

# NOVELS in CANADA

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A SPECIAL ISSUE on *current Canadian fiction* (from *Chris Scott*, *Alice Munro*, *David Helwig*, *David Lewis Stein*, *Brian Moon*). *poetry and children's books*

REVIEWS BY: *Margaret Laurence; Jane Rule; b p nichol; Margaret Atwood; Chris Homer; David Helwig; Alan Edmonds; Jon Ruddy; Val Clery; Leo Simpson*



# JACK WHO?

Portrait of d  
Canadian Unknown

*by Douglas Marshall*

**THE FIRST TIME** I heard the name Donald Jack was from an English girl I met eight years ago in a Notting Hill Gate pub. She worked for **Heinemann's**, the publisher, and wanted to know about Canadian novelists. I, of course, claimed to know all three or four of them quite well.

"There's my good friend **Mordecai**," I lied. "Saw him at a party just the other night." (That year in London it was almost impossible for a Canadian nor to **see Mordecai** at a

*overleaf*



party.) "And there's Hugh, Hugh MacLennan. I've never actually, uh ..."

"Then you must know Jack," she interrupted.

"Jack?" My brain, though sod&n with Imperial pints, was still nimble enough to flick through a Fairly extensive card-index file of known Canadian authors. Result: negative. Perhaps she had confused MacLennan with McClelland. "Jack who?" I finally asked.

"Donald Lamont Jack." she said with genuine surprise. "We rank him as one of the few really major writers working in Canada to&y. He's certainly as good as. if not better than, Mordecai however-you-pronounce-his-name."

The next evening she arrived at the pub bearing a proof copy of *Three Cheers For Me*. "That," she declared, "is the funniest book published in English in a decade."

I was more interested in the girl than the book at the time. So it wasn't until after we were married a few days later that I got around to reading Jack's novel. I discovered then, as all young husbands must, that my wife generally knows what she is talking about. *Three Cheers For Me*. if not quite a masterpiece, is a triumph of the creative imagination.

The book has since become a collector's item. It sold only moderately well — some 10,000 copies all told. fewer than 1,500 of them in Canada — and, astonishingly, has never been reprinted or issued as a paperback. Yet there are a growing number of people for whom *Three Cheers* is a sort of password, a sign of mutual interest in those things that are truly excellent in Canadian literature. They speak of Bartholomew Bandy, the novel's engaging young narrator, in much the same way as the Baker Street Irregulars pay homage to Sherlock Holmes. Like Holmes, Bandy lives.

What makes Jack's achievement more extraordinary is that Bandy lives 50 years in the past. The book opens in July, 1916, when Bandy, the son of an Ottawa valley Protestant minister, has just turned 23. He has finished four years of medical school in Toronto, received his commission as a lieutenant in the army and is going trustingly to war. We watch him trudging through Beamington, his rifle under one arm and a framed photograph of his Father's graduating class under the other (he had been using it for target practise, neatly drilling a bullet through every sanctimonious Victorian face except his father's), while the yokels on the steps of the general store crack jokes.

There is a sting of authenticity in that first scene that provides the clue to the book's power. It has what Jack himself calls "the spark of life." The reader can't help but believe in Bandy. We are compelled to share his developing awareness — call it Past Shock — of a world that had grown old and weary and was blowing itself to bits in the Flanders mud. After a period in the trenches, Bandy is persuaded to join the Royal Flying Corps and emerges as a hero beribboned for valor but bereft of values. His progress toward disillusionment is punctuated by a series of hilarious episodes that for sheer comic inventiveness have seldom been equalled since the Pickwick Club closed its books.

So rich is the novel in human detail, so accurately does it evoke the wry and topsy-Tipperary flavour of the era, that I assumed *Three Cheers* was embellished autobiography. I pictured Donald Jack as a forgotten First World War veteran

who, bored with tending bees somewhere in rural Ontario, had turned amateur writer in his old age. I concluded that some Romantic chemistry had been at work: that the author, recollecting real events in Wordsworthian tranquillity, had been inspired to produce a splendid artistic fluke. In fact, I assured my wife that this must be the case.

I was about as wrong as you can get.

Donald Jack is a boyish 46-year-old with a certain innate modesty, a lot of Bandyish charm and a near-fatal inability to exploit his own genius. He was born near Manchester (his father was a GP), educated in Scotland ("I grew up with an uncle who steeped me in tales of the First World War") and served as a radio technician with the RAF between 1943 and 1947 ("I tried to get into the aircrew side — I've had a lifelong interest in aviation — but they turned me down because of a weak left eye").

Since 1955, four years after he emigrated to Canada (his mother was originally from Charlottetown), he has been supporting his family — an English wife and two daughters, 17 and seven — entirely out of his earnings as a thoroughly disciplined, nose-to-the-grindstone freelance writer. Apart from the novel, he has hammered out 40 television plays, about 35 scripts for documentary films, dozens of articles, several radio plays and four stage plays. Two of the plays, *The Canvas Barricade* (1961) and *Exit Muttering* (1962) were produced at Stratford.

"It seems incredible looking back on it," says Jack. "that I've managed to make my living simply as a writer for so long. It's such an uncertain profession. My best year was last year, when I made \$19,000. I could have made a lot more money by just going after the commercial things. But I've always tried to save enough time out of the year to do what I want to do. Plays and novels, you know, are all speculative. You never know if you can sell them."

Something both impressive and rather sad, a melody that is peculiarly Canadian, seems to have haunted Jack's career. He is a writer's writer, working nine-to-five out of a semi-detached house in the Beaches area of Toronto, keeping meticulous track of his output and income, compensating for a weak memory with a daily record of thoughts, ideas and descriptions. A whole shelf full of red octavo notebooks testifies that *Three Cheers* was no fluke. Perhaps that's the reason Jack remains so little celebrated. He has the misfortune to be living in a country that tends to lionize flashy amateurs and forces true professionals to hack out a living in the suburbs of obscurity. Whatever the reason, it hurts.

It was left to foreign publishers, as usual, to pick up the ball on Jack. By the end of the 1950s his maturing talent was obvious enough for anyone to spot. He had turned out a couple of plays for Sterndale Bennett's Canadian Theatre School, begun writing scripts for Crawley Films, become one of the CBC's leading playwrights in those glorious salad days of TV drama, and sold a 20,000-word science-fiction novelette, *Where Did Rafe Madison Go?*, to Maclean's:

"A New York agent, Jacques Chambreau, saw the Maclean's story and wrote asking to represent me. *Three Cheers* was nearly ready — this was 1960 — so I sent it down to him. It was accepted by the first publishers who saw it. Macmillan in New York and Heinemann in London.

Continued on page 15

# FICTION ABOUT FICTIONS

## BARTLEBY

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT  
*House of Anansi*  
cloth \$8.50: 458 pages

reviewed by Margaret Laurence

YOUNG **BARTLEBY**, infant sexual prodigy, was conceived in a desk. This is hardly surprising when one considers that his parents **were** two characters in a story. The astonished author **or** narrator (or perhaps he is neither) overheard the seduction scene and later found the manuscript pages in understandable disarray. From here on, **things can only get** wilder, and they do.

Christopher **Scott's novel** is a fiction about fictions. If you **are** not deeply grabbed by the nature of fiction, this is not **the** book for you. Personally, I

found it fascinating, although somewhat too long.

As **Bartleby** goes about his quest, searching for his true **earthly** Guardian, Aunt Alice, we **find** ourselves in the **egg-within-an-egg-within-an-egg** situation. **Bartleby**, a frankly fictional character, is reading a novel called **Bartleby**, in which a character called **Bartleby** is reading, etc. What Mr. Scott is doing, in fact, is to explore the ambiguous quality of both fiction and reality, and in places he does it **with stunning effect**.

This subject is one which has **concerned** many contemporary novelists. Gone is the time when a writer could say: "Once upon a time there **were** these people, and this is what happened to them." The **God's-eye** view, as a taken-for-granted **aspect of fiction**, is seldom attempted any more, as perceptions of reality and possibility have altered. On the **other** hand, many young writers are moving away, also, from the Method novel (mainstay of my generation of novelists) in which **the** writer takes on the persona of the main character and, as it were, becomes that individual, not entering the novel as narrator at all. These **are** essentially first-person novels, even if written in


the third person. The current concept of fiction, for a number of writers, Scott among them, is that the writer cannot evade his personal responsibility by staying (or **appearing** to stay) out of the novel. This general trend has produced a good deal of directly autobiographical fiction. It has also, as **in** Scott's case, produced a **return** of the **God's-eye** view, but with the vital difference that this omniscience is now plainly seen to be that of the writer who is being observed by the reader **in** the process of creating fictions rather than in the process of simulating so-called reality.

Scott, however, while acknowledging that **Bartleby** and the whole crew are fictions, nonetheless has the **novelist's** familiar desire to believe that his characters do exist somewhere outside himself, as themselves, perhaps in some other dimension. Could the characters perhaps be aware of the reader, he asks, just as the reader is aware of **them**? Is the blood of the characters on **the** writer's hands; has he made these people suffer? Could the **characters** rise up in one mighty revolt against their author? Indeed, **in Bartleby** they do just that.

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# 1,700,000 Canadian Children

live in poverty. The federal government appointed the Senate Committee on Poverty to find out why: four of its members resigned in protest over the censorship of the Committee's findings. Writers Ian Adams and William Cameron, and economists Brian Hill and Peter Penz now issue their own independent study (an 80,000-word study which goes far beyond the article which appeared in *Last Post* magazine) in THE REAL POVERTY REPORT — the bluntest and most radical examination of this problem ever done in Canada. They claim, and prove, that poverty is sustained by this country's economy, that government policies are outmoded and ineffective, and that there are feasible solutions. THE REAL POVERTY REPORT is a book every Canadian should read; \$2.95 paper. 51.95 cloth: to be published in December by M. G. Hurtig Ltd.



HURTIG

I" the course of **Bartleby's** quest, we **discover** that they are innumerable novels **called Bartleby**, and with **great** skill Christopher Scott (if there is a Christopher **Scott** and if he is the **True** Author) carries the tale forward by **means** of its **numerous** authors—the suffering and **uncertain** Narrator; De'Ath, the gruesome hermit **in** the graveyard, whose **name means just** what you **think** it means; the Jester who may or may not be God **or** The Other; and **Bartleby** himself. **These** identities **merge** and **shift** before **our eyes**, **until** we see them (and a whole troupe of equally **bizarre** personages) as disguises for the writer **himself**. The question of how far a writer puts **himself** into his characters has rarely been **dealt** with so **intricately**.

**Scott** is, if **anything**, a shade too clever. I wish he had stayed more closely with his **own** characters and resisted the temptation to **include** quite so many literary references. Viewed **one** way, **this** novel is a dark romp through literature ancient and contemporary, with echoes from Chaucer, **Fielding**, Swift, **Melville**, **Lewis** Carroll, **Tolkien**, **Styron**, **Bellow**, Beckett, Barth, Mailer, **Fowles**, to **name** only a few. Sometimes this works very well, as **when** the Great Sex Scene is written **in** **Chaucerian** English with some **lovely** modern additives ("She hym ybonken"). **One** can **visualize** the chagrin of the instant-porn seeker. But **we** also get interminable parodies on other writers' names and characters (Zog by Groaner; Iiautboy — this foiled me for a bit, but I haven't **read** Barth; the women novelists Trophy and Dribble; the **sex**-change lady **Hymeneia Brokenridge**, and so on and on). **This** tactic begins to seem tedious and unworthy of Scott's abilities. Similarly, when characters from other novels take part in the rebellion of characters against authors, the book becomes pointlessly repetitive and the jest goes on too long. Nat — out of Myron — complains too often that his author is white, with only a few scraps of black history and Psych. I should only fail as well as **William Styron** did **in** *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. I don't **like** this cheap knocking of other **novelists**. **Scott** does himself a" injustice by putting himself here **in** the pipsqueak category, where he does not belong.

Nevertheless, he has a fine enchantment with words, and his verbal energy

and inventiveness rarely flag. The novel, although too cerebral and too lengthy in places, has a zaniness which is **sometimes** hilarious and sometimes profound. I especially liked the Narrator's **struggle** to foil the plot of De'Ath — thii indeed may be why most writers write at all. A fitting comment on the struggle, however, is that De'Ath comes across as **the** strongest, most sinister and most intriguing (in both **senses** of the word) character in the whole novel.

De'Ath. be proud. **tho'** some may not call thee mighty and dreadful. . □

MARGARET LAURENCE is currently in England, at work on her newest book.

## THE CREDIBLE WOMAN

### LIVES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

ALICE MUNRO  
McGraw-Hyerson  
cloth 56.95: 160 pages

reviewed by Jane Rule

**ALICE MUNRO'S** first volume of stories, *Dance of the Happy Shades*, won a Governor-General's Award in 1968 and an introductory tribute from Hugh Gamer. Haphazard and inadequate reviewing of books in Canada may still have kept it a secret from readers who would **find** in Alice Munro a writer of rare and clear **gifts**, who requires as much of herself as she does of her **readers** an accurate and loving insight **into** the world she creates. The **publication** of *Lives of Girls and Women* should be announced on the front page of every paper in Canada, for it is news of a sort that puts **all** other headlines — **FATHER FEEDS TWIN DAUGHTERS TO HOGS, WOMAN GIVES BIRTH TO HUMAN MONKEY. VIRGIN RAPED ON CROSS BY CRAZED MONKS** (to take examples from one of Mrs. Munro's stories in the new collection) — in their real place. Eve" without that publicity, it is a book that will find its way into the libraries of everyone who cares about craft in writing and good reading.

