

THE BEST BOOKS OF 1994: OUR EDITORS' CHOICE

A National Review

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BOOKS IN CANADA



JOHN
RAE AND SAUL
Uncommon Sense
a profile of a man in town

*Books for Cooks, Kids,
Coffee-Tables & Sports Fans*

02001



I learned

It was a disturbing vision of discrimination. I glimpsed more hard reality with Terry Jordan.

to see in black

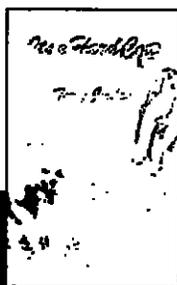
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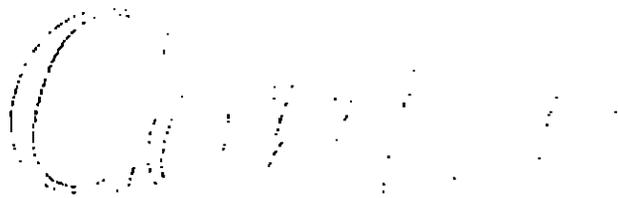
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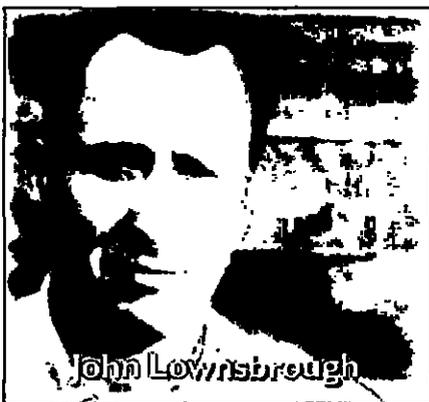
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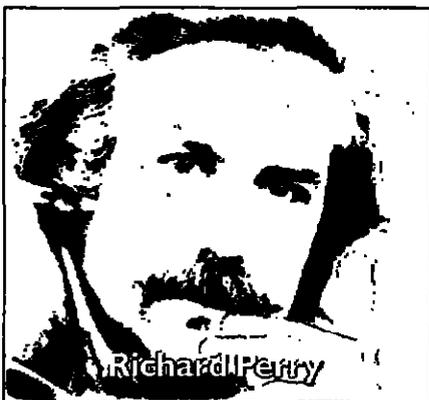
Contributors



Pat Barclay



John Lownsbrough



Richard Perry



Rhea Tregobov

Donald Harman Akenson's latest book is *Conor* (McGill-Queen's), a biography of Conor Cruise O'Brien. Clara Albert is a Toronto writer and occasional cook. Rob Allen is a Toronto photographer. From 1977 to 1983 John Ayre was the dance critic for *Madean's*; he is the author of *Northrop Frye* (Random House). Pat Barclay is a frequent contributor to these pages; she lives on Salt Spring Island, B.C. Diana Brebner's *The Golden Lotus* (Netherlandic) won the Pat Lowther Award last year; her new book of poetry, *Flora & Fauna*, will be published next spring by Netherlandic. Roger Burford Mason's most recent book is *The Beaver Picture and Other Stories* (Hounslow). Anne Cimon's latest book is *No Country for Women* (Mosaic), a collection of poetry. John Doyle is a Toronto writer. Gary Draper is the librarian at the University of St. Jerome's College in Waterloo, Ont. Louise Fabiani is an Ottawa writer. Brian Fawcett's most recent book is *Gender Wars* (Somerville House). Maureen McCallum Garvie is a writer living in Kingston, Ont. George Kaufman teaches at a high school in Oshawa, Ont. John Lownsbrough is a Toronto journalist. Elizabeth Mitchell and Donna Nurse are freelance writers living in Toronto. Denyse O'Leary is a Toronto editor and writer. Richard Perry teaches in the visual arts department of York University. Fred Sharpe is a Toronto puzzle enthusiast. Margaret Sweatman is the author of *Fox* (Turnstone); she lives in Winnipeg. Eva Tihanyi is a writer living in Welland, Ont. Rhea Tregobov's new collection of poetry, *Mapping the Chaos*, will be published by Véhicule next spring. Lynne Van Luven teaches journalism at Carleton University. Maurice Vellekoop is a Toronto illustrator; his work appears regularly in *Drawn and Quarterly*. Joel Yanofsky is a writer living in Laval, Que. O

BOOKS IN CANADA

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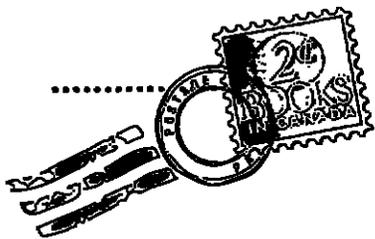
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THE ASSISTANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO
THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE,
TOURISM AND RECREATION IS ACKNOWLEDGED



Letters

Falling Short

MICHAEL COREN'S RAGGING of Karl Marx, Alan Paton, H. G. Wells, and others for falling short of socialist sainthood in their private lives reveals a childish idea I thought endemic only to the more naïve Left: that only pure origins give good results. By Coren's lights we should prefer a brutal, but sincere, fascist to a progressive who does good in public but remains flawed at home. Let us now praise Augusto Pinochet. As for his contention that "authentic" conservatives are forthright through belief in Rightish fancies like "natural law," "instinctive correctness," and such, I ask him only to name these old-line paragons. Were they in the Mulroney, Reagan, Nixon, or Major cabinets?

Scott Ellis
Winnipeg

Shoddy Dismissal

HAVING JUST REREAD SHERYL Halpern's review of my book of literary criticism, *Wild Mother Dancing: Maternal Narrative in Canadian Literature* (Brief Reviews, Summer), I feel not only miffed and annoyed as I did the first time, but angry. Halpern criticizes my book for reading "like the Ph.D. dissertation it once was." She charges the book with "criticspeak" and suggests "it is a specialist's book." On the other hand, she admits that I occasionally "make the reader rage and exult [about texts and gender politics]," a rather dramatic feat to pull off in criticspeak!

I find it outrageous that *Books in Canada* allows such a shoddy and easy dismissal of academic work by women. I have seen a similar anti-intellectual bias in reviews of other academic books by women writers in your magazine. Could it be that *Books in Canada* encourages anti-intellectualism

among its readers, particularly when it is women doing the intellectual work?

I would like your readers to know that *Wild Mother Dancing* has been receiving intensely enthusiastic responses and reviews in many different contexts. Bridging the gap that exists in our culture between academic and non-academic modes of experience and discourse was one of the goals of this book, and it seems to have been successful, Halpern's facetious comments notwithstanding. Every person on my dissertation committee commented on its engaging writing style: many people both in and outside the academy have told me how "moved" they were by my argument.

As for focusing on daughter stories "remembering and recreating their mothers" for much of the book, I can only say to Halpern: go read the book again, and pay particular attention to my description of the way mothers and daughters are torn apart and turned against each other in patriarchy, and how that in itself becomes the most effective strategy for editing the maternal out of narrative.

Di Brandt
Winnipeg

The Importance of Form

WHILE I SYMPATHIZE WITH the reviewees Maurice Mierau savages in his October poetry column, I rejoice to concur with his insistence on the importance of poetic form, and his distinction between the intentions and uses of poetry and those of prose. I have been a poetry editor with Brick Books for seven years, and a poetry awards juror for four: good poets are nearly as scarce as nightingales' teeth, and too many of the rest appear to see the above distinction to lie solely in who determines the line endings, the writer or the typesetter.

Wordsworth says that poetry is the history and science of feeling. Music evokes emotion, and poetry is the art that connects us with our inner, non-verbal life through the musical, sensory use of language, as well as through the cognitive. It may be argued that the ecology of the soul cannot be tended at all through language, without the musical, prosodic skills of the poet.

One more quote: Pound says that poetry must be written *at least as well as* prose.

John Donlan
Vancouver

Not Exactly as Described

I WOULD LIKE TO CORRECT several inaccuracies in Maureen McCallum Garvie's review of my novel, *In the Language of Love* (First Novels, October). The epigraph with which Garvie begins her review does not appear in the published book. The main character, Joanna, does not move to the West and then return to Ontario: she moves from one Ontario city to another. The last chapter is not called "Fear": it is called "Afraid." There is nothing in the book about "being hit by a bus." The novel is not 320 pages, but 350 pages. Some of these are minor points of course. But one expects a reviewer to be accurate, if nothing else.

What is not such a minor point is Garvie's assertion that my novel was "a bid to take Schoemperlen closer to the pantheon of Atwood, Munro, Shields, and Gallant." Not exactly. It was just me writing a novel.

Diane Schoemperlen
Kingston, Ont.

Maureen McCallum Garvie replies: Advance copies of books come with warnings that reviewers should check any material quoted against the published volume — for good reason. Most of the inaccura-

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cies Diane Schoemperlen decries in my review of *In the Language of Love* arose from working with a manuscript at an unusually early stage in the publishing process. Unfortunately my review went to press before the bound book appeared.

But my description of Schoemperlen's accomplished first novel as a "bid" to take her "closer to the pantheon ..." is, as she rightly points out, another matter: of course she was writing, not bidding.

Some Are Born Great ...

I'M WRITING IN RESPONSE TO Rhea Tregobov's review of *Twelfth Night for Kids* (Children's Books, September), part of Black Moss Press's "Shakespeare Can Be Fun" series. The reviewer is put off by the fact that the authors — Lois Burdett and Christine Coburn — have reconstructed the text of the English bard into what she calls "execrable

galumphing couplets." If she had paid attention to what is made abundantly clear throughout the book, she would know that the two authors arrived at this text after working with grade two students. These kids are seven years old. The fact is that Lois Burdett, a teacher in Stratford, Ontario, has been working with teaching Shakespeare to grade two students for the past 25 years. It is no exaggeration to say that they know more about the English bard than most adults. Each year they prove this to the Stratford Festival. They correspond with the actors — and much of this is in evidence in their own handwriting throughout the book — and they draw pictures of Shakespeare and the characters in the play. And that work is scattered throughout this book. And when the spring comes around, these children put on a play for the professional Stratford cast of whatever is current at the festival. These are "little" kids, but when they get into that gymnasium of Hamlet Public School each spring, they bellow out the words without the aid of microphones. Just like the Stratford Festival actors! This year it was *Twelfth Night*, and the performance was based on this book. Burdett and Coburn have worked with the children and from that experience — and knowing what they could do — came up with these "galumphing couplets."

The fact is that Tregobov is in the minority. Besides the multitude of good reviews, both in the papers (*Toronto Star*, *London Free Press*, *Windsor Star*, *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, *Ottawa Citizen*, etc.) and on television, other grade two teachers throughout southern Ontario have bought the book, taken it back to their "little ones," and tried it out. And it works! They've written to us and told us! As David William, former artistic director of the Stratford Festival, says in his introduction, "Lois recognizes that children, properly guided, will take to Shakespeare's characters and stories like ducks to water: in the

process they find their inner voices, they collaborate, they improvise, they communicate: they roll back the frontiers of their lives and each other's."

Marty Gervais
Black Moss Press
Windsor, Ont.

Not in the Middle

MICHAEL COREN'S COLUMN about polarization (September) repeats a pernicious and very Canadian error: the yearning for "a middle, moderate, and correct path." This is precisely what has precipitated the "ignorant and splenetic solitudes" that are in evidence whenever a debating point is being made.

What we have is each side, perfectly aware that the *via media* will be the path eventually chosen, taking up practically indefensible arguments as bargaining stances. The problem is, today, that even the leaders of the various groups have come to believe in the cant they and their followers shout. Thus, there is no chance of satisfying either side, nor of ever solving or resolving an issue.

In England five years ago, a judge presiding over a child abuse inquiry opened the proceedings by calling for a search for the middle ground. Sadly, very few asked if the judge's role is not to find the right ground. That anyone can look for the middle in a child abuse inquiry shows what a huge task those hoping to resolve a situation in the arts, where standards are ill-defined to say the least, have taken on.

What we must hope for, in arts funding as in everything else, is a rigorously correct path. It will seldom be in the middle. Mr. Coren's five points are a good starting point for intelligent discussion of where we as a funding society might go. Those who reject his ideas out of hand are symptomatic of the problem and should be themselves dismissed out of hand.

R. John Hayes
Devon, Alta.

PROFILE/JOHN RALSTON SAUL

BY JOHN LOWNSBROUGH

Uncommon Sense

*John Ralston Saul aims to turn our turbulent times
into another age of enlightenment*





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Strength and Weakness

○ KAY. THERE'S GEMS AND coal in review mags like yours. October's gem as usual was Brian Fawcett, Canada's most underappreciated cultural guru. The coal lump was Robin Skelton's creaky crime-fiction review. Negative notes should say more than nothing, please. Also, Lord preserve us from the word "award," as in banal raves "Deverell deserves an award" and "like William Deverell, he should have an award."

I didn't read John Lawrence Reynolds's *Solitary Dancer*, but I did read Ernest Langford's *The Apple Eaters*. Sure, the latter isn't up there in crime-fiction Chandler heaven; few are. Still, it did seem an interesting addition to Vancouver-ambience crime fiction and touched on the intriguing history of Chinese doggedness and English hypocrisy in my home town. The protag-

onist Jimmy Sung seemed more poignant than boring. As for "embarrassing" prose, methinks Skelton is living an over-academic existence away from 99 per cent of far more embarrassing mass-market pulp.

Anyhow, I sure as hell don't want to read Pollyanna reviews (see October's Munro piece). But I do want weakness and strength, concisely and with wit. Keep on trucking, folks, but don't swerve to create senseless literary roadkill.

*Jim Herrington
Vancouver*

Musically Sound

□ FAIL TO SEE HOW SIR THOMAS Beecham's hyperbolic remarks of 1956, as quoted by Richard Perry (Brief Reviews, October), cast new light on Sir Ernest MacMillan's monumental contribution to Canada's musical life. Conductors usually praise the orchestra they are guest conducting. Beecham was

no exception. He mouthed platitudes to the locals to give Sir Ernest, who was to retire as conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at the end of the season, a good send-off and, probably, to help get a return engagement for himself. It was as simple as that.

As for MacMillan's orchestral interpretations, they were sound but not "special." My biography of MacMillan does deal at length with his conducting strengths and weaknesses. What were special were his performances of the *St. Matthew Passion*, *Messiah*, and — forgive me — the hilarious Christmas Boxes. I give these their due.

*Esra Schabas
Toronto*

Letters may be edited for length or to delete potentially libellous statements. Except in extraordinary circumstances, letters of more than 500 words will not be accepted for publication.

THE WRITER OUT IN THE REAL WORLD," WROTE JOHN RALSTON SAUL IN HIS MAGNUM opus *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*, "is living proof that the novel was, and could still be, something else." Something, at any rate, other than the "fly food" that, according to Saul, describes so much of contemporary fiction — indulgent, obscure, cut off from the "real world." (The rhetorical stance seems almost guaranteed to set many teeth on edge.) Practising what he preaches, John Ralston Saul, novelist and essayist-provocateur, has travelled with the Polisario rebels in North Africa, ventured into the jungle domain of the Shan warlords of Burma, wandered the back alleys of Bangkok.

"I'm very curious," he says, by way of explaining this proclivity for the exotic, often dangerous, locale. "It's sort of a joke to say I'm an old-fashioned existentialist."

In the tight little confluence of circles making up the world of CanLit, Saul is a bit of an anomaly. In part because his writing is international in scope (and 75 per cent of his earnings come from outside Canada); in part because of the role he has contrived for himself as author and social activist. (The French term *homme engagé* comes to mind.) Partly, too, because Saul's oratorical style, with its predilection for full-throttle invective, seems often of another time, if not place. This style, incidentally, can be quite imposing when allied with the physical presence: Saul is a tall man, slender, with aquiline features and pale blue eyes that flicker between fierceness and vulnerability. The hair that remains atop the smallish head converges in coppery tufts at the back. The face is reminiscent of one of those gentle-born worthies who gaze at us from the portraits of a Gainsborough or Reynolds.

Voltaire's Bastards was Saul's first volume of non-fiction. (It followed four novels: *The Birds of Prey*, *Baraka*, *The Next Best Thing*, and *The Paradise Eater*.) It sold well in its hard- and soft-cover incarnations and became a topic of discussion in both tony drawing rooms and student

cafeterias. Insightful and cranky both, it was a more-in-anger-than-in-sorrow treatise, 600 pages, about how reason in the West since Voltaire and the philosophical Enlightenment has become a deformed image of itself, harnessed as it is to the narrow ends of ruling élites. About how the jargon of the technocrat has subverted the spirit of inquiry and of common sense. Its success was enough, at any rate, to have encouraged a sequel — a sort of how-to offshoot called *The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense* published earlier this year by Viking. There are 300 entries, listed alphabetically under headings. "What I'm really doing in this," says Saul, "is going back to the dictionary-as-argument. Each time somebody says, 'We have to do this because of the global economy,' you can pull it out of your pocket and say, 'That's a load of —'" (Fly food). It should also come in handy for Saul himself, now that *Voltaire's Bastards* has made him a fixture on the international lecture circuit, where one can always use a snappy comeback line. One such lecture, at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., in February 1993, drew a crowd of 300 people despite iffy weather to hear Saul speak on "Why the experts are often wrong." Camille Paglia's generally favourable review of the book in the *Washington Post*

probably hadn't hurt but, as the broadcast journalist (and companion of John Ralston Saul) Adrienne Clarkson noted, "Washington is a place that's interested in power and that's what this book is about."

"A man you can call about a wide range of subjects and get a trenchant opinion," was how the *Washington Post* associate editor and chief foreign correspondent James Hoagland had introduced Saul. "If I want to know about the world's arms trade, it's John Ralston Saul I would call. If I want to know something about the world's drug trade, it's John Ralston Saul I would call." The Saul message that evening, however, was "show your doubt" — challenge the doctrines of inevitability proffered by the managers and bureaucrats. The experts.

It was a message that didn't totally captivate. At least one member of the audience ostentatiously hissed his dissatisfaction while exiting the auditorium. (Marching, as it happened, directly behind Clarkson, who gave no indication she heard.) The dissident wanted answers. Solutions. Show-your-doubt, for him, amounted to a cop-out. Saul is aware of that sort of response, though no less impatient with it. "They don't need me to come up with solutions," he says. "That's not a writer's role. Our job is to provide people with tools to give themselves power."

THE French translation of *Voltaire's Bastards* came out last fall and Saul is pleased at the reaction: he was also short-listed for the Prix Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an influential European award given for the best essay on contemporary thought — the first time an anglophone Canadian writer had been so recognized. Those critical of the book he tends to dismiss as the “scholastic” crowd, “the people who worry about ‘How many angels on the head of a pin.’” “To the extent that *Voltaire's Bastards* was reviewed by ideologues, or what I would call mediocre frightened aca-

London], Saul writes in the manner of a gentleman amateur. All too often historical events are selectively enlisted to buttress the tendentious thesis with which the author comes armed.

Without buying into either the substance or the tenor of Persky's claim, it can surely be said that a great part of the appeal of *Voltaire's Bastards* is that it offers an implicit validation of the “gentleman amateurs” out there who refuse to be co-opted by the conventional wisdom. And it's in



‘They don't need me to come up with solutions.

That's not a writer's role.

Our job is to provide people with tools to give themselves power.’

demics,” he'd told me on another occasion, “it would be hated because it was profoundly anti-ideological. To the extent that this book was received by someone independent, or confident in that they know there's much wrong with society, they'll be engaged.”

A number of reviewers appeared intrigued if not always engaged. Despite its populist intent, *Voltaire's Bastards* is not the most user-friendly of tomes. It's long, detailed, at times hectoring. One of the more scathing critiques was Stan Persky's in the *Globe and Mail*. (A letter war ensued: Saul took umbrage at Persky's “supercilious one-liners.”) The Persky review included this dismissive passage:

Notwithstanding his degree in the field [Saul has a Ph.D. in economics and political science from King's College, University of

this “gentleman amateur” or gadfly role that John Ralston Saul rides out to tilt at the windmills of the élites and the experts and the “mediocre, frightened academics.”

“He's intellectually one of the most interesting people in this country,” says Louise Denny, publisher of Knopf Canada and Saul's successor as head of the Canadian Centre of International PEN: “In the European tradition of a fine intelligence, broad and free-ranging, tremendously knowledgeable — a kind of eccentric and idiosyncratic intelligence.” Saul's close friends will tell you to look beyond his tendency to resort to the rhetorical nukes and embrace, instead, his curiosity, his passions. “Basically his style is *épater les bourgeois*,” says the New York investment banker David Mitchell. “He's a stimulator of thinking.” Those friends who had read *Voltaire's Bastards* seemed to accept it, if not all its conclusions, in this “stim-

ulator” light. “John tends to think the technicians of the world, men like Robert McNamara, are pure villains,” says Mitchell. “And I tend to think they're a necessary part of our modern fabric. The danger is when they become dominant.”

Another friend, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist John Polanyi, sees “fanaticism” and not reason as being behind many of the disasters of this century. “Fanaticism doesn't really have its roots in reason,” says Polanyi. “The failure to recognize our humanity is not primarily because we are devoted to reason — it's because we are victims of some sort of false religion that evidences itself in a fanaticism whose symptom is a total imperviousness to reason. More often, instead of reason being the instrument for inhuman policies, it is the cloak for inhuman policies.”

Saul was born 47 years ago and christened in Calgary because his father,



William Saul, had been stationed there with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. "I feel more at home in Western Canada," he will say. For him, the West means "the dryness, the extremes, the sharpness — all the clichés." William Saul was the first member of his family to be a professional soldier, though his wife, Beryl Ralston, did come from a military background, "one of those big Victorian families where people get knocked off in various wars." The military background, Saul believes, awakened him to a special dialectic that has subsequently informed his life and work: the tension between structure and disorder, between staff and field officer, between the word of the experts and the object lessons of experience.

Saul was the second of three sons born to William and Beryl Saul. A younger brother, Anthony, was born mentally and physically handicapped. "With that

brother," says Glen Treverton, a family friend, "John was magnificent — sweet, caring, and understanding. He was just wonderful." Anthony died of his disabilities in 1972, at the age of 19. Saul's older brother, Alastair, followed in his father's footsteps, by becoming a professional soldier (First Paratroop Regiment in Britain) and by marrying an English wife. Someone who remembers Alastair and John from school days in Oakville, Ontario, says, "It was like two solitudes, if you will, they were so different. Alastair made the greatest splash because he was sort of big and muscular and expressive and John was lean and quiet and contemplative."

"He always said, 'I'm going to write books because then I'll make some money and then I can become prime minister.'" says Treverton of life with Saul at Oakville Trafalgar High School. In grade 12, Saul became prime minister of the model parliament made up of representatives from schools across Ontario and Quebec. He was also, says Treverton, "already eccentric at 14 ... We used to go to this restaurant called the Towne, the local for the high school kids. John always wanted to have a cold drink — orange — and a hot drink — chocolate: he 'liked the contrasts.'"

Colonel William Saul died of a cerebral haemorrhage in January 1968. He was 49. By then, he was serving as military adviser to the Canadian ambassador to NATO in Brussels. "He collapsed in front of us," says his second son, who was then in his third year at McGill. "We were dressing to go out to a New Year's party." Brigadier Rowan Coleman of Montreal, John's godfather, saw John shortly after his father's death, and recalls him as "very pulled together but obviously shattered." William Saul, says Coleman, "had a good sense of the ridiculous ... was very easy to get along with. And yet he could be very military at times. I can see Bill very much in John sometimes. The military bearing"

His father's death, says Saul, "caused a break in what I was going to do next." He had written the foreign service exams and been accepted, but backed off because "I didn't want to be locked in." Instead, he moved from McGill to his doctorate at the University of London, which later took him to Paris, a city where his father had spent part of his NATO appointment. Through connections in England, he got a job heading up the French subsidiary of a small British commercial real estate company by which he supported himself while doing further research for his first novel, *The Birds of Prey*. Homesickness, or something close to it, eventually entered his calculations. "I've watched people become professional exiles," he says. "I think they end up as kind of eunuchs in a way." His thoughts had turned back to Canada — back to the dryness and extremes and the sharpness. All the clichés.

SINCE the 1977 publication of *The Birds of Prey* — or *Mort d'un général* as it was known in France, where it created a mini-scandal — Saul has kept a more than nodding acquaintance with controversy. Mixing fiction with fact, the novel postulated official intrigue behind the mysterious death of Charles Ailleret, chief of the French General Staff. During his research on *l'affaire Ailleret*, Saul got some not-so-veiled threats from government higher-ups and suspects that his phone was tapped. Rumours that he himself was a spy stem (he thinks) from this period as well.

The origins of *The Birds of Prey* offer a few insights into the Saul methodology, which has remained pretty consistent through the years. For one thing, there is his prodigiousness as a recycler: what emerged as a novel had in fact begun as a Ph.D. thesis for King's College, London, on the efforts of Charles de Gaulle — to whom the novel is dedicated ("from a disciple") — to modernize French society. Another aspect of his work pattern, which

speaks less to method than temperament, could be seen in the contest of wills between Saul and his academic supervisors. They questioned his reliance on primary over secondary sources.

