

# BOOKS *in* CANADA

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## K.C. IN CLICHE

**K.C.. IRVING:**  
The Art of the Industrialist

*RUSSELL HUNT and  
ROBERT CAMPBELL  
McClelland and Stewart  
cloth \$8.95; 207 pages*

*reviewed by Harry Bruce*

HUNT AND CAMPBELL tell us that K.C. Irving – at least as his character demonstrates itself through what he's said and how his stupendous business empire has performed – has guts, tenacity, vindictiveness, a love o f ...

secrecy. a lust completely to own and dominate every corner of his corporate structures, a passion for litigation, a **highly** developed sense of local patriotism (which also happens to be highly **useful** to himself), a profound **capacity** for loud **moral** outrage, and far greater interest **than** most businessmen **have** in objects such as gas pumps as opposed to abstractions such as mathematical analyses. "Irving," they write, "has always felt **more** strongly about the **specific** than **the general**, has always had the dirtiest hands around the **conference** table."

It's great, at long last, to see bright people combine a sense of irony and sarcasm with social concern and relentless research to **give** us not only a really detailed account of the strange growth of the Irving phenomenon but also **some** perspective on what it has **all** meant to New **Brunswick**. The authors are cynical about Irving's self-promoted image as a defender of New **Brunswickers'** interests against greedy outsiders; his **regional** patriotism, they suggest, has always served **his own** empire far **more** than it has helped improve **the dismal** lot of a **huge** proportion of the people.

They are unfriendly then, but not preachy about their unfriendliness. They prefer **to** prove rather than moralize, and the book's **strength** lies in the weight of its research into assorted significant histories of Irving's industrial triumphs. They also **bring** to the book a sort of horrified respect for the qualities of character **that** enabled, Irving to create **his** unlikely corporate "dinosaur".

They tell us about **these** characteristics quite a few **times** for so short a book, however, and they do not **relieve** the repetition by finding new words **to** express what they themselves speedily turn into old **pronouncements**. Moreover, and particularly in light of the Preface, the **clichés** are irritating.

The Preface says there's "a **fundamental similarity** between art and the sort of journalism represented by this **book**.. . The method of this book is based on the assumption that the **journalist** has far more in common with the poet than the sociologist." People who set themselves up as **artists** should be particularly careful to avoid

telling **us** that a government must insist on the 'meeting of a deadline "come **hell** or hi water"; or that somebody wanted **to** own something "lock, stock and barrel". Even some of those- journalists who are reluctant ever to **call** their **work** Art avoid tired **expressions**. You get a little tired, too, of wondering just how many ways Hunt **and** Campbell can milk their "dinosaur" as a symbol of the Irving power.

The authors' preface betrays them in other ways as well. It's an **intriguing** and literate case for a certain kind of journalism. It uses quotes **from** *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and references to Falstaff and Macbeth to defend the book's method of presenting "a number of characteristic incidents or aspects of the development of **that (Irving)** empire.. . We offer each just as **an** artist offers an incident: as **interesting** in itself and also as part of a general portrait of a character.. ." My quarrel here is not with the method, but with the quality of the artistry.

As it happens, however, I have a quarrel with the method, too. Or perhaps it's just a cavil. The Preface tells us the authors gathered their information almost **entirely** from **public records**, because one of a journalist's most important functions

.. is to stand as an example of the fact that our universe isn't incomprehensible, that it is possible by application to come to an understanding of the most apparently complex and confusing phenomena. If the journalist restricts himself to sources equally available to everyone, he serves that function better than if he acquires privileged information, interviews important people, cites anonymous sources, and so forth. When understanding arises out of materials available to everyone, the understanding is more likely to be seen, not as an arcane process which is the special skill of a few, but as an ability which the reader himself possesses.

It's an interesting idea but it's the **first** time I've heard artist-journalists raising as a virtue the principle of refusing to **talk** to people to get **information**. It's possible that, in Irving's case, no amount of interviewing would have **given** the authors much insight into the man; it's possible, too, however, that interviews might just have **re-**

**vealed enough** so that Hunt and Campbell would not have felt impelled to tell us, 200 pages after their Preface, that Irving was still "this **apparently** uncomplicated New **Brunswicker** who so thoroughly defies comprehension." (In any event, they did rely for information, to some extent anyway, on Ralph Allen's three-part **series** in *Maclean's* magazine back in the spring of '64, and **he** certainly interviewed people. About 200 of them, including K.C. Irving.)

**Still**, I'm nitpicking a bit. Neither the pretensions of **the** Preface, nor the repetition of occasional ideas, nor the **failure to** rework phrases, nor the shortcomings of copy-editing come anywhere near **cancelling** out the general achievement of the book. It's good, and I'd **like** to see a French edition for New Brunswick Acadians.

