

BOOKS *in* CANADA

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EPIC STEEL

THE LAST SPIKE

PIERRE BERTON
McClelland & Stewart
cloth \$10.00; 478 pages

reviewed by George Woodcock

IF ANY EVENT in Canadian history has the kind of condensed grandeur that makes an epic, it is the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Pierre Berton may indeed be the man who has most successfully put it into an epic form appropriate to the modern age.

Before such a claim raises the eyebrows of scepticism, let me point out that no epic action ever seemed so to the men who lived through it or to their contemporaries. When King Agamemnon led the thousand ships away from Greece to lay siege to the corsair's stronghold of Troy, he was obviously reacting to the down-to-earth political imperatives of his time, compounded as they were of tribal pride and piratical rivalries; it was later generations that made the Greek exploits into so strange a combination of truth and fantasy that for long enlightened historians doubted if Agamemnon or Achilles or





Hector ever lived or if Troy had even existed. Only the persistence of that great romantic archaeologist Schliemann proved the basic truth of the *Iliad* by digging Troy out of the ground and finding in a desolate valley of Greece the massive citadel from which Agamemnon set forth and to which he returned to the treacherous welcome prepared by his faithless wife Clytemnestra.

The imperatives of state interest made later Greek kings and tyrants encourage the bards who, to make a living, turned the tales of Agamemnon's extremely badly managed military operation (it took him 10 years, exactly as long as it took the CPR to get its charter) into the splendours of the *Iliad*. And if we examine any other of the great epics of the past we usually find that there is a political and probably a national urge behind it all. The epic is the statement in contemporary literary form of the myth in whose shadow a nation emerges. The *Aeneid* in ancient Rome, the tales of El Cid in Spain, the Song of Roland in France, the Morte d'Arthur in Britain — all these (tales) populated with men magnified into heroes who performed superhuman tasks, came into their own at times when rather crude assemblages of peoples were being forged into nations.

Canada today is in that condition. During the past two or three decades

we have been going through the process of strain and consolidation that with luck may turn us into the modern equivalent of a nation — hopefully in our case a working federation rather than a nation-state in the old European sense — and we have had to find our epic, as the Americans found theirs in the Civil War. Since we live in a technological age it is the pioneers of our time that we naturally choose as epic heroes; just as iron-age Greeks chose men of the bronze age, so in a post-railway age we choose railway builders. And no story more fits our needs, as the poet E. J. Pratt recognized 20 years ago, than that of the creation of the Canadian Pacific Railway. In *The Last Spike* he turned the story into a poem, and the subject of the Great Canadian Epic was chosen. But poetry is no longer the modern epic form; rather it is the reportage or documentary in prose. The English-language epic of the Spanish Civil War, for example, is George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*; that of the October Revolution is John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*; and both Orwell and Reed were inspired journalists. Perhaps Pierre Berton and his *The Great Railway* are in the same company.

Having suggested such a claim, let me hedge it with qualifications. I am not saying that Berton has written the best *history* that could be written of

the founding of the Canadian Pacific. He is far too involved in his subject to have written the kind of meticulously objective study which modern fashions in historiography demand, even though his facts are unchallengeable and his research had obviously been considerable and thorough; he has not the grand sweep of a Toynbee or even a Creighton that is needed for the other kind of professional history, which amounts to the creation of universal myths. What he does have, remarkably developed, is that instinct of the well-versed and imaginative reporter which is needed to turn bare facts into the fabric of a modern epic. In the whole of the two volumes that comprise *The Great Railway*, perhaps the most significant phrase is one that undoubtedly slipped in half-consciously: "... those illuminating stories of human interest that are the journalist's grist." Berton, of course, is nothing if not a journalist, but he differs from most others in being able to transfer himself into the past and by a great imaginative concentration to be able to treat the facts of that past as if they were happenings today. It is the creation of "stories of human interest" that are so vivid that we can imagine ourselves experiencing them that is one of the techniques of the epic, which always seeks to unite heroic strength with human weakness, and marvellous events with the detail of everyday life.

continued on page 10

"EXILE, SILENCE and cunning," was James Joyce's prescription for genius. Obviously it has little appeal to our most notable literary exile, Mordecai Richler, who in recent issues of both *Saturday Night* and the *New York Times Book Review* has chosen to blast off from his London base a number of rockets against what he calls "The New Canadian Style."

It may be that these testy pyrotechnics are his own celebration of his latest advance towards the big-league eminence which he has sought (and deserved) for so long. Or it may be that they are merely an astute capitalization on that success (marked by a careful recycling of material from one essay to another). But whatever the cause, the effect is a view of Canadian affairs as reflected by a distorting rearview mirror, which is not the most accurate instrument for homing missiles.

Richler's observations on Canada's political and economic currents are all that one might expect from a Canadian whose more recent experiences of life here were derived from jetborne promotional hustles from ocean to ocean. Indeed, his analyses of Canadian nationalism, French and English, suggest that

intellectually he has never left St. Urbain. While these may confuse American readers, they can only amuse Canadians. Much the same can be said of his response to our awakened economic nationalism, which should win him friends in Washington, Paris, Lisbon and Pretoria and which goes something like, "Whaddya mean YOUR natural resources, they traded you all those beads, didn't they?" But then there has always been that curious affinity between comic talent and conservatism.

What are more immediately our concern are Richler's new insights into our literary development. "Nationalist zealots apart," he says, "most of us turn to Canadian writers for village gossip, news of ourselves, rather than fresh insights into the human condition." According to a demographic yardstick of his own devising, the literary muses are on the side of the big battalions. In Robertson Davies, Leonard Cohen, Richard Wright, Margaret Atwood, and (presumably) Mordecai Richler we have all the big-league writers we deserve, on a per capita basis. The crucible of future genius is in the connubial sack: produce more, get more.

So much for the funny stuff. In the hard, hard world of multi-national (that is, American) publishing, we need not expect much sympathy for our aspirations towards an identifiable Canadian literature; unless of course its spice of novelty offers an international marketability. Where we should expect understanding is amongst Canadian writers who were obliged to develop themselves in decades when Canadians were seen as a quaint and docile American sub-species. Mordecai Richler is one of the most notable survivors from that era, and his current international success marks a personal triumph over dire adversity. Like many self-made men, however, he now shows an unpleasant want of sympathy for those who have pursued and are pursuing a struggle similar to his at home.

Since Richler left, for reasons he seems not to understand, we have been forced to identify both ourselves and our problems. As an emergent nation,

which has escaped from one empire only to find itself partially engulfed in another, we must be excused some gaucheries and excesses. The writers and editors and publishers whom he mocks as chauvinists, usually by quotation out of context, are as aware of our literary underdevelopment as he is and are far more openly and validly critical of contemporary Canada than he has ever managed to be. What differentiates them from him is that they believe that Canadian writers are entitled to a hearing in their own country and that they should be spared the necessity (which Richler once felt) of having to tout amongst foreigners talents that have a more immediate relevancy to fellow Canadians. But however much we and the world value the tragi-comic retrospections that exile has forced on Richler, what we need now are writers who will stay in Canada and tell us, as he obviously cannot, what is happening to us.

In particular, Richler dismisses this magazine for not being (of all things) like the *New York Review of Books*. Let us retort first of all that if we adopted the radical chic of that review we should certainly not waste much space on the bourgeois likes of Richler, or any Canadian writer. The remark betrays his literary age, it betrays that Breakfast-At-Brentano's longing which afflicted Canadian writers in the 1950s, the rather boyish faith still harboured by Richler and the few people he admires that "New York reviewers are generally more perceptive," and that when you've made it with those dazzlers, boy you've made it!

Books In Canada is what it is because we know, as obviously he doesn't, that too many Canadians neither know nor care who he is. Whether he likes it or not, we feel that they should know and care and are trying to do something about it. Most of those whom he attacks have done far more on his behalf than the New York literati whom he so worships. He may bite the hands that have tried to help him if he chooses, but need he lick the boots that have so often kicked him aside? □

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subject to popular control. History, as Léandre Bergeron has so ably demonstrated, has a role to play in this. The real question is whether Canada's historians have the will to play it. □

MARTIN LONEY, a Canadian social scientist, currently working on his Ph.D in England.