"They disagreed with my thesis," remembers Saul indignantly, "but what bothered them was that since my sources were the most impeccable primary sources, they couldn't refute my thesis unless they discredited my sources." He did, though, get his degree. "It was a power play basically," he says. "I didn't behave like a student." That experience reinforced what has be-

come a central bias: the mistrust of the official version, not to mention a disdain for fusty academe. Tracing the line that connects *The Birds of Prey* to Voltaire's *Bastards* and now to *The Doubter's Companion*, he will say: "I never thought about writing books as an esoteric business because I'd written books about events in the real world, and I got a reaction from the real world."

His years in Paris, from the early to mid-1970s, when he researched first the thesis and later the novel, embellished the Saul persona. "I was surprised to find somebody who was English Canadian and spoke such good French," says Emile Martel, the diplomat and author. "He seemed to know everybody but you also had the feeling he had access to everybody: there's something in him that's directed towards the proper interlocutor." An eye for fine tailoring and the raffish accessory, the snappy car (a Lancia Fulvia replaced the Riley), and a ground-floor apartment on the rue Jacob added to the impression of *savoir faire*.

Three events of the late '70s consolidated this burgeoning mystique. Publication of *The Birds of Prey* made him a literary name at 30. He met and fell in love with Clarkson, an established TV star, a woman some years his senior, definitely exotic. And he signed on as special assistant to Maurice Strong, then just about to take on his role as chairman of the government-owned oil company Petro-Canada.

David Mitchell had introduced the two men in New York in the fall of 1975. Saul had gone there to attend graduate courses in business administration at NYU and Columbia; Strong was in for a visit before heading off to Calgary and Petro-Canada. Saul impressed Strong (now the \$1-a-year chairman of Ontario Hydro) as "obviously a Canadian who had experienced the larger world and wanted to come back to Canada. I said, 'Come out to Calgary and we'll work out something.'" Saul became the company's first staffer and essentially ran Strong's office. "What attracted me then and continues to attract me now," says Strong, "is that he is not a captive to conventional wisdom." Saul dedicated *Voltaire's Bastards* to Strong (who, he said, "taught me that a sensible relationship between ideas and action is possible"); earlier he had praised Strong in an essay for the *Christian Science Monitor Monthly* as

"a self-made humanist." While Strong will say, "I've never consciously taught him anything," the philosophical debt is evidently considerable. In a way, too, they share a common sensibility — the sensibility of the outsider, men of the world not bound by political parochialism, impatient with the hopeless linearity of Harvard Business School nostrums.

Douglas Bowie, a former vice president of environmental and social affairs at Petro-Canada, recalls how the new assistant cut rather a dashing figure amid the Prairie monochromes: "He would say, 'I

'It seems to me that the most important thing you can accomplish, apart from keeping people out of prison and keeping people alive, is making people understand that freedom of speech is not an abstraction, it's a very fragile thing'

want a sherry with two lumps of ice and three-quarters full," and it would come back and there would be three ice cubes — and he'd send it back. These stories kind of circulated and made him a sort of larger-than-life picture. And I couldn't figure that out — because they didn't serve him well ... I haven't seen that edge in him for quite some time now. I think it was a side of him trying to come to terms with being Canadian. He had lived in France. He'd lived in Britain for a while. And he's not going to put up with stuff that wasn't at a level that he was at." Bowie adds: "There's a part of John that can be terribly pompous — but there's a side of him that is so innocent, quite wide-eyed, which is charming."

When Strong left Petro-Canada in the spring of 1978, Saul followed. The friendship has endured. "He reminds me, I suppose, of an unfulfilled side of my own life," Strong says. "I love writing, the intellectual

life. If there is anything I'd aspire to be it is a teacher-philosopher." Echoes Douglas Bowie: "They're a fulfilment of each other in that John, no matter what he tries to do, is the intellectual, while Maurice is the action person. But they both have that other side."

The time at Petro-Canada provided useful background for *Baraka* (1983), the second of his four novels to date, the one of which he seems most proud and the one he feels is perhaps the "least understood." About the efforts of a multinational oil company executive to broker an arms deal in exchange for Vietnamese oil rights — Strong and Saul had been in Vietnam to try to negotiate oil rights in the mid-'70s — *Baraka* features a mentor-like executive who appears at least partially inspired by Strong. (*Baraka* is Strong's favourite among the novels.) Like *Voltaire's Bastards*, it too is "about structures" — and, as with the other novels, it is concerned with questions of morality and honour and grace under pressure — maybe a little self-consciously so at times. Philosophical earnestness, in conjunction with emotionally remote protagonists, has meant, however, that the impact of these stories can become rather muted. In *The Paradise Eater* (1988), set largely in Bangkok, John Field, the burnt-out-case journalist, looks down his nose at the hack writer Espoir because Espoir is forever searching for the obvious angle, the easiest way to point his vulgar moral, the "emotive element." But it's precisely that spark of vulgarity the novels most need. In plotting out the existential dilemmas of his characters, Saul keeps tripping up on his high intentions.

ON the subject of "emotive elements," I have watched Saul and Clarkson on a Washington street, walking with friends. He charging on ahead, purposefulness in his stride — the purposefulness in this instance having a lot to do with finding a cab — she hanging back, preferring a more measured gait. "John," she says, "is always

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We cordially congratulate **Robert Hilles**, winner of the 1994 Governor General's Award for Poetry with his book *Cantos from a Small Room*

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darting on." Clarkson does not dart. Not since that day during her Ottawa childhood when her parents took her to the funeral of a neighbour child, struck by a car while playing on the street, the car's tire track still visible on the small corpse's head: a cautionary tale. A cautionary tale delivered up in those by now so familiar dulcet tones. Watching them together, I had the impression that where at times he is impulsive or absent-minded — Emile Martel recalls the evening Saul left the *Baraka* manuscript atop the Madrid taxi cab he'd just instructed to whiz him to the airport — she is the steadier influence. I also observed how their interests — in the arts, history,

politics — overlapped, how each fed off the other's curiosity, how united they could appear in their lofty aesthetic standards, standards neither of them is exactly demure about enunciating or defending. Emblematic of the Clarkson-Saul aesthetic is the townhouse they share in Toronto's Yorkville district, the city's boutique hub. Elegant and casual it is, too — perhaps a bit studiously casual? — the centrepiece being the downstairs living room with its walls covered in peachy-pink Thai silk. The art is both figurative and abstract, both sensual and austere. Near the fireplace stands a plaster-of-Paris nymph, picked up at a Paris flea market during the time they



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lived there in the mid-'80s when Clarkson was Ontario's agent-general. The nymph's well-formed backside is illuminated by a tiny spotlight.

Each seems to understand and encourage the other's need for independent travel. "They're beyond the sort of stupidities that couples get into," says their friend Sue Polanyi. They are also beyond any discussion of their relationship. Their friend, the Toronto entertainment lawyer Michael Levine, says "they are very public and yet very private. They are not only private, they've gone beyond private to constructing an image that is impenetrable to the outside." I had already experienced the Clarkson stonewalling technique the time I interviewed her for another magazine. Remembered how she fixed me with a spectral gaze should a taboo subject — specifically, her acrimonious marital split from Stephen Clarkson — seem about to be broached. Saul goes very quiet when asked about her. "I have enormous admiration for what she does," is what he can finally muster. "I think she's the best at what she does."

Confession is not his style either.

IN recent years, Saul has been an outspoken critic of the free trade deal and NAFTA as well as the Mulroney Conservatives who helped "dismantle levers of power that have taken one hundred years to create. They've acted as if this country had no history." This sense of nationalism has always been balanced with an abiding fascination for the larger world. "He has a respect for other people's cultures [but] he's not really anchored into any culture," says the British journalist Richard Trench, who went with Saul on a two-week Sahara trek with the Polisario rebels in 1980. "Is he Canadian? Is he English? I think that restlessness accounts for his respect for other cultures."

In the two years (1990-92) he served as president of the Canadian Centre of International PEN, Saul is said to have worked tirelessly. "It seems to me that the most important thing you can accomplish," he says, "apart from keeping people out of prison and keeping people alive, is making people understand that freedom of speech is not an abstraction, it's a very fragile thing — that freedom of speech is not just a right

of writers." Saul, according to Louise Dennys, "energized and created a sense of the legalistic base from which PEN should operate and the causes we do undertake." Clayton Ruby, a PEN board member and legal adviser, says, "He moved us more deeply into domestic issues of free speech and oppression of writers than we had been before." Adds Dennys, it was during Saul's stewardship that Canadian PEN "first began to seriously fight for a change in the libel laws of this country.

"I think his moral centre is quite clear. He has balanced and considered the ethical positions he takes in life and then strives to live by them — in ordinary ways as well as intellectual ways."

When I last spoke with Saul for this article, it was at the Yorkville townhouse, the day was overcast, and the subject of the interview kept getting up to shoo away a stubborn pigeon that returned again and again to alight on the straw-thatched bird feeder Saul and Clarkson have installed in their tiny garden. In contrast to the gloomy weather, Saul appeared quite ebullient. Happy about the letters and interest *Voltaire's Bastards* continues to generate ("It seems to indicate there's a reason to be populist"), happy with its progeny, *The Doubter's Companion*. "I think what it's done," he says of his essayist-provocateur mode, "is put me more in harmony with myself, and I think it's made me more of an optimist." He is also pleased about a "little novel constructed out of stories" about "rich, decadent" Americans ("There's some politics thrown in") he has recently had published in the French-speaking market. The pigeon, however, is doing its best to qualify that upbeat mood. "Scat," he bellows, thumping on the glass door.

The bird obliges — for the time being. This pigeon, though, doesn't seem much of a respecter of old-fashioned existentialists.

THE BEST OF 1994

We wrangled. We wheedled. Truth to tell, some of us even whimpered. But finally, Books in Canada's editors banged out a best-of-the-year list

Our Choices Are:

The Holy Forest (Coach House, 394 pages, \$24.95 paper), by Robin Blaser. Although officially published at the end of 1993, Blaser's *magnum opus* only began to circulate this year. The collected work of more than three decades, *The Holy Forest* is truly a big book, not only in size (it's almost 400 pages) but in intellectual scope and poetic achievement. Blaser's poems move nimbly and vividly from the "determined privacy" of personal reminiscence to the "public face" of history and event; they are playful, introspective, wonderfully daring in their birdlike dart and glide. Phyllis Webb once wrote of poetry as, ideally, "the dance of the intellect in the syllables." Robin Blaser is one of the few poets whose work consistently lives up to this description.

Travels by Night: A Memoir of the Sixties (Lester, 272 pages, \$22.95 cloth), by Douglas Fetherling. Consistently witty and stylistically almost flawless, this autobiographical journey from '50s America to '60s Canada was one of 1994's most enjoyable trips. The author's volatile childhood is portrayed with intellectual acuity and considerable emotional power, as we follow an emerging sensibility's struggle to achieve independence; and the book's account of how Fetherling found freedom in a strange new land should be required reading for anyone still suffering from delusions of Canadian cultural inferiority. *Travels by Night* celebrates, among many other things, the kind of country in which we all wish to live, and does so with perspicacity, candour, and infectious enthusiasm.

The Green Word: Selected Poems 1973-1992 (Oxford, 92 pages, \$12.95 paper), by Erin Mouré. Right from the start of her career, as this selection of work from almost two decades shows, Erin Mouré has been testing the limits of what it is possible to do in language. Hers is a poetry of cognitive disruptions and contradictions and startling leaps,

intellectually exciting and adventurous; at the same time, it is charged with (as she wrote of another poet's work) "the emergency of human feeling" — longing, anxiety, passion, tenderness. Strenuous physical exercise is, paradoxically, energizing; similarly, Mouré's poetry is a workout that's both demanding and incredibly stimulating.

The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense (Viking, 342 pages, \$28.99 cloth), by John Ralston Saul. Billed as a Sancho Panza-style adjunct to 1992's hyperventilatingly Quixotic *Voltaire's Bastards*, *The Doubter's Companion* is more easily approachable and intellectually more penetrating than its predecessor. It's also, ultimately, more stylish. Saul's gifted and occasionally quirky generalism is better suited to reworking the lexicon by which we try to understand the macrosystems of civilization than to trying to direct intellectual troops that no longer exist. No current book — anywhere — is as acidly lucid about the new, globalized economics that are steamrolling custom, culture, and civility in every country in the world. Fascinating, funny, and best of all, profoundly useful.

How Insensitive (The Porcupine's Quill, 192 pages, \$14.95 paper), by Russell Smith. A sharply observed, sour, sweet, and very funny first novel. A young man from New Brunswick via graduate school in Montreal experiences Toronto's fashionable life for the first time. Half scornful, half seduced, he soon finds that it is easier to pose as a writer than to actually write. Does he keep his head? Yes and no. Many a beginner could have mustered the extravagantly callous mockery that winds its way through the tale. Not so many could have matched it with the inventiveness of the dialogue, the grace of the narrative, or the tenderness that Smith shows toward the most vulnerable of the characters he has created.



BARBARA CAREY



I had a tough time arriving at a personal short list for 1994's best books, per-

haps partly because I read a bit of everything — poetry, fiction, and non-fiction — and found lots to like in each of the genres.

Even aside from Erin Mouré's *The Green Word* and Robin Blaser's *The Holy Forest*, there were a number of outstanding poetry collections this year, but I'll limit myself to mentioning two particular favourites. Something of a cross between a Sandra Bernhard routine and a cultural studies primer, Lynn Crosbie's *Villainelle* (Coach House) is campy, outrageous, and wonderfully ferocious in its send-up of the sexual stereotypes in everything from *Saturday Night Fever* to Nancy Drew mysteries. It's not often that poems can make me laugh out loud, but Crosbie's "Little Stabs at Happiness," about the obsessiveness of a first crush, and "Betty and Veronica," which presents the two love interests in the "Archie" comics as lesbians, did just that. There's more than just laughs to be had here, though; Crosbie is a shrewd commentator on how gender relations and the subtleties of power politics get played out in the larger-than-life world of pop culture.

Going from the "profane" to the "sacred": there will always be space on my bookshelf for a new collection from Patrick Friesen. And so I welcome *Blasphemer's Wheel: New and Selected Poems* (Turnstone), a volume of new and selected poems from a writer who unfail-

ingly sets down in words the restlessness and yearning of "the flesh and the spirit," whether he is writing of erotic longing or the pressures of Mennonite life.

What can I say about Alice Munro's *Open Secrets* (McClelland & Stewart)? The late Bronwen Wallace once wrote that it was impossible to summarize a Munro story because "its meaning is the way it moves." There's an uncanniness to Munro's fiction: plainly written, grounded in prosaic detail, it nevertheless manages to suggest the complexities and ambiguities of experience itself, encompassing the social world and the characters' private, inner lives. I don't know how she does it: I'm just happy to have this collection of new stories to savour.

Healthy people generally take their well-being for granted and don't examine how intimately self-image and physical health are linked. Donna MacFarlane's novel, *Division of Surgery* (Women's Press), is a reality check, touching on our most basic (but often unstated) fears about suffering and disfigurement, about how our bodies can betray us. It puts us inside the mind of Robin Carr, a young woman who undergoes a series of major operations for inflammatory bowel disease and struggles to come to terms with the physical and psychological impact of the ordeal. Though its ending is somewhat disappointing, *Division of Surgery* has an effect that lingers; it's one of the most moving books I have read in a long time.

My final favourite is Dionne Brand's *Bread out of Stone* (Coach House), a collection of essays on race, gender, and cultural politics. Subjects done to death, I know, in scholarly anthologies. But Brand brings to them emotional spark, tough intelligence, and a vibrant style that moves effortlessly from demotic speech to trenchant analysis. She refers in one essay to her aesthetic tradition: "your speech must be relevant, charged, politically conscious, memorable." *Bread out of Stone* is all of these.

BRIAN FAWCETT



I spent most of 1994 reading non-fiction, and consequently my choices reflect a

bias in that direction. Within that genre, I found three books I liked a lot, and several more that fell just short of the upper range

The Perfection of the Morning: An Apprenticeship in Nature (Harper-Collins) is Sharon Butala's memoir of the 18 years she has spent on a grassland ranch in southwestern Saskatchewan since her marriage to the rancher Peter Butala. Its true subjects are a part of Canada most of us know nothing about and a way of paying attention to the world that, sadly, seems to be vanishing. Butala's singular achievement is that she manages to deliver the book without heaping us with bushels of corniness or being excessively preachy and superior about the courageous choices she's made about how to live. It helps, too, that her prose is as spare and clean as the Prairie landscape.

John Livingston's *Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication* (Key Porter) is partly a jeremiad and partly a journey of scientific redefinition and rediscovery by a noted environmental scholar. *Rogue Primate* successfully delineates — and then undermines — the ideological underpinning of the Darwinist enterprise, which has convinced an entire civilization that competition and its attendant blood sports are the stone-inscribed dictates of nature. Livingston's persuasive demonstration that the natural world operates as much by cooperation and care as by cos-

mic capitalism is marred by his misanthropy, but only slightly. This book is likely to be around longer than most Canadian books of 1994, and its influence, if we are lucky, will grow. It is highly recommended reading for everyone, but particularly for members of the business community, who badly need to know that God may not be on their side.

Over the last years of the Mulroney era, Toronto took such an economic butt-kicking that it has virtually stopped crowing over the rest of the country about just how terrific it is, leaving Vancouver to its fate as a world-class city. But as Vancouverites are learning, world-class cities are for tourists and investors, not for citizens. Toronto, meanwhile, may be turning into a *great* city. The publication of *Emerald City: Toronto Visited* (Viking), by John Bentley Mays, may be a signal of its transformation. The book is a charmingly effusive guide to a Toronto the tourism and real-estate brochures know nothing about. For Torontonians, it is a gold-mine of valuable and sometimes marvellously tinted information. Mays has his hobby-horses, but he rides them with élan. His joy at being alive as an urban dweller is oddly infectious, and even when he's being silly he writes like an angel.

Then there are some other books that fall outside the normal categories of literary excellence, but are important or fine books on their own terms. *Forestopia: A Practical Guide to the New Forest Economy* (Harbour), by Vancouver's Michael M'Gonigle and Ben Parfitt, is a book that ought to be read by everyone living within 100 miles of a forest (that's significantly fewer of us than a decade ago). *The Canadian Gardener's Guide to Foliage and Garden Design* (Random House), by Marjorie Harris and the photographer Tim Saunders, is probably the most gorgeous gardening book ever published in this country. And finally, there is George N. Hood's *Against the Flow:*

Rafferty-Alameda and the Politics of the Environment (Fifth House), a modest but remarkably articulate piece of social history that tries to eke out an inhabitable middle ground in the face of a factionalized world — and mostly succeeds.



Nothing in Alice Munro's stories has ever been implausible, despite the determined oddness and crankiness of some of her characters, and the sometimes startling events of their lives. Munro's special genius has always been the way she has mixed the banal with the alarming, and the impenetrable mysteries at the heart of her creatures' existence, which she is so good at finding and then not explaining.

If this weren't so awful, you find yourself thinking, it would be funny. In *Open Secrets* (McClelland & Stewart) she has pushed her powers of divination to a new extreme, and the ironic seems the strongest note now; there is a new detachment in her tone. The plot of "Carried Away" bears a ghostly resemblance to the plot of her classic "How I Met My Husband," published long ago in 1974, but the edges are sharper, the detailing more complex, and the interconnectedness of the characters goes much farther: it even persists after death. You might almost say she was parodying herself, if it were not so uncannily convincing. Highly recommended.

The Paper Wife (Knopf), by Linda Spalding, is an intense little fable about two girls, rich and poor, who grow up as best friends despite the fact that Lily is an orphan who lives with her indifferent grandmother in a roofed-over basement, and Kate the privileged daughter of wealthy, loving parents. Contrasts between the fortunate and the dispossessed are both figure and ground of the book's imagery, culminating in Lily's flight to an orphanage in Mexico where children are bought and sold. The thrillerish sections, in which hard men speak laconically in accented English, struck me as unconvincing, but the most important part of the book is Lily, accidentally pregnant, who doesn't know whether to betray herself or her friend, and here Spalding writes with a compressed, poetic insight that almost seems clairvoyant.

"Imprint," TVOntario's literary talk show, has published a collection of 18 interviews from its first six years on the air. If you missed part two of Margaret Atwood talking to Germaine Greer, or if you can't quite remember what Salman Rushdie said to Daniel Richler in that hotel room "somewhere in Canada," then *One on One: The Imprint Interviews* (Somerville House) is the book for you. The interviews are lively and, as the editor Leanna Crouch says in her introduction, they deserve a second life. Martha Gellhorn is amazing, William Golding is Olympian, Leonard Cohen eloquent and elusive. Better than television.

Also on my recommended list is *Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication* (Key Porter), by John Livingston, a sad look at the "technological servitude" in which we live, and the human chauvinism that has domesticated and probably doomed not only humanity but the rest of life on Earth. Livingston writes passionately of "the experience of wildness," which he believes could be our salvation.

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PAUL STUEWE



Although there was a lot of fuss about young bloods in 1994, I was most

impressed by the achievements of some of our older literary statespersons.

Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers* (Knopf) is a wonderful novel about the North, in which Natives, whites, and animals engage in mutually revelatory explorations of being and becoming. Style, sometimes a problem for Wiebe in the past, is here comfortably at the service of an utterly compelling narrative, and *A Discovery of Strangers* should win him a whole new crop of readers.

Alice Munro's excellence has been one of our *Open Secrets* (McClelland & Stewart) for some time now, which in no

way lessens the impact of these stunningly accomplished short stories. I like to savour Munro's work, to read a little bit of it at a time, because there's so much going on within and between the lines that paying close attention is immediately and lavishly rewarded. The natural rhythms of the stories in George Elliott's *The Bittersweet Man* (Red Kite Press), on the other hand, pulsate with a faster and somewhat more syncopated beat, as the author's wryly witty observations accelerate toward consistently satisfying epiphanies. Which isn't to say that Elliott is any less perceptive than Munro, but that he tends to focus on the ebb and flow of the human comedy rather than its discrete existential conundrums. Buy 'em both and enjoy, anyway.

Having never read anything by Mary Dalton, I was completely unprepared for the persuasive authority of *Allowing the Light* (Breakwater), one of the year's standout poetry collections. Dalton writes in a direct and highly visual idiom dedicated to communicating, rather than obscuring, the personal experiences that have engaged her imagination; as is definitely not the case with much contemporary poetry, one is

never lost in a sea of perversely private references. I was so taken with the book, in fact, that I went out and bought a copy of Dalton's debut collection, *The Time of Icicles* (Breakwater, 1989), which I also recommend to anyone interested in poetry as an intersubjective experience.

Also surprising was Julie Johnston's *Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me* (Lester), a discovery I must credit to the persistence of my 10-year-old twin daughters. Both avid readers, they still like to be read to, and have learned that only the very best children's books will keep their parents voluntarily vocalizing. *Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me* certainly filled the bill: after reading my daughters into slumberland, I curled up in a comfortable chair and polished off this clever and absorbing novel before my own bedtime inexorably rolled around.

Books mentioned in this article (listed alphabetically by author):

- Bread out of Stone* (Coach House, 208 pages, \$19.95 paper), by Dionne Brand
- The Perfection of the Morning: An Apprenticeship in Nature* (HarperCollins, 224 pages, \$22.95 cloth) by Sharon Butala
- VillainEille* (Coach House, 64 pages, \$12.95 paper), by Lynn Crosbie
- One on One: The Imprint Interviews* (Somerville House, 224 pages, \$19.95 paper) edited by Leanna Crouch
- Allowing the Light* (Breakwater, 61 pages, \$9.95 paper), by Mary Dalton
- The Bittersweet Man* (Red Kite, 130 pages, \$12.50 paper, \$27.50 cloth), by George Elliott
- Blasphemer's Wheel: New and Selected Poems* (Turnstone, 128 pages, \$12.95 paper), by Patrick Friesen
- The Canadian Gardener's Guide to Foliage and Garden Design* (Random House, 208 pages, \$37 cloth), by Marjorie Harris and Tim Saunders
- Against the Flow: Rafferty-Alameda and the Politics of the Environment* (Fifth House, 288 pages, \$16.95 paper), by George N. Hood
- Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me* (Lester, 184 pages, \$16.95 cloth), by Julie Johnston
- Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication* (Key Porter, 224 pages, \$21.95 paper), by John A. Livingston
- Division of Surgery* (Women's Press, 200 pages, \$13.95 paper), by Donna MacFarlane
- Emerald City: Toronto Visited* (Viking, 384 pages, \$29.99 cloth), by John Bendey Mays
- Forestopia: A Practical Guide to the New Forest Economy* (Harbour, 200 pages, \$16.95 paper), by Michael M'Gonigle and Ben Parfitt
- Open Secrets* (McClelland & Stewart, 294 pages, \$28.99 cloth), by Alice Munro
- The Paper Wife* (Knopf, 256 pages, \$25 cloth), by Linda Spalding
- A Discovery of Strangers* (Knopf, 296 pages, \$27 cloth), by Rudy Wiebe

GIFT BOOKS

BY RICHARD PERRY

'Tis the Season

HMM, THIS SHORT STACK OF large, heavy-stock gift books looks suspiciously like last year's lot. Here is, for example, the annual paean to the Iron Horse, once a living, essential obsession with Canadians, now a fading nostalgia. **Train Country: An Illustrated History of Canadian National Railways** (Douglas & McIntyre, 192 pages, \$45 cloth), by the writer Donald MacKay and the image researcher Lorne Perry, sturdily binds together 150 black-and-white photographs from the CN archives, a fascination with numbers ("Twenty-nine carloads of locomotive coal [with] forty tons in each car would fill four tenders with a day's supply"), and a text that evokes endearingly adolescent enthusiasms (the conductors "worked their way down the lurching aisle collecting tickets, calling out the stations, ensuring that people got off at the proper stops, calling 'All aboard!' and keeping order").