*Harry Bruce, one of Canada's best-known rambling journalists, has now settled down in Halifax.*

## STAR GAZING

### THE FILMS OF KIRK DOUGLAS

TONY THOMAS

George J. McLeod Ltd.

cloth \$11.50; illustrated; 255 pages

### THE FILMS OF MARLON BRANDO

TONY THOMAS

George J. McLeod Ltd.

cloth \$3.50; illustrated; 243 pages

AT AN OPENING-NIGHT party in Hollywood I was **looking** over **another** actor's shoulder as he was trying to ingratiate himself with **Kirk** Douglas, who was one of **our** hosts. Remembering Mr. Douglas only from such **films** as 20,000 *Leagues Under the Sea*, *Ulysses*, *The Vikings*, and *Spartacus*, I did not **myself** try to **meet** him, as I felt I had nothing to say to **him**. Yet from my vantage point, I noticed several rather surprising things about the man, even **taking into consideration** that he was no doubt being as **charming** as his importunate **inter-**

(continued on page 30)

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WHEN VAL CLERY resigned as editor of *Books in Canada* after seeing the last issue to press, the Canadian book-publishing industry as a whole lost the continuing voice and counsel of a better friend than it often seemed to realize. Val was a principal founder of this magazine and the main creative force behind its subsequent development. Under his direction, we have grown in 2½ years from an introductory issue of 10,000 copies to a more-or-less regular publication with an average print run of 40,000. The bulk of those copies are distributed free through some 450 bookstores across the country. Since we began, we have reviewed more than 730 books, Canadian books every one, at least three times as many as any other publication in Canada during the same period.

In the come of our development under Val's editorship, two malicious and highly damaging canards about *Books in Canada* were circulated with such frequency that in some quarters they were gradually accepted as established truth. The first suggestion is that we are an inbred magazine depending on a limited and repetitive cast of contributors. That is ignorant nonsense. One of our fundamental purposes was — and is — to seek out and encourage new book critics in Canada. As any experienced editor knows, serving as a vehicle for apprentice & p can be a risky business. Indeed, our quest for regional and intellectual variety among our reviewers has sometimes been at the expense of those standards of competence in reviewing to which we naturally aspire. But we are not ashamed of our record; More than 120 different reviewers, drawn from every province in the land, have written for us. At least a score of those were appearing in a national magazine for the first time and perhaps a dozen have since gone on to become regular contributors to other periodicals.

The second canard, that our criticism is too severe and that our reviewers tend to indulge in assassination of authors for its own sake, is simply untrue. The most elementary research

proves that only 25% of our reviews could be described as generally unfavourable. The implication that a responsible editor would deliberately order a professional titer, to ffill his pen with acid, and that a responsible writer would comply, is of course a double libel. Should that implication ever appear again in print, *Books in Canada* will immediately take action — even though the defendants turn out to be such an august body, as Ontario's Royal Commission on Book-Publishing.

*Books in Canada* will carry on, despite the malice and despite the loss of Val Clery's courage, wisdom and unflagging energy. We may for a time become a lesser magazine than he would have hoped. Increased production costs and sporadic advertising revenue have forced changes — slimmer but more frequent issues — that will undoubtedly narrow our editorial scope. We remain deeply grateful for the financial assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Council for the Arts. We are also cheered by the approval expressed by a majority of our readers, by the growing support from private and institutional subscribers, and by the goodwill we detect in all but a few dark corners of the publishing industry. Even so, our future is by no means certain.

What is certain, however, is that *Books in Canada* would not have survived at all without the inspiration of Val Clery's tough-tided editorial policy. The core of that policy, hammered home like Cato's "Delenda est Carthago", is that Canadians at large must be better served by this country's book industry.

"*Books in Canada* is a biased magazine." Val wrote in one of his first editorials. He said we were biased in favour of Canadian books, Canadian readers and, most particularly, Canadian writers: "Books may be produced by publishers, but only the creativity of writers can make them more than by-products of the forest industry."

For those who may be wondering, we are still a biased magazine. □

DOUGLAS MARSHALL.

# BIRNEY'S JOURNEYS

## What's So Big About GREEN?

EARLE BIRNEY  
McClelland & Stewart  
cloth \$5.95;

reviewed by Fraser Sutherland

THE CRITICS of Earle Bimey who have decried his excursions into concrete poetry will be comforted by his latest collection. Although he uses modish conventions like lower-case spelling and spatial punctuation, only one poem, "daybreak on lake opal: high rockies", even remotely resembles the pictographs he's been drawing in recent years. As far as that goes, his interest in concrete — which some have attributed to trendiness, or senility — hardly needs to be defended. It is just another outlet for the qualities we find in this collection: linguistic brilliance, a fertile talent for mimicry and satire, and an unfaltering curiosity. Like his fellow poet Al Purdy, he seems to have been everywhere — Australia, Fiji, Scotland — and written about it.