*Lives of Girls and Women*, like Margaret Laurence's latest collection of stories, is limited to the point of **view** of one character, Della, who is growing up with her brother, Owen, between the fox **farm** her father runs and the town of Jubilee where her mother rents a house for the children to be nearer **school**. The stories contain characters Hugh Gamer would again praise as "ordinary people in ordinary situations," but for me the world of Jubilee is nearly as foreign as a Greek village, and there **are** few people in it I **could** have understood at **all** except through Alice **Munro** who has done what Della, in the final story, wishes to do. "I would want to write things down. Every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark **or** **walls**, **every** smell, pot-hole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together." Real life (the title, incidentally, of one of the longer stories) is a preoccupation not with the ordinary but with the **actual**. "The hops of accuracy one brings to such tasks is crazy, heart-breaking," **Della** says, and she may be voicing Alice Munro's own feelings about the process of writing, but the book is that hope **fulfilled**.

Della is **rare** as a character because **Alice** Munro does not desert her in the end as so many interesting young girls have been deserted as they approach womanhood. A bright, ambitious, and perceptive child, Della is growing up in a world that might seem designed to strip her of those qualities. "Ambition is what they **were** alarmed by, for to be ambitious was to **court** failure and to risk making a fool of oneself." Her only **ally** is her outspoken, agnostic mother, who **sells** encyclopedias to reluctant and suspicious **farmers**. **Della's** recognition that she is, in some ways, **like** her mother is no comfort to her. She tries to believe in God, see virtue **in** resignation, fall in love with a" ordinary boy. Failure and **success** are confused: there is freedom from irony in neither. Della, in love when she writes her scholarship exams, fails, **but** she **also fails** to stay i" **love** long enough to get pregnant and married. The dark and melodramatic novel she has kept in her head to **reassure** herself of her own importance also fails before the larger vision of life itself. What she has, when the book ends, is the revelation of what her experiences have **really**

given her, "through country we did not know we loved," and the passion to "write things down." Among other things, Lives *of Girls and Women* is a portrait of the artist as a young girl who is stripped of nothing she cannot better do without and given all that she needs to go on.

Other characters in the book are not simply important to Della's growing but independently interesting. Uncle Benny, the man who works for Della's father, does not live through the finding and then losing of his mail order wife and child as a moral puppet show for Della. Her brother Owen's retreat into manhood is outside Della's capacity to understand, but it is there. And the Sheriff family, who Della has used as the seed for her novel, exist much more importantly outside it. Della herself says, "It is a shock, when you have dealt so cunningly, powerfully, with reality, to come back and find it still there." □

JANE RULE'S most recent book is *Against the Season*. She lives in Vancouver.

## RIVER OF SMALL RETURN

### COME A LONG JOURNEY

ALAN FRY  
Doubleday  
cloth \$6.50; 249 pages

reviewed by Alan Edmonds

A LONG-AGO land dispute at Brantford, Ontario, produced a" epic definition of Canada's original and most shameful race problem when the judge said: "In his dealings with the white man", the Indian usually gets the worst of the bargain."

Today a handful of writers are attempting to redress the wrongs of cultural genocide and the wholesale slaughter of racial pride. Even so, the

words of that long-forgotten judge remain true. In the few recent books dedicated to establishing the India" as equal but different to we Johnny-come-latelys, the Indian still usually gets the worst of the bargain.

*Come A Long Journey*, for instance. Author Alan Fry, a veteran of the North West and B.C., is a copper-bottomed Authority on the subject of Indians. But while Authority may prompt a man to write, it is rarely enough to make a" Authority into a writer. At least, not a good one. And it is because of Mr. Fry's deficiencies here that in this case, too, the Indian gets the worst of the bargain.

*Come A Long Journey* is billed as a novel, which it isn't beyond the point that it is a fictionalized story of a canoe trip by a whiteman and a" Indian down the Yukon River. The intent is to show how the white man" starts out full of respect for his companion but still thinking of him as an Indian, and ends up after a few cosy camps and one very undramatic incident involving a sprained ankle thinking of him as a brother; an equal.

## Fall windfall of great new books by distinguished Canadians.

### WHEELS by Arthur Halley

The great story-teller excels himself again in this powerfully dramatic new novel about the automobile industry and the people who design, test, build and market the cars. *Hotel* was revealing. *Airport* was gripping. *Wheels* is both. 88.75.

### WE GAVE YOU THE ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH!

by Robert Thomas Allen

A hilarious look at the "generation gap" by the two-time winner of the Leacock Award for Humour. This amiable defence of the older generation will leave you feeling things aren't so bad after all. 97.50.

### COME A LONG JOURNEY by Alan Fry

This is a first class adventure story about an Indian and a whiteman on a long canoe trip down the Yukon River. The racial barrier gradually gives way as the whiteman, through his partner's tales, comes to a deep understanding of what it's like to be an Indian. \$6.50.

### THE BLACK WOLF OF RIVER BEND by Helene Widell

The setting is the Robson Valley of British Columbia. The story is a true and genuinely moving story of a wolf named "Blackie" and the inherent conflicts that arise when he becomes part of a civilized community. \$4.75.

### A book to look forward to in Spring '72

#### THE TWELFTH MILE

A Novel of Adventure and Espionage at Sea  
by E. G. Perrault

This is a gripping fictitious story that is only an accident away from becoming a perilous fact. Outward bound from Vancouver to low in an offshore rig, the tug *Haida Noble* is struck by a hurricane and tidal wave and swept into a rescue situation with grave international implications. 86.50.

 Doubleday

# TELE-VERITE

## THE REVOLUTION SCRIPT

BRIAN MOORE  
McClelland & Stewart  
cloth \$6.95: 261 pages

reviewed by David Helwig

A YEAR AGO. The kidnappings, the new names that hung in the air with the bright autumn light, the murder, the speculations, the War Measures Act, the anger, the relief. And the argument going on, renewed now at the anniversary. A man is dead, millions of words have been spoken and written and the autumn of 1970 is a punctuation mark, I think. in the life of every adult Canadian. a comma or a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation point.

Brian Moore was in Montreal for most of the period. He has used the techniques of fiction to present the story of the events of last year, using as his main characters the members of the Liberation Cell, the kidnappers of James Cross. He has also used the techniques of the journalist, extensive interviews, study and consideration of written and broadcast material. viewing of the sites of the events.

Moore's book is sympathetic to the Cross kidnappers. He refers to them as "revolutionaries before their time" and makes clear that he regards their view of the world and that of their ideological hero Pierre Vallières as one that is based on real grievances. a legitimate demand for justice.

Two of the characters in particular, Jacques Lanctôt and Marc Carboneau are made into fascinating figures: Lanctôt the fanatic, full of energy and hatred. but still holding on to his humanity. not wanting to kill Cross; Carboneau, the oldest of the group, a "Old Left Marxist who had abandoned his wife and children to serve the cause of revolution. These two had been the organizers of the Mouvement de Libération du Taxi. grass-roots organizers who wanted to move ahead.

Again and again Moore suggests that these men were playing out a script that they had invented. They had

There is a charm about it all that transcends Mr. Fry's weaknesses as a novelist. And he drops in, albeit awkwardly, large dollops of Indian lore, mythology and history which are fascinating to anyone who cares.

And if you do care, as I do, about the tragic inter-relationships between Indians and whites, then you may be left feeling like the starving man fed a" anchovy hors d'oeuvre.

There is in Fry's writing much love but no character development; respect but no insight into the profound spiritual reasons for it. Mr. Fry seems to be a great hand with birchbark canoe and campfire, but not with words and plot and structure.

We still need someone who can do for the India" what Mordecai Richler has done so nobly for Montreal's Jews. □

ALAN EDMONDS, a Toronto freelance writer, is currently working on a book about the Arctic Ocean, to be published by McClelland & Stewart in 1972.

## DEEP FRIEZE

NOBODY OWNS  
THE EARTH  
BILL BISSETT

House of Anansi  
cloth \$6.50, paper \$2.50; 96 pages

reviewed by b p nichol

another super strong book from bissett lets pause for a moment & take bearings the poem is a state of flux fixed precisely with the flux intact so that it shifts & changes even as you read it criticism is that practise of taking the outerlimits of the flux & pinning every alternative down analogically the poem is a butterfly & the criticism the pi" that sticks in the book & mounts it lets backtrack it slightly print does not fix the poem in the same way it fixes criticism it removes the sound of the poets voice & substitutes fixed memory for short term memory (say the length of the poet reading the poem) but the rest of the flux remains criticism in print

removes or makes less obvious (which is really the more accurate statement) the one overwhelming area of flux involved which is to say it is the specific persons response to the specific poem or poet print fixes a formality which comes dangerously close to DEFINITIVE statement whats really fun is to sit around on a night and rap about theory or someone else's poems & where her trying to arrive at then its obvious that well that is that mans feeling about it write a" article on the same thing & watch it become definitive statement watch the desire for nonflux for a clarity which is really blindness rise to the surface in the way the article is taken the beauty of yin & yang as principles is that they are a completely precise completely scientific way of looking at the real world because they take completely into account the states of flux bissett is a flux poet where he stands from one moment to the next is not really open to definition what you can say is that he is moving with the motion of things around him every book that he brings out is important is another step in his charting of one course thru the dimensional chaos dont try to pin him take what everyone says about him & realize theyre only talking from their point of view then make your own mind up you can learn from him technically emotionally spiritually & politically hes that kind of poet hes that kind of man □

b p nichol won a Governor-General's Award last year for his poetry. His newest book is The Aleph Beth Book (Oberon).



b p nichol

rejected the conformist roles and were looking in history and fiction for new parts to play. One of their great influences was a movie, *The Battle of Algiers* and their heroes were the revolutionary guerrillas from around the world.

To the extent that the book has a villain, the villain is Pierre Trudeau. He too is seen as writing a script in which he is the star, the tough guy whose word is law, but Trudeau had the power to put his fantasy into effect over a whole country. While I've always considered Trudeau a dangerous man who has consistently appealed to what was worst in Canadians, I think Moore is a little unfair in presenting a picture of Trudeau as a man who likes to fight and likes to win, a performer who superbly manipulates the situation around him, but largely ignores the real political convictions which lie behind the Prime Minister's attitude to separatism and the FLQ.

The greatest problem in judging such a book is to decide what standards to apply. I missed *In Cold Blood* when the book came out, and reading it after all the furor had died down, I thought it no more than a good piece of journalism, not much beyond the class of *The Boston Strangler*. On the level at which these books succeed, *The Revolution Script* works splendidly. It's a good story. I stayed up late reading it and returned to it early in the morning.

I think Moore is on safe ground too in the sense that his attitude to the material is humane, that he seems to know something about the situation of the "white niggers" from his days of living in Montreal, and he suggests a real concern about the human content of the situation. The book does not exploit those he writes about.

But to say these things is to judge the book as conscientious journalism, not as a work of art. When he likens one of his characters to Raskolnikov, Moore gives the game away, for though he gives some sense of human reality to the people in the book, he is most concerned with events, with facts and conflicts and an observation of how the whole situation was developed through the media. He is not creating a whole imaginative reality, but only casting a new and useful light on a set of public events. The book, it seems to me, will

not challenge serious comparison with the best of the non-fiction novels, Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*. Moore is not working from as far outside his material as Capote was in *In Cold Blood*. but he is not far enough inside it to make it into a work of art. I suspect only a French-speaking writer could do that.

At the level of its achievement. *The Revolution Script* is a solid piece of work. It is clearly meant for audiences in Britain and the U.S. as well as in Canada, and it is a book that I wouldn't hesitate to give to an outlander who wanted to understand something of what we all lived through. Only last year. □

DAVID HELWIG'S new novel *The Day Before Tomorrow (Oberon)* is about espionage and the impulse toward revolution. (See below.)

## FREEDOM FROM HISTORY

### THE DAY BEFORE TOMORROW

DA VID HEL WIG  
*Oberon*  
paper \$2.95; 183 pages

reviewed by *Leo Simpson*

IN *The Sign of the Gunman*. to my mind one of the top books in contemporary Canadian poetry, David Helwig's messenger of spring is not the robin or crocus but the black scavenging crow. He has an eye for the un-sentimental facts of life, and they are the basis of a characteristic concern in his poetry. the re-integration of unities which have been separated by words: "We move in consternation/and we cannot tell/our strength from weakness." So. in a poem about Martin Luther King. the sign of the Lamb, with the suddenness of eclipsed light, becomes the sign of the Gunman. The

Canadian  
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**VOYAGE INTO DANGER**  
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selected poems by *bill bissett*

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WHEN HE WAS FREE  
AND YOUNG AND HE  
USED TO WEAR SILKS  
Stories by *Austin Clarke*

**Anansi**  
471 Jarvis Street, Toronto 284

central characters in *The Streets of Summer*, Helwig's story collection, are usually presented as exteriors: they will contain, we are made to understand, an inward unity, i.e., their seething contradictions. One never become bored with a Helwig character, because the character never surrenders his integrity.

His first novel is perhaps a development of a thought in his poem *For The Grave Of Gordon Craig*: "A revolution is a" act of faith/in man's freedom from history." With John Martens, a middle-aged Canadian civil servant stationed in England, the revolutionary act is betrayal of his country's secrets to an enemy, and freedom from history is a terrible oblivion.

John's younger brother, Jake, is sent by his mother to England for news of John after they are visited by the RCMP. Jake is familiar enough -- the student activist, a boy who may grow up to become a serious rebel or a nice doctor. He contributes incoherent an-

ger to the novel. a sort of embryonic revolutionary instinct that is appeased by sit-ins and protests about housing. Helwig's utter detachment from his characters leaves Jake's role otherwise in doubt. although this same detachment achieves, with quietness and authority. almost by stealth, a sure grasp on the humanity of John and his wife Margaret. The theme here is disintegration, Margaret's quick break-up and John's slow falling apart, after the death of their infant child. The only possible comparison is to early Graham Greene. in Margaret's case. and indeed in Helwig's whole vision, his sombre irony and knowledge of the weakness of flesh.

It's a consummate first novel, muted yet vital, moving easily between the large subject of revolution and the subtleties of human relationships. □

LEO SIMPSON is the author of the new novel *Arkwright* (Macmillan).