And, of course, here's the obligatory collection of colour photographs futilely trying to capture the living flux of Canada's vast, sparsely populated terrain. This year's entry is **Timeless Shore** (Bayeux, 112 pages, \$29.95 cloth), celebrating scenery viewed along Vancouver Island's wild West Coast Trail by the photographer George Allen. Unfortunately, the 55 images of fallen pine, becalmed tide pools, and wind-smoothed driftwood are rather small, not quite printed with requisite sharpness, and occasionally askew in colour.

Almost as dependable as the seasonal stacking of gift books at your local bookstore is the front-and-centre display of Pierre Berton's latest collation of patriotic pictures and avuncular commentary. In 1994, Berton huzzahs **Winter** (Stoddart, 239 pages, \$50 cloth), abetted by André Gallant's contemporary colour photographs and Barbara Sears's research into greyer archives. I can't imagine readers shelling out \$50 to buy this book for their own coffee-tables, but it may be a great gift for friends in Australia who will retaliate with *their*



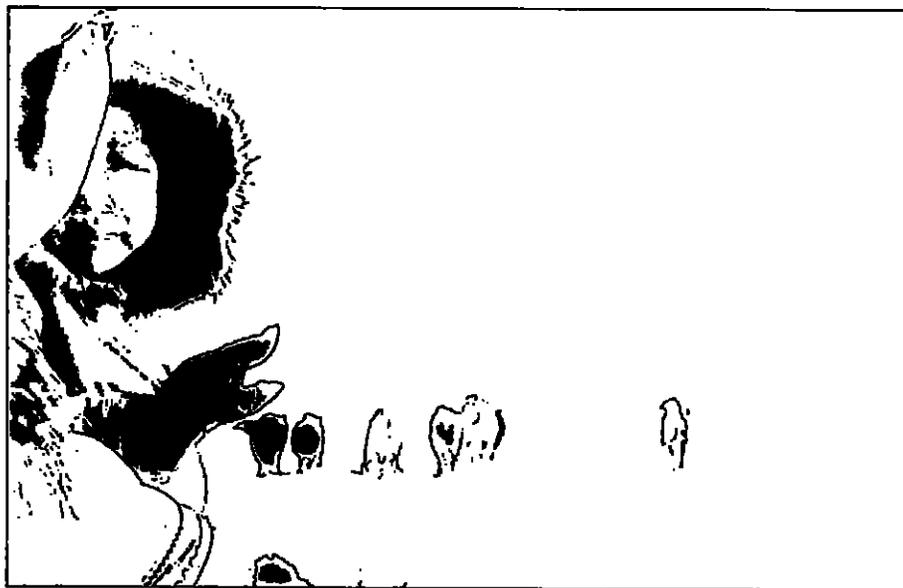
From Winter

soon-to-be-remaindered glossy tome on outback dunnies. In 14 chapters cozily analogous to travel-magazine gazetteering, Berton rolls out his smiling snowman of personal reminiscences, easy popular history ("For those who had a job, or lived on a farm, or were well-to-do, the winter season in settled Canada was a time of feasting and dancing"). impressive stats on "The Big Storms," seasonal sports, Inuit on sleds and Quebeckers on skates, and (three chapters) the earnest Canadian attempt to deny winter (Morlocks in malls and the monied in Miami). There's little serious discussion here about the effect of winter's existential ennui on divorce, alcoholism, and suicide rates in our fair

land, but some of the archival photographs are terrific, especially that of a department store façade encased in ice after being sprayed by fire trucks.

If these titles seem mere generic, amiable *divertissements*, a few new gift books manage to suggest more enduring qualities. Lyle McIntyre's *Silver & Stone* (Stoddart/Boston Mills, 96 pages, \$40 cloth) is yet another visual documentation of lonely rocks, trees, and water (with Ontario's Georgian Bay and the Muskokas the eternally patient model), but it rises above the plethora of similar studies by the technical excellence of both the original negatives and the black-and-white reproductions, which in their subtle detail and gradations of tonality here convey at least some of the intrinsic beauty and bite of a fine print. This is art photography in the classic Ansel Adams/Brett Weston tradition, in which the abstraction of black and white suggests a profound, resounding silence behind the natural forms.

In Maria Tippett's *Between Two Cultures: A Photographer among the Inuit* (Viking, 178 pages, \$50 cloth), one encounters that oddity, a photography book in which the text is somewhat more intriguing than the pictures. Tippett, an art historian, was researching modern British artists in London, England, when she heard of Charles Gimpel, nephew of Lord Duveen and co-owner of the distinguished Gimpel Fils Gallery. Gimpel, presumably the first dealer to exhibit Inuit art commercially in Europe, was fascinated with the Arctic and, despite fragile health resulting from his interment in Buchenwald and Auschwitz, made six trips to northern Canada between 1958 and 1968. An amateur camera buff, the erudite, sophisticated Gimpel shot numerous rolls of film of his Inuit friends and of their sparse surroundings. Although most of Gimpel's pictures evince no special skill or point of view — they are for the most part as unaffected as



From Between Two Cultures: A Photographer among the Inuit

any layperson's family snapshots — their very directness bequeaths a rare kind of truth, as they chronicle a simple, hard way of life seduced and rapidly transformed by the trappings of the commercial civilization to the south. I doubt that Gimpel's photographs warrant the sumptuous production given here, but Tippett does tell an intriguing human tale.

Cultural transformation of an even more entropic nature underlies the material compiled by Brock Silversides, the chief audiovisual archivist at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. In his *The Face Pullers: Photographing Native Canadians 1871–1939* (Fifth House, 192 pages, \$29.95 cloth), Silversides arranges "some of the most interesting images of First Nations people taken during the several decades following the introduction of photography into the old North-West" into four sections — "First Contact," "A Dying Race," "Transition," and "Inventing the Legend" — and thus neatly follows the manner in which the "Indian," portrayed free (if already posed) within his or her own milieu, was soon seen as succumbing to white, Eurocentric patterns of behaviour.

It is hard to know which are sadder, the neatly tiered rows of young Native students staring grim-faced from residential schools and reserve communities, or the portraits of warriors and chiefs in full regalia, but masquerading against studio backdrops. In his brief introduction, Silversides is candid about the many false archetypes foisted upon the Natives in these photographs (the photographers/observers inevitably altering the context in which they participate) and about the difficulty of dating many of the images; one wishes, however, that the annotations to the individual photographs offered more detailed information than the succinct captions provide. Is it sufficient to publish such archival images without decoding the often complex iconography? Are not racial stereotypes unwittingly perpetuated if authors do not provide an analysis of the significant social, religious, and personal references embedded in such iconography?

Guy to Goddess: An Intimate Look at Drag Queens (Whitecap, 128 pages, \$19.95 paper), with verist photographs by Rosamond Norbury and saucy text by Bill Richardson, portrays the impiously pur-



sued transformation of the male transvestite. Norbury's camera leans close to the tight tushes in black silk, the pyramidal falsies weighted with birdseed, and the pouting, lacquered lips, while Richardson's little biographical narratives are studded with "Drag Tips." That special person on your Christmas list can learn the art of "tucking" (tightly concealing the penis and testicles between the legs) and how to deal with facial perspiration ("finish off your face by spraying it with hair spray. Close your eyes first").

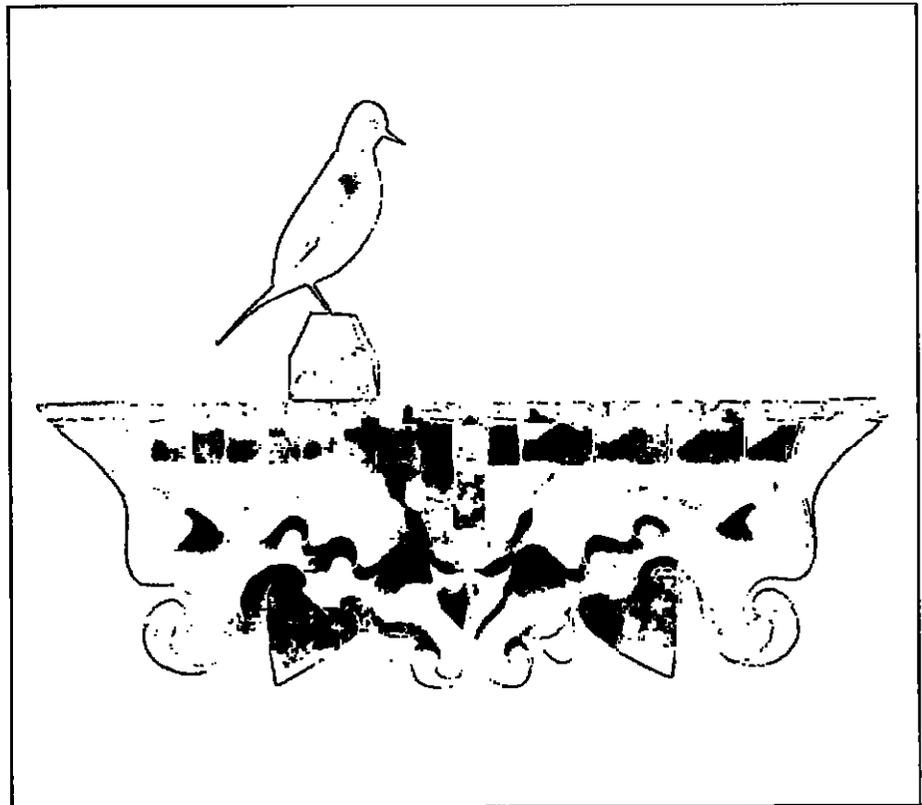
And last, but not best, is a handsome gift book that warrants long shelf life: John Fleming's *The Painted Furniture of French Canada 1700-1840* (Camden House/Canadian Museum of Civilization, 179 pages, \$34.95 cloth). Excellently designed, printed, researched, and written, this book does exactly what governments are now telling universities *not* to do: it focuses closely on a highly specialized,

singular subject, examines the available documentation carefully, and attempts to tell the truth about that subject in a thorough and minutely detailed way. The subject here is the handcrafted, painted furniture of Quebec (buffets, armoires, cupboards, chairs, etc.), domicile objects that today seem uncommonly heavy, roughed-up, and austere in design and which command astronomical prices in the antiques market. Fleming, a professor of French literature at the University of Toronto, carefully examines the furniture of the cited period, elegantly describing the style, function, and individual history of each object, and providing background on building technique, social context, and other relevant issues.

This book, which I think can be enjoyed by anyone who is interested in Canadian history and/or the fine arts, makes a solid contribution to the literature — and is very reasonably priced.



From Guy to Goddess



From The Painted Furniture of French Canada 1700-1840

COOKBOOKS

BY CLARA ALBERT

Working Up an Appetite

IF COOKBOOK COLLECTING CAN BE an addiction, I've got it. I must have 50 or so cookbooks and still can't resist a new magazine with a succulent picture of something edible on the cover. It's vicarious eating mostly, since I don't have that much time to cook, but it's fun to look, and at some unspecified future date, I imagine that I'll

Cooking from Market to Table (Red Deer College Press, 226 pages, \$14.95 paper), by Judy Schultz. Nothing is better than fresh vegetables, and the way Schultz prepares them is both simple and surprising. From asparagus to zucchini, she has wonderful ideas that don't require lots of time or too many ingredients. You might not expect a vegetable

cookbook to be worth your time, but this one is special. For example, "The Easiest Eggplant" is halved lengthwise, brushed with mayonnaise, sprinkled with Asiago or Parmesan, peppered and baked. Heavenly! Now why didn't I think of that? I said that quite a few times as I turned the pages of this book. Schultz is the first cookbook writer I've encountered to share my passion for potatoes. As she says, "For some people chocolate is the great comforter. For me you can lose the chocolate and give me a baked potato." She then proves her point with more mouth-watering recipes.

The only drawback is that I don't know if I can settle for only market veggies; Schultz gets me thinking I should really plant some mesclun next year, and some of those pink, red, and blue potatoes she mentions might be fun.

Cooking without Looking (Douglas & McIntyre, 148 pages, \$18.95 paper) is an appealing collection of recipes brought by numerous guests to Vicki Gabereau's CBC-Radio show. They'd certainly be welcome at my house, bearing cider and honey-glazed ribs, shrimps dijonnaise, "perfect" crabcakes, roasted carrot and Brie soup ... mmm. This cookbook is sometimes adventurous (Vicki loves hot peppers), sometimes inventive ("The



From British Columbian Salmon

use more than the five per cent of recipes that is supposed to be the average use of any cookbook. I don't actually fit that statistic, since some of my cookbooks get heavy use and some never inspire action at all. *Chacun à son goût*, I guess. Some cookbook authors are just more on my wavelength than others. I read somewhere that the Galloping Gourmet read cookbooks like novels; I think they're more like classifieds myself. The skimming stops when my current criteria for a recipe are met: it sounds great and doesn't take forever.

My absolute favourite of this year's cookbook crop is **From the Garden: Great Vegetable**

Great Vegetarian Turkey" will solve some holiday dilemmas), and often intriguing. It also includes winning recipes from Gabereau's annual cross-country contests: there was the year of meatloaf, then stews, followed by muffins, pasta sauce, condiments, and family favourites. I'm immediately drawn to the English mint chutney, and the peanut-butter-and-banana pancakes would be fun to try next time my nephew visits. In addition, I love the household hints sent in by listeners: how to deflea carpets, how to polish copper with tomato soup, how to clean carrots in the washing machine (yes, really!), and more.

The continuing shift to lighter, healthier eating is apparent in several new books this year. Bonnie Stern's *Simply HeartSmart Cooking* (Random House, 304 pages, \$19.95 paper) makes dietary sense look delicious. Appetizing photos and recipes for satisfying dishes like "Risotto with Seafood and Peppers," "Penne with Potatoes and Rapini," or "Rhubarb and Strawberry Cobbler" made this reader forget that this food was good for me. I also liked the special occasion menus, which effectively take the anxiety out of party planning. My "must try" count in this book is high, and since simplicity of preparation was one of Stern's objectives, it's definitely a keeper!

Get your kids (or some you're close to) off to a healthy start with *Food to Grow On* (HarperCollins, 288 pages, \$19.95 paper), by Susan Mendelson and Rena Mendelson. Starting with pre-pregnancy nutrition, it's a useful resource for parents, identifying the right foods to feed children at the right age and making the task manageable and enjoyable. The recipes are based on Canada's new food guide and although they're child-oriented, they'll please adults too. Who can resist nachos and pizza anyway?

Becoming Vegetarian (Macmillan, 262 pages, \$19.95 paper), by Vesanto Melina, Brenda Davis, and Victoria

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Talonbooks wishes to extend its apologies to Bryden MacDonald who was erroneously credited with a new name by inadvertent overtures & orthographically challenged technological systems in a previous edition of B in C. We have made the Bryden MacLennan is, but he most assuredly did not write WHALE RIDING WEATHER.

Harrison, is more than a cookbook; it's a very helpful and reassuring guide for anyone interested in making this change in their diet. The authors, all dieticians and nutrition consultants, are thorough and convincing in describing why a vegetarian diet is a good idea and how one maintains a nutritional balance with various types of vegetarian choices. They're practical and realistic, and even offer answers to all the questions you will face as a consequence of this decision, including "Why wear leather shoes?"

Canadian Living's Best series, published by Random House, includes new books on *Light Cooking*, *Chicken*, *Pasta*, and *Barbecue* (96 pages each, \$12.95 each, paper), all by Elizabeth Baird and the food writers of *Canadian Living* magazine. The series continues to provide reliable, interesting dishes for all palates. My family loved the "Chicken and Egg Pad Thai" (in *Chicken*) hot one day and cold for a picnic lunch the next. The barbecue book has plenty of easy marinades that take the trouble right out of cooking; try the "Grilled Salmon Fillets," simple and tasty. You can't miss with these books;

pick a category and watch the variations unfold.

Another set of magazine-developed and -tested recipes is *More Time Cooks* (*More Time Moms*, 148 cards, \$22.95), by Joanne Lalonde-Hayes and Susanne Jones. These come from *Chatelaine's* food editor Monda Rosenberg, and have been formatted into a unique box of file cards. The cards contain six weeks' worth of recipes along with grocery lists broken down week by week so you can grab the appropriate cards on your way to the store. Apparently these are selling like rice cakes; the concept is definitely worth a try for the harried cook.

Cookbooks have sprouted in every region of Canada this year, featuring local specialties and favourites. Pick your special spot; there's sure to be a recipe collection that will take you there, in spirit at least. In *The Flavours of Victoria* (Orca, 165 pages, \$15.95 paper), Andrea and David Spalding take a historical approach, with recipes from the wide variety of traditions that have affected the city's past. Teatime treats, of course, but also "Steamed Red Snapper with Fermented



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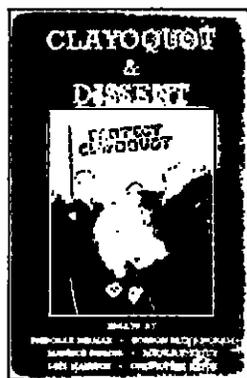


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Black Beans." Up the river with yummy **British Columbian Salmon** (Terra Bella, unpaginated, \$21.95 cloth), compiled by Pamela McColl, we are treated to two dozen ways to handle the catch. We go due north for hearty fishing-lodge fare in **Blueberries & Polar Bears** (Centax, 208

pages, \$16.95 paper), by Helen Webber and Marie Woolsey; along Ontario's QEW to elegant cuisine in James Bruce's **The Niagara Estate Winery Cookbook** (Warwick Publishing, 119 pages, \$34.95 cloth), with lush photos by Dieter Hessel; and down east with **Chester Chowder: A**

Potpourri of Nova Scotia Recipes (Pagurian, 192 pages, \$14.95 paper), compiled by Janet Ondaatje. All of these have tantalizing recipes, but I do question those publishers who decided to put their books in hard cover. Surely the higher price will often discourage impulse buyers from taking the books home as a souvenir or gift.

Another regional cookbook of note is **Maria Elena's Mexican Cuisine** (General Store, 224 pages, \$17.95 paper), by Maria Elena Cuervo-Lorens. The author, who lives on Vancouver Island, connects us to a cuisine that's very popular and piquant. I'm ready to graduate from the usual Tex-Mex to a more authentic taste, and Maria Elena tells you what to do when exotic items such as chayotes, cactus leaves, and jicama appear at your greengrocer's.

I can't leave out **The Great Canadian Literary Cookbook** (Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts, 184 pages, \$15 paper), edited by Gwendolyn Southin and Betty Keller. Sixty-five past speakers at the Sechelt conference, all Canadian writers, have contributed recipes. If you are curious about what Susan Musgrave, L. R. Wright, or Nino Ricci like to do in the kitchen, here's your chance to find out.

If you're exhausted from all this chopping and fussing, you might relax, put up your feet, and enjoy Margaret Visser's **The Way We Are** (HarperCollins, 306 pages, \$25 cloth). Several of the essays in this collection of her *Saturday Night* columns deal with food as part of a broad examination of cultural practices. I found these short studies easier to digest than the longer explorations of her previous books: they're perfect little tidbits that give you some perspective on contemporary customs. Visser ponders, among many fascinating topics, the reason squirrel stew is taboo, the little shoes that turkeys used to wear to market, and the military symbolism of Christmas pudding. Which reminds me: whatever you choose to eat at your holiday feast, *bon appetit!*

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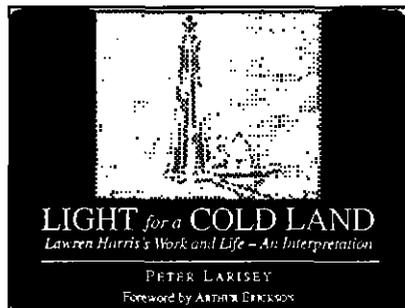
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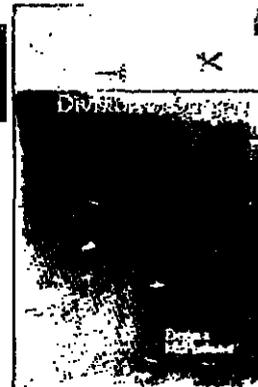
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SPORTS BOOKS

BY ELIZABETH MITCHELL

The Pucks Stop Here

FOR THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING from withdrawal symptoms due to the cancellation of major league sporting events, sports books aplenty are appearing to give them a fix while they await the outcome of all this player/management negotiation.

Douglas Hunter's *Open Ice: The Tim Horton*

Ice is Horton himself. The many and often long-winded quotes from friends, fellow players, and business associates all echo with similar sentiments about Horton's admirable character, and as a result there seems to be a void at the centre of the narrative. Horton, a gentle giant who left a trail of broken hotel doors in his on-the-road wake, played hard and lived hard as he tried to embody the Clark Kent/Superman personae. He seemed to be energized by his ambivalent feelings about the game and by the tensions of his tumultuous personal life, but unfortunately the pressures of both eventually caught up with him.

While Horton played on one of his hockey club's most successful teams, Jean Beliveau played on a team that many believe was the best in NHL history — the Montreal Canadiens of the late 1950s, who won the Stanley Cup an unprecedented and unmatched five consecutive seasons. *My Life in Hockey* (McClelland & Stewart, 272 pages, \$26.99 cloth), by Beliveau, with assists from Chrys Goyens and Allan Turowetz, is a pedestrian look at his 40 years with the Canadiens organization — first as a stellar player, then as corporate vice-president. Synonymous with class, grace, and elegance on ice, Beliveau is less than dazzling on the page. Though witness to or participant in numerous historical hockey events, Beliveau is not particularly insightful about his own and his teammates' play; he has brilliant raw material to work with, but has fanned on an notable scoring opportunity.

Roy MacSkimming's *Gordie: A Hockey Legend* (Greystone/Douglas & McIntyre, 224 pages, \$40 cloth) is the controversial, unauthorized biography of Mr. Hockey himself, Gordie Howe. MacSkimming — much aided by the fact that he interviewed everyone but Howe — provides an objective overview of the Jekyll-and-Hyde player who metamorphosed from a shy Prairie boy into an aggressive, physical maniac on the ice. MacSkimming devotes an entire chapter to Howe's brilliant teammate, Red Kelly; and



From Gordie: A Hockey Legend

Story (Viking, 320 pages, \$27.99 cloth) is an ambitious look at the life and times of the man behind the doughnuts. Hunter begins with a detailed description of Northern Ontario, an area that in the '40s and '50s was — much as Liverpool was to British football — a spawning ground for many future NHL stars. Taking a slow ride through the North, Hunter occasionally goes offside and takes some off-the-mark shots as he tries to establish a starting point.

Hunter has all the ingredients for a dynamite story: a star defenceman on one of the most successful Leaf teams in history, a name that's become an icon in a successful business venture, and a well-known, tragic death. What is missing from *Open*

his account of the Red Wings' involvement in the stunted attempt at forming a players' association in the 1957-58 season is a sobering depiction of what life was really like under the oligarchic NHL management of that time. On the one hand, Howe's longevity is a testament to his physical prowess; on the other, it illustrates the few chances he really had: he forfeited his education to play the game he loved, his opportunities for a fulfilling job in Red Wings management were nonexistent, and his prospective pension was hardly substantial. Although *Gordie: A Hockey Legend* has

Montreal Star and was assigned to cover the Canadiens. *Hockey, Heroes, and Me* (McClelland & Stewart, 272 pages, \$26.99 cloth) is a collection of Fisher's favourite memories peppered with personal asides and perspectives. Whether he's bemoaning the trade that got away (Gretzky) or interviewing Dostoyevskian characters on Moscow's main drag during those famed 28 days in September 1972, Fisher gives new life to hockey lore. At times, his punchy dialogue mirrors B-movie repartee as he takes on a tough-guy role when talking back to the likes of Maurice Richard or

480 pages, \$40 cloth) is a well-written and brilliantly illustrated trip down memory lane. Diamond describes these years, season by season, with help from some of the finest names in Canadian sports writing: Milt Dunnell, Trent Frayne, and Red Fisher, among others, each contribute an essay on one of the six teams. The main text is accompanied by sidebars with updates on the changing nature of the sport and summaries of pivotal or record-breaking games. Suitable for both the avid and the casual fan, *Years of Glory* is a splendid panoramic view of the famous six that doesn't play team favourites.