Bimey's poetic range is wide as well, and this book offers great variety; he can write fine lyrics, every word slotted into place, like "adagio", or the exquisite "villanelle". French verse-forms are notoriously difficult to execute; the interwoven rhyme nearly always produces a tortuous effect. But here is the first stanza and l'envoi of Birney's poem:

*What shall I do with all my sea  
your sun and moon have set alight  
till you will swim along with me?*

.....

*I divide alone and grope to see  
what salt and tidal things we might  
but cannot reach with all our sea  
till you have willed to swim with me.*

I find Bimey least satisfying in his political poems. If the same old safe liberal denunciations of American Intervention in Viet Nam, the atom bomb, and industrial pollution have to be made — and he makes them with

much sincerity and artistic craft — they will somehow have to be said differently. He is no different from most poets in this regard; about the only successful political poems I've made in recent years have been Walter Bauer's in *The Rice of Morning*.

If Bimey is a solemn political commentator he is also the mockingbird mimicking his own comic vicissitudes, as in "cucarachas in fiji". The poet's mom is overrun by gigantic cockroaches with omnivorous appetites, the fodder in turn for the hotel-keeper's reflections on *Blatta orientalis*. Half-French, "the logical half", this hotelier furnishes some ineffectual aerosol spray; noting:

*Ab it is a burgundy je crois un Chateau — Grand Cru  
tasting for them more dry even than piss  
— which is their vin ordinaire you ask about*

Or another hotel room, this one in Australia. A sick and shivering Bimey foolishly inquires about the possibility of obtaining a portable electric heater. The clerk replies in vintage Strine:

*a wot?  
aow yew mean a patable  
aow naow  
ent naow patables jes nah*

In Australia, too, is set "the gray woods exploding", a long narrative poem that Birney may intend to succeed his much-anthologized "David". He even has a footnote: "Warning to all literalati: this poem's story is an invention." (After "David", which dealt with a mercy-killing, some literal-minded readers assumed Bimey had pushed his best friend off a cliff.)

"the gray woods exploding" has a looser construction than "David" and lacks its linguistic precision, but may be a better work. It tells of the poet's meeting the head of a university English department in Australia who takes him to the local sight:

*grinite sheering to depths unseeable  
like an Andean chasm  
We sit dangling our feet over silence*

It was here, the poet's guide says, that "Pat", a fellow professor, decided to leap from the cliff but turned back: "Said it queered his pitch/not seeing ahead where he'd land." The professor tells more about this Pat, and as he tells, his London accent strips away to reveal the bedrock Strine beneath. Pat's been a bootlegger's runner, a

jailbird, miner, bulldozer-driver, policeman, professor — a perpetual imposter. His past has been both picaresque and tragic; he'd lost his wife to cancer.

It turns out, as one might have guessed, that the poet's professor-friend is himself Pat. A trite storyline perhaps, but well carried out: the fire leitmotif is superbly sustained. At the end Pat's eyes are "flint and sparked with fire." One suspects — though perhaps it would take an Australian to say for sure — that Birney has photographically fixed the Aussie psyche, done in his own art what the great Russell Drysdale did with paint and canvas. □

# PURDY'S WORDY

## SEX AND DEATH

AL-PURDY  
McClelland and Stewart  
cloth \$6.95, paper \$2.95:

reviewed by Fraser Sutherland

THE PERIPATETIC poet is on the move again, swooping down on all the torrid places of the earth — South Africa, Greece, Japan and Mexico. In Rome ("Temporizing in the Eternal City") someone tries to sell him a lot in Florida, using a good dinner as a bribe. "It saddened me to disappoint the super-hucksters but I was disappointed at the Hilton." (One might ask why the poet was staying at the Hilton — to sponge dinners out of real estate hustlers? But perhaps such "temporizing" is the point of the poem, a neat enough irony when, at the same time, he stretches out his hand to an eternal Beatrice carved in stone.)

Purdy's poetry is like a tossed salad. In serving it to us his situation is somewhat like Irving Layton's. Layton asks the reader to accept all his poetry when what he really means is like it all. Purdy implicitly says the same thing, only it is often said within a single poem. The poem is flatulent,

mawkish, **maudlin** and sublime by turns, and where the ironic tone is fully in evidence it **all** seems to work together: we accept.