# SAD STORY OF THE DEATH OF KINGS

## KING OF EGYPT, KING OF DREAMS

G WENDOLYN MacE WEN  
Macmillan

cloth \$9.95: 287 pages

reviewed by Randall Ware

TO HAVE BEEN born into the late 1940s and early 1950s is to have been delivered into times that cared not for history itself or the lessons it held for the order-seeking intellect. I am 24 years old and have never felt that history had anything much to teach me. This opinion is, I think, fairly representative of my generation and most surely that of the people maturing after me. Films, happenings, rock concerts are the new history, no history. The electric present replaces the available past. The historical method yields to the hysterical process and no one stops to point out likenesses in these polarities.

Well baby, this may do it to your head, but Gwendolyn MacEwen has written an historical-based-on-the-facts-no-bullshit-but-someshanges novel that not only demonstrates that THEY REALLY WERE A LOT LIKE US! -- but also that both history. and the novel itself, can speak movingly and directly to our 24-frames-per-second cultural nodes.

*King of Egypt, King of Dreams* is the story of Akhenaton. ruler of Egypt from 1367 to 1350 B.C., his rise and demise. A sickly lad who passes his first years not moving from his dark mom, vomiting, feverish. unable to walk properly, and haunted by voices

and visions that torment his head from the inside even as his overbearing and power-hungry mother torments it from without. Physically repulsive, yes, and destined to assume the throne when his somewhat aberrant and aggressive father goes to join his ka (transcendental self. spiritual twin)

But Akhenaton is a visionary, and having been forged in the separate furies of his parents, he emerges as their mirror opposite. He dissipates, during the course of his reign, the empire that Amenhotep. his father, had so painstakingly gifted (both senses) onto Egypt. Because he hated war and violence and would neither fight nor defend, many suffered and the empire crumbled. His eye was on the larger pattern.

A knot of reasons propelled him onto the course that is the substance of the novel and the reason for which he is best remembered today. For Akhenaton introduced the concept of monotheism into Egypt and into our lives. Why did he do it? Was it that the welter of different gods, each with his own province. was confusing? Was it perhaps that the people needed new symbols? These could be seen as reasons for the rise of Atonism, but only after the fact. And the fact was that Akhenaton had transformed the terrors dancing inside his head into a quasi-mystical vision of purity that suited his psychology even if it did not produce the goals it implied. The new religion is accepted reluctantly and eventually dies with its creator. We are left looking at a prismatic man; a mystical demagogue, a cross between Hitler and a flower-child. an individual. Akhenaton is known as the First individualist. Indeed. he is a model for what true individualism can represent and a caution for how it adapts to the social jig-saw.

The novel is rich in character and characters. Nefertiti, his wife, drifts in and out of the story but stays with you a long time after it is over. Ay. Akhenaton's father-in-law. is one of touchstones of his life. Philosophical and practical, he illumines Akhenaton's character by contrast. The end of the book is devoted to 'The Secret Papyrus of Ay: Circa 1337 B.C.' This chapter serves to put the whole book into proper historical perspective and to



show what occurred after the death of Akhenaton. Its greatest value, however, is that it gives us Ay's insights into **Akhenaton** and helps us move toward the **definition of a** character who is not readily **defined**.

Gwendolyn **MacEwen's** prose is admirably suited to her subject matter. The story is written in a straightforward manner. The prose is economical and clean, and we are mercifully spared the miasma of irrelevant historical data that so many novelists feel compelled to pour upon us. Here, the story's the thing. A useful glossary of Egyptian names and terms is included.

I found **King of Egypt. King of Dreams** to be a moving book. **Akhenaton** tries to incorporate the god, the beast, and the man into one. The **illustration** of his attempt can, I believe, teach us more about parts of ourselves than all the **Desmond Morris's**, **Lionel Tigers**, and **Robert Ardreys** we can muster. When the intellect fires the imagination, the novel thrives, history becomes redolent with meaning, and for a brief time we are transported out of our temporality. □

# OVER AND OUT

## THE NEW LITERACY

DONALD GORDON  
U. of T. Press

paperback \$2.75; 189 pages

## LONELINESS AND COMMUNICATION

SIGMUND DE JANOS,  
BRIAN BROOKS

new press  
paperback \$2.95; unpaginated

reviewed by **Chris Homer**

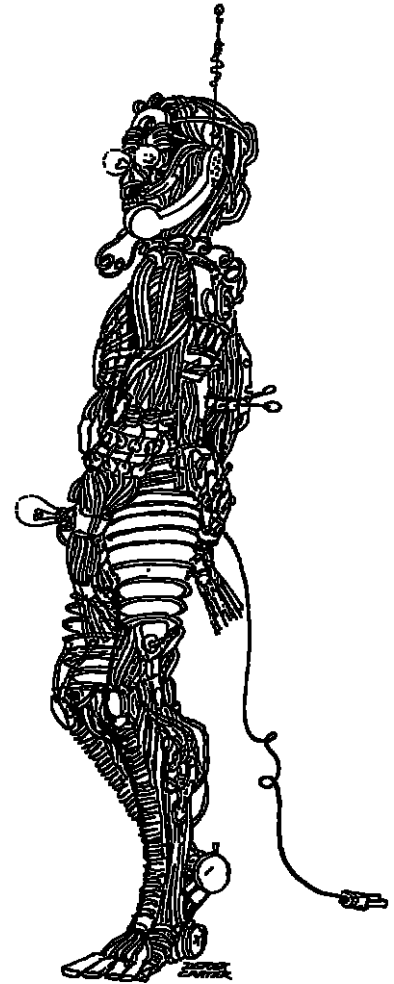
NOW **DO YOU** communicate a conception of "reality"? The word almost begs for quotation marks every time it **is** written, the concept of the term differs so from person to person. Even if you fully describe to someone else

your idea of "reality," is the other person understanding it in the same terms that you are using to describe it? Donald Gordon's book. **The New Literacy**, explores how we perceive reality; and what a task that turns out to be. "The central challenge we face," according to Gordon, is "to deal with an information explosion in circumstances that allow for little, if any, error."

Although this book is only 189 pages long, the designers, **Allan Fleming** and **William Reuters**, have used the book's irregular format to allow **almost** every page to be closely printed in two columns. Right from the start, in his first chapter, "On Communication," Gordon is forced to qualify every term and step of reasoning. Nothing can be taken for granted in this subject area because the source, transmitter and receiver, that he labels as the basic **units in** most forms of communications, are each subject to influencing factors in their operation **that** serve only to frustrate **the** very process they should be aiding. The simplest one-word message, he points out, can become a devious, dangerous obfuscation of meaning even if **we** know all the circumstances under which the word was uttered, with what emphasis, by whom and to whom.

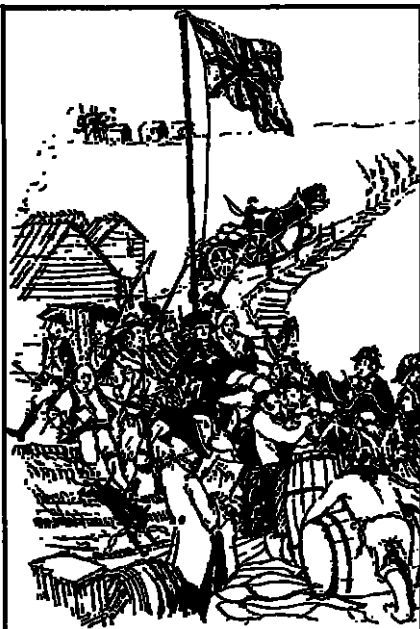
Gordon has spent ten-elevenths of his book enumerating, in a style that is easy-to-read and conversational, the variations in perceptions of reality, not only as our personal senses evaluate it but as it is laid down (or obscured) by the mass media. Wading through this material is in some ways as frustrating to **read** as it may have been to write, because the material is so **common-sense** and factual. You might like to know, when wondering why the air **smells so** bad, that "olfactory receptors in the mucous lining [of the **nose**] consist of about 600,000 specialized cells in an **area** about the size of a IO-cent piece." On the other hand, if you have a common cold the chances are that you will be spared from **realising** how rotten the air is. Both situations, **according** to Gordon, are perceptions of reality to some degree.

The mass media of print, radio, TV, and **film**, are examined for their contribution to our conception of reality. In this section, in an effort to get to some kind of definition of this **con-**



**cept, Gordon** has written large amounts of fairly simplistic material such as "Print can say 'the speed of sound' but this doesn't workably convey anything close to the full sense of acceleration or motion," and "Unlike print or even radio, television can let events speak and show for themselves."

Gordon's solution to deal with the barrage of information that we face today is not the obvious. He suggests we **use** the present and impending technological innovations and by a **never-sleeping, computerized** system of time switches, etc., connect our office and home **with** the whole world-wide mass of televised, print-out and audio information! The straightforwardness of the first **10** chapters may not prepare you for the rather idealistic conclusions. The new literacy of the title, to which we **will** have to become accustomed in order to survive, is the various methods of sifting this information input for our own use. Gordon suggests that this will possibly **heighten "interpersonal contact" result-**



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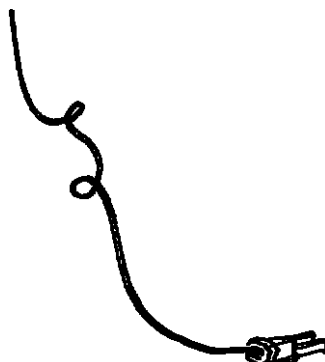
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ing in "the end of desultory small talk." But how can this be? The assimilation of real knowledge, as opposed to cocktail-chatter material culled from various sources, is usually a private affair; the more intense the knowledge, the greater the need of concentration in privacy. Speed reading may help us to cope with the printed word but with more sources of knowledge at our fingertips it won't be communication of knowledge that we'll need to practice but communication itself.

Perhaps if you read and follow *The New Literacy* you'll need *Loneliness and Communication* to fetch you out of your shell. This thin book (in more senses than one) is also about "interpersonal contact." It's full of cryptic messages to the lonely ones like "tune in and adjust your dial." There are instructions to "Be yourself, damnit!" and to "keep your message (face, hands, body) together." It's not too difficult to knock this book as a facile design exercise since it consists of a combination of slick, short texts sometimes obscured by the photographs or drawings over which they are printed. It is difficult to take the book seriously, on the other hand, when it directs the reader to watch the Johnny Carson Show because Carson "always tunes his conversation to his guest's vibrations." Apart from such fallacious observations as that, people out of touch with the world might not be able to follow the jargon. However, since loneliness is a definite malady in our society, if either book plays any part in breaking down the walls between people its purchase will have been worthwhile. □

CHRIS HOMER is a freelance television and film producer director.



## IN MY DAY...

### WE GAVE YOU THE ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH

ROBERT THOMAS ALLEN

Doubleday

cloth \$7.50; 270 pages

reviewed by Donald Jack

IN *We Gave You The Electric Toothbrush!* Robert Thomas Allen defends his generation against the accusation that it is "hidebound, hypocritical, phoney, mired in Victorian morality and hung-up on sex:

"No older generation," he goes on, "has ever before been presented in such a ghastly light. TV commercial writers, who show young people leaping laughingly over surf boards, depict my generation butting in with some out-dated theory about peanut butter or floor wax, or just sitting around in the shadows keeping regular." Mr. Allen ripostes with memories of icemen, saxophones, Tom Mix, crystal sets, "medicines that made you sting, retch or gag, and cars that smelled of coal oil, bay and automobile curtains," and confesses that he would be happy to stand in the way of a progress that has brought us walkie-talkies ("I'm turning west now. Do you want me to bring you a chocolate bar? Over!"). schools that look like factories, and the notion that good manners are a form of hypocrisy.

The book is subtitled "One Man's Defiant Defense of the Older Generation," but there is no real defiance in Mr. Allen. As defence counsel he illuminates his case with a nostalgic candle rather than courtroom pyrotechnics. He shows us that there was just as much of a generation gap in his day but that nobody took it too seriously, and that sex was just as fashionable, if not so grossly publicized: "We had group love-ins long before Woodstock. We took night cruises on the old lake ferry, the Cayuga, and the deck would be dotted with dark figures bundling in the moonlight beneath a shower of soot from the ship's stacks. It was the

most erotic ship afloat and made soft panting sounds as it crossed Lake Ontario . . .”

While Mr. Allen gently reproves today's undisciplined generation he is perhaps too tolerant of his own. To a large extent it is the aging swingers, middle-aged hucksters and those whose loss of faith in their own values who have contributed most to the contemporary over-indulgence of youth, and there is a good example of this in Mr. Allen's own experience. Last year Mr. Allen, a dedicated professional writer of more than 20 years' experience was invited to Orillia — at his own expense — to receive the Leacock Award for his book, *Children, Wives and Other Wildlife*. Mr. Allen was presented with a medal. On the same occasion the winner of the Leacock student humour contest, an 18-year-old Grade 12 student from Saskatoon, received a check for \$1,000. □

DONALD JACK won the Leacock Award for his novel *Three Cheers For Me*. He is completing work on his second book.