PLAIN SEX

RED LIGHTS ON THE PRAIRIES

JAMES H. GRAY
Macmillan
cloth \$6.95

reviewed by Reg Vickers

JAMES GRAY is without a doubt Western Canada's most prolific popular historian. "My idea of history is that it should be about people and how they lived," he says. "Too many historians can't seem to stay away from politics."

He has followed this credo faithfully through *The Winter Years* and *Men Against the Desert*, two highly successful accounts of the depression years on the Prairies and with *The Boy from Winnipeg*, a personal portrayal of Gray's youth in the Manitoba capital.

Now, with *Red Lights on the Prairies*, the Calgary writer takes his personal-style history to its earthiest level — an almost brothel-by-brothel reliving of the hay day of prostitution in the West.

Gray focuses on the women of easy virtue and the way they affected Prairie life from the turn of the century until the early 1920s. These were the years when the Prairie population spiralled at such a dizzying pace — more than a million arrived in the first 15 years — that the builders couldn't keep pace with the demand for homes.

It's the story of the girls who made these men without women (for most married men left their wives at home when they came west) forget about the dust and hard work of early Prairie life and who made their bawdy houses the centre of a town's social life.

There was Minnie Woods who reigned for 30 years as the queen of the Winnipeg brothels; Lila Anderson, a Winnipeg madam who paid \$12,000 for a house, an absurdly high price at the time; Rosie Dale, a Moose Jaw whore who is credited with inventing the U-Drive system (she arranged to have a number of horses trained to trot right to her house so that a customer didn't have to know where she lived); and Babe Balanger, a Saskatoon madam who tried to bribe a Mountie but managed to win an acquittal from a jury ("it was not Saskatoon manhood's idea of how to treat essential services").

There were others, like Big Nellie Webb in Edmonton and Gertie Curney, a legend in Winnipeg, and Pearl Miller, who Gray tabs as Calgary's most famous prostitute.

Part of the Pearl Miller legend involves a Calgary regiment camped near an American outfit during the last war. The Americans tacked up a sign reading:

"Remember Pearl Harbour!" The Calgary soldiers then had their own sign painted. It read: "To hell with Pearl Harbour, remember Pearl Miller!"

While there is a disappointing shortage of stories of the Pearl Miller type in Gray's book, there are more than enough anecdotes about the houses the women ran and of the police who were more than willing to turn a blind eye to the goings on.

For example, the police chief of Medicine Hat at the time owned a brothel in that town and let it run for four years, thinking nothing of it. As Gray points out, it had to be something worse than sex for the police to act.

In 1901 there were 30,000 more males than females on the Prairies and by 1911 the male advantage grew to 210,000, offering excellent odds for the women of the street. When pressured to act, local police forces found it almost impossible to get a conviction. To help out, Winnipeg council in 1905 set up a "secret service fund" and gave the police chief \$5,000 to help buy evidence.

What killed open prostitution on the Prairies? In an interview at his home on the outskirts of Calgary, Gray said it was a combination of prohibition, the depression and the coming of the automobile. What surprised him most while researching *Red Lights* was the uniformity that showed up across the Prairies.

"In almost every city the police turned a blind eye to what was going on."

Gray's book is well laced with colorful asides. On Winnipeg's Annabella Street, not only did the houses have

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large electric red lights on the porches, but most of them had foot-high house numbers, just to make sure a prospective customer didn't miss it. And he tells how the Saskatoon gay blades had a choice of three races: a coloured girl, a Japanese girl or the usual white.

It was while working on *Red Lights* that Gray realized he had the basis of another book: booze on the Prairies.

"There may have been prohibition, but all you had to do was go to your doctor and get a prescription for \$2 and pay the druggist another \$3 and you had a quart of good booze."

For James Gray, the Prairie well never seems to run dry. □

REG VICKERS is book review editor of *The Calgary Herald*.

MARX CHEZ-NOUS

THE HISTORY OF QUEBEC

A Patriote's Handbook
LEANDRE BERGERON
New Canada Press
paper \$1.50; 245 pages

reviewed by Philip Sykes

AT ONE READING, you *know* why this took hold. Léandre Bergeron's little history of Quebec was an instant best seller there, a quick success in English translation and is even going well in a comic book version. The reason is that it provides a whole view. What desperation underlay the approval of so many Québécois of that scabrous FLQ communiqué last fall? And what connected last fall to the events and people of the past — to Duplessis, the conscription crisis, Riel and Lord Durham? There are some answers here.

In a time of confusions, the "Patriote's Handbook" is explosive with certitude. The complexities of 400 years are "fixed" in a hard Marxian focus. But, though true to the guiding dogmas and the propogandist tone, this account has none of the staleness

of its *genre*. Even such leader phrases as "surplus value" and "repressive apparatus" lose their mind-numbing weight when they are used with integrity and precision. The Marxist method works freshly here. Bergeron uses it to shatter Quebec's own cherished mythologies. In its harsh light, explorers turn to plunderers, heroes and missionaries to genocidal rogues. It reveals nothing to comfort the federalist — one wonders, indeed, if Montreal is not today, as it was one year ago, "in the trough of a huge wave preparing to crash" — but it does dispel some of the shadowy obscurantism around the discussion of Quebec's past.

The author teaches literature at Sir George Williams University, but his outlook is light years from that of the now-conventional Parti Québécois academic who, smugly I think, is disinclined to see massive American ownership and control as any menace to an independent Quebec. Bergeron, in contrast, separates his history into The French Regime (1534-1759), The English Regime (1760-1919), and The American Regime (1920-?). In plain words — vigorous still, despite odd misspellings and coy colloquialisms in the English translation — he traces two lines of descent in French Canadian nationalism. One is romantic — religious, or pastoral, inward-looking, a retreat to the hearth of the *habitant*. The other is revolutionary — its heritage includes the armed Patriotes of 1837, the anti-conscription rioters, the journal *Parti Pris* and, by implication, the sympathizers of the FLQ.

It's uncomfortable, of course. One would have liked something more moderate. But, given Bergeron's recording of blood and betrayal, a case for Fabian reform would not be easily supportable. Here are some threads in the author's hard line:

Lord Durham, progenitor of Confederation, the governor-general whose report in 1839 led to the union of Ontario and Quebec and to responsible government, was a liberal and a "racist despot." Liberalism led him to recommend responsible government for the English colonialists. But his belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority demanded a union that would turn French Canadians, the numerical majority in Durham's time, into a political minority.

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permanently outvoted by a combination of Ontario and the Quebec English, ripe for assimilation, a process that would "better their condition." They could, in Durham's view, have the happy fortune to become more industrious and more English!

The Asbestos strike, 1949, revealed the limits of political democracy: "Johns-Manville, the U.S. capitalist company, exploits the Quebec workers. To continue this exploitation, the company has to use the government it controls by means of the party treasury. It orders the government to put down the workers. Caretaker Duplessis orders the Provincial Police to beat up the workers. The cops do their 'job' . . . Here we see plainly how the bourgeois possessor class also possesses the state."

Jean Lesage's Quiet Revolution, 1960-66, was impelled by continental economic forces: "The role played by the former Negro-Kings, Duplessis and the Clergy, was not useful enough to our colonizers, American and English-Canadian capitalists, in the modern system of exploitation. The requirement was no longer a Negro-King preaching hard work and an austere existence, but a Negro-King who could make the Québécois believe they had to work hard and live extravagantly . . . they had to consume, and consume . . . A new elite was needed, a liberal lay elite who would adopt and preach the *American way of life*, gradually Anglicizing the Québécois: to make them into 'real' Canadians — second-rate Americans who are submissive producers and servile consumers for American imperialism. So our colonizers

supported our small and middle bourgeoisie morally and financially, concentrating on the provincial Liberals. The party came to power in 1960. . . "

It is a partisan and probably a dangerous view. Nonetheless, Bergeron's record bristles with surprises, original debunking, unmined veins of hard truths. And it is what they are reading in Quebec—in CEGEPs and Manpower lineups. It should be read in Moose Jaw and Ottawa, too, read and understood. It may, on the political scale, be a bit late for that, but on the scale of history, it is never too late to look truths in the face. □

PHILIP SYKES, an editorial writer for the *Toronto Star*, is a student of Quebec politics.

