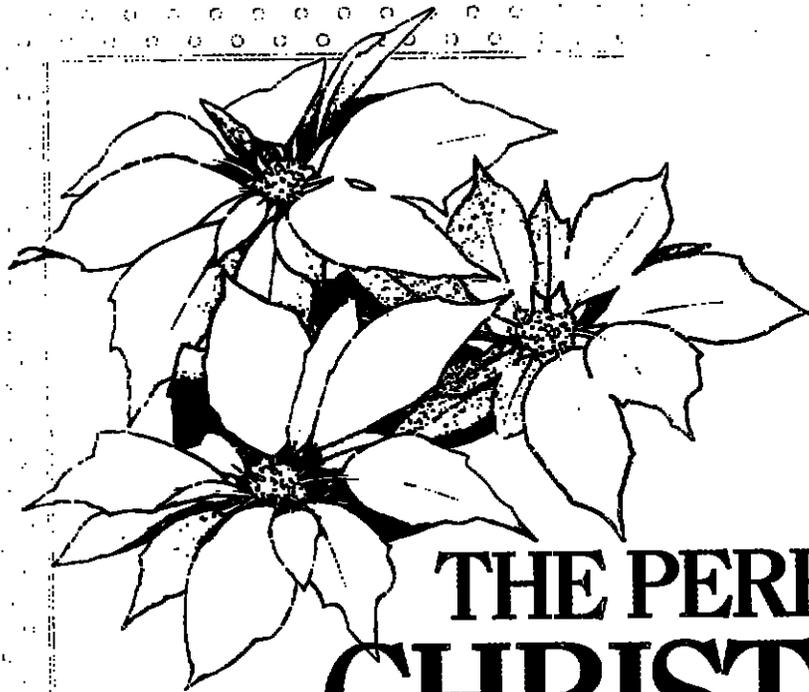
	1	F2	S3	E	4	K5	T6	X7	L8	9	B10	S11	O12	X13	C14	U					
15	A16	R17	T18	N	19	J20	U21	Z22	G	23	D24	K25	U26	S	27	P28	O	29	J		
30	Y31	X32	N33	R34	S35	H	36	Q37	K38	L	39	C40	A	41	T42	X43	C44	Z45	W46	R	
47	Y48	L49	J50	D	51	R52	H	53	T54	H	55	S56	Y57	E58	Q	59	C60	V61	G		
62	A63	Y	64	S65	O66	R67	D	68	W69	H70	K71	E	72	M73	AA74	V75	A76	Z		77	T
78	S	79	D80	N	81	K82	V83	F84	S85	Q86	L	87	A88	T89	AA	90	V91	H92	O93	F	
94	C95	R	96	B97	H98	B99	T	100	V101	Y102	R	103	J104	G105	B106	Z107	H108	L109	S110	C	
111	R	112	K113	P114	R115	AA116	A117	B	118	X119	R	120	F	121	X122	U123	F124	S125	A126	T	
127	V128	J129	L	130	S131	K132	T133	R134	Y135	C136	S137	U	138	G139	K140	A141	V142	C		143	J
144	N	145	A146	R147	B148	S149	H150	N151	V	152	X153	F154	T155	J156	H157	R	158	A159	Q160	I	
161	Y162	AA163	Z164	K	165	U166	C167	S168	D	169	T170	V171	Z172	K173	S	174	Z175	B		176	
176	A177	I178	Q179	E180	V181	S182	Y	183	N184	D185	V186	P187	C188	R	189	B190	U	191	J192	T	
193	H194	I3	S195	F196	K197	X198	V	199	V	200	W201	E202	G203	B204	U	205	K206	R207	T208	J	

When properly filled in, the letters in the box form a quotation from a Canadian book. 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. 10 appears on page 41.

- A. Acclaimed dramatist: 2 wds. 15 153 62 75 145 140 125 87 178  
116 40
- B. Silver medal winner in boxing, 1984 189 175 203 98 9 147 98 105 117
- C. Neck projection: 2 wds. 135 110 167 39 142 59 94 43 13  
168
- D. Alberta publishing company 50 67 23 184 168 79
- E. Festival of Canadian plays 201 3 71 57 178
- F. Forage for dairy cattle 93 168 123 120 153 83 1
- G. Tough person 104 202 138 61 22
- H. Extravagant story: 2 wds. 52 149 193 69 91 35 97 156 54
- I. Type of poem 177 160 8
- J. Constitution Act provision: 2 wds. 155 29 19 143 128 103 49 181 208
- K. History of the Great Depression: 3 wds. 205 70 37 197 139 112 4 164 24  
131 172 81
- L. Simple song 39 48 103 129 85

- M. Inquire 72 7 194
- N. Jazz musician 144 107 183 32 80 150 18
- O. Low sandy island 92 65 28
- P. Urchin 185 27 113
- Q. Neat and tidy 159 38 178 85 58
- R. Area around western end of Lake Ontario: 2 wds. 133 114 188 102 33 119 206 16 66  
46 111 157 148 51 85
- S. Type of political corruption: 2 wds. 185 181 124 2 109 28 148 64 173  
78 84 167 55 130 10 34 188
- T. Surgeon, teacher, and propagandist: 2 wds. 192 154 128 53 207 88 17 41 169  
5 77 132 99
- U. Curling competition: 2 wds. 204 20 137 165 180 122 14 25
- V. Anna Porter novel: 2 wds. 170 180 141 74 127 80 82 151 80  
185 189 100
- W. 7th letter of the Greek alphabet 45 68 200
- X. Remove poison 121 188 12 6 42 118 152 31
- Y. Kain partner 30 58 182 134 47 161 83 101
- Z. Fisherman's warning: 2 wds. 44 21 163 106 174 78 171
- AA. \_\_\_\_\_ Creek Mines (Ontario copper refinery) 115 162 73 89



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