# ZIP CRACKLE POP

## JOHNNY CRACKLE SINGS

MATT COHEN

McClelland & Stewart

cloth \$6.95, paper \$2.95; 112 pages

reviewed by b p nichol

a lot of people aren't going to like this book now that a little statement to set your teeth on edge but its true a lot of people aren't going to dig what matt cohen is into but as johnny crackle says thats all part of condition zero i sat down & read it thru in one sitting i sat down and opened up & really liked the way the cover flowed into the first page & the way the other pages fell and there you were right into the book and then it was over this is how it strikes me

johnny crackle is all about perception

if youre going to get into whats going down with him then you have to enter right into his perceptual system

cohen opens it up for you how he writes is how crackle sees or what hes in the midst of forcing you into the midst of it its really nice the way he sucks you in with newspaper clip pings & bits of really straight prose or like the letters from shaugnessy to his wife pat where hes really worried about his erections & how he couldnt get it into her just before leaving for europe & crackles telling jenny in his letters how shaunessy is balling this little chick ten times a day and writing the letters home in between letters in novels lots of letters are really interesting take you back to those 16th & 17th century trips that whole historical form & crackle is all caught up in his own history who he is being as it were so many people really it doesnt matter finally everyone in the book becomes part of his condition zero including you as you read it are you turned off its all part of condition zero that

# Five more on the fall flight; first class.

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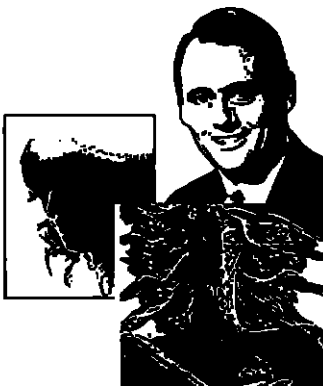
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moment when the mind numbs when the barest energy possible keeps you going what it seems to me is that lots of people still dig to be outside of the event when reading feel raped when the writing forces them into the perceptual system as cohens does dont like that loss of self control that emerges thus they are forced into value judgements that just arent applicable there are moments when cohens writing stumbles slightly when the rhythms he is trying to sustain run away from him but it doesnt matter its all part of condition zero the writer the reader the book as artifact everything becomes part of condition zero i wouldnt want to live inside crackles head i did for the length of the book you should try the experience thatll let you know what that particular madness is □

## BRAVE NEW ZOO

### THE IMPERIAL ANIMAL

ROBIN FOX and LIONEL TIGER  
McClelland & Stewart  
57.95; 308 pages

reviewed by Richard Lubbock

THE UNPLEASANT NEWS was first brought in by Charles Darwin: Man is an Animal. It gave the Victorians a fit of the horrors. But there was worse to come. Freud announced that Man is a Sexual Animal. With every year that passes, new skeletons are found in the cupboard of our biological heritage.. and our pride reels under the hammer blows. We learn that Man is an Aggressive Animal (Lorenz); Man is a Territorial Animal (Ardrey); Man is a Naked-Ape Animal (Morris); and now (ta-ra!) Man is *The Imperial Animal*, by Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox.

Shudders! Shame! Shades of Democracy! O, Bishop Wilberforce, where are you, now that we need you?

Alas, poor Wilberforce is dead, though his spirit lingers on. and we are

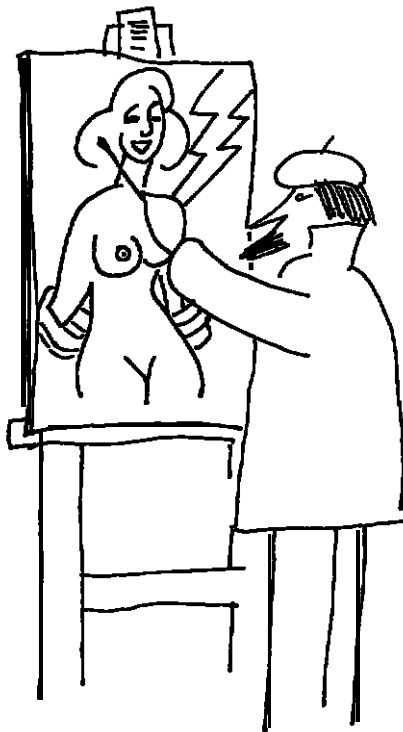
all alone, face to face with an inexorably growing mountain of evidence that our natures are not as we would wish them to be.

*The Imperial Animal* restates and develops a massive block of facts about animal behaviour, especially primate behaviour. which forces a troubling reassessment of the real political nature of men and women.

Fox and Tiger utilize recent ethological discoveries to build a convincing and unflattering picture of the biological substructure of our society. The facts are hard, and for some people unpalatable. But as the authors point out, we ignore them at our peril.

Not everything reported in *The Imperial Animal* is cause for dismay. The book offers evidence that suggests we are programmed internally to share our loot with our fellow human beings and to act as our brothers' keepers when they fall on hard times. That Western capitalism discourages such natural behaviour surely violates our feelings at a deep biological level. and may account for much of the dissatisfaction with the way our lives are presently organized.

This book fits very neatly into the deterministic position espoused by B.F. Skinner. It seems that Tier and Fox cement the last stone into our behavioural prison. for even where conditioning fails it is only because our



biological programmes demand expression, regardless of our "free will."

I can see no escape from these conclusions except, perhaps, by appealing to a type of indeterminacy involving the universe as a whole, which is postulated by John Archibald Wheeler on cosmological grounds.

*The Imperial Animal* has to be praised, not merely for its stern logic but also for its many passages of excellent literary expression. Style in scientific writing is rare. For all its hard-headedness, this is a most compassionate and moving account of the facts of the human condition. □

RICHARD LUBBOCK is a freelance writer and broadcaster with a special interest in natural science.

## SANG DES BETES

### THE BROKEN ARC, A BOOK OF BEASTS

edited by MICHAEL ONDAA TJE.  
drawings by TONY URQUHART  
Oberon  
cloth \$5.95

reviewed by Margaret Atwood

THE BROKEN ARK is a collection of poems about animals. It's excellently designed, printed, and illustrated - sensitive line drawings by Tony Urquhart - and at first glance it may look like the kind of attractive gift book you present to your Aunt Alice. And you could, creditably.

But *The Broken Ark*, as you read through it, becomes considerably more than a beautiful book. The range of the poems, from George Johnston's amusing but mournful bee poem through such classics as Layton's "Cain" and Nowlan's "The Bull Moose" to Bill Bissett's "Killer Whale" and Gwen MacEwen's iconic "Invocation," suggests the whole spectrum of man's interrelationship with his fellow ani-

imals. Everything that ma" does to **and with** animals is here: he kills them for fun, eats them **or** their eggs, drinks their mammary secretions, trains them as slaves or pets, stuffs them for decorative purposes, **wears** their skins; or, on a mom spiritual level, turns **them** into ancestral totems or **uses** them as symbols of himself, of his **lost innocence** or conversely of his **fears** or the parts of himself he finds morally reprehensible. Seldom is the animal allowed to **strike** back, and never can **talk** back: he is prevented from communicating with us by his inability to pronounce our language and our **reluctance** to learn his. It's more comfortable for us not to know what a cow thinks the moment before the sledgehammer **descends**. **Noah's Ark**, that image **of human** and animal friendship and interdependence, has indeed been broken.

Since all the poems in it are by Canadians, the book may have a further significance for us. Animals, like snow and ice, are of central importance to the Canadian imagination. In *The Naked Ape*, **Desmond Morris** makes a connection between concern for threatened or "early-extinct animals and a fear of one's own extinction. Most of the poems in this book are sympathetic **towards animals, critical** of the humans who exploit, maim and kill them. As the jacket cover says, "We want you to imagine yourself pregnant and being chased and pounded to death by snowmobiles."

The last poem in the book is **Stuart McKinnon's "On the Way to the Vivarium,"** in which the poet comments on the **carcasses** of skinned

animals. and the last picture is of a disintegrating skeleton. Is our coast-to-coast poetic defence of animal victims a symbolic defence of our&es? These poems may speak more directly to our national condition than we would like to admit. □

MARGARET ATWOOD is the author of *Power Politics*. Her novel, *The Edible Woman*, is currently being filmed by Tony Richardson.

## MY FUR LADY

### THE BLONDE VOYAGEUR

NAN SHIPLEY  
*Bums & MacEachern*  
cloth \$4.95: 122 pages

reviewed by J. L. Parr

DESPITE THE unlikelyhood **of Manitoba** author Nan Shipley's *The Blonde Voyageur's* **ever** making it as a juvenile literary **classic**, there is one major consolation: **this novel** will certainly be popular with public and school libraries, representing as it does a **triumph** of interesting historical research. **But, alas**, not a triumph of the imagination.

The plot: in the early 1800s English teenager Josephine Ness arrives in Fort Churchill. **Manitoba**, in search of her beloved, David Ross, who has left her

to serve out a five-year **apprenticeship** for the Hudson's Bay Company. Jo (according to the author's information) thus becomes the **first** white woman **in** the Canadian West — an historic **achievement** but one which cannot be **acknowledged** since the HBC does not allow members of her sex into their fur trading territory. (India" women **suffice** for masculine needs.) So Jo has come disguised as a boy and represents herself as David's brother.

Unfortunately, though, the miraculous adventures that seem about to occur **fail** to do so. Instead, the author offers a social history of the times — information on the fur trade, the types of food eaten by the traders and Indians, and so forth.

However, about halfway through the book Mrs. Shipley finally does let something momentous happen to her heroine. On page 61, Jo meets a presentable young **man**. a certain Roger **Flett**, to whom she is attracted. And from here **on** things pick up. In fact, a mere two pages later, the situation has reached the point where Roger manages to penetrate Jo's disguise, as **it were, causing her to become pregnant.**

So at long last the plot has begun to thicken — or maybe it's just Josephine.

Curiously, despite the author's historical and biological **exactitude**, realism disappears when it comes to dialogue. Here is one of Roger's **utterances**:

*Our time is short, dear Jo. Tell me that you will let me follow you to Churchill and wherever else you may go. Tell me that we may start over again. I want to make amends, and to share your life for as long as we both may live.*

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Melvin Jacobson

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Ladyrsmith, Quebec.



Anyway, doubtless the readers for whom the book is intended — junior high school girls, one would assume — will find Jo's Old Canadian West experiences sufficiently engrossing. Certainly a pleasant enough means of learning their history, geography and sex education lessons. □

J. L. PARR is a freelance writer and reviewer who lives in Winnipeg.

## TRADESMEN'S ENTRANCE

### CATALAN POEMS

GEORGE McWHIRTER

Oberon

paper \$2.50. 77 pages

### SKYDECK

STUART MacKINNON

Oberon

paper \$2.50: 61 pages

reviewed by Fraser Sutherland

THE FIRST TWO books in Oberon's New Canadian Poets series have more in common than a cover design of diagonals and coloured, intersecting circles. Unlike many scattershot collections of poems published today, each has a unity of theme.

In *Catalan Poems*, by the Irish-Canadian poet George McWhirter, the unifying agent is a Catalan named Eduardo Valls. Valls and his family figure in most of these poems set in Barcelona and northern Spain. As a structural device, Valls is useful though he never quite becomes the human, "contrary beast" that McWhirter, in his introduction, says he is.

Coping with Valls and Catalonia, McWhirter suffers from a kind of poetic eyestrain: he stares too hard. The metaphors are often forced instead of growing naturally within the poems. In the third poem of a sequence called "Tertulia," for instance, "An ebony light squats on paving-stones." Sometimes the image is almost, but not quite apt: window shutters "squint"

in the poem called "In Zaragoza Street." Most of McWhirter's images lie somewhere between the surreal and the impressionistic, succeeding as neither.

Occasionally, though, intent and effect come together superbly, as in "The Gypsy Girl." Walking through a slum, Valls throws a coin to a gypsy girl who "waits until it/stops spinning before she picks it up."

While McWhirter's poems are nervous and hard-edged, Stuart MacKinnon's *Skydeck* maintains a cool reserve. Everything is seen from a great height. The parachutist's point of view serves MacKinnon very well, though at times he seems to pull a little too hard on his rip cord, as in "Song for the Rising Sun":

*See the rain come down  
like a ton on the facetious  
back of upland.*

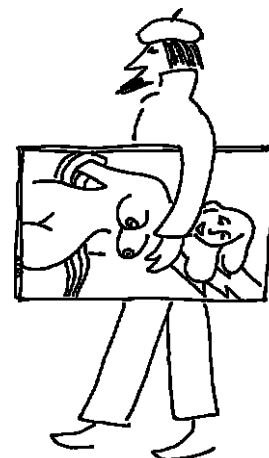
For the most part, though, MacKinnon's effects are not forced, and the images are sometimes lovely, like this one in "Sun Resort."

*In valleys elk stand in the pale  
reflection,  
while piercing white streams draw  
from that high random light.*

What the free-falling man sees, and how he sees it, is beautifully revealed in "Tracadie Bay," the best poem in the book. The "flotsam of earth" and "the early warnings of clouds" now "become lingerings on this wheel/turning between earth and sky."

With the publication of MacKinnon and McWhirter, Oberon's new series makes a modest but hopeful start. The craftsman's conscience that shows in each is enough cause for encouragement. □

FRASER SUTHERLAND is a freelance writer and book reviewer. He lives in Ottawa.



It was distributed in Canada by Brett-Macmillan, now Collier-Macmillan.

"There was also a French edition, *Hurrah pour moi*, put out by Hachette in Paris. They paid an advance against royalties and that's the last I heard of it. It was an abominable translation. Victorian Light Infantry Regiment comes out as 'an infantry regiment formed in Victoria, western Canada.'

"The book got about 50 reviews on both sides of the Atlantic. All but one were favourable, ranging from 'fair' to 'superb.' The London *Times* was the exception; their critic obviously hated it for some reason.

"It's very strange that, even though the novel has been out of print since the end of 1962, people are still ringing me up or writing me about it. A woman in Ottawa called earlier this year, wanting to know where she could get 12 copies. I'm always looking for copies myself. I've only three -one American, one British and one French.

"Film agents keep asking for it too. It was under option for five years to two British producers. They got pretty close to production twice, once with Peter Sellers playing Bandy and then with Dick Van Dyke. I didn't think very much of either of them. Now the CBC's film-drama department is considering it as a multi-media production."

By 1962 Jack was hovering in the wings of fame. He won the Leacock Award that year for *Three Cheers*. At Stratford. *Exit Muttering* was as big a draw as Shakespeare. A well-meaning but hapless radio announcer attempted to draw the self-effacing author further into the limelight ("Now Mr. Jack, will you please speak out of your mind about your play"); the resulting interview, five minutes of incredibly comic non-communication, is still played around the CBC as a side-splitting example of how not to do it.