Harold Garton's *Hockey Town Canada: The Golden Years* (Creative Bound, 226 pages, \$29.95 paper) is also a detailed celebration of hockey, but with a much smaller target audience. Garton, a writer and sports broadcaster in Pembroke, Ontario, provides an exhaustive list of games that took place in the Ottawa Valley and regions from 1936 to 1961. While a few players made it to the NHL — Turk Broda being the most memorable — it's difficult to appreciate the book without being familiar with the area or the players.

What would a hockey library be without a book on that perennial fan favourite and constant record-making machine Wayne Gretzky? *Wayne Gretzky: The Authorized Pictorial Biography* (Whitecap, 177 pages, \$39.95 cloth), is a lush illustration of Gretzky's rise from "Wally Colosseum" in Brantford, Ontario, to the heights of hockey history in the shadow of the Hollywood Hills. This *Life* magazine approach to a book contains classic shots of Gretzky, gathered from family albums and sports photographers across North America — with the best being those supplied by the star's parents, Walter and Phyllis Gretzky. While there are some curious omissions — no pictures of Peter Pocklington, Glen Sather, or Gretzky's first well-known girlfriend — this pictorial biography will be read to tatters by any reader remotely interested in hockey.



From *Years of Glory, 1942-1967*

raised the ire of both Gordie and Colleen Howe, the book is an interesting slice of hockey life that offers insight into a man who at one time dominated the NHL and will always be remembered for the sheer artistry of his game.

Before Don Cherry's "Coach's Corner" on "Hockey Night in Canada," there was Red Fisher's "Fisher Report." The venerable Montreal sports writer began his career in 1954 — the year after Beliveau signed with the Canadiens and the year before the famed Richard Riot — at the

telling Scotty Bowman to screw himself (a comment that had Peter Mahovlich thanking Fisher on behalf of the team). While Fisher's main focus is the Habs, he does tell a few other hockey and non-hockey tales to round out this account of his illustrious 40 years in the business.

For a broader look at what is often erroneously called the era of the original six-team league, Dan Diamond's *Years of Glory, 1942-1967: The National Hockey League's Official Book of the Six Team Era* (McClelland & Stewart,



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- Sharon Butala

R.D. Symons

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COTEAU BOOKS

For fifteen years, beginning in 1926, Bob Symons matched wits with poachers in northwestern Saskatchewan. His experiences provide the material for this, his fifth book, published twenty years after his death.

These memoirs are colourful and quickly paced, spiced by an acerbic attitude toward bureaucracy and the cold-hearted modernism that favours "progress" over land and wildlife.

If you are keen to test your hockey knowledge, Liam Maguire's *Hockey Trivia Book I* (General Store, 106 pages, \$9.95 paper) is a handy little publication full of teasers to stump the best of hockey buffs. Maguire supplies questions and answers, plus an annotated "best of the best list" of 10 players he feels have dominated the NHL from its early days to the present. While there is the occasional editorial slip-up, it can't be denied that Maguire knows his subject and has created great fodder for conversation over a couple of pints.

Hockey is often thought of as the backbone of Canadian sports history, while baseball is considered the new kid on the block. Jim Shearon's *Canada's Baseball Legends* (248 pages, \$14.95 paper), the premier publication from the fledgling Malin Head Press, is out to dispel this popular notion. Shearon has compiled a detailed record of Canadians in the big leagues from 1879 to the present, plus anecdotal episodes from our baseball history. From Bill Phillips, the first Canuck to grace the major leagues, to the legendary Jackie Robinson's brief stint in Montreal, and from Fergie Jenkins, Canada's most famous player (and sole inductee into the

Baseball Hall of Fame), to our first World Series champions. *Canada's Baseball Legends* offers a provocative Canadian perspective on the sport known as America's pastime.

The Blue Jays' World Series wins did wonders to increase interest in the sport across the country, and baseball books are now almost as popular as those on hockey. Stuart Broomer's *Paul Molitor: Good Timing* (ECW, 217 pages, \$12.95 paper) is a homogenized look at the man who played practically every position possible and was plagued by injury throughout his major league career before going on to become the MVP of the 1993 World Series. It's worth wading through the account of Molitor's Milwaukee years to finally arrive at Broomer's glorious recreation of the final games of the 1993 World Series. *Game Day: The Blue Jays at Skydome* (Viking, 296 pages, \$25.99 cloth), by Martin and Sean O'Malley, focuses on the people whose behind-the-scenes work went into making the Jays champions. There's not much of a story here to begin with — not to take away from these people's accomplishments — but the authors' style does not do its subjects sufficient justice.

The Vancouver writer Cleve Dheensaw believes you can only truly understand the Commonwealth Games by putting them in historical perspective. His book, *The Commonwealth Games: The First 60 Years 1930-1990* (Orca, 224 pages, \$15.95 paper), thus begins with a simple, informative introduction, and then goes on to give an overview of each of the games since their inception. There are also lists of records and notable accomplishments as well as brief bios of some of the Games' more famous athletes.

For many amateur athletes, fame is fleeting and may not last beyond the duration of the international sporting events they compete in. But the synchronized swimmer Sylvie Fréchette will long be remembered for her brave performance in the face of adversity at the 1992 Summer Olympics. *Gold at Last* (Stoddart, 157 pages, \$14.95 paper) is her account, with help from Lilianne Lacroix, of her devastating losses and the personal triumph that came when she was finally awarded the gold medal she deserved a year and a half after the competition was over.

Finally, *Figure Skating: A Celebration* (McClelland & Stewart, 256 pages, \$40 cloth) by Beverly Smith, with an introduction by Elvis Stojko, provides a history of the sport and a look at some of its key players. Smith's guided tour of the sport's past kicks off with a portrait of its creator, Jackson Haines, and closes with a portrayal of the fiercely competitive and media-conscious contemporary scene. Part celebration of the many Canadians who left their mark in the skating world, and part an attempt to capitalize on the heightened public interest after the much publicized women's singles event of the 1994 Winter Olympics, *Figure Skating* is an interesting read, and something to keep you busy until the world championships next spring — chances are that this event may be the only televised sport available.

... to keep on
 God, half a dozen
 state fishes' ...
 ... to anything
 ... by a crowd
 ... how welcome

They Went Thisaway



GEORGE BOWERING IS AT IT again. He's back in the saddle, riding through the Okanagan Valley, where the summer sun beats down relentlessly and an outlaw's life is nasty, brutish, and short.

In *Shoot!*, the outlaws' lives are even shorter than average, since Bowering is writing about the adventures of four very young men — the three McLean brothers, Allan,

Charlie, and Archie (who is only 15), and their friend Alex Hare. The reader meets these "bad

boys" in 1880 at the end of their story, as it were, as they sit in the New Westminster provincial jail, awaiting word on whether they will be given a new trial or be hanged. They have been captured after leading "the Chilcotin Uprising," when the forces of law and order have the upper hand once more.

As the young men wait, they are being read to and sung to by the warden's wife, Mary Anne Moresby, who isn't much older than they are and is troubled by their incarceration.

The McLean boys are products of colliding points in history: their father was Donald McLean, chief trader for the Hudson's Bay Company in Kamloops, "a pillar of the community but he was

SHOOT!

by George Bowering

Key Porter, 304 pages, \$18.95 paper (ISBN 1 55013 606 2)

Reviewed by Lynne Van Luven

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a nasty man, cruel and self-important." McLean, Bowering writes, was born at Tobermory, on the Island of Mull, but "he left to go somewhere where he would no longer be a hopeless case. He wanted to become powerful."

The place McLean found to do that was British Columbia, working for the Hudson's Bay Company, where he did well because he "shared a nineteenth-century European notion that the world he had come to was a vast disorder that could be organized with the application of strength and will."

Although he despises Indians and likes to subdue and kill them, Donald McLean takes an Indian woman as a second wife. With Sophie Grant, he has three sons, even though "he never learned a word of her language." The youngest son, Archie, was born the year his father died, and Archie "was going to die without ever doing whatever you do with a girl."

You can see what Bowering is up to here: he's writing an anti-history, or at least, a history short on the usual stuff of vast noble plans and individual heroics. He's also trying to tell the Natives' stories—for instance, there's the tale of the feud based on whether the noise geese make as they fly comes from their beaks or their wings—on an equal footing with those of the white settlers. He's questioning impe-

rialism in all its forms, and he's inserting female sensibilities into what has largely been a male story.

The result is a sly bleak-comedy Western. *Shoot!* is infused with jostling contradictions: Native mythology contends with low-brow cowboy violence; lullabies echo through prison cells. And Bowering juxtaposes opposites: Special Constable Johnny Ussher rides off to his death without a gun, thinking the McLean brothers are "just boys on a tear"; brutes like McLean in a fit of drunken pique bite off an Indian's nose.

Bowering has been riding thisaway before, astride his frisky stallion Sendup, notably in his 1987 novel, *Caprice*, also set in the inner B.C. drylands where the novelist grew up. The aptly named *Caprice* tells the story of a six-foot, bullwhip-toting redhead from Quebec who is seeking revenge for her brother's murder. Some of the same people—like Everyday Luigi—who get involved in *Caprice*'s adventures show up again briefly in *Shoot!*. You can't blame Bowering: there's lotsa stories in them thar dry hills, and it's high time somebody with a sensa humour told 'em.

So the question remaining is, does *Shoot!* work? My answer is yes, once a reader adjusts to Bowering's own highly individual gait and point of view. "Some

wise people say that stories never end." Bowering writes. "Stories are open like doors, and no one can ever shut them. Stories stay open for hundreds of years, and grandchildren stand in front of an open door, learning to tell."

In his learning to tell, Bowering's prose style is initially disconcerting; short, choppy sentences, discontinuous narrative, abrupt shifts in time, a mixture of Native mythology and laconic cowpoke dialogue all compete for attention.

Miraculously, one-third of the way through the novel, the reader adjusts to the teller's style and begins to enjoy the journey. Perhaps the experience is best explained by a horse-and-rider metaphor: when riders trade in a long-time mount for a new one, it takes a while to adjust to different equine contours and mannerisms.

So it is with *Shoot!*: the old grey mare of historical fiction ain't what she used to be. Bowering opens new doors in stories told about his part of the world and lures us into a reimagined West, one informed by post-modern ironies and an educated awareness of race and class, one where the tall tales of derring-do and nation-building are debunked.

Call *Shoot!* a subversive Western, and let Bowering seduce you into viewing old scenery from a new, ultimately touching angle.

The Dancer from the Dance

KAREN KAIN:

Movement Never Lies

by Karen Kain, with Stephen Godfrey and Penelope Reed Doob

McClelland & Stewart, 336 pages, \$40 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 2320 0)

Reviewed by John Ayre

WHILE KAREN KAIN still gets called "Canada's sweetheart," by the *New York Times* dance critic Anna Kisselgoff,

she really hasn't been so for more than 10 years. Yet, like Barbara Ann Scott in the '50s, Kain undeniably retains a mythic stature for the Canadian public, a stature that goes well beyond the simple fact that she is, I would argue, the most impressive ballerina Canada has produced. In the period of about 1973 to 1983, she was a Canadian icon, a superstar all across the country, if not, alas, the world.

Now with the help of the arts journalists

Stephen Godfrey and Penelope Reed Doob, Kain gives us her story at the end of a career that inevitably has had its full complement of confusions and major depressions as well as victories. It's obvious that, as ever, ballet hands out its rewards sparingly and often with a cruel hand. As a result *Karen Kain* sometimes reads like an extended Dear Audience letter to explain that those looks of pain and stress on stage were just that. In fact there is a tone of didacticism throughout: Kain is very determined to let us know all the problems of ballet injuries, shoes, stage conditions, partners, and balky artistic directors.



From Karen Kain: Movement Never Lies

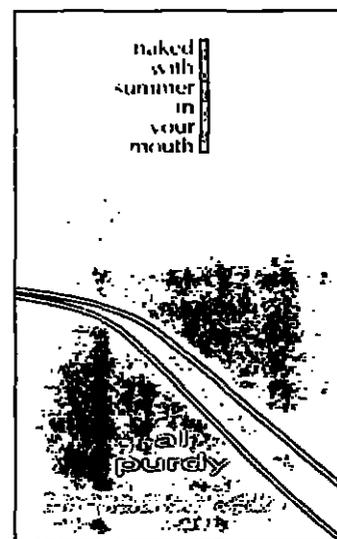
Despite the help of Godfrey and Doob, Kain unfortunately presents a bewilderingly uneven array of personae. At the forefront, there's Kain the discerning critic who can analyse and articulate the pros and cons of each production with the acumen of an artistic director. This is where she is best. She has a voluminous and hard-edged memory for each of her major roles and for each of her international involvements, whether it be as favourite post-Fonteyn partner of Nureyev or as star of Roland Petit's company in Marseilles and Paris. On a personal level, though, she appears often as a frightened girl who admits it took years to realize that the God of Dance was not going to strike her dead for cultivating an ordinary offstage pal. While she huffs and puffs about the dumb dancer stereotype that frequently keeps even major stars out of important decision-making, there is much that shows the immaturity and tunnel vision notorious in the dancing life. So acute in her analysis of onstage events, Kain has very little interest in the wider

world of the arts media and promotion and Canadian cultural dynamics, which made her career such a "gold dust" phenomenon. There are major lapses too. She only briefly discusses her crucial relationship with the choreographer Tim Spain in her teens, but devotes many gushy pages to her courtship by and wedding to the actor Ross Petty. Breathlessly she relates: "Our wedding day was the fairy-tale event of every bride's dreams, starting with the exquisite dress, designed by Maggie Reeves" It goes on from there to the hand-embroidered silk and the large silk flower.

By the end of the book, the reader is a bit punch drunk, wondering when and if the real Karen Kain will stand up. Of course, like many actresses, Kain may use personal confusions to absorb roles and win audiences. Still, compared with dance biographies of the past decade such as Gelsey Kirkland's *Dancing on my Grave* or Suzanne Farrell's *Holding On to the Air*, *Karen Kain* is a decidedly uneven and confusing book.

"The greatest
of our poets..."
- Globe & Mail

naked
with
summer
in
your
mouth
al purdy



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effortless gratuitous magic
which has been the sign of
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creative, insightful teenager, Michelle; her strong-willed grandmother, Lee; and Nora, mother of the former, daughter of the latter. Nora is dying of cancer, and the love, fear, and rage this elicits in her family is chronicled in all its puzzling, often frustrating complexity. In "Callings" an investment banker who was fired for slapping an employee is forced to confront her loss of status and financial privilege. As she sinks into depression, she learns not only to see herself but also her schizophrenic brother in a new light. A family New Year's Eve party provides the backdrop in "Bold," where Janet, pregnant through the aid of a sperm bank, comes face to face with the implications of her decision to have a child completely on her own. In the deeply moving "About Johanna," a woman recalls her now dead older sister and, in the process, comes to terms with their relationship.

Extraordinary Appearances

KNEELING ON RICE by Elizabeth Denton

University of Missouri, 184 pages, US\$14.95 paper
(ISBN 0 8252 0968 8)

AMERICAS by Robert Mullen

Coteau, 288 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 1 55050 063 5)

Reviewed by Eva Tihanyi



Elizabeth Denton



Robert Mullen

Denton has a fine eye for telling details — what a piece of unwrapped candy at the bottom of a purse or a glance at a TV screen during a serious conversation can reveal about character. She also has a talent for creating drama, for throw-

FOR ANYONE IN THE MOOD for serious, provocative fiction, here are impressive debuts by two very different but equally worthwhile short-story writers. Elizabeth Denton lives in Virginia but was born in Toronto; Robert Mullen, originally from Washington, D.C., emigrated to Canada in 1968 but currently lives in Scotland. Both have been published in literary periodicals; however, this is their first appearance in book form.

"*Kneeling on Rice* puts Elizabeth Denton in a league with Alice Munro — there is no higher praise," boasts the cover blurb. A

weighty comparison with which to saddle a writer's first book, and certainly a red flag — a dangerous invitation — to wave in front of reviewers. Fortunately, although most of Denton's stories lack the multiple-layered emotional resonance of Munro's, they are impressive in their own right.

The central characters, in 10 of the 11 stories, are women. Eccentric, intriguing women. Women caught in turbulent, often bizarre, circumstances. Women in the throes of change. There is, for example, the powerful triangle in "Generations": the

ing together — much as life so often does — diametrically opposed characters and recording the alchemy. It is to her credit that she makes the extraordinary seem believable.

In *Americas* Robert Mullen, too, focuses on the extraordinary: the pervasive influence of myth and ritual lurking beneath the soul-numbing technology and seeming banality of contemporary life. As he notes in his stylistically innovative "The Bridge," modern civilization's motto might well be: "Having stumbled upon one of life's secret

passageways, we proceeded to laminate it." And with such an attitude come inevitable grief and a yearning for meaning that cannot be satisfied without attention to history, tradition, the value of "ancient things." In "Flotsam" a Black waiter returns to his voodoo roots; in "Maize Child" an Indian couple struggles to conduct a traditional fertility rite despite the meddling of a parish priest; in "Reflections" a Native magician casts a spell over a botanist in the jungle. "Monsters" centres on a desert therapy group that juxtaposes Navajo lore with the participants' personal stories of marriage breakdown, urban stress, and general malaise. As the protagonist of "Pilgrims" observes:

It's not the big things, but the small and insignificant things in their endless succession, that do the damage. It's not the thousand miles

you drive across the country that grinds you down, it's the thousand times you drive a mile to work.

In the chilling, futuristic "The Girl in the Machine," a man tries to escape his loneliness while maintaining order in his life by buying a female robot to be his companion. Ironically, Elliot and Evangeline (as the robot wishes to be called) are in many ways not that different from present-day couples. They "train" each other, become accustomed to their daily patterns, succumb readily to routine. Yet even in this futuristic world, there is a need for art, a quest for personal relevance. Evangeline takes up painting, begins having "bird thoughts," blue and shimmering.

These brief descriptions can in no way do justice to the remarkable depth, the richly allusive style of these stories. Mullen challenges the reader both intellectually and emotionally, and does so in a way that defies easy categorization. It is hard to believe that such an accomplished collection is his first.

Exterior Details

THIS BOOK IS NOT A GOOD read, but it is a great stroll and should be enjoyed as such. The

author is an enthusiast as much as he is a scholar, and he takes us on a leisurely walk across Canada. It begins with Amerindian wigwams, winds past early European settlers' cabins, continues by high Victorian monuments to prosperity and probity, and finally meanders into the demotic sprawl of late-20th-century constructions.

A HISTORY OF CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE by Harold Kalman

Oxford, two volumes, 984 pages, \$95 cloth (ISBN 0 19 541 103 X)

Reviewed by Donald Harman Akenson

What makes *A History of Canadian Architecture* a good Christmas book (at least for anyone who is not a specialist in

Canadian history or in the history of architecture) is the quantity and quality of the illustrations.

Virtually every page has a picture, and many have several. The presentation of the illustrations is a credit to Oxford University Press, the more so because even though no colour plates are used, the profusion of black-and-white illustrations gives the book a visual rich-

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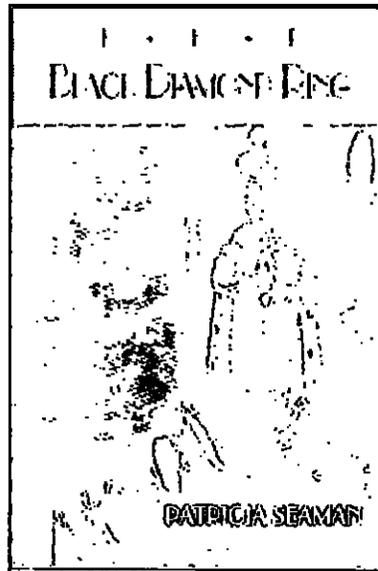
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many English settlers on the Prairies is embodied in *The Grotto* in Davisburg, Alberta, built around 1887 by Dr. Albert E. Bannister, a veterinarian from Bridgport in Dorset.

And, to give another example, we learn in the summation sentence of a chapter on buildings used for communications, defence, and commerce, that "the many social and economic sectors that participated in creating Montreal are clearly visible in its buildings and its urban form." After a few hundred pages of this sort of thing, one begins to think, guiltily, that, yes, our companion is a nice guy and he's full of facts and the odd interesting theory, but the day would be considerably enhanced if he would fall down a manhole and let us continue our pleasant stroll unimproved by his observations.

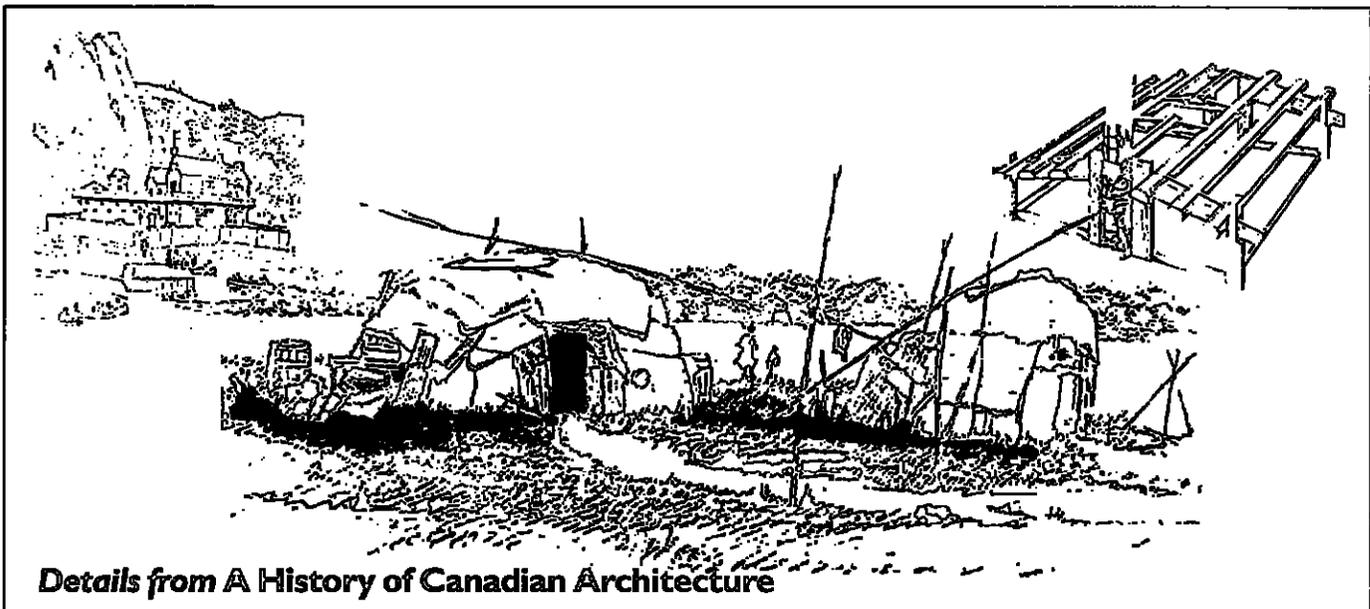
Is this two-volume set worth \$95? I think it's a great bargain at the price. What I would do is buy a set, spend a couple of evenings with it, and then gift-wrap it for your favourite old uncle, the one who collects antique woodworking tools and is impossible to buy presents for. He'll love the pictures.

ness. Thus, on a long winter's evening, readers can slowly turn the pages and have the same feeling one gets from those lovingly slow-paced documentaries that they do so well on PBS. There is very little here in the way of technical drawings or floor plans. Mostly we find nicely detailed exteriors, just what one would see if one were ambling by the building in question.

The text is another matter. It is the kind

of thing one frequently gets from people who are good at using their eyes but not their ears. It is the unending chatter of an enthusiast, who tells us lots of useful facts in the most earnest manner. Thus, on this stroll we have the thudding tramp of a companion who insists on telling us things like this:

The Englishness of the houses of



Details from *A History of Canadian Architecture*

Changes of Air

PEOPLE WHO WRITE ABOUT the mass media seem to have a sense of urgency. Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* is a typical example. It was laced with a strange sort of self-aggrandizing adrenalin that, if nothing else, kept readers alert. By contrast, those who write about literary culture these days, particularly when it's Canadian, seem most interested in, well, whether the doilies have been properly placed. This is no doubt highly comforting to the initiated, but for outsiders, it is coma-inducing.