BI-LINGUA FRANCA

SECOND IMAGE

*Comparative Studies in Quebec/
Canadian Literature*

RONALD SUTHERLAND

new press

cloth \$7.50; 189 pages

reviewed by Howard Roiter

RONALD SUTHERLAND has produced, with his *Second Image*, a fascinating and tantalizing volume. Sutherland teaches comparative Canadian Litera-

ture at the Université de Sherbrooke, and he has a thorough awareness of Canadian literary production both in English and French. In *Second Image* he tries to delineate the common themes and pre-occupations which are shared by Canada's two literatures. In effect, Sutherland calls them one literature in two forms. His volume, however, reminds this reviewer of Clément Moisan's *L'Age de la littérature canadienne*, a study of comparative Canadian literature which appeared in 1969. Moisan's study was rather weak, filled with facile generalizations and faulty evidence. Almost no serious book-length work had been done in comparative Canadian literary criticism, and Moisan's book was avidly welcomed only because it was a voice crying in the wilderness — almost the only voice. Sutherland's *Second Image* is much more perceptive and solid than Moisan's superficial observations, but it also leads with the chin and invites attack. Nonetheless, in terms of serious, readable scholarship Sutherland has taken the first step and his pioneering effort should be applauded.

Sutherland finds that both Canadian literatures share a number of common themes: man in harmony with the land and God's cycles of nature, the breakup of old established value systems and the generational tensions and clashes which ensue, and the existential search for truth. It is exhilarating to watch Sutherland oscillate between Ringue's *Trente Arpentes* and Frederick Philip Grove's *Our Daily Bread* in his attempts to describe the treatment of man and the land. In depicting the

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contemporary search for truth which emanates from a total existential emptiness, Sutherland, with great agility and knowledge, picks his way through Jacques Godbout's *Le Couteau Sur la Table*, Douglas Le Pan's *The Deserter*, Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and Hubert Aquin's *Prochain Episode*. Sutherland's juxtaposition of W. O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* and Rejean Ducharme's *L'Avalée des Avalés* is expertly done and effectively illustrates Sutherland's point that childhood in both literatures is portrayed as a time of acute misery and conscious suffering.

Sutherland also demonstrates how the two Canadian literatures are permeated by a puritan sensibility, in one case coming from an inbred Calvinism and in the other a die-hard Jansenism. This sensibility has produced several recurring literary themes: a "Saturday-night fling" syndrome, followed by Sunday morning purification, the idea that pleasure is really quite sinful and not to be enjoyed, and the image of "the imperfect priest." Sutherland uses a number of novels to illustrate this Puritan shadow, especially MacLennan's *Each Man's Son* and Roch Carrier's *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* His discussion of the initial reception in the late 1930s of Jean-Charles Harvey's *Les Demi-Civilisés* should be obligatory reading for the middle-aged French-Canadian lovers of "liberté" who crawled out of the woodwork only when the love of "liberté" became fashionable in the 1960s.

Sutherland also has the courage to denounce the racism of Caron Lionel Groulx's *L'Appel de la Race*. Groulx had badly misguided racist sentiments and subscribed to a type of proto-fascist, biological racial theory. Somebody has to say that the emperor is wearing no clothes, and never wore any clothes, and Sutherland says it well.

Why has Groulx's reputation remained so high in French-Canadian intellectual circles? Why has his influence formed several generations of influential historians who have transmuted the original message but retained certain essential ideas? Here is the rub of the whole matter. Sutherland wants to prove that "It can be safely said . . . that French-Canadian and English-Canadian novels of the twentieth cen-

tury have traced a single basic line of ideological development, creating a whole spectrum of common images, attitudes, and ideas . . . There are at the moment no fundamental cultural differences between the two major ethnic groups of Canada . . . There does exist a single, common national mystique . . . the mysterious apparatus of a single sense of identity."

True, certain common elements co-exist in Canada's two cultures. Sutherland, however, has a socio-political axe to grind ("assuming that we want to preserve this single nation" . . . etc.) and he stacks his literary cards heavily in favour of his thesis. Some of his evidence is downright slim, and his generalizations are often facile and unsubstantiated. He often strays into the non-literary (e.g. Quebec cars at 100 mph wrapping themselves around trees) to marshal every available bit of evidence, and links his own undeniable Canadian loyalty to select morsels of prose which support his uni-cultural premise. Prof. Sutherland's emotions as a Canadian often crush his adherence to the objectivity which usually underlies the study of comparative literature.

Prof. Sutherland nowhere explains the fact that Abbé Félix-Antoine Savard's *Ménaud, Maître-Draveur* leaves English Canadian readers utterly cold and disenchanted, whereas French-Canadian literary critics of some eminence and general readers have long accepted it as a "classic." Prof. Sutherland ignores the fact that the writings of French-Canadian intellectuals about the October crisis reveal a deepening chasm which fundamentally separates them from English-Canadians, and this chasm is based on widely differing attitudes to life, death, freedom, and the dignity of individual liberties.

Second Image, however, in spite of Prof. Sutherland's evident over-enthusiasm, must be recognized as a capable pioneering work which should, hopefully, open a new horizon in comparative Canadian literature. □

HOWARD ROITER teaches Canadian Literature at the Université de Montréal.



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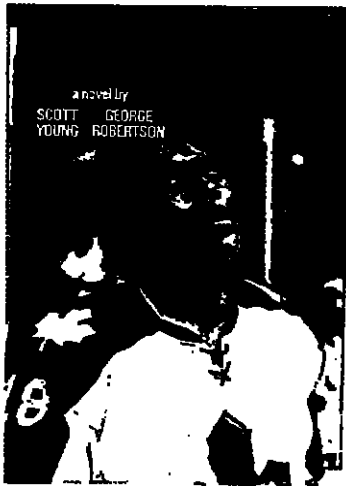
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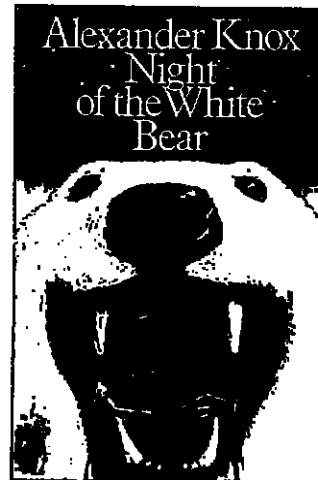


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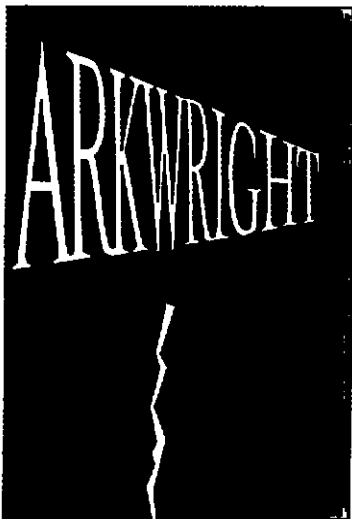
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This is precisely what Berton is doing in his two-volume history of the CPR, and he is even helped by the fact that the railway as our fathers knew it is already becoming part of the past. It is no longer the single and indispensable link that unites our straggling nation; no more does the wail of its engines mean to solitary men and women that they are not completely alone; indeed, if the CPR had its way now, the rest of us would just forget about it and allow its managers and shareholders to make their profits quietly out of land and minerals and by any other way than carrying us over the world's most spectacular railway. It is precisely at this point, when institutions or men forget their history, that they recede out of the meaningful present and become fair prey for the epic writer.