The seeds of future failure were in that interview. The limelight moved on and Jack was again for the dark. He spent three wasted years, part of the time in England, on a second novel that didn't work: "It wasn't a good idea to begin with a contemporary plot about a bumbling private eye and based on the theft of the Polish art treasures. I revised it three times and then realized it didn't have what

a book has to have, the spark of life. That's the hardest thing to get into a novel."

Then, 2½ years ago, he got enthusiastic about Bandy again. Squeezing 150 days out of a timetable devoted to bread-and-butter projects, he produced a sequel to *Three Cheers* called *That's Me in The Middle*. The book, now being read by Doubleday and various London publishers, picks up Bandy in the spring of 1918 and describes how he got involved in British and Irish politics.

It will be followed, Jack fans will be delighted to learn, by at least three more Bandy novels. They will carry our hero through to 1929. Research on the third volume, which deals with the Allied intervention in Russia, has already been completed. (Jack visited the USSR on a Canada Council grant two years ago.) The object of the five-novel sequence: a full-scale exploration of the manners, morals and crazy momentum of the 1920s.

"I'm fascinated by the idea of going back over Evelyn Waugh's territory," says Jack, "and seeing it all from a different angle, incorporating something of the same characters and, to a slight extent, the same situations. But my theme, unlike Waugh's, is the loss of faith. This was the period when the principles and standards of human conduct that had existed before 1914 started to disappear.

"For instance, who could ever believe again in the superficial aspects of the Protestant church after the way the church behaved in that war? It's not a big step from disillusionment over superficial aspects to disillusionment with religion as a whole. It's this vital point of view about the period that I hope to write about in comic terms.

"You can't write humorously about the present. I tried and failed. These are hard times for comedy. It's easier to go back a little bit into the past."

Jack is keeping his fingers crossed. The main reason *Three Cheers* failed to catch fire, he thinks, is that he was in advance of his time: "It was one of the very first books to show a revived interest in the First World War. Since then, there have been at least 500 books on the subject."

Now he is venturing into the 1920s, which is almost virgin ground for modern novelists. Will Jack scoop himself into obscurity again? I doubt it. Nearly 10 years have passed since Bartholomew Bandy pranced unforgettably into our lives. By now the world and my wife and I should be ready to follow him anywhere. □

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cloth, \$3.95

both by ELIZABETH CLEAVER  
texts by WILLIAM TOYE

Oxford University Press  
32 pages each

*How Summer Came To Canada* is about Glooskap, the Lord and Creator of the Micmac Indians, and how Summer broke Winter's reign. I like it because of the magical and beautiful way in which the author and illustrator put it. I especially like the part about how Glooskap can talk to animals. The pictures look really real. I would recommend it for children from seven to nine to read.

*The Mountain Goats Of Temlaham* is a legend of the Tsimshian Indians of British Columbia and the mountain goats of Stek-yaw-den. It is one of my favourite books, and it is a very delightful story. I'm sure anyone who reads it will like it as much as I do. In this book there are pictures that look half-real but not as many as in *How Summer Came To Canada*. I would recommend it to be read to children of five to six and for children of seven to eight to read. □

-EMMA, 9

## A NICE FIRE AND SOME MOONPENNIES

DORRIS HEFFRON

Macmillan

cloth, \$5.50; 160 pages

Sixteen-year-old Maizie, an Indian girl, decides to hitchhike to Yorkville with Doggit (her dog) in order to try some marijuana and have some new experiences. She meets many different kinds of people on her journey, some of whom she finds repulsive, some of whom delight her. But there are none to whom she can remain totally indifferent, and they all help her to grow up. For in her opinion, growing up is not concerned with age but with

experiences, and she is eager to have her share.

Frankly, I found this book slightly boring. Dorris Heffron seems to start off with the mistaken belief that because a book is "hip" it is automatically interesting, and she carries on in this vein for the first few chapters. Luckily, after that, she appears to realize that she does have an amusing subject and starts to write more entertainingly. As soon as the plot starts to become more interesting, Mrs. Heffron's need to use italicized words and exclamation points to keep the reader's attention ceases. It is slightly passé but this is bound to happen with a book written exclusively in the contemporary clichés, many of which became outdated a few months after they were originated.

Nevertheless, *A Nice Fire and Some Moonpennies* does have a strong line of humour running throughout and is in parts both enthralling and appealing. □

-JENNY, 17

## TALES OF NOKOMIS

PATRONELLA JOHNSTON

McGraw-Hill

cloth, \$4.95; 66 pages

*The Tales Of Nokomis* are by Patronella Johnston, an Ojibwasy Indian from the Bruce Peninsula, Ontario; the illustrator is also an Ojibway Indian from Manitoulin Island. The book looks very inviting, nice white paper, dark black printing. Every picture is big and very colourful; some are very detailed and some are just a figure with some colour. I like the main characters, but they are rather confusing at first because they are not introduced clearly. There is a moral for every tale which makes it very worthwhile reading. I recommend it for ages 8-9. □

-PAMELA, 9

## KATE

JEAN LITTLE

Fitzhenry & Whiteside

cloth, \$4.95; 160 pages

This story is about a girl named Kate Bloomfield and her best friend Emily Blair, and about their school life. They have fun together and also share unhappy times. Things that hap-

# TO BEGI

Children's books may be written and illustrated to be enjoyed by children. So our reviews, written by children who properly represent unedited opinions will help children (Ah





# N WITH

strated by adults, but they are meant to or this selection of Canadian books are ent the intended readers. We hope their D their parents) to choose.



from *Tales of Nokomis*

pen to everyone happen to them and when they get caught in the rain Emily looks in the mirror she has stuck in her locker and says. as she looks at her hair, "It's a mess, I'll have to put it into braids." She says that because she does not like her hair in braids. Another time Kate bears a funny noise behind her during class and she turns around and sees Sheila Rosenthal leaning over her desk looking sick. Sheila says she has the cramps and she is scared so Kate helps her though no one else will. Kate is very kind and helps the teacher take Sheila to the office where the secretary phones for her parents. Sheila's dad comes but he is very rough with Sheila and so Kate goes with her to the car. When Sheila's father notices that Kate is with them he says bad things about Kate's Father when he learns who Kate is.

I think that some parts of the book Kate are too old for my age. but I liked the poems a lot. □

-ELIZABETH, 10

## VOYAGE INTO DANGER

TED ASHLEE

Holt, Rinehart and Winston  
cloth, \$3.95: 138 pages

*Voyage Into Danger* is an extremely interesting book about a boat, its crew, and illegal smuggling in the area of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

The main character is Jim Ormiston, a lad of seventeen, who is a deckhand on the S.S. *Gabriola*. The author gave him a friendly, eager personality. He is always the one coming up with ideas to try and foil the smugglers. This seems somewhat unreal.

The crew members of the boat are fun-loving men who don't look for fights but leap at the chance to, if necessary. They usually win because they are BIG!

The illustrations are excellent as they really convey the action.

Anybody from eight to 15 years of age would get a kick out of this story. It is truly enjoyable and I highly recommend it. □

DANIEL, 13

## PUFFIN ISLAND

ADA and FRANK GRAHAM  
Jr. Cowles Book Co., New York  
cloth, \$6.25: 139 pages

*Puffin Island* is a very good book. It teaches you about puffins and terns and plants. The story is about two boys, Wilbur and Roy who are twins and they investigate the island with Anne.

There's a part in the story when they are looking all around the island and they find this Prickly Thing. Anne has seen people eat these things and so Roy said, "Eat one!" so she asked for his pocket knife and cut it open. It was orange meat and tasted very good she said!

There's a picture that shows you all the boats that crashed into the rocks. One picture is of a dead bird that has been washed up on shore. But they never showed a picture of Anne.

I think that boys and girls who are 8 to 11 would love the book. □

-LAURA, 8

## HONOR BOUND

MARY ALICE and JOHN DOWNIE  
Oxford University Press  
cloth, \$5.00: 192 pages

*Honor Bound* is the story of an American Loyalist Family which escapes to Canada because the feeling is against them. They settle on land at Kingston, which was once owned by a thief who comes back for his stolen goods.

The story begins with the father coming home from the war disguised as an old man so no one would recognize him. This caught my attention but my interest was immediately lost for the characters were (a) boring, (b) unreal. The father was arrogant, the mother insipid. (As an example when her husband just escapes death she worries about her silver spoons.) Their son was lippy, their daughter dull.

Two other problems with the story is (a) the authors talk down, and (b) one gets the feeling the story is at an end in the middle of the book, but it just drags on and on. I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. □

-SUSAN, 12

A further selection of Canadian books for children will be reviewed in the next issue of *Books In Canada*.

# BIGTOWN AS PIGTOWN

## MY SEXUAL AND OTHER REVOLUTIONS

DAVID LEWIS STEIN  
new press  
cloth \$6.95; 209 pages

reviewed by **Jon Ruddy**

I started off with a Puerto Rican wet nurse and then a black mammy and, as our fortune waxed, I was given a Scots nanny who used to beat Daddy secretly with a tawse when dear Mumsie was off at the library studying for her PhD in psychology.

And a course you know who plugs him, don't you? I wouldn't believe it possible but little hunchbacked misshapen Geordie has his big gun out afore anyone else does. That .45

comes up like an enormous hog leg and Geordie plugs that pink right in the centre of his yellow belly.

—representative snippets from the pages of *My Sexual and Other Revolutions*.

DAVID LEWIS STEIN is a Toronto writer who has gone to the right schools — *Maclean's*, the Park Plaza Roof Lounge — and whose output has included some youthfully sensitive short stories and a 1967 novel, *Scratch One Dreamer*, derivative but readable and redolent of Thirties pacifist sentiments.

The best scene in *Dreamer* was a vertiginous seduction on the wall surrounding the terrace of the Roof Lounge. Stein has used the same placid setting for an overview of the city in *Revolutions*. But now — Hogtown is BigTown, there is a revolution in progress, and pigs patrol with flamethrowers while Everyhog is “a plucky little guy standing there with his face covered in blood and his neck broken but still flailing away with his little fists.”

This sounds straightforward; it isn't. Even as a novel of the absurd, *Revolutions* is spectacularly muddled. The only constant is bestiality, and only an RCMP bloodhound could follow the plot — or be dumb enough to try. Antic without being amusing and dirty without being titillating, it stumbles along, redeemed occasionally by such gems of journalistic description as Stein's view of a singles bar: “The girls still tended to gather in gossipy little snarls and the boys still gathered on the other side of the room in little clumps leaping into the air and flexing their thighs to prove their strength.”

Clearly, Stein the author has reacted in baste and depression to the darker aspects of a decade seen by Stein the journalist. Both writers should repair to the Roof Lounge, order a bourbon from Ray and take another look at “the teeming lights of BigTown.” □

JON RUDDY, television columnist for *TV Guide*, has recently completed a feature article on the bars of the Park Plaza.

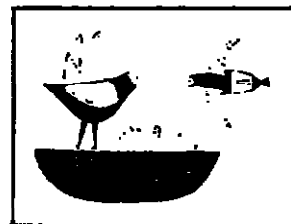
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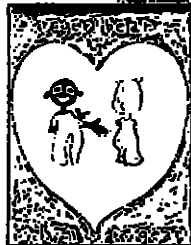


### ROGER BEAR

Mike McGear, as a guest on the “David Frost Show”, revealed his deep concern with world problems, especially race relations, poverty and man's inhumanity to man. *Roger Bear*, a book about a very special relationship between two bears, reflects this interest and the idealism of a young man dedicated to improving the world.

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Gene Smith, illustrated by Ted Lewin. The story of *Sassafras*, a young Irish setter whose “family” is killed in a car accident, is filled with love and loneliness — a story as moving as *Black Beauty*. The way *Sassafras* overcomes his grief and learns to help the kennel's other frightened newcomers will touch the hearts of young and old alike.

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### I BREATHE A NEW SONG

Poems of the Eskimo — Richard Lewis. Editor With an introduction by Edmund Carpenter and, illustrated by Oonark, this is a rare and beautiful book. Here are 90 wonderful examples of Eskimo poetry, sacred songs, chants, lullabies, songs to bring luck while hunting, and songs for taunting enemies. Richard Lewis, whose anthologies included *Miracles*, *Journeys* and *The Wind and The Rain*, has combined stunning graphic drawings by Eskimo artist Oonark with his own distinguished selection of poems, making a lively and unusual collection of Eskimo art and thought.

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# BRIEF CANDLES

## THE FRUIT MAN, THE MEAT MAN & THE MANAGER

HUGH HOOD  
*Oberon*  
paper \$2.95: 207 pages

## VIOLATION OF THE VIRGINS

HUGH GARNER  
*McGraw-Hill/Ryerson*  
cloth \$6.95: pages

## FOURTEEN STORIES HIGH

DA VID HEL WIG & TOM MARSHALL  
*Oberon*  
paper \$2.95: 172 pages

reviewed by Val Clery

IN THIS COUNTRY WE CAN scarcely expect writers to adopt towards their craft the rigorous attitude of Cyril Connolly, who began his *Unquiet Grave* with the prescription, "The more books we read, the clearer it becomes that the true function of a writer is to produce a masterpiece and that no other function is of any consequence." But perhaps in the cases of fiction and poetry they should adopt it.

As a means of livelihood, the conventional forms of "creative" writing are largely obsolescent. The short story is an obvious example. In their introduction to the anthology *Fourteen Stories High*, David Helwig and Tom Marshall point out that there is only one reputable commercial magazine in Canada still accepting short stories — *Chatelaine*, and even its requirements tend to be constrictive. The only other paying market of any capacity is CBC Radio, and there is irony in the fact that Hugh Hood should be dedicating his new collection to Robert Weaver at a time when Weaver is fighting a dogged rearguard action within the Corporation against the non-literate tides of popularization. The literary reviews like *Tamarak* and *Quarry* and *Fiddlehead* and *Alphabet* serve to keep only writers' spirits alive.