The main virtue of Barry Cooper's *Sins of Omission: Shaping the News at CBC TV* is that it won't put anyone in a coma. Cooper, a professor of political science at the

University of Alberta, analysed 250 CBC-TV broadcasts shown between June 1988 and June 1989, focusing on the network's coverage of the Reagan-Gorbachev summits, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and South Africa. Most of CBC-TV's luminaries appear prominently in the extensive transcripts the book provides, including Peter Mansbridge, the now retired Knowlton Nash, and the late Barbara Frum. Cooper's premise is that CBC's coverage was overly friendly to Gorbachev and the Marxist regimes in Ethiopia and Mozambique, and unjustifiably hostile to the Reagan administration and the South African government.

If this makes Cooper sound like another of those John Crispo-ettes who believe that

the CBC is infested with left-wing sympathizers, so does the detail and analysis in the book. Cooper is a little like one of those scientists who decides what his conclusions ought to be and then goes looking for evidence that supports them. But within his transparent ideological limits, he's a competent analyst, or maybe it's just that line-by-line media analysis is easy. Whatever the case, the book is extremely readable, and it delivers a helpful conceptual short-

hand for media analysis that anyone will be able to use.

It's fun to discover — in print — that CBC's slick anchors and their stable of experts don't speak English very well, and think even less clearly, but accusing CBC's

news people of being soft on communism is downright silly. Barbara Frum was David Frum's mother, for God's sake. On the evidence Cooper selects, it is possible to deduce that Frum, the other anchors, and the CBC's researchers and writers were slightly addle-headed and sometimes given to excessive flights of metaphor, but a similar kind of analysis of CBC-TV's coverage of the last G-7 conference and the recent Mexican elections, or its non-coverage of free trade, would just as convincingly establish that the corporation is a bastion of neoconservatism — and suggest that the CIA, not the KGB, is in control of CBC editorial policy.

Being attracted to Mikhail Gorbachev during the last few years of the 1980s —

SINS OF OMISSION: Shaping the News at CBC TV by Barry Cooper

University of Toronto, 255 pages, \$29.95 cloth
(ISBN 0 8020 0597 7)

RADIO RETHINK: Art, Sound, and Transmission edited by Dan Lander and Daina Augaitis

Walter Phillips Gallery/Banff Centre for the Arts,
356 pages, with CD and survey, \$40 paper (ISBN 0 920159 76 1)

Reviewed by Brian Fawcett

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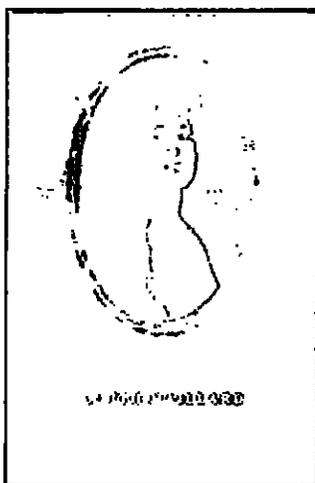
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and being sceptical of the Reagan-Bush machine of the same period — is hardly evidence of excessive sympathy toward communism. During that period the Soviet leader seemed to be the only political figure anywhere in the world capable of imagining real change. At the very least he had full control of his faculties, which even ordinary citizens could see Ronald Reagan was losing, and George Bush hadn't had to begin with.

I have more sympathy with Cooper's arguments about the CBC's coverage of Africa, which did demonize South Africa while spinning out badly over Ethiopia and Mozambique's crazed regimes. But there again, his theories about left-wing bias seem off the mark. I'd say that the distortion in coverage was caused by a fear of being seen to be racist toward Black Africans, not because the CBC was floor-to-rafter with wild-eyed Marxist cheerleaders. In any event, the under-reporting of Ethiopia and Mozambique doesn't excuse South Africa's apartheid madnesses, which were *not* over-reported. The mainly white, middle-class folks at CBC were (and remain) simply more at home bashing

people who seem to resemble themselves — a point that Cooper makes in his rhetorical fashion, and then proceeds to mistake for leftist malefaction.

The banal truth is that the folks at CBC (and at virtually every other television news agency) are the victims of their own lazy mediocrity. They are also the victims of a medium that has not yet learned how to carry complex content, and is therefore not capable of supporting the discourse that is the basis of democracy. We should be afraid of television's apparent inability to grow up, not of an alleged red menace at the CBC.

I do agree with one point Cooper makes in his concluding chapter:

The CBC, like all modern media, has directed its energies toward the production of a specific configuration of opinion — namely, progressive opinion — and not toward the provision of reliable information about the world.

It's too bad Cooper didn't concentrate on the issue of just exactly how television

might provide "reliable information" — as he begins to in the book's last few pages — instead of letting himself be sucked into merely contesting the definition of what "progressive opinion" is.

Radio Rethink: Art, Sound, and Transmission is a different and stranger kettle of fish. It is actually two books and a demonstration CD, and it doesn't really fulfil the promise of its title — the subtitle is a more accurate guide to its contents. It's the Yamaha Canada-funded product of the Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre for the Arts, and its subject is something called "radio art." In case you're not familiar with the term, it is pretty much the opposite of what you hear while you're twirling the knobs of your car radio. Its premise is the McLuhanesque notion that radio is an obsolete medium, and therefore a logical medium for the practice of art, and that's about as far as *Radio Rethink* wants to rethink radio.

It's a fairly thin vein they're mining, as the accompanying 70-page *Selected Survey of Radio Art in Canada: 1967-1992* unintentionally reveals. The heftier anthology of radio-art essays doesn't do much to alter that impression. Few of the essays seem very interested in invading the immense (and immensely centralized and vulgar) world of commercial radio, and no one outside of Jody Berland seems very interested in reclaiming the cultural promise radio exuded before television turned it into an instrument for commercial white noise and neotribal moozak. Disappointingly, only one or two of the essays examines public radio, and then only to peer down their noses at the CBC's somewhat saccharine cultural nationalism or at the recent decay of its cultural mandate.

The radio-art movement has deep roots, and at least four of those roots are first rate and Canadian: the Innis/McLuhan academic axis; the tiny opus of brilliant ideas about the possibilities of radio Glenn Gould gave us; the notions of acoustic ecology and

musical education that R. Murray Schafer developed before he realized that universities were hostile to unorthodox multidisciplinary thinking; and the more international visual arts-based avant garde centred around Toronto's General Idea, A-Space, and Music Gallery, and Vancouver's Western Front.

Yet for all the inventive brilliance of people like Hank Bull, the Schafer disciple Hildegard Westerkamp, and several others, there is too much pointless whining in *Radio Rethink* about how unfeeling our commercialized world is toward art and artists. The authors are disturbingly acquiescent about their marginalization (from both the universities and the commercial mainstream). The experience of reading the essays is rather like reading contemporary Canadian lit-crit: one is startled by the creativity and erudition of the authors and their subjects, and disappointed that all they can think of to do in the world is drape the Leviathan with crocheted bits of lace. ○

Prairie Fires

TEN YEARS SEPARATE THE two sisters-in-law whose lives, memories, and reflections are the focus of *Imitating Art*, Marlis Wesseler's new collection of cleverly linked short stories. While 10 years is no big deal in chronological time, for Wesseler's protagonists it is more than enough of an interval to make them the inhabitants of different worlds and different ideologies. The rub of those differences — and the bond the two women nevertheless share — is what makes *Imitating Art* so engaging and so revealing. Wesseler (as her earlier collection of stories, *Life Skills*, showed) has an acute sensitivity to the lives of women, although she's also no slouch when it comes to getting inside the head of a man. Her nuanced language captures the tiniest

changes in the atmospheric pressure of hope, fear, elation, and despair.

Jean and Karen live in middle-class Regina. They are, respectively, forty-something and thirty-something, with husbands increasingly peripheral to their lives, and children who challenge them. Jean's mate, Larry, is a jovial couch potato whose idea of fun is pizza, a six-pack, and "Hockey Night in Canada." She teaches at a community college and is a good teacher, and committed to her work, while at the same time experiencing a growing sense of futility and emptiness.

Karen is married to Chad, a compulsive worker with his own architectural firm who tries hard to be the sensitive and supportive modern *paterfamilias* but doesn't always get it. He is frequently out of town

MAN OF MYTH



Lively, compelling and meticulously researched, this landmark biography paints a captivating and insightful portrait of Canada's greatest living novelist.

Penguin Books Canada Limited

IMITATING ART

by Marlis Wesseler

Cotnam, 184 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 1 55050 072 4)

TEETH

by Fred Stenson

Cotnam, 144 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 1 55050 06 0)

Reviewed by Roger Burford Mason

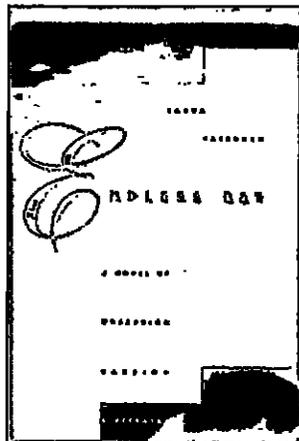
on long business trips, leaving Karen to pursue her rather desultory career as a sculptor when she is not actively engaged in rearing their small son, Jeremy.

Jean escapes from the dulling inertia of her life by fantasizing about her late teenage years in the '60s, when she travelled through Europe, lived and worked in London, and enjoyed a vivacious and bohemian existence that seems, in retrospect, to mock the staid aridity of her mature life. By the end of the group of stories Wesseler has allotted to her, Jean is contemplating the *Shirley Valentine* sce-

Endless Bay

Laura Fairburn

Literature, history, and passion intermingle in this tragic and compelling story of the deadly price of blind ambition.



The Mercury Press

ISBN 1-55128-014-0; \$14.50 pb

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Marlis Wesseler

occasional flashes of iron will. With more positives in her life than Jean she, too, will survive, although Wesseler makes it clear that it will be at a cost.

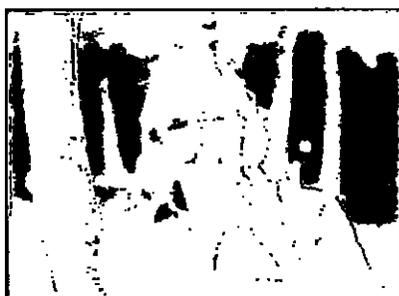
At first glance, the vacuum at the centre of the lives of the sisters-in-law recalls Bob Geldof's poignantly titled autobiography, *Is That It?*; yet in the end the phrase fails to describe the situation of the two women, for whom there *is* more, even though, as Wesseler wisely hints, it may be only the defining minutiae of their lives.

Fred Stenson is one of those writers whose work is a smack upside the head to those who say Canadians are too serious to have a sense of humour. In his 1990 collection of stories, *Working Without a Sound Track*, Stenson gave notice that he was Canadian *and* humorous, and that he could use a laugh as a lead-in to some serious reflections on the human condition. In his new novel, *Teeth*, he has largely eschewed the pursuit of message for a more broadly worked and viscerally comic canvas.

Stenson's protagonists this time around are the management and players of Canada's worst NHL team, the Bisons, located somewhere on the Prairies between the Manitoba-Ontario border and the foothills of the Rockies, in a town not entirely unlike, say, Pincher Creek, Alberta, where the writer grew up. Stenson is very strong at conveying the excitement, the adrenalin rush, the broken teeth, and the winded gut of our national game without losing those whose pulses do not race at the

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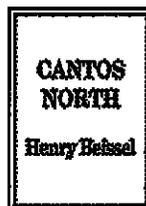


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nario of flight to a romanticized, hedonistic Greece. But Wesseler undermines the romanticism of this dream by having Jean recall that her icon of that freedom and hedonism is a handsome sybarite, a small-time crook and gigolo who stood her up.

Karen's sense of alienation is different, but no less real. In a marriage that works,

but often only just, and then largely through her marital engineering, she is resentful of her husband's full and busy life, and of the little part she plays in it, and is driven to make her art without ever fully believing in her vision or ability. She takes refuge behind a screen of humour, an oblique and zany attitude to the world, while showing



Fred Stenson

sound of the stirring theme music of "Hockey Night in Canada"; but it's in delineating character and piling up events that go from amusing to ludicrous that he shoots, he scores.

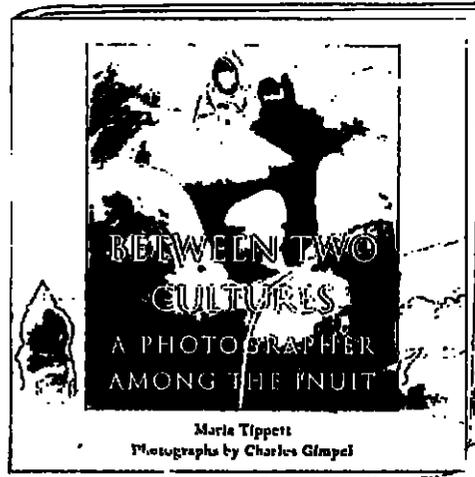
His best character to date is Doug Burns, the talented but lazy and gutless star of the hapless Bisons, whose career survives only as long as he has the protection of his best friend and club goon, Smitty Smith. In charting Doug's decline from star to burn, through his desperate attempts to attract a wife before getting his teeth smashed out, and ending with a farcical comeback in which he achieves his dream of playing and scoring against Guy Lafleur, Stenson has created a character he may well want to do more with in future. Indeed, the passages concerning Doug's attempts to found a doughnut empire *à la* Tim Horton are natural material for a cult sitcom.

Because Stenson's canvas is broad and his characters little more than comic-book cutouts, there isn't much room in *Teeth* for subtlety, either in the plotting or the dialogue. But the book has a racy and authentic ring to it, and charges along like a good winger on a roll. Stenson's is the humour of the chuckle and the belly laugh rather than the knowing and appreciative smile or the quiet amusement of recognition. Nevertheless, by the end of the book, I was surprised to find that I had developed a relationship with Doug, and I cared about his dreams and failures.

That's some trick Stenson pulled.

BETWEEN TWO CULTURES

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**GESTURES OF GENIUS:
Women, Dance and the Body**
by Rachel Vigier

Mercury, 240 pages, \$16.95 paper (ISBN 1 55128 012 4)

**GIGOLOS AND
MADAMES BOUNTIFUL:
Illusions of Gender,
Power, and Intimacy**
by Adie Nelson and Barrie W. Robinson

University of Toronto, 416 pages, \$29.95 cloth
(ISBN 0 8020 0613 2)

Reviewed by Margaret Sweatman

[his aesthetic] maintains a controlled and token feminine presence designed to serve male visions of power and creativity. Whether the female dancer is fetishized in a

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Margaret Christakos

"... unlike anything you've ever read about feminist consciousness, about women's bodies... Christakos' words reach further to decipher new connections and form exquisite new patterns."

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\$11.95; ISBN 1-56128-017-5, 96 pages
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The Mercury Press

based on more than 600 case studies. It feels like more. They are spread very thin, the testimonies of men and women on the subjects of love, money, power. There is little analysis and it is offhand and erratic. The material needs to be cogently placed, distilled, shaped, edited. As it is, I am left bored and frustrated, saddened and a little pissed off.

The authors argue that power and gender roles are changing with the recent economic advances made by women (in Western societies). The reader is taken on a quick ride through the history of European monarchies and the edicts of popes. There is nothing new in this information and the survey is superficial. Most of this long text is devoted to oral history, the tales of relationships — many, many relationships. I feel as if I've eaten Corn Pops, the whole box. The purpose of their survey is defined negatively in the first 50 pages, but I don't ever feel that they have focused with much discernment on the topic. The stories are framed by easy-to-read sociological discourse. This is so strangely tiresome — stories of "relationships" are often sad, and in this book they are treated with sociological typologies that diminish their human resonance and add little or nothing to our understanding of human nature, sexual politics, or history.

Nelson and Robinson write of

the new superhero of the '90s — "Commitment Man" — that emulatory hero who is willing to commit himself to a relationship — as if this was in itself a somewhat self-sacrificial and dangerous undertaking. The imagery underlying the creation of Commitment Man inverts the traditional imagery surrounding "men as pursuers, women as pursued" but nevertheless suggests a reassertion of male power. Invested in the metaphor is the

I felt as if Vigier were assembling her book in the dark, a good and honest place from which to begin a tentative search, an essay, a worthy project even while this process might reject the glamour of authority and force of argument. I feel nurtured by this book, informed in ways other than, or in addition to, the purely cognitive. The names of the dance practices, the proper nouns, haven't stayed with me because they are so unfamiliar, but the embodied biographies have left me with a sense of optimism and a renewed will to shape my own life.

I only wish it weren't made at the expense of the other sex. I'm wary of feminism that force-feeds our concepts of gender. Women are one thing, whereas Men are another. As a reader I become sceptical and instantly check the writer's experience of Men with my own. It's a desperate polemic. And I feel uneasy with the yearning for an Edenic state prior to the Patriarchy. But saying that, I must affirm its opposite: a sense of having been spoken to at a level innate and health-giving.

The promotional material for Adie Nelson and Barrie W. Robinson's *Gigolos and Madames Bountiful* tells us that it is



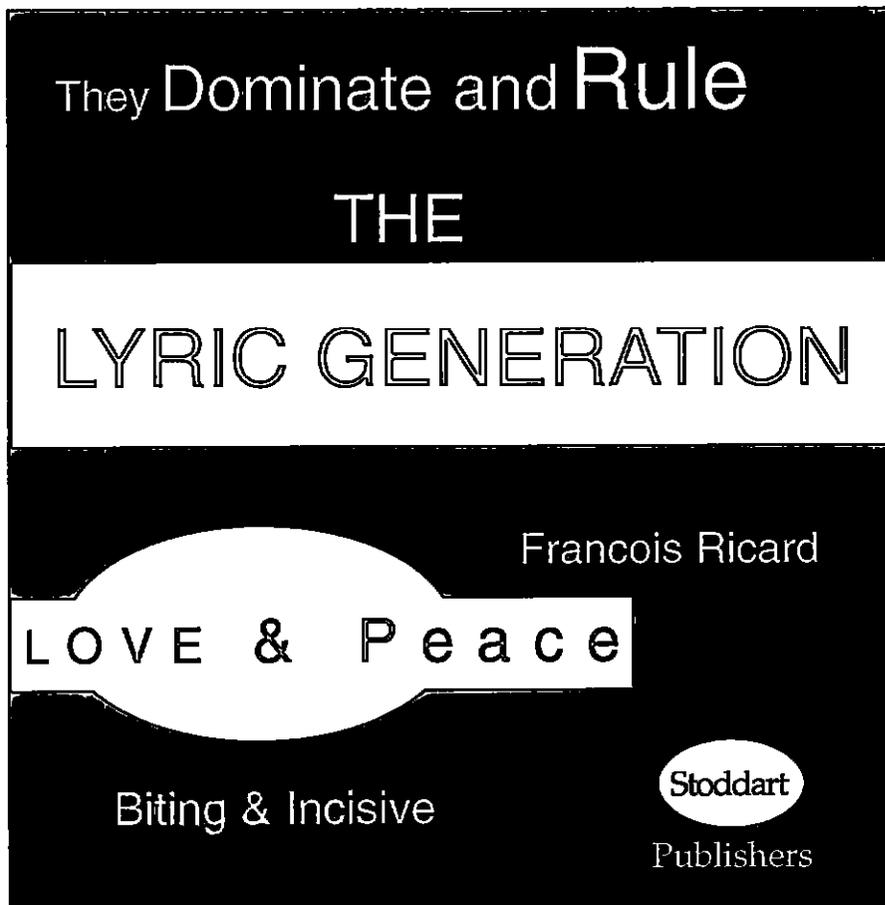
Rachel Vigier

flowery cult of beauty and romance or entirely removed from the stage space, her position is determined by the equation of power and creativity with men, violence, and money.

suggestion that such men are in themselves scarce, invaluable, and thus to be treasured. When allied with economic and institutional power, Commitment Man embodies a potent combination of social and personal resources.

The presence of "Superwoman," the absence of "Superman" and the heralding of "Commitment Man" give implicit testimony to the differential rates of change which have occurred within female and male spheres of social life.

This may be a fact, but it is scattered like so much buckshot through the book, as if this were a draft but not a finished work. The historical and sociological analysis is unimaginative and glib, a superficiality that seems to be intended to be humorous (and perhaps there are readers who will find it so). ☺



Natural-Born Fables

IN A STEADY PROCESSION OF novels and short story collections published since the '70s, Katherine Govier has been charting a territory that is by now distinctively her own. The 15 stories that comprise her latest book, *The Immaculate Conception Photography Gallery and Other Stories*, come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but all are recognizably set in Govier's world.

The world according to Govier is a treacherous place. Her characters face the ordinary, terrible treacheries that threaten us all: the loss of those we love, by separation or death; the slow, inevitable decays of time; the sudden, unexpected occurrences that change our lives. But they may also face situations that most of us will never have to confront. Consider Ellen,

who appears in "God Is Writing a Novel": "Ellen was a professor of English, forty years old, ten years divorced. She had cellulite in her thighs, but she was strong and kind, and pretty enough." The thing about Ellen, the unusual thing, is that she has taken an ape as a lover. Or consider the central character of "Aliens": "Teresa is a rationalist, and a Catholic. She would say that she doesn't believe in aliens." Teresa nonetheless watches in fascination as a UFO disgorges gold balls from the sky in front of her cottage.

The fate that twists the inhabitants of Govier's eccentric, melancholy world seems not so much malign as capricious, and her characters tend to be bemused by what befalls them, whether it be the strange after-effects of a heart transplant, or their

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY AND OTHER STORIES

by Katherine Govier

Little, Brown, 212 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 316 31984 8)

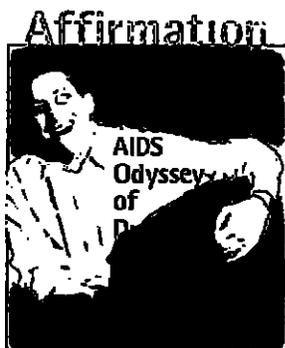
Reviewed by Gary Draper

imminent plunge over Niagara Falls. They are also isolated from one another by literal and metaphorical barriers, by coming from different cultures — or the same family. In the end, however, they are people who cope. In fact, the peevish husband of "We Rented a Rolls and Drove to Disneyland," whose wife dies suddenly as they vacation in Europe, copes so well as to disconcert the young woman dispatched by his daughter to look out for him. In small — and sometimes ironic — ways there are rebirths here, and fresh starts. Several of Govier's characters manage to light out for the territory.

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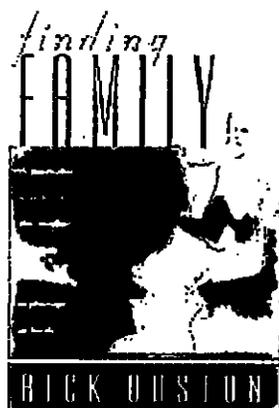
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NEW STAR BOOKS



Katherine Govier

Govier works simultaneously in two modes: naturalistic fiction with its emphasis on character and credibility, and the fable, which admits strange conceits in the interests of pointing a moral. Thus the world of these stories is sometimes the world we know and sometimes not. In different stories Govier touches down at different points between the two. Obviously Ellen and her lover inhabit the outer fringes of the fabulous. By contrast, "The Orange Kite" unfolds in a world that is pretty much our own. Brad and Marion, still grieving over the death of their daughter, accompany their neighbours on a picnic. Brad brings along a kite, which travels higher and higher, and at length escapes into the sky. Nothing impossible happens here. At the same time, the link between the lost daughter and the lost kite is impossible to ignore. It is less a metaphor that subtly enriches the fiction than it is the essence of the fiction itself.

Yet the distance between this story and that of Ellen and her simian love is shorter than might at first appear. Take just one more step: cross the line, and say Brad's daughter *is* a kite. Or take a step back, and say Ellen's lover *is like* an ape.

There are even some stories that move between the worlds. It seems not impossible that Morris, the central character of "The Damaged Heart," should be given the heart of a much younger woman who dies in a car crash. When his new organ begins to communicate with him, we have crossed the border into surreality. Collectively these stories suggest that that border is more apparent than real.

The success of these stories is certainly not dependent simply on the degree of naturalism or surreality. The best of them come from all the points on the spectrum. The weakest suffer not from too much or too little of one element, but from a disharmony among the elements, which can

result in the appearance of the mechanical working out of an idea rather than of something true and inevitable, or in an ending that is just too pat. And sometimes a conceit — such as that God is writing a novel — is introduced and never really explored at all.

But many of these stories are vivid and arresting. The gem of the collection is the title story, which tells the magical, sad-funny tale of Sandro, proprietor of the aptly named photo shop. At the outset, Sandro is asked by an unhappy client to doctor a

wedding photo, eliminating a bridesmaid who was seduced by the groom shortly after the picture was taken. Step by step Sandro moves into areas of aesthetic, moral, and even historical ambiguity, until in the end he has compromised not only his craft but his essential self. This piece represents what happens when all the elements are in harmony. It is engaging, surprising fiction, with ideas that reverberate in the mind long after the book is closed. And its sly, suggestive ending is — forgive me — immaculate.