The epic intent is even more evident in this second volume of *The Great Railway* than it was in the first, which ended with the final granting of the charter to the Canadian Pacific in 1881 after a decade of complicated and often disgraceful political manoeuvres. During that first volume a great deal of attention had necessarily to be devoted to those political actions, and it is hard to squeeze much epic grandeur out of Sir John A. or his Liberal adversaries after the climax of their nation-building efforts at Confederation. The epic element in the story of the CPR is brought in by the engineers and surveyors and contractors, and by the thousands of navvies — Caucasian and Chinese — who turned Macdonald's political promise to British Columbia into the physical bond that for two generations kept Canada intact.

Berton gives free and sometimes flamboyant play to their achievements. The political manoeuvres fall into the background. It is the fantastic endurance of the survey teams (many of them literally explorers of unknown country), the enormous technical feat of carrying the railway across the Shield and over the Cordillera, and the great social fact of the CPR as the populator of waste lands and the creator of cities in empty landscapes that forms the vital substance of the present volume of *The Great Railway*.

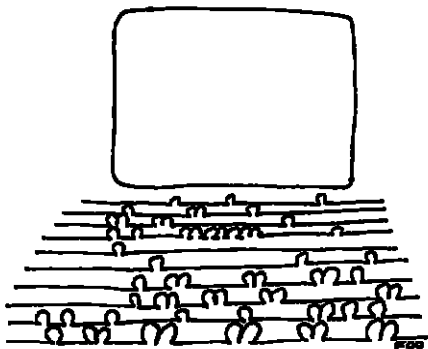
All epics revolve around a struggle in which the right side eventually wins, and in this case the foe is the land itself (it was an age before environmentalists and eco-philosophers, and the CPR pioneered, among other things, the destruction of much of the Canadian wilderness.) Berton tends to keep the sense of struggle high throughout, just as he streamlines into appropriately grandiose form the myths that surrounded men like Van Horne, first general manager and master organizer of the CPR. I am not suggesting that Berton tampers with facts, but he does select and arrange them with a rather baroque imagination, so that his central figures are clearly his heroes (a rather refreshing aberration, actually, in an age obsessed by the anti-hero).

Yet in spite of the high colour and the accelerated prose, which sometimes gives a hectic feeling to events that must have seemed pretty banal in their time, Berton has written not only an entertaining but also a very informative book, full of odd facts and eccentric erudition. His journalistic mind has assured that he never forgets the very profound ways in which the construction of the railway affected the lives of many thousands of ordinary people in the 1880s, and he presents a more thorough account than I have found anywhere else of the way the actual labourers lived and worked; there is a particularly fascinating description of the methods used to push the railway across the prairies at a speed that on one momentous single day exceeded six miles (a feat of railway construction unrivalled since, in spite of our vastly more sophisticated machinery). Berton has lost none of the interest in collective manias which he displayed in his *Klondike*, and he zestfully describes the various land booms that followed the railway across the country. He narrates the story of the second Riel rebellion in a way that persuasively suggests that Van Horne was more responsible for the defeat of the Métis than lack-lustre General Middleton. And he wastes none of the comedy accompanying the discovery of the route through the Rockies and the Selkirks by that outrageous man but brilliant surveyor, Major Rogers.

Major Rogers was an American, and there is an irony about the fact that so

many of Berton's heroes — including the formidable Van Horne — came from south of the border. It is a little confusing — almost as if Agamemnon had won the Trojan war with Trojan mercenaries — to find that the feat which was meant to keep us from absorption by the United States was performed so largely by American citizens. It is the kind of salutary lesson that epics should administer. □

GEORGE WOODCOCK, one of Canada's best-known writers and critics, is editor of *Canadian Literature*. He lives and works in British Columbia.



SATCHMO

"Life was there for me and I accepted it . . . And life, whatever came out has been beautiful to me and I love everybody . . . You understand, I'm doing my day's work, pleasing people and enjoying my horn — if I've got my horn in my hand then let's go."

Little Louis' official biography — his story and the story of jazz — "Told like it wuz."



LOUIS:
The Louis Armstrong Story

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SOFT FOCUS

IN AND OUT OF LOVE

arranged by **BRUCE VANCE**
Van Nostrand Reinhold
paperback \$2.95; 116 pages

BEING BORN AND GROWING OLDER

arranged by **BRUCE VANCE**
Van Nostrand Reinhold
paperback \$2.95; 115 pages

reviewed by *Joan Harcourt*

EVEN IF THESE two collections of poems and images are not primarily intended for schools' consumption, they should still be bought in bulk by every board of education in the country. This is not to suggest that their appeal is limited to the classroom. On the contrary, here is no kiss of death but an opportunity to break through the resistance so many students have when it comes to grappling with poetry — a resistance not uncommonly continued resolutely through life once the days of forced feeding are past. The cover photographs alone are enough to hook anyone, and from then on, it's compulsive reading as the images carry us from one poem to the next. The poetry runs through time and place from the traditional classics to something suspiciously like doggerel, and the illustrations follow a similar pattern. There are street photographs, water colours, classical studies, drawings, documentary stills, all of them lending dimensions of depth or lightheartedness to the written word which is hard to resist.

The anthologies have been put together around themes — love and age respectively — rather than centuries or nationalities, which can be so uniformly dreary or intimidating to the uninitiated, while the informed reader invariably suspects that he has been cheated, that he is at the mercy of too arbitrary a selection. However in these collections, the emphasis is on Bruce Vance having arranged the poems and images, which makes the selection a secondary issue. He has achieved a kind of choreography

that tends, for the most part, to disarm the conventional criticisms. Nevertheless, one wonders why for instance, there are ten indifferent Byrons to one superb Hardy, or why there was no room for even one of Edward Thomas' poems to his children when Richard Armour's "High Chair and Low Spirits" and Roger McGough's "Goodbat Nightman" might have been happily omitted altogether (on grounds of taste).

The choice, however, is entirely personal and makes no claims to being comprehensive. The images are an integral part of the collections. It is the themes that are being explored and accepted in this light, the experiment is immensely pleasing and full of surprises. Poems zoom in from all sorts of unexpected angles, making the choice ingenious rather than willful. There is no attempt to be chronological in any terms but mood and counter-mood, so Suckling is followed by Pound, Klein by Wordsworth. Dorothy Parker, cheek by jowl with Lovelace, hurls herself forward to contradict that gentleman's remote idealizations with:

*Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,
A medley of extemporanea;
And Love is a thing that can never
go wrong;
And I am Marie of Roumania.*

The images, culled from many sources, largely Canadian, have been interwoven with the poems most adroitly, sometimes just illustrating, more often commenting on or even opposing the poetry, so that we are compelled to look closely at both. For instance, a thoughtful, but very modern face beside Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd to his Love" or a truncated doll matched to Jon Silkin's "Death of a Son" force us back and forth between the poems and images, each adding to the other and both to our enjoyment.

For the chauvinists amongst us there is a fair sprinkling of Canadian voices, although happily not identified as such. If Bruce Vance and the Language Arts Centre continue to produce such collections, which I hope they do, our own poets may yet find a place in the national consciousness as simply fine writers and not the inferior breed (because Canadian) they still sadly present in so many minds. □

JOAN HARCOURT lives and works in Kingston, Ontario. She is a regular contributor to *Quarry Magazine*.

heard

THE TORONTO TELEGRAM is folding. And we in Toronto, like people in many other large metropolitan cities, find that we cannot support two afternoon newspapers. It is a loss we bemoan only in principle, because fewer and fewer of us were reading it. Newspapers are peculiar institutions in that, because they are very much a part of our daily lives, we develop attachments to them much as we attach ourselves to a favourite armchair or the Saturday night hockey game. The *Tely was the* kind of newspaper you kept a watchful eye on, in order to see what the newest print trend might be. They were the first to develop a what's-happening-around-town magazine supplement. The first with colour on the front page, children's adoption service, information about pollution campaign, and many other things. They scooped the *Star* regularly, but not even the high priced talent like Ron Haggart plus all their innovations could make it a paper that enough people liked and trusted. One would like to think that maybe the *Telegram* failed because it was *not* resistant to change. An admirable characteristic in psychology: a pity it means the death of a newspaper.