These three collections suggest that while the good intentions of literary entrepreneurs such as Helwig, Marshall

and Weaver may have been of some comfort to writers, their unwitting effect on the short story may have been less than beneficial. To make good radiostories need to be developed within oral traditions which make them unsatisfactory on the printed page; conversely, stories that are purely literary in their development are often incomprehensible to ear. Given the penalty in which most Canadian writers live it is understandable that many of them should attempt to produce stories that can straddle both disciplines. To my mind and ear, the hybrids produced by this situation are fatally misconceived.

For anyone interested in the survival of the short story, of course these and the other collections being published are required reading. Hugh Hood's *The Fruit Man, The Meat Man and The Manager* seems to me to establish further his role as an Upper Canadian regional writer. His characters never quite transcend their petty bourgeois settings in Quebec and more particularly in Montreal to make contact with a wider and deeper humanity. His observations of the quirky Jansenism of French Canadians often awake echoes of the droll condescension with which Somerville and Ross depicted the Irish peasantry: similar note, probably unconscious, infects his treatment of Montreal's Jewish subculture. Several stories seem to fall between the ambiguous demands of the oral and the literary: *Harley Talking* is a vigorous monologue somewhat flawed by a "straight-man" second voice. *Who's Paying for this Call*, an experimental prose poem which might read well on the air is crippled for this purpose by a dependence on typographical innovation.

Hugh Garner is the true journeyman of Canadian writing. He deserves (and is too infrequently given) the attention and the respect of the writers in his wake. In three decades of earning a living as a writer of course he has had to compromise and write some pot-boilers, but even in these there is always the unmistakable resonance of a man speaking directly from life lived, a quality which often makes his stories, for all their acceptance of print conventions, acceptable also as broadcasts. In addition, he is unique

amongst Canadian writers in being able to catch authentically the North American furies that haunt the lonely and the rootless and the poor. Undertones of conservatism, a testy impatience with hippies and the like — these quirks can be irritating but should be forgivable in a writer who was a fighting radical in Spain when most of his radical critics were still waiting to be born. In *Violation Of The Virgins* the indignant empathy that made him a radical is still there to be seen.

HUGH GARNER



McGraw Hill

In *Fourteen Stories High*, which is subtitled Best Canadian Stories Of 1971, Garner is properly represented again. Although not the best story, his is the most assured in a collection that seems infected by unsureness of touch. It would be a hopeful sign if this uncertainty amongst the younger writers were to derive from a search for their own authentic voices, but I suspect that it is produced again by the ambiguous nature of the market. Gwendolyn MacEwan's *House Of The Whale* is an interesting "inside" job, a letter charting a West Coast Indian's encounter of White culture which might read well on radio. Marian Engel's *Amaryliss*, a spiky communique from a marital battlefield, is essentially more literary. There are no genuine innovators amongst the writers represented and most of them seem to suffer from a lack of clearly-conceived purpose. They are all writers who should be watched. Who knows? Some of them may become impatient with the constrictions imposed by a derisory market and go all out for the masterpiece. □

# ICE CAPADES

## NIGHT OF THE WHITE BEAR

ALEXANDER KNOX

Macmillan

cloth 56.95: 256 pages

reviewed by Ted Whittaker

**BOOKS ABOUT Eskimos** are fashionable, whether they are good literature or not. Sex and adventure alone will sell this book, but a small unexpected pleasure is the usually credible portrayal of Ugluk, the youth who through trial becomes a man, and who, by the story's end considers he can stand alone, without the dubious benefit of the white man's ways or the ways of the now nearly impotent culture the white man has tubbed into the ice.

Knox's style is equal to bringing the North alive for the reader; pages are devoted to what goes on inside an igloo; minute particulars, of necessity; and from his descriptions of arctic landscape, one feels the author has learned much from the people with many names for snow.

Humor is here, too, Ugluk and his friends Pakti and her middle-aged husband Joe have finished eating food and making love in a white man's cabin, when he enters and kicks them out in a rage.

*"Paw-prints on the ceiling!" the man shouted. "Grease on the wall. Oil on the mattress, fish on the pil-*

*low, piss in the groceries, soot on the velvet and shit all over the sheet!"*

*"It's not shit," Ugluk protested, "it's chocolate."*

And they used the chocolate their way. They use everything their way — fear, victory, defeat, jealousy, sadness — and come through, in their way. That is what raises *Night of the White Bear* above novels whose emphasis is violent or pornographic. Knox is talking about the dignity of man, and in no way condescends to the reader or his subject. He admires the Eskimos plainly and without stint; their having survived the climate and white man, keeping intact their magnificent hilarity and the rudiments of their sense of community is no mean feat. □

TED WHITTAKER is book review editor of *The Varsity*, the University of Toronto student newspaper.

## BATTLE HYMN

### MANY BROKEN HAMMERS

KELLY COVIN  
*Fitzhenry & Whiteside*  
cloth \$8.75: 266 pages

IT SEEMS likely that the Second American Civil War, which began on the streets of Chicago in the summer of 1968, will eventually prove as much of a boon to the publishing industry as the first. The war has been a messy, sporadic and, following the Vietnam

precedent, officially undeclared conflict. We don't see neat ranks of blue meeting grey. Instead, ill-organized and transient armies stumble into miniature but nonetheless bloody Gettysburgs in the ghettos, campuses, prisons and rural slums of the divided nation. What is beginning to impose order on this war, what asserts its undeniable existence, is the considerable body of literature — academic, journalistic and imaginative — it has already generated.

Kelly Covin, a native of Texas who has lived in Victoria, B.C. since 1957, gives us a fictional report from one of these battlefronts. The scene is an unnamed southwestern state; the conflict between radicalized Mexican-Americans demanding the return of raped lands and a bigoted white Establishment: the protagonist a Chicano sheriff caught between the conflicting loyalties of race and duty. Covin, a sometime Hollywood scriptwriter, is no Stephen Crane. The plotting of this, his second novel, has the arid symmetry of a better-than-average made-for-TV movie. His attempts to realize fully his main characters result in some turgid monologues about the human condition in a time of broad crisis.

Yet the subject matter and the landscape — social and geographical — outweigh the literary defects. The action unfolds with a lean and classical urgency: the theme celebrates those human dignities that can't be written about too often; the pacing is hard and tight. This is not deep enough to be a great civil-war novel. But Covin writes with a conviction and an authority that makes this a highly readable book.

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# RUM MIXES

## WHEN HE WAS FREE AND YOUNG AND HE USED TO WEAR SILKS

AUSTIN CLARKE  
*House of Anansi*  
cloth \$7.50, paper \$2.75; 151 pages

reviewed by Tom Marshall

AUSTIN CLARKE'S new collection of stories, *When He Was Free And Young And He Used To Wear Silks*, is an important book both for literary and for social reasons. Its recurrent concern is to express the joys, pains and frustrations of West Indians (particularly Barbadians) living in Toronto, and its most attractive feature is its style — an easy lyric flow of idiomatic, racy, West Indian talk. There is not a strong narrative element in these stories — for the most part it is the same sad story of culture shock, disillusioned hopes and covert or overt racism told in different ways and with different degrees of intensity — but there is considerable wit, anger and compassion in the author's expression of black experience in Canada. The book has variety but also the kind of unity of theme and atmosphere that Joyce's *Dubliners* has.

Mr. Clarke has presumably a predominantly white middle-class Canadian (or North American) readership in mind, since this is where the market is, and the book can thus be regarded as an education for the more or less ignorant or indifferent majority, but it is more than that. It is also highly entertaining. For better or worse, Mr. Clarke's West Indians refuse, despite bitter experience, to be radicalized, and one feels that they might lose much of their charm if they were more politically aware. When Henry, who has married a rich Jewish girl obsessed with the Negro as a sociological phenomenon, composes a poem to express the difficulties of his marriage, his friend Boysie comments: "Man, in those days, the poems we had to learn by heart was printed in a book, man! They were poems. . . . As you know, the only poems we ever learned about

was written by an English fellow called Milton and Keats . . . things like fair daffodils we weep to see you fly away so soon and the Grecian urn of roses and paradise and them things, and all them poems as you know yourself was printed in a English book. ." This kind of comedy frequently accompanies the serious problems of the characters.

Mr. Clarke's people are immensely likeable and humane; perhaps one can conclude then (though timidly) that



Graeme Gibson

the book expresses a blend of West Indian and Canadian sensibility that is at a considerable remove from the militancy of black America. □

TOM MARSHALL is co-editor of the new anthology *Fourteen Stories High* (Oberon). His most recent book of poetry is *Magic Water*.

## PEELING OFF

### SELECTED POEMS 1954-1965

PHYLLIS WEBB  
*Talonbooks*  
cloth \$8.00, paper \$5.00; unpagged.

reviewed by S.P. Zitner

SELECTED POEMS — a risky business. Like the family wash, the whole achievement is laid on the line, testifying definitively to class, taste, and person. It is too extensive for the polite nullities: "how interesting" or "shows promise." on which so many single works survive. Worse. the last

poems can wither the first; or worse still, the first the last; or each particular grace go unnoticed as the reader follows the will-o'-the-wisp of "development." Finally there is the risk that the obligatory introduction will embalm the poetry in formulation. Phyllis Webb has taken these risks, but from first to last *Selected Poems* testifies to an important and distinctive achievement. The introduction, by John Hulcoop, is informative and devoted, but always at the service of the poems and the reader. True, there is a superior mastery evident in the later selections from *Even Your Right Eye* (1956), and decisively from *The Sea is Also a Garden* (1962) on: an absence of the occasionally ineffective colloquialism, the slack or arbitrary phrase, the lost motif. Yet one cannot reject as apprentice work the poems in *Trio* (1954), which contain such elegant perceptions as "patience is the prose of tears." Nor can one call the blank "Oh?" with which the collection ends, given the context and minimalist experimentation of *Naked Poems* (1965), a modish waste of promise. "Doubled in pain," the poet tells us: "I feel/ small like these poems/ the ares of attack/ is diminished."

The collection — moreover — seems to have come at the right time. One feels that Miss Webb is on the verge of something different. This is not suggested only by what Mr. Hulcoop tells us about the "Kropotkin Poems," her work in progress. The selections from *Naked Poems* are a culmination, and already promise an alteration from much of what went before.

The Selected Poems are pervasively, sometimes threateningly, full of the imagery and themes of enclosure. The figures of clocks and eyes, of involution and circularity. the themes of entrapment in time and place, in the irresistible arc of biology, or in the particular genetic heritage, or in "the politics even I could not reform," recur. Even love is "deliberate regression" — however witty the context makes that phrase in the poem "Standing." As "In Situ" tells us: "The world is round. It moves in circles." But though *Naked Poems* gives us: "TO-NIGHT/ quietness. In me/ and the room./ I am enclosed/ by a thought/ and some walls," it gives us also the

Sapphic relief of "YOU/ took/ with so much gentleness/ my dark." And its final questioning "Oh?" perhaps allows us to infer a further approaching openness. Similarly, the very nakedness of these last poems, and one of them with its salty "Yeah" to the question "Are you talking about process or individuation. Or absolute whole numbers and that sort of thing?" seems to promise a further dilution of the "cooked" intellectualism that gave us a pantheon of culture-heroes in one earlier poem and Aeschylus and Elizabeth I (with proper dates, no less) in another. But this is observation, not carping. One cannot regret the superb intelligence of these poems. As Miss Webb writes in one of them: "It is a good mind/ that can embody/ perfection with exactitude." One only anticipates a continuation, less costly to the poet, of what is already a major career. □

S. P. ZITNER is a Toronto academic. He has published poetry as well as reviews and scholarly writing.

## PERSONAL EFFECTS

### OUR MAN IN UTOPIA

DOUG FETHERLING  
Macmillan  
paper \$2.95; 54 pages

### THE RED FOX

BILL HOWELL  
McClelland & Stewart  
cloth \$4.95

reviewed by Al Purdy

TWO BOOKS, one by the most prolific free-lance writer and book-reviewer in the Canadian business, Doug Fetherling. The other from Bill Howell, late of Halifax, and later still of Toronto. And both of them are, essentially, records of love affairs. But I think Howell is in love with life; and Fetherling, with introspective and elegaic despair, is trying to break free of himself and find something that seems real outside himself.

Judging by that invidious comparison and description, one would be most

likely to choose Howell's as the best of the two. But word-labels and book reviewers can fool you. While I am slightly repelled by Fetherling's woman's wrist watch as something "to aid me in my study of your/ habits north and south," such passages as "—I invent truths men/ thought of years ago without/ telling me" amount to sadness metamorphosed to the negation of sadness with a bronze ring to it. But a poem complaining to a woman that "you've never heard/ a gun fired in anger" is a querulous self-excuse.

Despite lapses, Fetherling has reviewed so much poetry by other people that he's beginning to know what to avoid himself without having to spend all his time at it. And not to avoid things of importance. He describes, for instance, the differences in Canadians abroad now and abroad in years past as "the/ difference in the meanings of the words/ earth and land." Which strikes me as excellent. Especially from a newly-landed book-reviewer-poet.

Bill Howell too is a good, newly-landed-in-Toronto poet, hitch-hiking with an electric typewriter in his suitcase. (I met him in Edmonton recently looking for an outlet.) His warmth and naiveté sometimes lead to something as embarrassing as *I Can't Wait to get Home for Christmas and be Hugged by Mom*, which I greatly fear must be taken literally. He has not the despairing sadness of Fetherling, nor the oblique magnificence; but is much more human sounding, and his poses have a self-ridiculing good humor.

I don't like all of either poet, but both are well worth etc. Howell I expect will go on writing and become much better. Although his present book is very good — warm, open, in love with the whole of the known world and both genders — Fetherling is more a puzzle: more explosive here, sadder and more unrequited there, a Romantic waiting for a Future opening. □

AL PURDY is currently touring the East Coast. He has just finished a reading and writing tour of the West Coast.