The Crisis Continues

ANYONE WHO WRITES about television in Canada is familiar with the phenomenon — the long-winded letter from a CBC employee who is indignant at a scathing review. These letters are angry, belligerent, and accusing, often filled with repeated assertions that the reviewer doesn't understand the CBC's mandate. It is sometimes suggested that other media lazily deride the CBC without knowing all the facts. If the

letters weren't written on CBC letterhead the writer might be dismissed as a paranoid crank. Unfortunately, the letters say more about the CBC than the radio and TV shows produced by the corporation.

In *The Microphone Wars*, Knowlton Nash isn't long-winded or paranoid, but he is a little indignant. He's indignant at politicians and inept bureaucrats who have been given so much power over the CBC. The problem with this book is that he isn't indignant enough. *The Microphone Wars* is a history of the CBC, plainly written in

a good journalist's just-the-facts style. It starts with Alan Plaunt and Graham Spry hatching their plan for public broadcasting in Canada and ends with the resignation of Patrick Watson as CBC chairman. In between, Nash covers the landmark broadcasts, the resignations and firings of CBC

executives, the sniping at the CBC by politicians, and the internal empire-building by CBC producers. It is astonishing to find that the CBC has always been

in a state of crisis about some controversy or other.

However, the book does have a central thread — the conflicts between governments and CBC presidents, and between CBC senior management and the egotistical, creative people who actually put programs on the air. Back in 1959, when the CBC was enjoying what is now laughably called a golden era, the Diefenbaker government waged a fierce war against the CBC for alleged editorial mistreatment of the prime minister. George Nowlan, the

THE MICROPHONE WARS: A History of Triumph and Betrayal at the CBC

by Knowlton Nash

McClelland & Stewart, 550 pages, \$35 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6712 7)

Reviewed by John Doyle

CANADIAN BIOGRAPHY

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"Ladies and Gentlemen . . .

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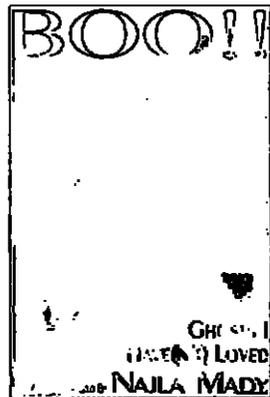
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minister responsible for broadcasting, said.

I thought the thing [the CBC] was very loosely run, that the CBC reminded me of a cabbage patch with a great lot of heads, each one trying to get bigger than the other — and you know what happens when they get too big. They burst.

Unlike most Conservative comments on the CBC, this one has the ring of truth.

The great public controversy over "This Hour Has Seven Days" is described in detail here, and the discussion of Patrick Watson's key role takes the book neatly to the present. For CBC-watchers (not just viewers, but those people with time on their hands who follow the boring, Byzantine politics of the place), the last few chapters are filled with incendiary material. It's not the revelation that many

in the Mulroney government despised Pierre Juneau and CBC News. We kind of gathered that over the '80s. It is the blow-by-blow account of Gérard Veilleux's intemperate reorganization of the English language CBC-TV schedule. The tantrums and the vicious infighting related by Nash can only appal anyone with a knowledge of how large organizations are run. Even worse is the news delivered by Nash that Veilleux rooted out senior people who weren't 100 per cent in favour of his hastily arranged changes. Nash likens the CBC to a university and, if he's right, Veilleux almost demolished it.

The problem is that if the CBC is more like a university than a broadcast company it can only fitfully function as a brilliantly creative force in Canada. It is doomed to permanent disruption and dissent. The clearest evidence for this is the case of Patrick Watson. His style, energy, and abil-

ities were gloriously appropriate for "This Hour Has Seven Days," and for the dangerous game of poker he played with CBC management in the show's losing battle to survive. But decades later, when Watson rose to the top of the CBC, his input was a massive disappointment.

Knowlton Nash ends *The Microphone Wars* with a quote from the 1957 Fowler Commission report explaining the CBC's mandate. The commission stated that sometimes a broadcasting system might make large numbers of people acutely uncomfortable. Too often the CBC has used the same argument to justify bad programs. Too often it is forgotten that CBC employees have to feel uncomfortable if they're going to enjoy the luxury of working inside a quasi-university. Most people don't know or care how a university operates but they do want results. And they're right.

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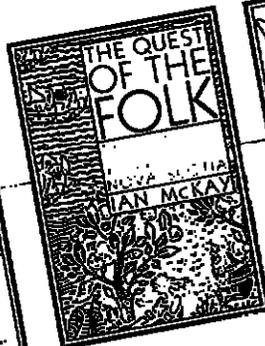
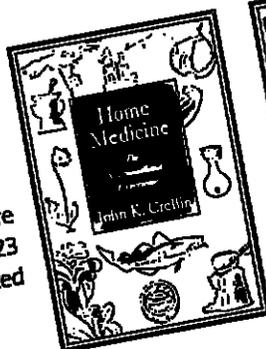
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IT IS ONE OF THE MOST unchallenged rules in the creative writing rule book: show, don't tell. But dogma in literature is no different from dogma anywhere else: take it too far and it will cause as many problems as it solves. The extreme, someone once said, always makes an impression — though not necessarily a good one. Exposition is no sin; neither is clarity. But to read what remains of minimalist fiction these days you'd think it was. Fortunately, Gayla Reid's unique brand of minimalism displayed in her first collection of short stories, *To Be There with You*, manages to skirt the edge of evasiveness without ever going over it. Instead, Reid shows us how the old rules — showing and not telling, for instance — still make sense.



Gayla Reid

TO BE THERE WITH YOU by Gayla Reid

Douglas & McIntyre, 218 pages, \$16.95 paper (ISBN 1 55054 176 5)

STRANGE BODIES ON A STRANGER SHORE by Ann Copeland

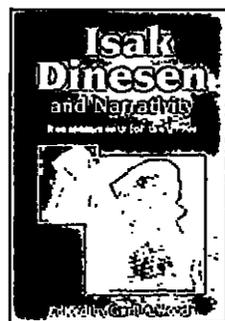
Goose Lane, 236 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 86492 143 8)

Reviewed by Joel Yanofsky



Ann Copeland

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

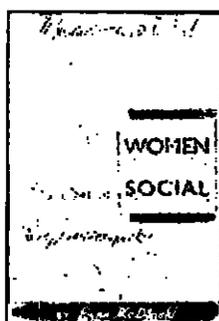


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ed. by Gurli Woods

ISBN 0-88629-244-1 (case) \$24.95
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Anatomy of Gender: Women's Struggle for the Body

ed. by Dawn H. Currie & Valerie Raoul

ISBN 0-88629-156-9 (paper) \$19.95

Throughout the ages, the female body has been enshrined as an aesthetic object, associated with nature, sin and danger, and blamed for women's inferior social status. These essays address the artistic and cultural representations of women, the physical treatment of women, and how women are attempting to reclaim control of their bodies.

CARLETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

Distributed in Canada by Oxford University Press

Reid had made a name for herself in CanLit before her first book even appeared. Several of the 13 stories in this collection have already won her acclaim and awards, including the 1993 Journey Prize and last year's CBC/Saturday Night Literary Award. This isn't surprising when you take into account the distinctiveness of her narrative voice. Perhaps the best description of it is provided by Reid herself in the story "In the Water, Like This," where a male narrator discovers how love works:

In love, she assured me, plot is the least of it. Plot, she said, is what comes at the beginning and end. In the middle it is like music, like water, the same themes over and over, corny and classical ... phases opening up, circling around, rippling away, returning.

The same elliptical quality is evident in Reid's fiction. Whether she's writing about the Vietnam War from the unusual vantage point of her native Australia (Reid has lived in Vancouver since 1967) in "Passport" and the title story, or dealing with the slippery dynamics of friendship and love in "Flowers for Magda" and "Father Kenny," Reid's prose is stubbornly spare. I confess there were moments when I wanted more explained, when I wanted Reid's otherwise articulate characters — peace activists, journalists, teachers, priests, and nuns — to stop fumbling with their feelings and guarding their secrets. But they don't — and although Reid has to be admired for the consistency with which she sticks to her stylistic guns, the reader is still left with lots of blanks to fill in and with only one certainty, that what's being left unsaid

will be more significant than what's being said.

Elusiveness is almost another character in *To Be There with You*. In the story "Learning Welsh," for example, the narrator, a young woman at a Catholic school, tries to decipher the enigmatic nun who is her teacher. but, in the end, discovers only the obvious — that Sister Winifred "will never go anywhere outside the convent. She has chosen. She has been chosen." Of course, for a young woman, struggling with her own hopes and dreams, even the obvious seems unfathomable.

In a way, Ann Copeland's new book, *Strange Bodies on a Stranger Shore*, picks up where Reid's "Learning Welsh" leaves off. This is Copeland's fifth collection of stories and it is a sequel, of sorts, to *The Golden Thread*, which chronicled the life of Sister Claire

Delaney as she entered a convent and then left it. (It was a finalist for the Governor General's Award in 1990.)

Now married with grown-up children, Claire reflects on that choice. The title story is typical. It jumps back and forth between the present and the past, setting up a series of emotional obstacles for Copeland's first-person narrator to hurdle — from dealing with her son's breakup with his girlfriend to honouring an unexpected summons from her former Mother Superior: "Why did the first superior I'd ever had, my old novice mistress, want to see me after all these years? She was dying. If anyone should be ready, she should."

Several of the stories — "Scoring," "Seducing Piety," and "Lifeline" — are structured as actual or emotional pilgrimages to the past. While the characters in Reid's book do their best to evade the painful truth, Claire in *Strange Bodies on a Stranger Shore* is compelled to seek it out. Old habits, pardon the pun, die hard.

"Broken is the norm, healing the wonder," Claire explains and, in one way or another, Copeland has a lot to explain about the life her central character has both chosen and left behind.

In "Rupture," the final story in the book, Claire even agrees to go on a popular, tacky television talk show to try to explain first, why she became a nun and second, why she abandoned that life. On the program, she blurts out: "Why do you insist on making us different? Can't you see there's more that joins us than separates us?" She is not just trying to explain herself to the audience, but also to her family, her daughter, and in particular, herself.

In throwing light on a cloistered and unexpected exotic world, Copeland sometimes stumbles. For example, her use of linked stories is not always smooth — they don't connect so much as over-

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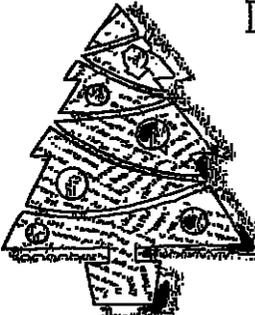

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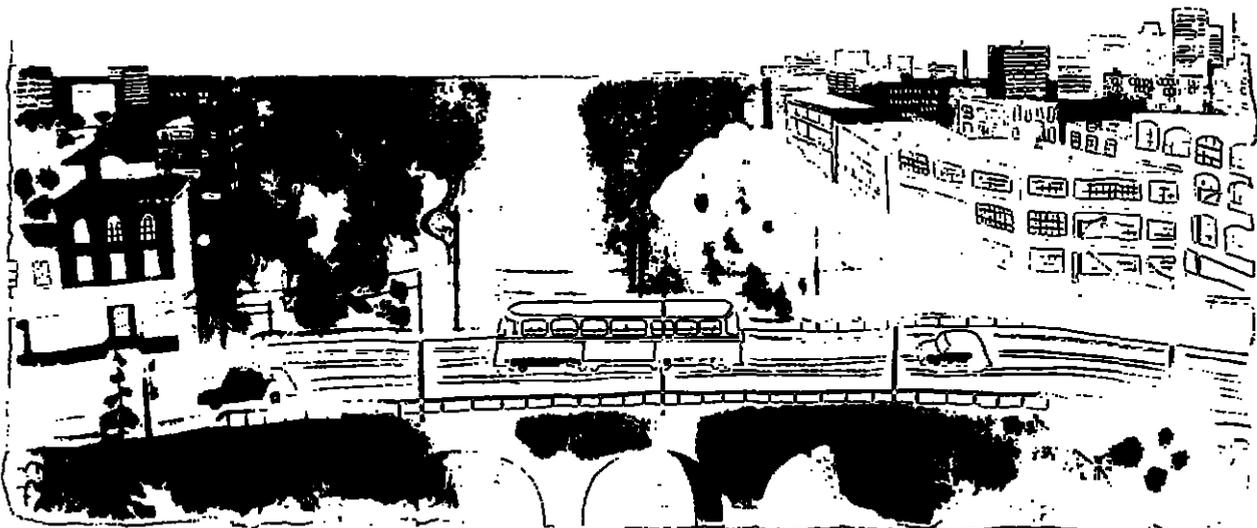
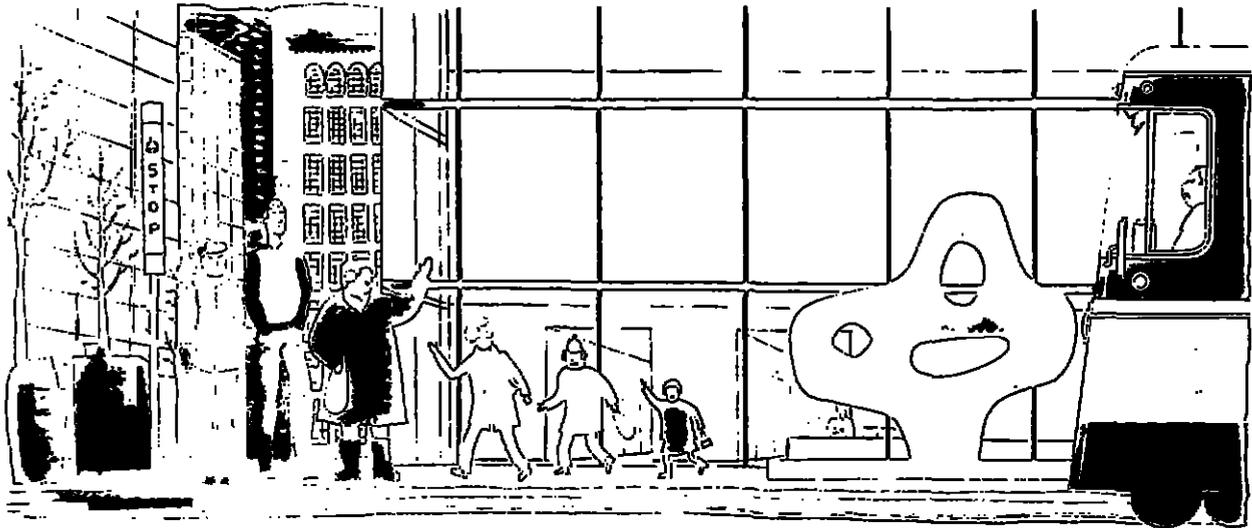
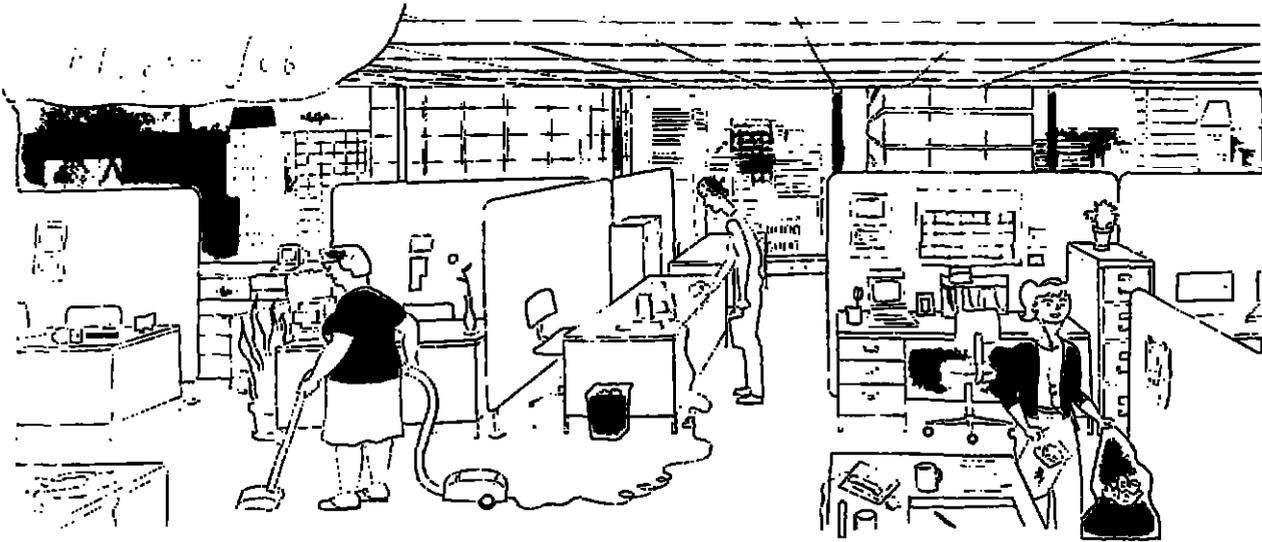
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BOOKS IN CANADA

The next issue of *Books in Canada* will be February 1995, which will include a profile of Commonwealth Writers Prize winner OLIVE SENIOR, an interview with biographer PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH, the winning entry in the Writers' Union of Canada Short Prose competition, STAN FOGEL's look at the meaning of "cultural studies", omnibus reviews of new theatre and short story books, and more!

lap; even within each of the stories the transitions from present to past and back again can be ungainly. But if Copeland is not as meticulous at crafting her stories as Reid is, her stories work on an emo-

tional level that often transcends craft. In the end, I admired Reid's *To Be There with You* more than I was engaged by it. The opposite was true of Copeland's *Strange Bodies on a Stranger Shore*. ○



Fiction

FOR FIVE YEARS during the 1980s Oakland Ross was the Latin America correspondent for the *Globe and Mail*. In his collection of stories, *Guerrilla Beach* (Cormorant, 281 pages, \$14.95 paper), Ross explores the evils of dictatorship and the futility of civil war. In "View of Guazapa" an academic settles in El Salvador and ends up a guerrilla sympathizer. In "So Far, She's Fine" police release a young Chilean woman, an astonishing occurrence in a country where disappearance is synonymous with death.

Ross is at his best when he describes the complexity of fear, especially the fear of North American correspondents. In "Dangerland" terror so paralyzes a journalist that he is unable to abandon his vehicle to escape fire. Instead he sits frozen, reading a book, even after he is wounded in the head.

This collection suffers somewhat from a monotone of detail and experience. We see journalists lighting up Marlboros too many times and hear too frequently about the rush of adrenalin they experience after surviving battle. Only "Guerrilla Beach," in which "hacks" join guerrillas at a seaside retreat, offers an alternate perspective.

Regardless of who tells the story, the journalists' point of view prevails. Ross seems oddly reluctant to enter imaginatively into Latin America and its people. Even the stories with primarily local characters lack a certain cultural ambience. In *Guerrilla Beach*, Oakland Ross observes suffering with sensitivity, but ultimately he leaves the reader on the outside looking in.

Donna Nurse

THE POSTMODERN story often reminds me of a newborn kangaroo: incompletely developed and incapable of

living on its own. The reader must interpolate a great deal in order for a coherent narrative to exist. Thus, with two exceptions, the 14 stories in Patricia Seaman's collection, *The Black Diamond Ring* (Mercury, 144 pages, \$14.50 paper), seem little more than sketches, lacking in plot, characterization, and dramatic tension. They cry out for something more.

"The Summer of Love," which relates the story of the disappearance of a teenage girl's beloved eldest sister, held my attention until a few pages before the disappointing conclusion. "Ulli on the Beach" is a colourful but aimless story about a German artist the narrator meets in Spain. In contrast with the other stories in this collection, which barely create atmosphere, the vibrant characters and setting of "Ulli on the Beach" and the build-up of events in "The Summer of Love" suggest creative non-fiction.

The rest of the stories bear no such apparent resemblance to real life (not that realism is a necessity; it does, however, result in a measure of credibility here). Even the stabs at humour ("Facts about Shriners") and feminist posturing ("Don't Call Me Honey," "The Sly, the Slick, the Wicked") fall short of the mark. Perhaps more effort to tell a story, rather than simply presenting the possibility of one, would have made *The Black Diamond Ring* a more engaging read.

Louise Fabiani

BUDGE WILSON, a prolific Nova Scotia writer best known for her children's stories and novels such as *Oliver's Wars* and *Lorinda's Diary*, has published a collection of stories for young adults, *Cordelia Clark* (Stoddart, 192 pages, \$5.99 paper).

Wilson likes to explore familial conflicts and the tensions between girls and women. In the title story, the narrator is a 76-year-

old woman from Wolfville, who confides in her dog. Charlie, the story of a traumatic childhood friendship she had with an out-of-town girl named Cordelia Clark.

In "Joanna and the Dark," a 14-year-old girl has a slavish crush on the village minister. When she finds out that he is all too human and has a cruel streak, she is cured of her fear of the dark.

Wilson has a wide-ranging imagination, and her characters are pleasingly diverse, from a heartless teenage boy in "The Charmer" to an unhappy writer in the year 2080 in "The Happy Pill." Unfortunately, although the stories in *Cordelia Clark* are generally well-crafted, with moments of humour and whimsy, there is too often a lack of convincing psychology and essential depth of emotion.

Anne Cimon

Non-Fiction

THE WRITINGS and paintings of R. D. Symons are considered a national treasure in the Canadian West, and so they should be all across this country. Symons came to Canada from Britain as a teenager, and immediately adopted the Western frontier. He went on to become a respected artist, writer, and conservationist. His posthumously published memoir, *Many Patrols* (Coteau, 176 pages, \$14.95 paper), documents his years as a Saskatchewan game warden between the world wars.

The West was still in many parts an untamed wilderness, and we cannot ask for a more insightful, gentler chronicler of the times and people. Game warden may sound a dull occupation in these days of wham-bam action heroes, but Symons opens up for us a world rich in colourful characters and fascinating stories in the wide Prairie landscape.

The young warden practically had to

Classifieds

Prima Publishing announces that as of January 1, 1995 titles published by Prima Publishing or distributed by Prima Publishing (Webster and Associates, Border Books) will be fulfilled by Ballantine Publishing Group through Random House Canada Inc. Until March 31, 1995 all returns should be sent to Georgetown Terminal Warehouses Limited, 34 Armstrong Avenue, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4R9. Beginning April 1, 1995, Prima Publishing returns should be sent to Prima Publishing, C/O Random House Canada Inc., 1265 Aerowood Drive, Mississauga, Ontario L4W 1B9. Please note that Random House Canada Inc. will not accept Prima Publishing returns prior to April 1, 1995. Prima Publishing will continue to be solicited and sold by Canadian Manda. A representative will contact accounts to review ordering procedures. The Ballantine Publishing Group, through Random House Canada, Inc. will provide fulfillment services which will include warehousing, shipping, invoicing and collections.

Please Note:

The next issue of BOOKS IN CANADA will be February 1995, available February 1st.

invent his job as he went, and his solutions to the various "situations" in which he found himself — from learning the ropes of dogsledding to dealing with the rough pioneers who neither understood nor appreciated the need for a game warden — are instructional and entertaining.

Symons fills his pages with real-life short stories that weave a tapestry of first-person history. His account of relations with the Natives shows as much about them as it does about the writer. Describing one tense standoff over a trapping dispute, he ends with: "This was the only occasion I was ever offered violence by an Indian. Those people . . . were the least criminally minded in the West."

This tour of an unsophisticated and unspoiled West is a literary trip well worth taking.

George Kaufman

THE EXISTENCE of its four predecessors probably renders academic the question of the need for *The Fifth (And Probably Last) Morningside Papers* (McClelland & Stewart, 384 pages, \$19.99 paper). There is a Peter Gzowski cult out there waiting for this latest compilation of letters, comments, asides, poems, and interviews from the near-legendary host of the pop-

ular CBC-Radio morning show.

While the appeal of these collections likely extends beyond Gzowski's considerable personal popularity, his personality is central to this book, as it is to the show, which sags noticeably in his absence.

Just like "Morningside" itself, this book has its ups and downs. Some of these transcripts make it clear just what a good interviewer Gzowski can be. "Living with AIDS: A Mother's Story" is a virtual workshop in an interview style that manages to be probing, insightful, and sensitive at the same time.

Touching highlights like that far outweigh the few fluffy ego massages that don't make the transition from airtime to print in good shape. Gzowski has built a solid bond with a large group of listeners across Canada, and the scope and strength of that bond is lovingly apparent here.

George Kaufman

HAVE YOU EVER felt that your horizon extends no further than the blade of your snow shovel? That you measure out your life like grains of No-Skid (a proprietary version of sand)? Can you instantly recall the names of at least 20 over-the-counter remedies for cold symptoms?

If so, you have likely experienced a typical Canadian winter. And if you hang around long enough after the leaves fall, you are at high risk to experience another one. But seriously, the drab, frigid months affect some people so severely that they suffer a winter-long depression, characterized by months of unbearable hopelessness, fatigue, weight gain, and lack of interest in sex. Researchers have begun to term this condition Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, which seems an unusually appropriate acronym.