PETER MARTIN Associates have announced that they will have a book titled *The Death of the Telegram* out by the end of October. Freelance writer Doug Fetherling is doing the book. It will probably be a paperback and sell for \$3.95.

IN ORDER to remind reviewers and booksellers about the October publication of *The Plastic Orgasm*, McClelland & Stewart have issued one of the most bizarre promotion pieces in their history of dubious promotion schemes. Mounted on a scarlet coloured square of paper was — are you ready? — a miniature athletic support. The book in question is a harsh look at the realities of Canadian football, written by the wife of an ex-player. Tennis, anyone?

write-in

Sir:

Your editorial in the August issue invites comments from your readers concerning your book reviews or other aspects of writing in Canada. I interpret this to mean that you are concerned about the deterioration of the English language as it is used in Canada, and at the risk of appearing as one crying in a linguistic wilderness, I would like to draw your attention to a usage which is becoming increasingly prevalent in writing at various levels these days. (I will spare you my five-minute lecture on the unhappy practice of using "presently" when "currently" is intended, or "hopefully" when what is meant is "we hope" or "it is hoped.")

In David Williamson's review of *The Paper Tyrant* in the August issue, I count three instances of the reviewer's using "quote" (the verb) where "quotation" (the noun) is clearly intended and should have been used. This practice is widespread, and is, I suppose, tolerable in speech. But in written prose it seems preferable to maintain the distinction between noun and verb which our language tradition has given us.

Here is Wilson Follett (*Modern American Usage*) on this question:

As a noun, *quote* is heard more often than it is seen, but it is seen too often. . . . The innovation delights those who do not mind crudity if they can have succinctness. Whoever makes this choice must expect after a time to see *The cite is Browning's/The refer is not clear/The allude leaves me baffled.*

We in the universities have trouble enough in encouraging young people to practice good language habits when almost every other force in their environment commits rape and mutilation upon the English language every day. Two of our chief enemies are journalism and advertising. Help.

W. J. Barnes,
Associate Professor
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
Kingston, Ontario

Sir:

I have read the first issues of *Books in Canada* with great interest. As an American living in Canada, I have watched the various attempts to stimulate a national culture with some amusement and more sorrow. Canadians are a funny people; they will support the idea of the arts but rarely the arts themselves; they will support writers and painters lavishly with tax money, but they prefer to read foreign books and look at foreign artwork. A concerned reading of a concerned editorial on *The Writer in Canada*, a two-dollar lottery ticket, and their duty is done.

As much as any country Canada deserves fine writers. The talent is here; what is lacking is the audience. That is where your publication is so valuable. It directs attention to the books themselves, and to the writers; it provides a useful survey of the latest happenings on the Canadian literary scene. Canadian books are, alas, even higher-priced than American ones. It would cost a small fortune to buy them blind. Although I am the first person to disbelieve a reviewer, I enjoy finding out roughly what has been published. I am not conscious, reading *Books in Canada*, of *The State of Canadian Literature*; I am aware only of a group of books. This is as it should be. An audience reads books, not a literature. As long as your magazine stays clear of nebulous laments and exhortations — however true — and concentrates on the many fine or even mediocre books that are appearing, it will perform a desperately-needed service.

Michael Steinberg
Toronto, Ontario

Sir:

Your new publication presents so many facets dealing with books in Canada that I am tempted to add one more.

This is the matter of proper attention in the reprinting of out-of-print Canadian books. Recently I examined the reprint by Greenwood Press (printed in the USA) of Henry Youle Hind's "Northwest Territory. Reports on progress on the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Expedition", printed originally by

John Lovell in Toronto in 1859. The Greenwood reprint omits the title pages, two pages of introduction, six pages of contents and what is worse, omits the errata which are of the utmost importance, dealing as they do with both text and maps. Hind later corrected the text in his "Narrative" of the Expedition published in 1860. An unsuspecting user quoting this Greenwood reprint, will undoubtedly perpetuate errors unknowingly. I might add, that since the title page is omitted, the work will appear in catalogues under the name of S. J. Dawson, whose brief "General Report on the Progress of the Red River Expedition" precedes the report of Hind.

The Toronto Public Library Board has made available for many years copies of important works for reprinting, but the Board has insisted that re-print firms pay the utmost attention to the conditions of the reprint. With foreign sources being used as the basis of reprinting Canadian works, it would appear that we will get new versions of Canadian history whether we know it or not.

H. C. Campbell,
Chief Librarian
THE TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Sir:

I think the issue that your ex-New York critic raised is valid, though not relevant to your publication. But I fear it *is* true, even on the basis of the evidence provided by your own reviews, that most current Canadian writing probably would not qualify for attention in NY REV. The trouble, I think, comes from the fact that the class-structure of Canadian society tends, as with the proletarian novels of the thirties, to assign the problems to the people who are written *about* which now seems unbearably smug. I enjoyed FIFTH BUSINESS very much; but am immensely irritated both by Davies and the viewpoint from which he writes. Does he really think that as Master of a College of U of T he occupies an *honorable* position? Those of us who work for universities should learn from Jean Genet: our somewhat distinctive careers and life-styles provide a helpful opportunity for obser-

vation of how societies really affect individuals; but no justification for either social institutions or our own misdeeds. Thomas Mann really did understand something about Germany — and hence about any nation-state — that I have never found a Canadian who did, at least not an Anglo.

Edgar Z. Friedenber
 Professor
 DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Sir:

Your correspondent, Mr. Michael Shulman, who wrote complaining at your 'modest attempt to draw attention to Canadian writing' is evidently totally unaware of the American nationalism demonstrated by the *New York Times Book Review* (but not, I am glad to say, by the *New York Review of Books*), by *Time*, by *Saturday Review*, *The New Yorker* and a substantial number of other US literary magazines and journals. The great majority of them have a policy that excludes from review any work not 'published in the United States' on the rather facile argument that if the American reader cannot go to his bookstore and readily obtain the book they are doing him a disservice by noticing it. (There is some virtue in this for I can recall being greatly annoyed at reading a review in the *TLS* of a work which was only obtainable from a prominent historical society, who supplied it only to their members — their membership being closed!)

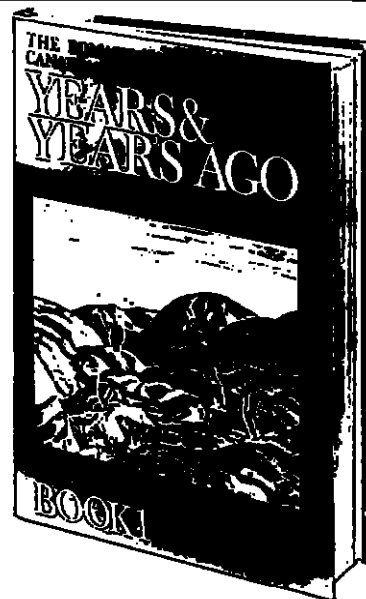
But the truth is that Canadian books, by and large, are not being reviewed in literary journals and magazines in the United States as a matter of deliberate policy.

Hilary S. Marshall
 Manager-Sales & Distribution
 UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS



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POETIC GRAVITY

Collected Poems of
LOUIS DUDEK

Delta Press
cloth \$5, paper \$4; 327 pages

reviewed by Dennis Lee

LOUIS DUDEK has been writing poetry, teaching it, preaching and publishing it for 30 years. Now, at 53, he has brought out his *Collected Poems*. The retrospective assessment it invites is difficult.