RW

# DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

## SELECTED POEMS

JOHN GLASSCO  
oxford  
paper \$1.95; 96 pages

AN HONEST-TO-GOD cultured man: here, in rural Canada. And a good poet. The kind of urbane and literate poetry one finds receiving urbane and witty reviews in quality magazines. John Glassco, editor of anthologies of French verse, author of a book about the literary life in Montparnasse, the man who finished up Aubrey Beardsley's novel for God's sake, gives us verse about living in rural Quebec and does it with the same polish he uses on *Brummel At Calais* or *The Death of Don Quixote*, both of which appear in the latter part of the book.

These poems are not simply paeans to the wilderness. Here, a man stands to face his anguish and inadequacies while the land, like good movie music, heightens the effect without ever becoming obtrusive. Thus, in the *Brill Road*:

"Does it even exist, that quiet road  
Snow bleached between the laden,  
bending trees  
Where the small, fat birds will be  
flitting and feeding,  
Where the wind is muffled and we  
move at peace?"

Therein lies the beauty of this book. The return to the land is not a blind escape from urban life. A man may change his style of life but his civilization stays with him. John Glassco's alternative life style is one we might well examine. It works for him. □



## AN EDITOR REGRETS

THESE DAYS **THE social columns** are all a-twitter about **“the charming publication party** that Pirate Editions gave last night to launch *Lampshades I Have Known*” and so on. Reading this sort of article, the hung-over editor winces to see his name mentioned along with swinging, illiterate disc jockeys, half-witted local politicians, and well-known glamorous people who are well known simply for being glamorous at parties. Dimly the editor realizes that this **honourable** mention is meant kindly. Grimly he toys with the idea of blowing the whistle on publishers’ parties.

Some publishers regard parties as a stupid way to spend money. Others.

perhaps because of the social predilections of their senior officials, appear to believe fervently in parties, and launch even minor books on a flood of martinis. But all publishers agree that parties must be organized so that they are good for business.

Publication parties, you see, are meant to bribe people. Take a look at the groups of people who are invited to these parties. First of all there are book reviewers – sterling fellows, one and all, models of industry and integrity. But reviewers are human. And this makes them very reluctant to turn down an invitation to guzzle free drinks and food in a clean, well-lit place surrounded by clean, well-lit people. Where does the bribery come in? Well, all these free drinks are poured in honour of an author who has just published a book that has to be reviewed. It takes a brave man to write a really cutting review (“I find it hard to believe that Mr. Parsnip has more than a passing acquaintance with the English language or anything that might even loosely be described as an idea”) when he knows that in a week’s time he is going to be shaking hands with Mr. Parsnip and drinking martinis in his honour.

Librarians are bribed with invitations to these parties. “Yes, I’ll try just a little from the square bottle” they say at the start of the party. By the party’s end, glasses and tongues slightly askew, they are loudly announcing that they have \$500,000 to spend on acquiring new books, and by golly, they’re going to be spending quite a bit of that on Pirate Editions’ books *from now on*.

Booksellers, squadrons of them, are invited for the same reason and (with luck) with exactly the same effect. What’s more, after having actually *spoken* to Mr. Parsnip and found him so nice, they are going to be hustling hi book, thrusting it at anyone who steps into their store.

Then there are the “media people.” The theory is that the more free food and drink a publisher pours into them the more likely he is to get his authors on their shows to talk about their latest books. The problem here is to get the media men to remember who poured *this lot* of free drink into them.

The Bribe of the Evening, of course, goes to the man of the evening – the author. In fact, perhaps the main reason for having these parties is to keep the author happy. After a glorious evening of being lionized he will relax, confident that his splendid publishers are doing a great job with his book. So of course he’ll stay with them for his next book.

These thoughts occur to editors in moments of deep cynicism. But, of course, they are not to be taken at all seriously. Bribery, indeed! How can you bribe someone who wakes up too hung-over to remember anything about the party? □

STET

SW is the pseudonym of the editor of a large publishing house. He wishes to develop his theme in coming issues and would like to hear from our readers about aspects of book editing they would be interested in learning.

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# PRIAPIC LOSER

ARKWRIGHT

LEO SIMPSON  
Macmillan of Canada  
cloth, \$9.95: 442 pages

reviewed by Patrick MacFadden

INSIDE EVERY fat novel, there's a thin one trying to get out. Usually a good thin one. Thus it is with *Arkwright*.

Its hero, Addison Arkwright, an antic Job still paying his dues at mid-life, is cursed with a developed sense of the old decencies. In a world and at a time when grace of mind has dwindled to no particular consequence, he is the good fellow among knaves. The knowledge that he will therefore finish last he transmutes into a kind of broken wisdom. Addison is a stoic in motley.

Attended by public and private demons, he exorcises his head-house each day with the booze. (Braw Highlander); he observes his long lovely wife, the Gothic bitch Eleanor, being had, for all he knows, by smarties in smooth suits. Her awful theatre agent friend is called Henry Veeley.

He philanders. Not well. Nose bleeds at the crucial moment. Horny enough, but moroseness sets in like a wet fog. He is, as Muggeridge said of Frank Harris, wistfully priapic. The thought is there.

Too many thoughts really; a small discreet gonad swell is enough to sail him off into great sloughs of Eng. Lit. Marlowe and Keats and all the crowd. He wears smell shreds of poesy to keep the world out.

Leo Simpson has made a fine thing from Addison's tugged-out life. There is much in common with Donleavy's skinned men, more with the intense comic dignity of Flann O'Brien's walking wounded.

That would have been the good thin novel. But Simpson would not have it so. Like its hero, the novel is asked to carry too much on its back. There is a foray into feyness: Addison is involved in the business ventures of a mogul Uncle Caspar. (This whole thing

doesn't work.) There is a hint of symbols shyly toyed with in the Sons of Elmtree, an ignoble sect dedicated to unsuccess. Failure freaks. These characters and sequences are under-written and forced.

There seems to be an attempt at a trans-Atlantic transplant of Flann O'Brien of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, not just in the absurdist stance but in the book-within-a-book banter that appears on and off. I'm not sure that this kind of thing travels well; O'Brien's strength lay in his sure grasp of the richness of the tradition he satirized. It is harder, especially for an outlander (Simpson was brought up in Ireland), to gab hold of the Great Urban Vacuity.

Hence, I think, the book's ups-and-downs. Addison's best moments are when he's not sure of himself, his worst when Simpson has him say stuff best

left in the columns of newspaper philosophers: ("It is not by chance that a man's easiest victories in sex, the ritual dance and battle, is over women he does not like.") That sounds like the voice of the Limerick Men's Sodality. And it's not true.

Simpson may be a moralist. Which is fine. But it's to demand attention in a way different from the absurdist. There's a duality lurking here somewhere. It's a nuisance to have to take time out from Addison to pursue it.

Much of the book is funny and opens up its possibilities by degrees. There is a sense of choked-off protest about the way lives are used, spat out, not lived. Simpson has a kind of spirited, pained judgment to make on the mess we live by. He is a magnificent complainer.

## HANDS

*At Acayucan we stopped  
to water and feed  
the engine's horses  
then walked the streets drowned  
in sun  
At the Super Mercado we said "Leche?"  
meaning milk but there was no milk  
except what the Indian women  
in the marketplace supplied for babies  
from their own bodies unpasteurized  
Little lizards darted up a ceiba tree  
small hands and fingers like darning needles  
attached to their one-tree forest  
And I thought we should go back to the car  
for heat made me dizzy  
so my wife took my trend walking  
On the way we passed the police station  
and attached prison  
from each barred window a man  
reached out imploring us for something  
asking for something we couldn't give  
faces streaked with sweat and eyes coals  
the hands reaching out and following us  
thru dusty alleys of thatched huts and dogshit  
and out to the high hill roads  
over the narrow-waisted isthmus of Mexico  
a woman made of red earth and flowers  
a dram out of mind from the spoiled towns  
end vultures patrolling the wind's four quarters  
the hands followed me  
down the long road to Coatzacoalcos*

— Al Purdy  
Mexico 1971



# FICTIONS BEFORE THE FALL

Capsule reviews of novels published earlier this year.

**EPICENTER** by Basil Jackson (*George J. McLeod*; cloth \$6.95; 284 pp.) A SciFi subspecies — the environmental thriller. A first novel on what happens to Life, Love and Happiness when an earth-burp within the fat belly of Southern Ontario spills contamination out of a nuclear generator near Toronto.

**THE ASSIGNMENT** by Martin Myers (*Fitzhenry & Whiteside*; cloth \$9.95; 346 pp.) Allegorical farce revolving round a” archetypical junkman called Spiegel. First novel by Toronto ad-man which became a” underground bestseller. Rich in jeux de’esprit, but sometimes overemphatic on significance. (Profile of Myers in *September Books in Canada*.)

**FARQUHARSON’S PHYSIQUE: AND WHAT IT DID TO HIS MIND** by David Knight (*Musson*; cloth \$8.50; 478 pp.) In wake of David Godfrey’s *The Mew Ancestors*, this rewarding first novel makes Canadian pre-occupation with post-colonial Africa almost an intellectual fad. A CUSO-loaned Toronto academic, Farquharson confronts his own sexual and spiritual duality, the roots of violence and, eventually, death in the alien ominous context of Nigeria before Biafra.

**AGAINST THE SEASON** by Jane Rule (*Double&y*; cloth \$6.95; 170 pp.) Third novel by Vancouver writer which explores intensely and explicitly lesbian and heterosexual relations amongst a group of women in a declining New England community.

**CREATION** by Robert Kroetsch, James Bacque & Pierre Gravel (new press; cloth \$8.50, paper \$3.50; 192 pp.) Literary sampler which might satisfy the curious, the impatient, and the studious. The ordinary reader, however, might find this assembly of works-in-progress and indulgent interviews by three young writers equally a put-on and a put-off.

**CALL HEAVEN TO WITNESS** by Bernard Berlon (*Musson*; cloth \$6.95; 210 pp.) Both publisher and author of this awful and hackneyed novel, on basis of title alone, place undue faith in Divine forbearance.

**GODDAM GYPSY** by Ronald Lee (*Tundra Books*; cloth \$7.95; 248 pp.) Lively and persuasive autobiographical novel by a Canadian Gypsy which delivers the overdue message that gypsies are yet another of Canada’s underprivileged and threatened minorities.

**THE CLIMATE OF POWER** by Irene Baird (*Macmillan*; cloth \$6.95; 255 pp.) Ottawa, the epitome of governmental overkill, cries out for a good inside novel. This sags of bureaucratic by-play, while a good try, is not quite it.

**BOMB RUN** by Spencer Dunmore (*Heinemann*; cloth \$6.95; 218 pp.) War, and its moral dilemmas, raises its ponderous head again in this conscientious why-do-it about a Lancaster pilot at the end of the Second World War.

**IN COUNCIL ROOMS APART** by John Craig (*Longmans*; cloth \$6.95; 223 pp.) Clique-and-dagger thriller balanced uneasily on the theory that the Queens Elizabeth and Mary sailed unscathed as wartime troopships because of an international protection racket.

**THE WHITE DAWN** by James Houston (*Longmans*; cloth \$7.95; 275 pp.) Perceptive and conscience-pricking novel about the first and disastrous encounter of an Eskimo band with Americans — three sailors lost on a whaling expedition. Based on a historical incident and on the Arctic experience of Houston, himself a legend as a friend of the Eskimos.

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# AGE CANNOT WITHER

## PICTURES OUT OF MY LIFE

PITSEOLAK  
*Oxford University Press*  
cloth, 59.95.

reviewed by Shirley Raphael

**PITSEOLAK LIVES** in Cape Dorset, Baffin Island. She is one of the most famous Eskimo graphic artists whose work now has a following around the world.

One can review this book in two ways. First, as the story of Pitseolak's life ("I have lost the time when I was born but I am old now — my sons say maybe I am 70'3, an account of growing up in the Arctic, marriage, births and deaths, the old ways and the new. It is also the first book to be published in an English/Eskimo edition.

Dorothy Harley Bber tape-recorded a series of interviews in which Pitseolak tells the story of her life in her own words: "My name is Pitseolak, the Eskimo word for the sea pigeon. When I see pitseolaks over the sea, I say, 'There go those lovely birds — that's me, flying!'"

I met Mrs. Eber in Montreal and she told me she had made a trip to the Arctic and had met Pitseolak, and felt that this Eskimo artist was someone who could tell both in pictures and words just what it was like in the old days. Mrs. Eber felt that it was necessary to preserve this rapidly vanishing culture in book form.

She then got together with Rolf Harder and Ernst Roch of Design Collaborative Books (award-winning graphic designers), who were already interested in Eskimo art and were enthused about the opportunity to design such a book. Together they went through many of Pitseolak's drawings, both old and new. The result is a beautiful collection of animals and birds, monsters and spirits, and the "things we did long ago."

So the second way to look at the book, the way I prefer, is as an artist's portfolio. There are approximately 90 engravings, stone cuts and drawings in color and black and white.

James Houston discovered and encouraged graphic art among the Eskimos. Pitseolak started drawing graphics in 1962 and from then on it wasn't long before she became surer about the technique and was able to create in a simple, straightforward way some very sophisticated works of art. She relates in a simple language, but there is also the wisdom of age. Each design is dif-

ferent; the lines vary from thick to thin and there is a freshness and a purity about what she draws that is extremely delightful.

The book is a valuable one to own, both artistically and culturally. It will provide many hours of pleasure. The illustrations portray, in a way no other published collection has, the imagination and vanishing life-style of the Eskimo. □

SHIRLEY RAPHAEL writes on art for the *Montreal Gazette*, *Vie des Art*, and *Art* magazine. She is also a graphic artist.