In *Fight the Winter Blues: Don't Be Sad — Your Guide to Conquering Seasonal Affective Disorder* (Script/Good Health Books, 243 pages, \$18.95 paper), Celeste Peters explains that

SAD is not triggered by cold, as one might expect, but by short winter days. Patients show improvement when they sit under intense artificial lights.

SAD has only become widely accepted as a medical disorder in the last decade. Peters provides a questionnaire for self-diagnosis, case histories, descriptions of symptoms, and lists of clinics, information, and suppliers of therapeutic equipment. With all this help, if you're truly SAD about winter, you can burrow into this book and not come out until spring.

Denyse O'Leary

WHERE TO START with Kildare Dobbs's *Smiles And Chukkers & Other Vanities* (Little, Brown, 250 pages, \$24.95 cloth)? On reflection, that's the problem facing a reviewer (and likely a reader): where, indeed, to start?

This is a book with geographical and thematic wanderlust, veering wildly, sometimes on the same page, from thoughts on the Canadian class system to Rhodes scholars to the mysteries of claiming races. As a reader, you could randomly pick any page of this book as a starting point; there is no narrative flow to interrupt.

There are some ripping good yarns here, in the old-fashioned sense of a story well told. The author as raconteur exhibits an impressively well-rounded and well-travelled world-view, discoursing authoritatively on topics like polo and whisky with style and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, there's no centre here, no literary rack on which to hang any of these thoughts, observations, insights, and anecdotes. All the dizzying information simply spins round and round in a universe without a centre of gravity.

If this lack of linearity doesn't bother you, you'll find much to be intrigued with, and will find Dobbs a boon companion — the drinking buddy who knows everything about everything.

George Kaufman



POETRY

BY RHEA TREGBOV

Nature and Nurture

IF I HAD JUDGED JOHN O'NEILL'S SECOND book of poetry, *Love in Alaska* (Oolichan, 96 pages, \$11.95 paper), by entirely the wrong criteria, i.e., the awkward title and cover, I would never have looked inside, which would have been a shame. Perhaps both cover and title are intended to be ironic. At any rate, O'Neill produces much stronger writing in the contemplation of Alaska than he does in the contemplation of love, but when he focuses on the former subject, the poetry can be extraordinary.

O'Neill writes about nature much in the spirit of the Toronto poet Roo Borson: he manages to avoid the distortions the human mind tends solipsistically to impose on the "otherness" of the natural world, to capture it with integrity. The moments in *Love in Alaska* when O'Neill accomplishes this, which seem to occur most often in the first of its three sections, are remarkable indeed. In "Trail Dream," O'Neill writes of how the horse "moves through whatever isn't moving," the rider "on his back but not on his mind." In "Migration," the caribou "in one motion, / many doors slamming, / swing their heads." He also deftly sketches the ways in which the human approaches, intermingles with, the animal. In "Hunter's Lament," for example, the deer will

*lift her tail with its bull's-eye while
a bullet goes through my heart. Am
I the hunter? Coughing up what I am.
The deer is a slim passageway. On
the other side I emerge
with a new face, one that may be
hunted, or not — as blank as perfectly
clean still water.*

Human solipsism doesn't fare too well in the context of wilderness. Through this poem and others such as "Whales" and "Wilderness Enough," O'Neill expresses a variety of takes on the human/animal theme, all of them astute. In one of the strongest poems in the book, "The Kill," O'Neill uses a controlled, understated voice to describe a pack of wolves as they attack and kill a wounded moose. The narrator, watching at a distance, experiences a growing awareness of his exact position on the food chain. We don't often remem-

ber that we too could be prey, and it is good of O'Neill to remind us.

Poems such as "On the Big Rez," "Barren," or "Chilkat River, 1899," in which O'Neill attempts to take on various voices, are less focused, more diffuse. The poem's narrative thread tends to get obscured and the reader is left feeling somewhat bemused. And at times O'Neill seems simply to lose the sense of balance in voice and tone. Unfortunately, this occurs in the opening piece, which acts as proem or prelude to the book, the unbecomingly didactic "Take This Book." (Didacticism is, happily, a feature mostly absent elsewhere.) The voice also falters when it strains for the incantatory, as it does in "Destinations," which feels overworked and overwound. The positive, however, by far outweighs the negative: O'Neill's poetry is valuable not only for the insights he offers into what it is to be human, but for the strength of voice through which these insights are expressed.

John Barton's *Designs from the Interior* (Anansi, 136 pages, \$14.95 paper) is also a second collection, and once again it is the first section of the book that, through a combination of delicacy and strength, shines. In these poems about the childhood self, the steadiness of voice, the clarity of detail, and the ease with which the narrative is worked into the poem make for a satisfyingly tactile, felt work. What remarkable opening lines are these from "City in the Foothills":

*What grows into my body
is night,
the ink prairie sky above the dull
sodium glow of the street lamps as I
walk home
along the road I used to take
to and from school, sun setting
early or rising late in this cool country;
the houses snaking down the hill
on either side as I walk
familiar as the cold door keys clutched,
pulled from my coat pocket.*

Yet even some of the poems in this section circle their

core matter without engaging it. We never quite crack the code. The mother's rigidity, the father's distance are addressed more with the animus of a child than through a mature understanding. The voice seems to become less sure when the poems venture out beyond the narrator-self. The nuns, for example, in "The Aqua Nuns" are never more than glyphs, projections of the speaker's desire for tranquility, a life that has been resolved. When this failure of sympathy occurs, the poems thin out, lose their resonance.

And while Barton draws a vivid, complex, and thoughtful portrait of contemporary gay life, the political analysis he only occasionally strives for falls far short of the mark. In "Ripper" and "Impotence," the attempt to comprehend and elucidate acts of violent homophobia by speaking through the voice of the victims is simply not enough, not adequate to the enormity of these atrocities. One senses that if the poems were pushed just a little harder in the direction of analysis, the author would achieve what he attempts here and in poems such as "Patriarchy," which addresses the connections between misogyny and homophobia.

The voice in John Livingstone Clark's *Breakfast of the Magi* (Thistledown, 80 pages, \$11 paper) is either intriguingly or irritatingly varied, depending on the reader's psychological need for consistency. Livingstone Clark includes in these rather crammed pages (another quibble here with the publisher's design; this is the first book I've ever read where the text proper began — aggravatingly — on the verso side of the page!) lots of deadly serious poems about writing poetry and lots of cynical poems about love.

I like best the poems that are gently, intelligently sceptical; and least those that are sublimely Yeatsian. For the former, read the casual, graceful cadences of "Martha's Old Gals"; for the latter, the ponderous rhetoric of "Winter

Meditation." It's hard to believe that the same poet who wrote

*Martha's old gals give her more love
than
almost anyone. Mrs. Mitebell, for
example,
said one day, while looking out the
window,*

It's only one sky — yet it
rains here and there.

also wrote: "Poems like blossoms fall / silently onto the pages of books and are pressed inward to seal their fragile beauty." The charming, breezy tone sours when it becomes windy, when wit becomes mere superiority.

Even the *Fawn Has Wings* (Brick, 72 pages, \$11.95 paper) is Cherie Geauvreau's first collection. These are lively poems full of delight in the musicality of language. Geauvreau seems to have taken a leaf from Dennis Lee's *Riffs*, to judge by the jazzy sexual verve of some of these poems. Take "Concertina," for example:

*you got the picture?
your heart threw you from bed
slammed feet to the floor
dead/
run*

*got the picture?
you thought it a dream
all that bop/discordant jazz
cacol/
phone*

Despite the engaging energy, much of the work in the early part of the book feels unresolved. Geauvreau does not fully integrate narrative into her poems; too often it is difficult to tell what exactly is going on. Too many of the early poems remain guarded, resistant to directly revealing their painful core. In "child of mine," for

example, we learn that the silent, damaged child "has hands but no arms." At first the image sounds evocative, intriguing, but how are we to read it? Is this a positive quality through which the child protects herself from the (unspecified) abusive environment? Or is it a negative quality, a representation of her damage?

"A graceful dance in quarter time" is even more difficult to interpret. The speaker watches through glass as the violated child, whose "teddybear thighs grind glass," dances. There is no way for the reader to determine the relationship between the speaker and the child, to know who the "compte & compesse" might be or might represent, to locate the poem tonally. Is the child an image of the speaker's childhood self? Are the *compte* and *compesse* representations of the parents? The poet doesn't give us enough to determine these relationships — or the import of the poem.

Ethel Harris's *A Rage of Poppies* (Wolsak and Wynn, 80 pages, \$10 paper), also a first book, is a series of elegies and meditations based on the tragic lives and deaths of four of the author's immediate family: her sister (who died at the age of 20), her infant daughter, and her aged parents. Harris's strength is narrative clarity, and it is impossible not to be moved by the stories she tells. Occasionally the poem will pause to dip below, to dwell in the concrete moments that inform events, as in the following lines from "Home Again":

*Milkweed, daisy centres, grasshoppers,
monarch butterflies in jars,
gifts from me like silver silks
and gold coins, royal robes.*

However, Harris seems to move rather too swiftly across the surfaces of these tales, to hesitate to trust herself to linger at greater length in this painful and difficult subject matter.



FIRST NOVELS

BY MAUREEN McCALLUM GARVIE

Rocky Relationships

CORDELIA STRUBE'S NOVEL, *ALEX & ZEE* (Coach House, 360 pages, \$18.95 paper), scrutinizes the hell of heterosexual relationships in the late 20th century — men are expected to be gentle and caring, women assertive and omni-capable, and still the twain can't meet. In this revisionist romance, even the names are gender-blurring: it's Alex who is female, Zee male. Love between them has turned to "cold war" as Alex has grown fed up with Zee's static passiveness. He was a lawyer when they met; now he's unemployed, passing the time wondering whether there are more crazy people around than there used to be, and "why people don't have the patience to fade their own jeans anymore." Alex jettisons him, sending him home to his mother, then turns obsessively to seeking someone to father the child she is resigned to bringing up alone.

Propelling the reader on, in addition to the sheer pleasure of the prose and dialogue, is the question of whether Zee and Alex will get back together, as their friends and family all hope. But if they do, won't it be simply out of loneliness and despair? What can alter the hopeless polarity of their positions? Strube deftly navigates around the human heart in a way sometimes reminiscent of Carol Shields. The writing is so effortlessly accomplished that it makes me wonder where Cordelia Strube (who dedicates her book to "Dorkhead") sprang from. If I have a reservation — more an observation, really — it's that the backdrop to this acutely observed human drama is so generic. The city where Zee and Alex live has parks, subways, and coffee shops that could be anywhere in North America. Except for one cumbersome Eskimo (not Inuit) carving (maybe a walrus, or a seal), the cultural references are American. That may, however, say as much about Canada as it does about the writer.

Quite the opposite is true of *Volcano Days* (Somerville House, 166 pages, \$19.95 paper), by the Toronto journalist Brian Johnson, which opens in Montreal in the early '70s. Its unnamed narrator reports on the labour scene for the English-language press by day, works for the revolution by night: "I was twenty years old and Quebec was the closest you could come to covering a war without leaving the country." Drunk on change, dangerously exhilarated by an incident of environmental terrorism in James Bay, he erupts in

paranoid hallucinations. After being invalided out to Toronto, he levels off at a chronic, manageable state and returns to Montreal. Madness is now a heightening drug, cheaper than acid; the world is animate with psychic energy. Leaving Mount Royal ("my first volcano"), he and his Québécoise lover, Cleo, go to Italy, looking out over the slopes of Mount Etna. As they move on to more volcanoes in Lipari and Stromboli, the novel becomes a travel journal, vivid fragments of visionary experience. Shades of Lowry and Hemingway cross the pages. Back in Canada, Cleo takes up with a Toronto guitarist; her dumped companion contemplates suicide, then joins a band (called Limbo and made up largely of Cleo's old lovers), planning to "play well into the apocalypse." Years pass. Limbo disbands. Flying off for Antigua, Guadeloupe, and Martinique, the narrator finds more volcanoes, more love. "Sometimes," he notes, "[sex] seemed to be the polite thing to do, like washing the dishes." Sometimes it feels that way to the reader as well. Volcano days settle into quirky quotidian, and the slight plot, linear rather than complex, thins to invisibility. Ultimately the book doesn't add up to a novel — but as a dazzling memoir of times past, it is sublime.

That was then; now is *How Insensitive* (The Porcupine's Quill, 258 pages, \$14.95 paper), in which Russell Smith, a younger Toronto journalist, polishes off that city much as Jay McInerney and Bret Easton Ellis did New York. Smith's hero, Ted Owen, leaves Montreal and academe for the Big Smoke, in search of fame and fortune. He stays in the Annex with an old school friend and a rich assortment of other roomies — a sad girl named Go-Go, a software-writing nerd known as the Mole, a touchy-feely gay actor named Malcolm. Drawn instantly into a summer of bars and night-clubs, he falls for models and Toronto rich girls. By Thanksgiving he has achieved the proverbial 15 minutes centre stage on the Janni Bolo TV show and is profiled in Toronto's most happening magazine. *Next.*

With wit, ease, and a perfect ear for X-ish dialogue, Smith sends up cultural sacred cows, from the Canadian film industry to city-core arts funding. By the time the leaves fall, Ted finds there's little money in transitory celebrity, and that he really never had the faintest idea what was going on around

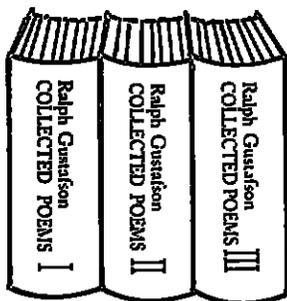


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him. As Ted oscillates between continuing to pursue the golden ring and going back to grad school, Smith's momentum falters. A fresh player appears on Ted's doorstep, and the carousel is about to go around again, but the reader is ready to get off.

After *How Insensitive*, Pete McCormack's *Shelby* (Douglas & McIntyre, 262 pages, \$16.95 paper) feels like changing down from a BMW to an old V-8 Chevy. For the first half-dozen chapters I fought withdrawal from Smith's seamless prose; but despite high exhaust emissions and over-idling, *Shelby* gets there, with even an occasional inspired turn along the way. McCormack's major characters talk too much, and minor ones verge on caricature, but for all his callowness, his eponymous Shelby is a more memorable Candide than Smith's glib, shallow Ted.

Shelby is another innocent forsaking academe for life, this time in Vancouver. After three years of slogging toward med school, he drops out and gets himself a place in a band called Smegma Bomb ("Do you know E?" "Major?" "Cool . . . A? . . . D? Great. You're in.") Ambivalent about everything in life except sex, he meets a foul-mouthed tarot-card reader and exotic dancer more than 12 years older than he is. Lucy initiates him into sex (he's torn between love and terror that a moment's unprotected sex may infect him with AIDS) and by the book's end has also taught him there's more to a relationship than bed.

From Ted and Shelby's struggles to get a woman and/or a life, there's a yawning cultural gap to two books from Moonstone Press, *The Shunning* (218 pages, \$15.95 paper) and *Medusa and Her Sisters* (220 pages, \$15.95 paper). Both reflect strong feminist themes of women's alienation from their spiritual natures. Long on theme, both are often uneven in terms of craft. In Marianne Paul's *The Shunning*, two women born more than a century apart in Plum Hollow, near Brockville, Ontario,

share a gift. Elizabeth Barnes's talents of dowsing, healing, and prophecy alienate her from her family and neighbours. Her descendant Aley's abilities find an outlet in books that draw the fire of a group called Mothers for Morality, who want her work banned from bookstores. Paul handles imagery effectively, but her style can be clumsy, and her structure mechanical. Each of the 36 chapters parallels a present-day incident with one from a century before; so much emphasis upon these correspondences robs her characters of individuality and subtlety.

Clare Braux's *Medusa and Her Sisters* falls somewhere between a Judith Krantz made-for-miniseries and Marija Gimbutas's *Language of the Goddess*. Braux's narrator, Caroline, is an art scholar and filmmaker. Like Mouse in Susan Swan's *The Wives of Bath*, she has a hump, which sidelines her from much of the sexual intrigue but sharpens her take on the objectification of women. Lacking such perspective, her beautiful cousin Daphne has thrown over a career to marry Eurotrash, a high-testosterone Spanish aristocrat named Gamal.

As the book opens, Caroline finds Daphne's infant son suffocated in a wastebasket; this disturbing image takes much of the fun out of the tale that unfolds in flashback. In caves beneath the family castle, Gamal's dying sister has discovered a huge iron-age female divinity. She wants to bring it to the surface to restore the power of the goddess to women. Gamal wants to sell it. A collective of women gathers to solemnize the goddess's return to the light: their didactic dialogue develops the book's themes. Their work, celebratory rituals, and skinny-dipping mightily irritate Gamal in his dark and desperate doings. The inevitable apocalypse is cataclysmic, not to say Monty Pythonesque: it just seems a shame that an innocent infant has to pay the price for such shenanigans.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

BY DIANA BREBNER

Creature Comforts

IN THE DARK DAYS OF WINTER OR THE dog days of summer we humans seem to live by the maxim "Misery loves company." Loneliness, in the guise of *angst* and alienation, is our late-20th-century anathema. We crave companionship, and rightly so, for in the company of family, friends, and companion animals we find necessary comfort, the balm of sanity and good cheer.

Good-natured insanity is the hallmark of *A Dog Called Dad* (Bungalo Books, 24 pages, \$4.95 paper), by Frank B. Edwards. The book opens with the line "I was only a baby when the coyotes stole my Dad" and an illustration of four upright, kangaroo-like coyotes carrying off an apparently willing long-haired hippie-dad dressed in pink long underwear and cowboy boots.

Dad learns to howl (*à la* Ginsberg?) and soon forgets how to speak. He becomes a charming but bewildered re-entry human being when civilization, in the form of a barbed-wire fence, snags his (pony)tail during a chicken-thieving expedition. Dad makes his attempts at fitting in, but it's obvious he would rather be chasing a frisbee. John Bianchi's rollicking illustrations are bright and cartoonlike though not artistically daring. The humour is wacky and inventive. Three woofs.

Rémy Simard's *My Dog Is an Elephant* (Annick, 32 pages, \$15.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), with English text by David Homel, is a very different animal but continues the dog metamorphosis theme with verve and assurance.

Hector befriends an escaped elephant and attempts to hide him in a variety of disguises, all rendered in vibrant ink and acrylic illustrations by the award-winning artist Pierre Pratt. The elephant as a butterfly is particularly charming, but the ultimate disguise is as a giant pit-bullish version of man's best friend. Homel's English text is smart and smooth, capturing all the energy of the French original. The high quality of the artwork and the delightful absurdity of the text keep the pages turning

towards an appropriate surprise ending. Four woofs.

Not every reader enjoys the bizarre and zany. *A Dog for a Friend* (Orca, 32 pages, \$14.95 cloth), by Marilyn Reynolds, is a gentle story for the quieter spirits among us. Jessie lives on an isolated Prairie wheat farm in the 1920s and hopes for a dog, for a friend to assuage her loneliness. Jessie's mother and father don't see much use for a dog on a wheat farm and it's only when a runt piglet needs special care that Jessie finds the friend she needs: a pig for a dog.

The illustrations by Stephen McCallum are carefully rendered and full of small moments of warmth and touching humanity. Reynolds depicts Jessie's parents as weary and preoccupied by farmwork but also as kind, loving, and concerned. The dialogue is fresh, the story well told, and the text rich in detail and carefully crafted. I'd choose this as a bedtime or circle story for a school-age child. Four woofs and an oink.

Bedtime stories, storytelling, family anecdotes, and memories: these are all ways that families, whatever their structure, can share their warmth and love for each other. Gale Henry's *Granny and Me* (Women's Press, 24 pages, \$6.95 paper) is set on a Caribbean island where Simone and her



From
Granny and Me

NEW FROM RED DEER COLLEGE PRESS

100 YEARS OF COWBOY STORIES



Edited by Ted Stone

Many of the great authors from a full century of Western story-telling are included in this collection: Owen Wister, O. Henry, Stephen Crane, Wallace Stegner, Paul St. Pierre, and Mari Sandoz.

"Supper at the U-Bar wagon that midsummer evening was by no means a-hurt with happiness, nor with cleanliness either. The only wahoo not mud-caked from boot heel to brisket was old luck Fergus, the cross-eyed cook."

from "Trail Fever," by S. Omar Barker

0-88995-125-X • 223 pages
\$14.95 trade paperback



distributed by Raincoast Books

Granny do everything together. They water the patchoi, eddoes, and sweet potato plants in the garden, wash clothes in the river, swim together, go shopping, and visit Ma Popo, who bakes corn bread and cassava pone in a dirt oven. They never tire of each other's company.

When Granny gets sick and then dies, Simone is comforted by her mother and her community. She learns to overcome her sadness and anger by remembering her grandmother and all their happiness. This story is compelling in its simplicity and purity of language. The illustrations by Winsom, who works primarily as a textile artist, are bold and stark in their folk-art style. The black-and-white line drawings are full of emotion and drama. The brightly coloured pages are rich and alive with detail and enjoyment of life. I found myself coming back to this book again and again, as did the younger readers who are constantly burrowing in and borrowing from my bookpiles. Let's hope that this is the first of many books from Gale Henry and Winsom.

In a different key, Maureen Bayless also explores the comfort and solidarity in

families with *Strike* (Ragweed, 24 pages, \$5.95 paper). Yvonne Cathcart's illustrations are bright and cheerful, perhaps even a little too cheerful considering the story. Molly's mom is on strike at the local fish cannery and life is getting really tough; Mom had to sell the TV for grocery money. My heart bleeds. Molly and her teddy go picketing with mom and when trucks threaten to cross the picket line Molly, with help from her teddy, saves the day.

I have the greatest sympathy with the labour movement and many of its important struggles but I have never understood why parents would drag their child out to the picket lines. Childhood is hard enough, why foist our difficulties on our children? I especially object to the sweet and simplified solutions that are presented in the text and particularly the final sentence: "Then Mom, Molly and Teddy set off to end the strike." Would that life and labour negotiations were so easy.

Ragweed has also published *Real Sisters* (24 pages, \$5.95 paper), by Susan Wright. The subject of interracial adoption is the focus of this book about Claire, a Black girl adopted by a white family.

Claire is teased at school because she looks different from her older sister. The menace of the schoolyard bullies, as illustrated by Bo-Kim Louie, is real. So is the inattention of the adult yard supervisors off in the distance as Claire is taunted with the repeated question "Who's your real sister?"

The illustrations in *Real Sisters* are soft but never cloying, communicating the anguish Claire experiences as she confronts the idea of family and what is "real." Wright has managed to portray a very real family that deals with Claire's dilemma in a sensitive and sensible way. The politics of adoption are not overtly addressed in this book. Wright deals with Claire's world and her specific experience. This is certainly subject enough for this warm and loving story.

Chickadee magazine calls itself the "little sister" of *Owl*, and its editors have put together a book for younger children about the riches of the natural world, *My First Nature Treasury* (Owl Books, 48 pages, \$14.95 cloth). In an ideal world all children would have, among the many other benefits they deserve, a personal bookshelf brimming with intelligently written and interesting books. This large-format treasury belongs on such a bookshelf. Lizann Flatt has written an accessible, clear, and simple text to accompany page after page of clear, bright, and attractive artwork by Allan Cormack and Deborah Drew-Brook.

The book would serve as an excellent reference text for those first school projects that kids get so excited about doing. From the Arctic tundra to a tropical coral reef, the natural world of animals, birds, soils, plants, water, light, and rainbows is explored. Two real sisters enjoyed looking through this book with me. They participated in an impromptu search for the one thing we thought we definitely should be able to find. And, yes, there is a picture of a dog somewhere in this book. Move over, Waldo.

BY PAT BARCLAY

Inspired Lessons

I WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN writing a logical, left-brained review of this group of novels for young people when I was interrupted by a knock at the door. Standing there was the young neighbour we'd hired to do a few carpentry jobs about the house, presenting his bill. After I'd written him a cheque, he produced from somewhere a sheaf of poems and short pieces of prose and asked me if I'd read them. Intrigued, I agreed. And what struck me about his manuscript turned out to be what had struck me about the eight novels I'd just read: when it's well done, writing from the right side of the brain is what moves us most.

Though this point may seem old and obvious, it needs making again, if the novels at hand are anything to go by. Because, if we judge them by the standard of how deeply they move us, only one passes with honours. The rest, like good journeymen, simply get the job competently done and will doubtless entertain (and in some cases, enlighten) the young readers for whom they were so consciously designed. Don't get me wrong, there's no stigma attached to not writing a classic! When somebody comes close, however, we are made to realize the power of fiction in a way that more ordinary writing cannot match.