Dudek spent much of his earlier career writing fairly short occasional poems, in more or less regular forms. As it turned out, his talent ran in a completely different grain; hence most of the poems in the first third of this book are worthy but perishable – in fact, most are worthy but perished. There are a few fine pieces, and a good

many striking lines; but there is a recurrent mismating of talent and convention which can produce – at its worst – moments like this:

*When I have carded the wool of
your thoughts*

*and found the physiological knot
from which your terrors proceed
which make you you.*

*and we have opened the electric
lock*

*together, and entered the current
of desire.*

*we shall know the rock on which
each of us was broken . . . (157)*

To be fair, this tossed salad of metaphors does travesty the early Dudek. It is instructive to read, though; it's like watching someone go through a particularly bad day at the wrong job or in a miserable marriage. What's remarkable is that Dudek managed to break out of these contortionist exercises – which kept screwing up Montreal poetry in the 1940's – as often as he did.

Reading Ezra Pound appears to have freed Dudek of that. The result was two very long poems – "Europe" and

"Atlantis" (both included here with some sections cut) – and about a dozen long meditative poems, of which the most impressive is "En Mexico". Many are travel poems, and "Atlantis" in particular becomes a poem about the idea of voyaging well. In this, of course, Dudek is responding closely to his mentor's *Cantos*.

These longer poems invite a critical article, not just a review. Since that isn't possible here, let me sketch some tentative conclusions.

I don't believe that Dudek understood the poetics of vorticism; or if he did, it too was a blind alley for him. Pound set down, in *The Cantos*, a series of apparently disconnected historical vignettes, insights, personal experiences, quotations, lyrics, etc. These particulars were rendered with a range of technical virtuosity which no one in this century has equalled. And the whole was informed with an imaginative intelligence which – at its best – found an order, in fragments ranging from five words to five pages, that coincides with a whole order of civilization.

continued on page 19

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GEORGE GRANT/TIME AS HISTORY.

The 1969 Massey lectures. The author's declared purpose is "to write about the word 'history' as it is used about existence in time, not as it is used to describe a particular academic study". He describes himself as not being "concerned with historical inquiry, its proper purposes and methods, to what extent it is a science" but rather, "with what it means to conceive the world as an historical process, to conceive time as history and man as an historical being". In this regard, he explores the thought of the German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche who "thought the conception of time as history more comprehensively than any other thinker before or since".

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OF THE INNOCENTS



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THE SMALL PRESSES

by Randall Ware

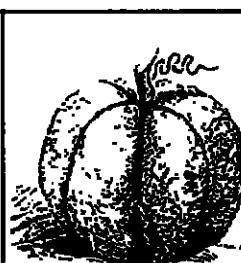
WHEN IS AN historical narrative not an historical narrative? When it is an history poem. Get it? Sent \$2.50 to Fiddlehead Books, Fredericton, N.B. for *The Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* by John Robert Colombo and you will.

What Colombo has done, and done exceedingly well, is to transpose James R. Wilson's 1906 volume, *San Francisco's Horror of Earthquake and Fire*, into a slim book of artfully crafted found poems, both intense and moving. Within 45 pages, the scene swings from the asylum (curiously named Agnews) to the hawking of food at inflated prices and on to the bank that managed to stay open throughout the three days of horror. Random details of great and small import coalesce into a vision of horror and despair. Colombo has accomplished the printed equivalent of the hand-held, cinéma vérité camera. If anyone still has doubts about the value or effectiveness of found poetry, he or she should buy this book. T.G.S.F.E. and F. demonstrates not only how found verse works, but also why it does.

Tom Marshall's new book, *Magic Water* (Quarry Press, Box 1061, Kingston, Ont., paperback \$2.50) is most aptly titled. The poems are fluid, now trickling gently, now rushing hell-bent-for-salvation over some spiritual Niagara. But even as you can look into water on some days and see the bottom and yet on others your gaze seems to not penetrate the surface, so some of these poems come to you quickly and cleanly while others appear to shift with each reading.

There are many senses of innocence to these poems; innocence lost or found or not yet discovered. Marshall exhibits concern for the future, concern for the proper resolution of improper events.

Privacy is the key to these verses. Quiet thoughts cast out from the house of intellect and forged into verse for the sake of his relationship with you, the reader, and for the challenge of the interface between the poet and his words. Tom Marshall continues to prove that economy of space need not result in foreshortened expression. □



BLUNDER
In our last issue, we quoted the price of Wee Folk as being \$1.95. The publisher informs us that the correct price is \$2.50.

SHE SHOOTS, HE SCORES

FACE-OFF

SCOTT YOUNG and
GEORGE ROBERTSON
Macmillan
cloth \$6.95; 250 pages

reviewed by Jack Batten

THERE WERE all kinds of reasons why I was hoping to dislike this book. One is that it smells of a ripoff. It's a novel put out in advance of a movie, based on the movie's story line and clearly intended as promotion for the movie. Then there's the awful little contest that goes with the book: all you have to do, according to the rules, which read like something you'd find on the back of a Crispy Critters cereal box, is buy the book, make a list of all the real-life people mentioned in it, send your list to the publisher, and you may win two box-seats to a Leaf-Canadian hockey game.

Well, OK, but — damn — I like *Face-Off*. It's terrific fantasy stuff, for one thing, putting nicely into print the dreams of every red-blooded Canadian man to make it in the NHL as a rookie, ranked just behind Orr and Hull right off the bat, and, not only that, to make it with the most beautiful girl in sight at the same time.

The hero of *Face-Off* is Billy Duke who arrives on the Toronto Maple Leaf defence at 21 after a sensational career in the juniors. Billy is colorful, rugged, a remarkable goal scorer (second among defencemen only to Orr), and he leads the Leafs to first place. Off the ice, he meets Sherri Lee Nelson, lovely blonde singer in a rising Toronto folk-rock group called The Final Chorus. They fall in love and shack up in her loft. But all is not perfect. Sherri comes from what is commonly called a troubled background. She keeps her head together, as the saying goes, by smoking dope. Billy fails to understand this approach — he's a beer man himself — and, losing patience, walks out on Sherri. He cannot forget her however, and while Sherri is freaking on harder drugs, Billy's game falls apart. The

Leafs tumble down in the standings. A nasty sportswriter precipitates a final crisis that ends with Sherri's death and with Billy and the Leafs threatening to finish the season in fifth place, out of the playoffs, which is, of course, hockey's ultimate humiliation.

What I like best about the book is the flavor of the hockey scenes, on the ice, in the locker room, on the road, talking to writers, drinking beer, fooling around. Those passages have a wonderfully authentic feel, a sense of bringing you inside the hockey player's world in a way that no other fiction ever has. The hockey people — players, coaches, owners — come across as absolutely believable characters, masculine, hard, one-track, randy, basic guys.

By comparison, the authors don't seem nearly as comfortable or as accurate with the rock world. The musicians and agents are sketches, almost parodies. You don't believe in them for a minute.

But that's small quibbling. It's a nice book. You should read it if you like hockey. One thing though — don't give it to your kids for Christmas. There's some dirty stuff in it. □

JACK BATTEN is a freelance writer. His most recent book is *Champions*, published by new press.

IMPERIAL DROPOUTS

THE NEW EXILES

ROGER N. WILLIAMS
Nelson, Foster, Scott
401 pages; cloth \$9.50

reviewed by Jim Christy

THIS BOOK IS comprised mostly of tape recorded transcriptions author Roger Williams made with fellow dodgers and deserters from Montreal to Vancouver. The talks with these men, as one would expect, reveal the horror of the war in Vietnam, the decaying life in the United States, the dehumanizing military experience, and the agony of

leaving. But, I can't help but wonder, who among the potential readers of this book is not already aware of all this? The book will obviously be bought by liberals who are already sympathetic. It is highly unlikely that those favouring the Vietnam war and opposed to dodgers and deserters will plunk down the \$9.50 to chance a change of mind. The one thing that could make the book important to all Canadians is unfortunately missing. That is a discussion of the experience of exile, the reaction to Canada. Other than passing and superficial comments: ("Canadians are really more open and friendly" and "I sense more freedom here") there is nothing about the Canadian experience of the exiles.