# POOR RICH KID

## THE LATCHKEY KID

J UNE BHATIA  
Longman  
cloth: \$6.95.

reviewed by *Marian Engel*

WHILE PARTICULARLY in a year of nationalism foreign perspectives are necessary, it is hard to see what an American-owned publishing house is doing foisting this point of view on the Colonial public. In spite of the sincerity of its tone it combines the mental modishness of Agatha Christie with the precision of observation of a vanity press poet.

The Latchkey kid (we have thumb latches here, but no latchkeys, ma'am) is neglected by his Mum to the same

degree as other kids in Tollemache, Alberta — she sends him out to play after school and won't let him walk on the new broadloom (remember the winter 30 babies froze in Brighton (Eng.) in their prams?). First thing he does when he achieves brutish puberty is make civilising contact with a young English widow whose husband, a Canadian, was murdered peacekeeping in Cyprus (no Canadians were murdered in Cyprus, ma'am, but a Black Watcher put out Clito's eyes with a broken bottle in his Bitter Lemons bar); second thing is to put down the hypocrisy of Tollemache in a book which gets a \$40,000 advance from the States. In between, there is some accurate description of Western Babbitry, and a lot of nonsense. I have no doubt that the ladies of Tollemache are horrendous to one who has been raised in other places but since Latchkey's mother's apotheosis is the handshake of a Brrrrritish Princess. I can only wonder that the clash of the two value-systems didn't invite a novel less genteelly scornful than this. □

# ONLY KIDDING

## UNMUZZLED MAX

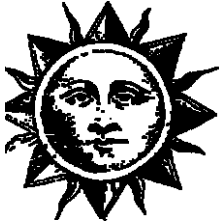
MAX FERGUSON  
McGraw-Ryerson  
cloth 56.95: 160 pages

reviewed by *Richard Lubbock*

THERE CAN BE no political humour without venom. Unless you savage your prey, unless your humour elicits blood, screams and libel suits, you are failing in your duty, which is to provide the public with its minimum daily requirement of life-enhancing sadism.

I cannot believe, on reading his latest book, that Max Ferguson has ever been challenged to a duel by any of his victims.

The book is a collection of sketches culled from his CBC radio show. It deals blandly with such reliable old



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We are also publishing this fall *Lark des Neiges*, Ronald Sutherland's new novel; *The Massacre of the Indians in Brazil* by Lucien Bodard, *Out of the Silence*, photographs of totem poles by Adelaide de Menil; *champions* by Jack Batten, about Canadian athletes, and many other books. Write for our catalogue, new press editorial offices 84 Sussex Avenue, Toronto.

new press born 1969 still going strong

targets as The **Bonaventure**, doctors' fees, Mr. **Diefenbaker's** flush toilet, The Queen, and various other political whatnots.

Any of these limp efforts would have been worth publishing if they had contained a decent proportion of unkindness and fury. But **in** cold print, **Ferguson's impact** withers away to nothing, because his popular success is based **solely** on his brilliant gifts as a performer and mimic. He is far too **kind, and his** capacity for comic invention approaches absolute zero.

Jules Feiffer has remarked that "the secret of **truly** successful cartooning is .. professional hate: the intensity of conviction that **comes** to a craftsman's work when he has made **the** decision to kill."

The amiable Mr. **Ferguson** is a magnificent craftsman, but until he acquires that necessary killer instinct, he will never create effective satire (except in the deluded imaginations of **his** multitudinous, adoring **radio** fans). □

## LOOSE BAWL

### THE PLASTIC ORGASM

La **VERNE BARNES**  
McClelland & Stewart  
cloth \$6.95; 144 pages

reviewed by Jack Hutchison

**PRO FOOTBALL** players drink. They gobble benzedrine, **dexedrine** and any form of speed that's going. Most of them are crude slobs, the kind who **casually** scratch **their** genitals over the cold cuts. They **are** lousy lovers, but they constantly chase women and **pursue** them. Black football players are better **than** white football players, **though** management will never admit this and maintains a quota on the number of **blacks** it employs; but black players **are** naturally more **highly** prized as lovers by women who know. Nearly

all football players, white or black, are really only tall children, too stupid. too dazzled or brainwashed by "the system" to know that it is **shamelessly** exploiting them, ruining their health and corrupting their lives. Canadian professional football is only an extension of the American system which, if we didn't know, is reactionary, racist, sadistic and **crypto-fascist**.

I'm surprised **LaVerne** Barnes didn't point out that Richard Nixon is a football fan, just to clinch her case. The paragraph above seems to me a fair summary of some of the main ideas and ideology behind *The Plastic Orgasm*, her much-publicized **exposé** of professional football in general and Canadian pro football in particular. Mrs. Barnes is the wife of Emery Barnes, a defensive tackle fmm Oregon who played a couple of seasons for the B.C. Lions. She says she made herself two promises when Emery **hung up his** jock and retired from football: one, never to go to another football game; and, two, to write a book about it all from a personal viewpoint. I'm sorry her book **isn't** better.

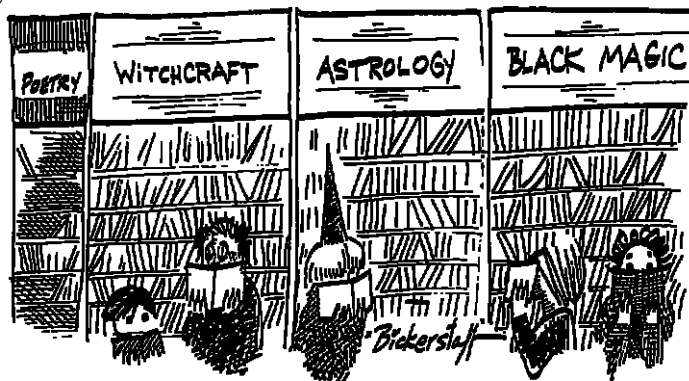
**Punch Imlach** once remarked that, "The trouble with sports books is you can only tell half **the** story." Again Mr. **Imlach** seems to have been **right**, as he so infuriatingly often is. The question is: **which** half of the story do you **want** to tell? **LaVerne** Barnes has chosen to write about the seamy, sorrier side of football and to wash all **those** dirty jockstraps in public, so to speak. No doubt she enjoys paying off some old scores-who doesn't?-but she includes a vicious personal attack on one man whose unforgivable sin, **apparently**, is that he didn't offer her husband a job: and her book makes many such cheap points. This kind of **thing can** be fun to read, let's admit it, and Mrs. Barnes also writes tough, **colourful** prose, if you can ignore her tendency toward tiresome New Left

rhetoric and her sometimes shaky grip on the language. Her interviews are especially good, and I suspect they are edited transcripts of tapes; in **any** case she certainly knows how football players talk. But *The Plastic Orgasm* is so paranoid, so **angry**, so bitter and one-sided that it must be classed as just another exploitation vehicle, as **trashy** and cynical in its own way as anything perpetrated by "the system" it sets out to attack.

Now maybe professional football did treat Emery Barnes badly. Maybe it hurt and humiliated and insulted him and, **through him**, Mrs. Barnes. It is an exceedingly and cruelly competitive sport, and it tends to do that to everyone sooner or later, when you **find out** you're too old, too slow, too beaten up, too small or whatever. Heartbreak of a kind looms at the end of every football career, just as death is the end of every life. But that doesn't **mean** that professional football isn't worth playing, any more **than** that life isn't worth living. Nobody forced Emery Barnes, or anyone else, to play pro football or to become part of a system he felt was degrading. Nobody forced **him** to return to football with the B.C. Lions, after he had been out of **the** game as a player for some years. But he did. And the question is why.

I suspect that, like the rest of **us**, Emery Barnes played Pro football for a number of reasons. To prove **something** to other people or, more important, to himself. To test himself against the best men around. To make some money and **gain** some measure of fame. To enjoy a kind of male friendship and companionship rare in adult life. I remember the good times and the laughs. If all he remembers is the hurt and humiliation, I feel sorry for him and for his wife. □

JACK HUTCHISON is a freelance writer. He played professional football for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.



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# GRAMMAR OF IDENTITY

## CONTEXTS OF CANADIAN CRITICISM

ELI MANDEL  
U of T Press

cloth \$11.75. paper 53.45: 304 pages

## THE CRITICAL PATH

NORTHROP FRYE

Fitzhenry & Whiteside

cloth \$6.25: 174 pages

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reviewed by Ted Whittaker

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"We are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here: the country is too big for anyone to inhabit completely, and in parts unknown to us we move in fear, exiles and invaders. This country is something that must be chosen — it is so easy to leave — and if we do choose it we are still choosing a violent duality."

THUS MARGARET ATWOOD ("Afterword" to her *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*), is cited by Eli Mandel ("Introduction" to *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*). In one way or another, every critic in Mandel's collection of essays would agree to Atwood's claim. The Canadian critic, Northrop Frye, describing — patterns of myth in literature Canadian and foreign, patterns figured in words about actions, combs neat in *The Critical Path* the shaggy bulk of human affairs with these patterns of his. The subtitle of his book is *An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism*, and he applies to events categories resembling those Atwood speaks of. Canada has spawned him:

"When we look at whatever it is in our own world that makes it not quite the abhorred world, but something we can live with in the meantime, we find that one of the most important elements is the tension between concern and freedom. When a myth of freedom has everything its own way, it becomes a lazy and selfish parasite on a power-structure. When a myth of concern has everything its own way, it becomes the most squalid of tyrannies. They must both be there, and the genuine individual and the free society can exist only when they are."

Frye defines "the myth of concern" as "A fully developed or encyclopedic myth (comprising) everything that it most concerns its society to know." It can be a myth for people's good, though often it only masquerades as one: Frye would have theorized more credibly, had he admitted oftener that his myth of concern may become a myth of control, a myth against people, to keep the screws on them, especially when it is contrasted to and assaulted by what then becomes the apocalyptic myth of freedom.

Frye looks long and bard at the rise and fall of empires of ideas and makes us aware of how they all could fit together if we just could start seeing them with names attached. He explicates the changes of the creative man's relationship to society at large, from Homer on through the Renaissance and its English offspring, the Romantic poets; he even fits in the Berkeley People's Park struggle. Everything is grist for the myth.

Myth is also one of the main focuses of Mandel's collection. The tension Frye posits between freedom and concern is one which, in *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, appears more than once, disguised variously. The essays of "practical" and "theoretical" critics and historiographers primarily analyze again that poor old tired horse, the Canadian identity, as it is presented in our works of art and our politics.

Here are the sources for professors' mournful bleats about our country's being so far capable only of spawning too much fatalistic art, its being necessary for us to find someone to write our national epic, etc.

The historical essays too are large shiny chestnuts from our most respected searchers for the soul of the past (like all the others in the book, they are by writers whose first language is English: a perverse sort of solipsism, such selection). Frye, McLuhan, Francis Sparshott scurry to enclose the world.

The essays which concern Canada directly tend to see it as a sort of fossil, retrospectively. We are treated to a diagnosis of our country's disease, the split personality. In the face of the awesome wilderness, the split in humans is roughly between the desire to keep warm and safe and the desire to strike out for and at the territory.

These are Frye's terms also, and such historians and critics as George Grant, W. L. Morton, Henry Kreisel, mask the neurosis variously. We shouldn't give ourselves over to the giant maw south of us, they say: our destiny lies (historically) in some ways to the north and east: that ocean, those woods, that prairie, they freeze a man and gobble him up — but a man has to tame and conquer, though he die doing so.

Finally, then, it is these tensions and divisions in Canadian art which makes it so often self-conscious and twitchy and which makes Canadian criticism pathetic. As cultural heirs of what George Grant, in his 1969 Massey lectures, called "the spirit of revenge," we have, until recently, been only rarely blessed by a realization that all's one.

Who in Canada ever thought of such a thing? Indians, Eskimos, a few communards: and they are starting to be heard. And we are starting to listen to what they have to say, though after what we have done and done to them, let us hope that it is not too late for all of us. We are our country, and we are the choices we make. It stays with us: as we ruin it, we destroy ourselves: as we notice its rhythms, they are most certainly our own. □

# BIRD THOU EVER WERT

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## LARK DES NEIGES

RONALD SUTHERLAND

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ACCORDING TO her one-night-stand lover, the heroine, of Ronald Sutherland's first novel *Lark des Neiges* "is a magnificent lark that's not quite in the right season. You're a snow lark. How would you say that in

French? *Lark des Neiges?* Susan MacDonald's malaise stems partly from her mixed parentage having, as she does, a Scottish Calvinist father and a sensual French Canadian mother. Now, as Suzanne Laflamme, wife of Georges, mother of four, living in a crowded apartment in the east end of Montreal, she is slowly cracking up. In an extended monologue addressed to her patient cat *Minou*, Susy/Suzanne runs through the events of her past life, eventually achieving an apparent resolution of her problems, both sexual and cultural.

In *Second Image*, his study of comparative Canadian literature, Sutherland mentions the ethnic myth that "the French Canadian girl is more highly sexed than her English-speaking compatriot." so it is rather strange to see bim apparently following suit. For Suzanne, at times, sounds disconcertingly like a cross between a French Canadian Molly Bloom and Alexander Portnoy (unlikely bedfellows if there ever were any).

Despite the occasional bit of stilted dialogue and a somewhat strained resolution, *Lark des Neiges* is a good first novel. The language is rich and rhythmical. Suzanne is convincing as a character through the sheer force of her vitality and there is always the possibility of a political allegory hovering somewhere in the background. □

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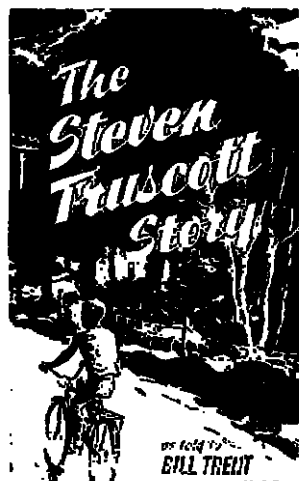
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