R. P. MacIntyre's *The Blue Camaro* (Thistle-down, 158 pages, \$13.50 paper) is a collection of short stories that is, quite simply, a terrific success. MacIntyre can take an "apocryphal" story and turn it into something that sounds both new and almost true. The majority of these stories, though, deal with the everlastingly universal subjects of love and death. Especially moving are "Cut," about a drifting drop-out who can't accept his father's values, and "The Rink," about an elderly widower's friendship with a small boy whose honesty and innocence help to heal his grief. And no one should miss "Eat, Sleep, Jump High for Smarties," about Randy, a money-conscious teen, and Kathy, his

intellectual girlfriend, who writes poetry and is offended when he produces the better metaphor in English class. MacIntyre's assured prose, coupled with his ability to treat important subjects with humour, realism, and a wonderfully right-brained humanity, make *The Blue Camaro* an event not to be missed — by "old" adults as well as young ones.

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, who teaches creative writing at the University of British Columbia and is a "child-survivor from the Warsaw Ghetto," has written a moving account of the experiences of 14-year-old Slava Lenski, who comes to Canada with her family after the Second World War. Told in letters, memories, and present-day, first-person narration, *The Old Brown Suitcase* (Ben-Simon, 148 pages, \$11.95 paper) reveals the shadows cast by war upon one young girl and her struggles to adapt to her new life in Canada. Valuable for its insights into the many difficulties that beset the new immigrant, the novel also points out that Slava's terrifying past has created in her a need for "faith in the goodness of people, in God, in the possibility that someone could care." Slava's talent for inventing romantic tales about her past life — and for being found out — helps enliven her story. A "Historical Introduction for Young Readers" and Boraks-Nemetz's evident understanding of her subject make *The Old Brown Suitcase* a worthwhile addition to most school libraries.

Of Two Minds (Bain & Cox, 154 pages, \$11.95 paper), by Carol Matas and Perry Nodelman, is ostensibly a rollicking fantasy about a princess who can make real whatever she imagines and a prince who can read

any mind. About to be married, they are diverted instead into a world ruled by a benevolent dictator who condemns whole races of beings (elves, trolls, fairies, etc.) to invisibility. Though relentlessly sprightly and flippant in tone, *Of Two Minds* is actually an allegory about democracy vs. dictatorship and what happens when a people gives too much power to its leader. The message that a dictator lives in each of us also comes through loud and clear.

Also in the fantasy vein is Janice Erbach's *Wanderer's First Summer* (Polestar, 176 pages, \$9.95 paper), a well-realized tale about Kee, a rebellious teen who lives on a floating island and works hard at harvesting "whalin spawn" each summer. ("Whalins" are dolphin-like, telepathic creatures who help protect the islands from the dreaded "soonaloons" of the deep; they also sound like a lot of fun to play with.) Kee's main problem is the man known as "The Sentinel," who rules her island and seems bent on limiting her freedom and knowledge. Following Kee as she learns how the system works and the importance of her place in it is not much of a substitute for a good plot, but Erbach's watery world is remarkably convincing.

Meanwhile, back on planet Earth, *The Invisible Polly McDoodle* (Coteau, 147 pages, \$4.95 paper), by Mary Woodbury, briskly sets about proving that girls in grade six are people, too. Polly's problem is the seeming inability of her parents to understand the importance of her concerns (what school to select next year, the Christmas concert, who's been stealing from the neighbours, the lack of recognition in general that makes her feel invisible). Coming to the rescue are a neighbour

Creative Non-Fiction Contest #8

\$1,500

Three winners will each receive
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Preliminary judging by the editors of
Event. Other manuscripts may be
published.

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Writers are invited to submit manuscripts that explore the creative non-fiction form. See *Event* 17/2, 18/3, 19/3, 20/3, 21/3, 22/3 and 23/3 for previous winners, with comments by judges Myrna Kostash, Howard White, Eleanor Wachtel, Susan Crean, Andreas Schroeder, Heather Robertson and Stephen Hume.

Note: Previously published material cannot be considered. Maximum length for submission is 5000 words, typed, double-spaced. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope and a telephone number.

Entry fee: Each submission must include a \$16 entry fee (includes GST). All entrants will receive a one year subscription (three issues) with each entry. Those already subscribing will receive a one year extension.

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Postmarked no later than April 15, 1995.

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who appreciates Polly's art talent, and her buddy, Kyle the Clam, who has a splendid brain and hates to talk. The robberies in their apartment building set her and Kyle hunting for clues. In the end, of course, everybody wins except the criminals and Polly discovers that feeling invisible is not limited to people in grade six. Lively, charming, and amazingly low-priced, this story is a good bet for pre-teen girls.

Crime also turns up in a novel from the nitty-gritty school titled *Thirteenth Child* (HarperCollins, 224 pages, \$17 cloth, \$10 paper), by Karleen Bradford. This story skirts cautiously around the edges of alcoholism, wife-beating, robbery, and murder, but focuses primarily on the state of mind of its 15-year-old heroine, Kate. Kate's stuck in a teenaged girl's nightmare: working part-time in her parents' run-down, highway gas station snack bar with the big sign out front that reads: "COFFEE, SNACKS, WORMS." Her only friend is a "nerd" called Barney who's obsessed with motorcycles and another girl. But when good-looking-when-he-grins Mike Bridges shows up, life gets more interesting. Trouble is, Mike may be responsible for the spate of robberies in the district and even for a local murder, and Kate's parents have problems that are worse than their daughter's. Bradford handles her challenging material sensitively, and demonstrates that a little love, trust, and loyalty can go a long way in fostering human relationships. She gets away with an unexpected twist in the love interest, too.

Also aimed at older teens is Heather Kellerhals-Stewart's *Witch's Fang* (Polestar, 192 pages, \$9.95 paper). This novel centres around the struggles of its athletic hero, Todd, who's damaged his foot in a car accident and fears he may never climb mountains again. Todd has a lot to learn and he does it the hard way, literally hanging on by his fingernails as he, his sister Jess, and best friend Howie attempt a first ascent on the wickedest B.C.

Coast Range mountain of them all, the "Witch's Fang." The author's evident mountain know-how makes their adventures thoroughly convincing, and the lessons the mountains teach are expertly driven home. "A mountain is never conquered by a climber — only the climber is changed," states Kellerhals-Stewart in her epilogue, which neatly sums up the novel.

Interacting with nature is also the subject of a novel by Dayle Campbell Gaetz of Salt Spring Island, B.C., *A Sea Lion Called Salena* (Pacific Educational Press, 128 pages, \$8.95 paper). Kristie, Gaetz's heroine, is unhappy because her best friend has moved away. Then one day, she takes the family dinghy out fishing and discovers an injured sea lion pup. The novel follows Kristie as she mothers the pup and has to deal with fishermen who want to shoot it and a biologist who treats it like a machine without feelings. Various ecological points are scored, and a note of humour leavens the earnestness as Kristie entertains the sick animal by reading it Nancy Drew stories.

Also set in British Columbia is William Bell's *Speak to the Earth* (Doubleday, 122 pages, \$11.95 paper). This laudable effort describes the effect on one small family of the controversy over clearcut logging. Any resemblance to the Clayoquot tragedy is clearly intentional, as 15-year-old Brian — who's embarrassed when his mother is sent to jail, and frightened when the bed-and-breakfast visitors in their home are revealed as saboteurs in the pay of the logging company — is forced to take a stand on this inflammatory issue. It is a fact that clearcut logging in B. C. has provoked the biggest wave of civil disobedience in Canadian history. As Brian explains what finally propelled him into action, the complex situation suddenly becomes, well, clear-cut. Congratulations to Doubleday for publishing this book. Let's hope it finds its way into those Christmas stockings where it will do the most good.



BARBARA CAREY

UP FRONT

Getting into Trouble

NOT LONG AGO, A WRITER complained to me about something I wrote in an earlier column. Well, "complained" is not exactly the right word, since neither the offending material nor the people offended by it were specified. I'm not even sure the writer was expressing a personal objection. There was only the vague comment that I was getting into "trouble" in some circles with what I was writing, followed by the insinuation that this could have career consequences.

This was ironic on two counts: first, because making fun of specific CanLit personalities wasn't my intent; and second, because the comment (a criticism? a friendly warning?) came from a writer with a reputation for irreverence and iconoclasm. But aside from demonstrating how thin-skinned and paranoid people in the public eye can be, the incident is significant because it's a prime example of CanLit *realpolitik*, at least in some quarters.

Of course, there's nothing new about this way of operating. Oscar Wilde commented that "A man [not to mention a woman] cannot be too careful in the choice of his [her] enemies"; and some form of Machiavellian dealing exists in every community, from the playground to the boardroom. Why should the literary crowd be an exception? There's cooperation and generosity, as well as infighting and competitiveness; there's loyalty and supportiveness, along with bitter feuds and vindictiveness. When it comes to human behaviour, I'm no Rousseau. Still, the practice of sorting people into Us versus Them, rewarding those in your chosen circle and punishing those you regard as enemies, seems to me childish and ultimately a waste of time.

One consequence of adopting this way

of thinking is that writers scrunch themselves down in bunkers of paranoid logic: if you don't get a grant when Writer A is on the jury. Writer A must have it in for you, because she's a friend of Writer B, who *definitely* has it in for you, because you've been on a jury that turned *him* down. But any writer who's been on a jury knows that the competition for grants is fierce, aesthetic tastes vary, and group dynamics — and the necessity to compromise — can determine decisions more than individual preferences. Inevitably, there are trade-offs and delicate negotiations. (I was once on a blind jury with a writer who didn't go to bat for a favourite project because two of our fellow jury members were opposed — or more accurately, they steadfastly promoted their own choices. But in the interests of reaching an agreement, the writer in question gave in, and later regretted it.) It's similarly absurd to leap to the conclusion that if your latest masterpiece got trashed when it was reviewed in the local newspaper, it's because the books editor or the critic is out to "get" you. Oddly enough, writers who see personal slights behind every rejection or instance of being overlooked for prizes don't see any taint of personal prejudice at work if they get rave reviews or a place on the short list of a major award.

Let's be realistic. Favouritism and "pay-back" sometimes do account for who does or doesn't get grants, awards, and teaching appointments. We've all heard the stories that justify such an assumption. The writer who called up a magazine editor, wanting to review a book for which he'd written a blurb. The author who spurned a colleague's sexual advances, only to have a subsequent grant application turned down when Don Juan, coincidentally, was on the

jury. Or the writer who agreed to write letters of recommendation for a grant for two fellow authors, and not only failed to strongly support their projects, but entered the same competition. But I would guess that such practices are far less common than the conspiracy-minded among us believe.

Corporate bribes and kickback schemes are frequently defended by those involved on the grounds that "everyone" does it — which means, in effect, that everyone *has* to do it. Similarly, assuming that the wheel of literary fate routinely has a crooked spin leads to the acceptance of malfeasance as merely "the way things are."

The unfortunate corollary to this attitude is that real achievement — say, being short-listed for, or winning, a major award — often doesn't get the credit it deserves in the literary community itself. Instead, there's gossip and speculation about connections and undue influence, as if the quality of the book has nothing to do with the honour accorded it.

By playing by these rules — or taking it for granted that everyone else does — writers spend far too much time tiptoeing around or stroking touchy egos, fretting about and analysing how other (influential) authors regard them, and concocting elaborate theories to explain their own career disappointments and their colleagues' accomplishments. Why not put all that ingenuity into designing a board game based on literary intrigue, along the lines, say, of "Diplomacy"? It could be a winner. And with that energy productively channelled, they could get back to writing.

Barbara Carey's most recent book is The Ground of Events (Mercury), a collection of poetry.

3 E	4 H	5 K	6 L	7 U	8 T	9 N	10 S	11 L	12 Q	13 G	14 R	15 J	16 U	17 D	18 T		
19 D	20 K	21 H	22 G	23 C	24 F	25 C	26 O	27 Q	28 L	29 B	30 F	31 G	32 S	33 C	34 M	35 D	36 E
37 D	38 A	39 B	40 A	41 S	42 G	43 B	44 I	45 F	46 T	47 D	48 G	49 T	50 L	51 D	52 F	53 E	
54 B	55 H	56 C	57 I	58 H	59 H	60 U	61 K	62 F	63 T	64 A	65 S	66 I	67 G	68 B	69 J	70 D	71 L
72 C	73 J	74 E	75 S	76 R	77 K	78 B	79 K	80 G	81 J	82 L	83 O	84 F	85 D	86 I	87 O		
88 M	89 E	90 D	91 C	92 S	93 L	94 U	95 I	96 U	97 I	98 D	99 C	100 R	101 H	102 K	103 U		
104 R	105 I	106 G	107 B	108 F	109 B	110 H	111 L	112 C	113 G	114 I	115 D	116 S	117 G	118 F	119 L	120 B	121 C
122 H	123 L	124 G	125 H	126 G	127 B	128 C	129 P	130 O	131 G	132 H	133 A	134 F	135 I	136 C	137 S	138 T	
139 M	140 K	141 G	142 F	143 I	144 O	145 B	146 S	147 M	148 E	149 D	150 C	151 P	152 L	153 J	154 T		
155 H	156 C	157 L	158 K	159 G	160 F	161 A	162 H	163 B	164 T	165 U	166 L	167 S	168 F	169 E	170 U	171 I	
172 R	173 K	174 P	175 I	176 T	177 L	178 M	179 H	180 J	181 T	182 D	183 R	184 E	185 G	186 O	187 D		
188 F																	

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

A. Advice (obs.)

38 64 161 40 133

B. Certainly not a strike (3 wds.)

120 29 78 145 14 43 109 127

C. Beginning of many an introduction (4 wds.)

88 107 54 39 163
42 136 56 25 150 91 112 128

D. Giant 1893 cheese (2 wds.)

187 17 35 19 85 149 51
115 90 70 1 182

E. Calling up

36 184 89 53 169 74 148

F. Director of University of Toronto Press, 1953-77 (2 wds.)

24 118 45 134 30 108 63 168
52 84 142 62 188 160

G. Henry Beissel play (3 wds.)

124 31 131 3 141 117 185 67
80 113 159 106 22 126 46

H. Some other time (2 wds.)

55 179 21 162 132 59 101 4

I. "_____ the dying of the light," Dylan Thomas (2 wds.)

68 95 57 175 86 44 171 105
135 143 97

J. Eccentric, in the U.K. (2 wds.)

114 15 81 180 73 153 69

K. In a casual manner (3 wds.)

61 20 140 102 5 77 173 79

L. *Flint and Feather* author (2 wds.)

157 6 152 119 11 93 166 28
177 50 111 82 123 71

M. Jewish priestly vestment

139 178 88 34 122

N. Describing stale beer (2 wds.)

155 9 60 147 58 125 110

O. Monarch of Iran

26 98 83 144

P. Toronto celeb Erica

151 174 129

Q. Simplicity of style or taste

47 37 13 27 87 186 12 130

R. _____ section

183 76 100 172 2 104

S. "Good is good from _____," Joaquin Miller (3 wds.)

65 41 10 75 146 167 116 92
32 137

T. Smug-sounding conclusion (2 wds.)

8 181 46 176 164 18 138 154
49

U. Sloughed off

96 165 16 94 170 103 7

Solution to Acrostic #67 - "The envelope was stiff and thick, bent almost in half. Peter didn't say anything as I opened it and pulled out photographs. The top one showed the Duke of Windsor as a young man, and beside him, Millicent, wearing a Nineteen-twenties cloche hat" - *Millicent*, by Veronica Ross (Mercury Press)



Cultural Circles

IF ONE COULD SOMEHOW MAKE a survey using the technology of the data-density scanner, one could probably arrive at some interesting generalizations about the comparative state of writing in Britain, the United States, and English Canada. By counting the pulsating red squares that indicate places where heat is being generated, I think we'd see that there are a surprising number of regional scenes in Britain that we seldom think of over here. I don't mean Manchester and Edinburgh or other provincial Londons, but semi-rural clusters of some intensity, such as Hertfordshire in the southeast or Cornwall in the extreme southwest.

Of course Cornwall has been an "artists' colony" for decades. Writers have been drawn there not only by low overhead but also by the visual artists' and the community's hard-won mutual acceptance. I suspect this is also the case with the vigorous writing scene in New Mexico (as compared with the one in Seattle, which is very hot right now, but seems to have no more than the usual ties to the visual arts — that is, largely through the common medium of performance).

What brings all this to mind is Ken Norris's *Véhicule Days: An Unorthodox History of Montreal's Véhicule Poets* (NuAge Editions), and also another of his new books, *A New World: Essays on Poetry & Poetics* (Empyrean Press). Both tell, very clearly and insistently, the story of how Véhicule Art (Inc.), an alternative gallery that operated in Montreal from 1972 to 1982, gave birth to the "Véhicule Poets" (Norris, Endre Farkas, Artie Gold, Tom Konyves, Claudia Lapp, John McAuley, and Stephen Morrissey), who in turn mixed poetry with music, performance, and video, and also formed the

Véhicule Press to publish themselves more traditionally. The publishing house split off from the gallery in one of the tiny schisms that shook the scene; it persists today, as a good general, broad-based small press. Norris makes the case that the Véhicule poets survived all such fissures because of their unanimity in the field of poetics (though under close questioning by his mentor Louis Dudek, in one of the fascinating interviews and other primary documents in *Véhicule Days*, he's hard pressed to identify just what those poetics are). My feeling is that the Véhicule poets were held together for so long not by technical similarities (any more than were the Montreal Storytellers) but rather by the fact that they were a group of friends who, as minority writers in a French culture, depended on one another for criticism, praise, and support. Even in the cocky days of the McGill poets, from whom Canadian modernism is supposed to have derived all those decades ago, the participants can't have been unaffected by the fact that they were writing in one language while hearing another one spoken on the trams.

(This very question lies at the heart of another new book, *Lasting Impressions: A Short History of English Publishing in Quebec* (Véhicule), by Bruce Whiteman, the poet and head of McGill's rare-books collection. Whiteman shows how Victorian Montreal became the centre of Canadian publishing, only to relinquish the title as imperial confidence faded. After all, he writes, "Montreal was a strongly English-speaking island in a predominantly French-speaking province, and it is not surprising that the shift of publishing power to Ontario should have occurred.")

But the most interesting aspect of the Véhicule poets, it seems to me, is their con-

nection to the visual arts. It's in this way that they dovetail with so many different groups in Toronto or Vancouver, say — and, on balance, present a picture much different from that of other literary groups, in either Britain or the United States.

In the late '60s, a new generation of Canadian painters began to reject the traditional commercial gallery system and founded their own cooperatives — now called artist-run galleries but first known as parallel galleries (a term that survives only in the name of the art magazine *Parallélogramme*); by 1970 they had their own national association. In Vancouver, there was the Western Front (subject of an excellent book from Arsenal Pulp Press recently), the Granville Grange, and the New Era Social Club. Toronto had A-Space and many others. London had the Forest City Gallery. Even a city the size of Kingston, Ontario, had its own, the Kingston Independent Artists' Association. They really were *parallel* to the institutional and commercial galleries, bypassing old notions of the curatorial role (and of curatorial rule). But they ran *counter* to the existing structure too — not least in their almost fetishistic emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of successive avant-gardes. Writers as dissimilar as bpNichol, Michael Ondaatje, and David McFadden were as one in the way they moved freely between the visual and the literary worlds. Such books as *Véhicule Days* are valuable for reminding us, through a kind of documentary nostalgia, that Canadian culture is like a half-tone, composed of hundreds and hundreds of little circles.

Douglas Fetherling's latest books are a novel, The File on Arthur Moss (Lester), and Selected Poems (Arsenal Pulp).



Censor Perceptions

THE PARADOX OF LITERARY censorship has been tackled before, and the trends are easy to recognize. Ostensibly open-minded liberalism and socialism are prepared to grant freedom of voice and freedom of publication only as long as the view or the material falls within certain severely defined wavebands of acceptability. Every philosophical argument concerning liberty seems to evaporate when a directly contrary opinion is expressed. We live in the age of liberal prejudice, where books are rejected before they are even read, arguments eschewed before they are even heard. And the consequent censorship often takes a more subtle and arguably more insidious form than straightforward banning. How do I censor you? Let me show you the ways.

Reviewing is one of the sharpest of sharp ends of contact between a book and its potential readers, and a form of very good publicity. Every society, every city, has an incestuous literary community, whether it be the giants of London or New York, or the less heavily muscled Toronto or Sydney. And in spite of, or sometimes because of, the efforts of books editors at newspapers and magazines, books are sometimes given for review to people who have a known regard for, or friendship with, the said book's author. Or, more to the point, they are given to someone who the editor knows dislikes the said book, its subject, politics, or author.

The quality of the review is not all that matters. The size, placement, and timing of the critique are also extremely relevant. Reviews can sometimes be inserted in newspapers months after publication, so that the all-important initial sales drive is

hindered. Reviews can also be very short, indicating that the reviewed book does not deserve a full treatment. A studied and tentative neglect. On the other hand, in some extreme situations authors can be so friendly with an editor or so supported that their books receive not one but two reviews, providing publicity too generous to ever be purchased. Yet disliked books can have their reviews tucked away in pages full to boredom with advertisements or hidden between non-literary items deep within a newspaper.

Another vehicle of censorship is exclusion from media coverage. Part of this phenomenon is due to lack of inclusion in the "loop" — that group of radio, television, and newspaper people who live by a system of media symbiosis — but then this itself is an aspect of control and censorship. There are several key radio and television programs that help book publicity and sales, and if authors are not invited to appear on these their books will suffer. If the authors manage to be invited onto the shows, they may still be subject to disapproval, which can manifest itself in two ways. The first is straightforward hostility and criticism, but the second is more interesting. It is the so-called "objectivity" approach, where a producer or interviewer will claim that the book under discussion is of such a nature that a "balancing voice" is required. Whereas only two people — host and author — are usually involved in the equation, suddenly a third, outside commentator is introduced to give an opposite view to that articulated in the book. An author advocating full abortion rights or homosexual marriage, for example, does not require a critic, but an author arguing the

case for abortion controls or the sanctity of traditional marriage most certainly does.

We also have the less palpable but equally damaging attempt to marginalize an author. Canard and innuendo about the undesirability of a certain book and a particular author can take many forms. It could be talk encouraged among librarians about the author's racism, misogyny, homophobia, conservatism, fascism, devil worship (insert favourite accusation here). Or words of advice and warning given to buyers who purchase thousands of books from publishers for hundred of stores, or simple derision and abuse at fashionable and important parties about a book's politics — this last one much more significant than you might imagine.

For further information about all of this, ask any number of writers. Try talking to William Gairdner in Canada, Rush Limbaugh in the United States, or Paul Johnson in Britain. All of them, and so many more, experienced the sort of treatment I have described, yet all of them wrote books that became national best sellers because of the genuine popularity they enjoyed amongst the ultimate and best arbiters of quality and importance, the book-buying public. And please remind yourself that the view expressed in a book is as irrelevant as the colour of its dust-jacket — anybody can tolerate a friendly opinion, it is the toleration of that which angers and offends that defines you as a supporter of freedom or a fan of oppression. It is increasingly time to take sides. Do please choose.

Michael Coren's latest book is *The Man Who Created Narnia* (Lester).

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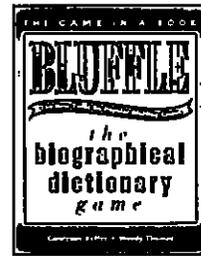
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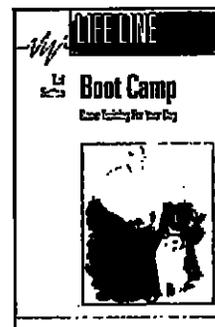
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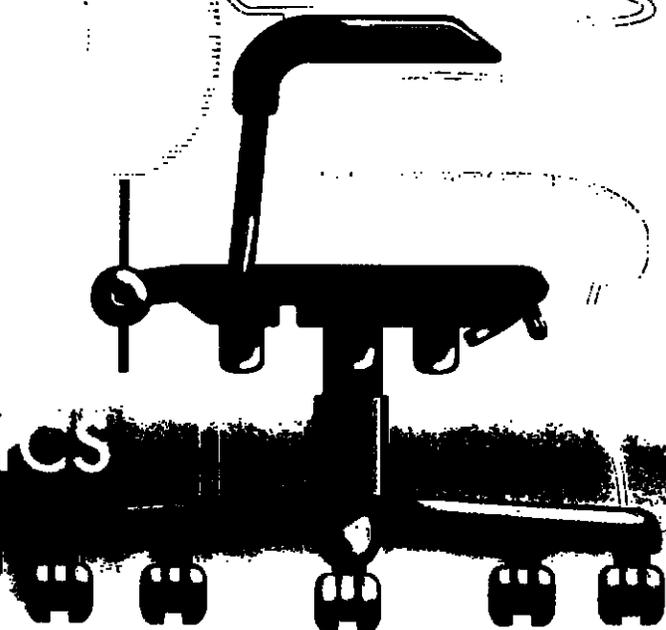
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