This is too obvious an omission. As a dodger himself Williams must be aware that the exile situation is comprised of three very distinct parts: the reasons which culminate in a decision to leave; the decision itself and the changes it catalyzes; and the actual experience of the new country. Without part three, *The New Exiles* is not a whole.

Perhaps Canada wasn't within Williams' scope. *The New Exiles* is obviously directed to the American reader and begins and ends with a plea for amnesty. As William Sloane Coffin says in his introduction: "He (Williams) has written for Americans a heart-warming and heart rending book." I sense therefore that the new exiles is primarily an anti-Vietnam book, but from the exiles' perspective. Most everyone interviewed by Williams came to Canada directly because of the war. The book is subtitled "American War Resisters in Canada." This gives a rather narrow picture of the exile. Some, in fact, came simply because they were sick of America, some came because they wanted to get on with living, some don't know why they came. They are all new exiles and, I believe, most are too busy *living* in Canada to bother about amnesty. □

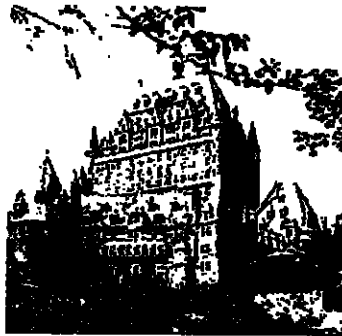
JIM CHRISTY is an American expatriate living and travelling in Canada. He is editor of the forthcoming anthology, *The New Refugees*, to be published in early November by Peter Martin Associates.

Now booking for a great fall flight.



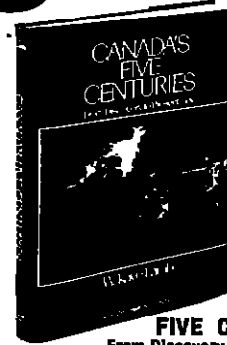
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Charles de Gaulle
Translated by Terrence Kilmartin

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October. \$10.25



THE CHATEAU FRONTENAC
Rosemary Pitcher

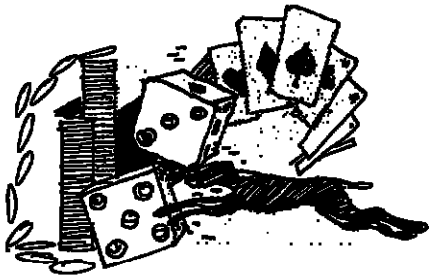
Here are the fascinating stories and incidents about the hotel, its history and operation, creating for the reader an inside-out view of one of Canada's fabled landmarks. Illustrated with photographs.
November. \$5.95



CANADA'S FIVE CENTURIES

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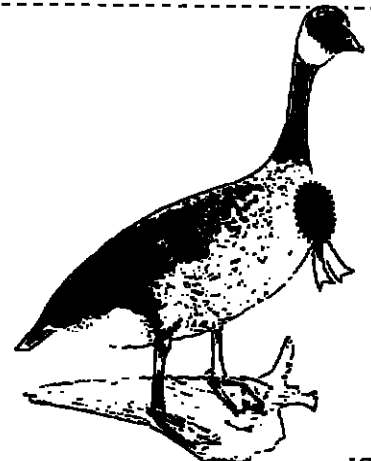
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HAIDA WAYS

OUT OF THE SILENCE

ADELAIDE DE MENIL and WILLIAM REID

new press

cloth \$7.95; 120 pages

reviewed by Robert Markle

I'VE NEVER known what to make of picture books. I buy a few, get a few more at Christmas. And maybe that's it. They . . . look nice, are usually light, easy-to-take glossy things aimed directly at the coffee table, to be leisurely dealt with during the numerous commercial breaks in a wildlife adventure series on a Sunday afternoon. No serious thought, just something to flip through. To give you a nice feeling.

Out of the Silence is a picture book on the totem carvings of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest, with a slight though deeply felt text, and that familiar glossy grainy lots of white space and contrast that is the norm for the coffee table culture look, out of new press for the kind of people at the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art in Fort Worth, in the US of A.

Out of the Silence is a good picture book, good to hold and flip, good to look at, nice and light. Rich and important looking.

The sparse biographies tell us little, though probably enough. The photographer, Adelaide de Menil, is experienced in these matters: she's been around most of the moss-choked ruins and artifacts in this world; she's competent; she knows what to look for, when to pull the trigger.

Of William Reid there is less. We do know that he carves, that his carvings "rival the finest ever produced by his Haida forebears," and that he wrote the text.

The photography is good. *Art* here comes to the fore. Long lingering looks over misty bays and ferns, through trees and bush. Totems angled to the sky, their reflections sharply caught shimmering in water, and totems fallen, strained and drawn, silver grey, swallowed by fern and moss, slowly seeping back into the leafy floors of the west coast forests. Stark dappled close-ups, on black, of carved curves, eyes,

spheres and suns, gaping mouths. And totems broken and gone, their bulk already starting shoots of new growth as they lay, faces lost in grain and splinter, yet somehow fire still there, raging. Good pictures, yes, good to look at.

William Reid's text is what one would expect, a somewhat sonorous celebration of the way things were. ("in a few weeks men could gather enough salmon to last a year, . . . berries were plentiful on the bare hillsides"), a long poem sliced suitably to caption length, a complement to the pictures. Yes, it works well here.

And yet I wanted more than a sombre narrative. There is an example of his carving in the book, a detail of a pole, carved sure and strong, smooth and new. He's into it. He *knows*. Yet nowhere in the book could I find real heavy talk of his commitment, the creative process. Just a slight touch on the duty and the noble task of heritage. I want to know more. What goes on in the mind of that carver? Is it any different than that in the mind of a deKooning, or an Emily Carr? This kind of information, intimate information surely has a place in these books. It could only help. If art is important then I wonder if these guys are artists. And if a man is alive today, where does his responsibility lay, with his heritage, or with his time . . . And what is more to the true nature of these carvings, the static freeze of photography, or the mild wanderings of Emily Carr's vision?

The lush design is the responsibility of Arnold Skolnick. Good. Text, picture, text, picture; lots of clean space (like the coast must have been like). Books like these are the property of the designer; yet he's friends with all. A handsome look.

Books on the way out? Possibly, for this is a good example of a great idea for video-cassette programming; plug it into your TV and let the camera do the lingering, the text word perfect for Chief Dan George.

The last snap is worthy of study. Splintered remains of a battered totem lean out of roadside scrub and into a No Parking sign. Surrounded by sewage pipe, industrial debris, wire fencing and electric wiring. The dirt road weaves into a background of dense forest, a flag and a few battered buildings, some *new* ones. Ah yes, time, and progress. Like having hawkers flogging postcards outside the Sistine Chapel. The celebration of man moving . . . forward. □

ROBERT MARKLE is a Canadian artist and occasional book reviewer.

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When Dudek proceeds by the same method, however, the particulars too often tail off into limp observations of places visited and people met, and the great animating ideas emerge merely as notions, as schoolmarmish truisms. Pound can fail in the same ways too; but finally Pound remains the master of the placed and galvanized fragment, while Dudek is a jotter of fragments and a stater of precepts.

At his own birthday party, then, Professor Dudek comes on too often as the party bore. When wisdom comes at you as portentously as this abrupt homily — “I wonder if we would die of happiness/if we did not suffer./Are we afraid to try?” (234) — it is easy wisdom, unearned by the poem. There is a great deal of easy wisdom in the longer poems.

To have failed in Pound's league is perhaps no great disgrace. Fortunately, Dudek has occasionally done more. His real voice, I believe, emerges in passages that rise and fall in a single voice,

radiant extended meditations on art and civilization where he forgets how great poetry is supposed to be written and finally gets down to good poetry of his own. There is a sporadic eloquence in the two long poems, and more consistently in “En Mexico”, which is austere and beautiful.

*But the universe does not wait
for me to judge it, nor is death
itself
a cause for condemnation.*

*Knowledge is neither necessary
nor possible
to justify the turning
of that huge design.
That turns in the mind, for love.*

*That it should come into being
out of nothing
(grass . . . bird . . . machine
and metal),
that they should come into being.
Man come to shape out of
smoking matter,
out of male secretion in the
womb, take form.
All things, all bodies,*

*that they should come out of
nothing,
rise, as projectiles out of rock,
with spicules, eyes, limbs,
with ornaments, accoutrements,
skills,
amid an abundance of flora and
fauna,
and each to itself all —
in a jungle, devouring graves!*

(202-3)

Except in the Mexico poem, the book's dozen or more moments like this invariably topple back into mediocrity five lines on. But taken together with the best of the shorter poems, they surely vindicate 30 years of work.

For the sake of his immediate reputation, these *Collected Poems* should have been a *Selected Poems*. It is hard not to see Dudek's finest achievements as somehow accidental, when he has so regularly deserted them for other men's precedents. But there remain poems and passages which are almost of the first order; and if a reader is prepared to appreciate a



Pitseolak: Pictures out of my life

*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!'*

Pitseolak is one of the most famous of the Cape Dorset graphic artists whose work now has a following around the world. Now more than 70 years old, she looks back in this book to give in her own words a haunting account of growing up in the Arctic, marriage, births and deaths, the old ways and the new. Pitseolak has illustrated her story with more than 90 drawings in black and white of animals and birds, monsters and spirits, and 'the things we did long ago'.

Everyone interested in the art of the Eskimo, and in their vanishing life-style will want to own this beautiful book, published in an English/Eskimo edition.

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serious poet as he lurches in and out of his centre of poetic gravity, there are considerable rewards in Dudek's *Collected Poems*. A reader who does not approach the book in such a spirit will find it very heavy ploughing.

Physically the book is a fine blend of elegance and sumptuousness. The price is astonishingly low. □

DENNIS LEE is co-founder and editor-in-chief of House of Anansi. A revised edition of his book, *Civil Elegies*, will be appearing this spring.

WILD SCENE

NORTH TO CREE LAKE

A. L. KARRAS
Book Service

256 pages; cloth \$8.50

reviewed by Laurie Ricou

MR. KARRAS had — still has — a bad case of the “North bug.” The myth of the North is revived here by a passionate advocate: the North is peopled by “rugged individualists who stood on their own two feet — come what may”; life in the North is “clean, free and easy.” In recounting his tales of trapping and hunting in northern Saskatchewan from 1932 to 1939, Mr. Karras frequently feels obliged, with

one eye on the market place, to express his concern with matters ecological. We are invited to shed a tear for the days when the northern forest was untouched. Mr. Karras needn't have bothered. The appeal of his book lies elsewhere, while his concern for the environment, though undoubtedly sincere, seems a superficial afterthought, largely ignoring the implications of his own exploitation of the forest, his inclination to kill for sport and ignore game laws.

Karras is no artist, but a competent raconteur. His descriptions of landscape, like Kubinyi's illustrations, are conventional and slight, harmonizing in mood with the description of the forest, a “sort of Disneyland setting.” The real fascination of *North to Cree Lake* lies in wildlife vignettes, the adventures of the hunt, and intriguing gems of forest lore. Here you can find how best to brew tea from snow, how

to make snowshoes, how to cook a moose nose (burn off hair, peel outer layer of skin, cut into chocolate-bar-shaped pieces and boil for about 2½ hours), even how to make disposable diapers from dried sphagnum moss.

This book is light reading, both amusing and absorbing. As a supplement to your current edition of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* it is ideal. As an urgent plea for the biosphere, which it tries to be, Mr. Karras' memoir is redundant and unconvincing. □

LAURIE RICOU is an English Professor at the University of Lethbridge. He wrote his thesis on “the Prairie Landscape in Canadian Literature.”





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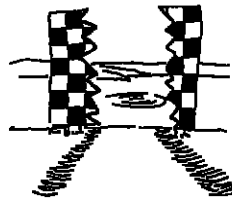
reviewed by Arlene Kaufmann

THE DUST JACKET blurb describes *Today's Child* as a "simple, practical book" whose authors are both pediatricians and mothers and hence doubly qualified to discuss their subject. In fact, the book does contain much useful information, ranging from tips on how to bathe a baby whose head is still wobbly to a discussion on the latest developments in automobile safety devices for children. The authors' treatment of a large number of topics is brisk and concise, and the comprehensive index makes it possible to locate necessary information at once.

In spite of its considerable virtues, however, *Today's Child* is a curiously joyless text — partly, I suspect, because the care of children is presented as such a time-consuming, mechanical and uncreative task. Moreover, the authors' notions about what constitutes good training seem excessively rigorous, to say the least:

If you have taught him to eat well, a job that takes among other things both patience and a good example; to come to meals on time; to go to bed at a regular hour without objection; to have a usual time for elimination; to enjoy active outdoor play — all these will make it easier for him to get off to school on time without fuss and flurry.

No doubt — but if such a paragon of a child exists, I have yet to meet him and frankly, I'd rather not. This is the stuff of which mothers' inferiority complexes are made and Drs. Robertson and Wood as women, mothers and pediatricians should know better. □



WHITEOAKS ESTATE

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

by GEORGE HENDRICK
Burns & MacEachern
cloth \$6.15; 149 pages

WITH THIS badly made and unattractive little book, Professor Hendrick follows the formula of modern American "lit. crit." mechanics so faithfully that at first I assumed he was dealing in parody. Alas, he is in deadly earnest. This work is part of something called "Twayne's World Authors Series" and, academically, is beneath notice. Hendrick has relied heavily on Ronald Hambleton's definitive 1966 biography, *Mazo de la Roche of Jalna*, for his interpretive chapters and padded out the rest with summaries of reviews and potted précis of the plots.

The result, of course, is a thinly disguised crib. Every mark-winning fact

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is there. Presumably the object is to help legions of unimaginative English students in the United States write their pre-programmed essays on Miss de la Roche, answer the multiple-choice exam questions and earn the degrees that will enable them in turn to produce books like this. It is a significant measure of Hendrick's method that he began his research in Frankfurt, West Germany, continued it in Britain and the U.S. and was able to complete his project with what appears to be only one flying visit to his subject's native country.

It is also, to be sure, a significant measure of Miss de la Roche's phenomenal international popularity that such remote-controlled research was feasible at all. And here one can almost forgive Hendrick for his hasty and shallow treatment of de la Roche. She was indeed a negligible writer, remarkable only for the effect she caused. It is one of the embarrassments of being a Canadian that for 30 years our most famous author was a slightly dotty, ever-so-dikish (surely in 1971 we can stop being coy about her life-long affaire with her cousin Caroline?) doyenne of the "life-in-a-dark-full-tide-came-flowing" school of juvenile romance.

Unfortunately, with CBC-TV launching its *Jalna* series in January, it is an embarrassment we shall not soon be

allowed to forget. One British publisher has remarked that de la Roche "has been a gold mine to anyone who has ever had anything to do with her." The TV series is expected to mean the tapping of a whole new mother lode. Judging by the timing of this book, Hendrick and his Canadian distributors hope to carry off their share. That's not honest prospecting; it's literary claim jumping. □

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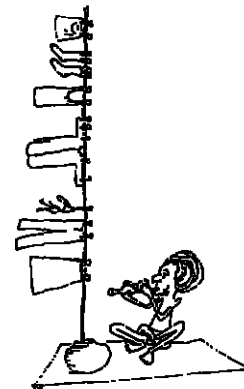


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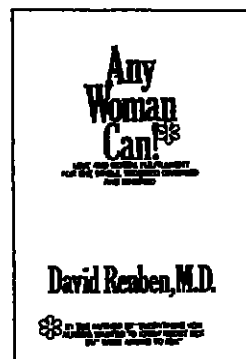
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