Sometimes, though, the irony fails, which most often happens in the political poems. Some poets, Purdy among them, **feel obliged to compose elegies and odes on what** passes in our age as **great** state occasions — **self-appointed poet laureates**. “Lament for Robert Kennedy” is Purdy at his worst: empty rhetorical, **full of statutory compassion**. “The Peaceable Kingdom”, written after the War Measures **Act** was **invoked against** the FLQ, is better but it still wanders around trying to find what it has to **say**: that Canada’s innocence died. Political commentators **said the same thing**; Purdy’s version is only a slight **improvement**. That is not to say Purdy cannot write good political poetry; there a few moments of great power in **the** Hiroshima and South African poems, though sometimes rather deeply buried.

Having begun sourly. I don’t want to continue in this vein; there are

many joys in **this** collection with the forbidding title. What we have come to know as the Purdy persona is to be found everywhere: as **Hokusai** (“Old Man Mad About Painting”); as the bumbling Stone-Age hunter of the **impressive** “In the Foothills”; and, most frequently, as the **poet-as-his-own-character**. **Each** of these is fumbling, groping **through** windy rhetoric and taut imagery toward some realization. Sometimes the realization is comic — and Purdy can be very funny — **sometimes rueful, sometimes unashamedly** lyrical, as in the lovely “Observing Persons”. The tone here is quiet, meditative; those who observe lovers, he says

*are a kind of privileged children  
suspend judgment sometimes  
and not loving ourselves  
love the mystery  
and do not understand It*

Returning to Rome, and to that poem of rhetoric and the sudden **perfect** image. The poet of “Temporizing” finds himself baffled by so much having been written about the **Eternal City**. He is able to remember

*only a waterfall lost in the Canadian  
bush  
which has had nothing written about  
it  
except when autumn leaves drifting  
on the foam  
are crimson letters*

Sermons in stones, letters written on the water. □

## GROUP OF TWO THE GIRLS

REBECCA **SISLER**

Clarke **Irwin**,  
cloth \$7.95; 120 pages

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reviewed by **Stephanie J. Nynych**

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**THE GIRLS** were two women **sculptors**, Frances **Loring** and Florence **Wyle**. They were American-born but lived and worked in **Toronto** from 1914 to 1968, one dying three weeks **after** the other. They remained here. as



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Frances **Loring** stated. because **they** were **attracted** by the "youth" of Canada. In 1920 they bought a **derelict church** on **Glenrose** Avenue and **turned-it into a studio** where **they** lived and worked until 1968. When you consider that their commissions were few and far between, that the Toronto winters were long and cold in a large derelict church requiring much fuel to heat it adequately, that the cost of food and materials was high, you have a setting against which to see **two women dedicated to their art far beyond the usual hardships imposed by lack of recognition.**

To Frances **Loring** we owe **thanks** for such massive statuary as the lion at the **Toronto entrance** to the Queen **Elizabeth** Way and the **figure** of Sir Robert Borden on Parliament Hill. Besides sculpting, she participated in the "politics" of the art world, serving on committees, giving lecture tours and writing articles. After 54 years of sculpting in Canada, Florence **Wyle's** **first** major exhibition was given by **Jack Pollock** in 1968.

When she submitted "Sea and Shore", one of her last **sculptures**, to the Art **Gallery** of Toronto for exhibit in 1965, the jurors turned it down. Rebecca **Sisler** speculates: "Perhaps the self-assertion of the new, more vigorous art expression allowed no place for the old." It would be interesting now to view this sculpture; it embodies in the form of a woman, Florence **Wyle's** search to portray the feeling that "the tide comes in and the tide goes out but the sea and the shore remain." To date I have been unable to locate its whereabouts.

**The vigour** and strength of these two women, who overcame **both** the hardships of being women and of being artists, takes on the proportions of the heroic. My only criticism of **the** book is that it is far too short. able only to touch on the profound humanity and compassion of two **magnificent**, brave women who will' no doubt occupy eventually the place in the history of sculpture that they deserve. To quote Jack **Pollock**: "Florence **Wyle** and Frances **Loring** were to sculpture in Canada what **the** Group of Seven were to **painting.** □

*Stephanie J. Nynych, who last year published the autobiographical... and like i see it, lives in Toronto.*

# MERCY ON THY PEOPLE, LORD

RIVERRUN

PETER SUCH

Clark Irwin cloth \$5.95; pages

reviewed by Al Purdy

WHEN EUROPEANS tint visited' Newfoundland, there were two native peoples living on the island. The Dorsets, Eskimos of near-giant stature, **occupied** the northwest **coastline**, Labrador and the Arctic regions. When Norse landings occurred in **the** 10th century, the Dorsets fought these pale-skinned invaders of **their** island. Five hundred **years** later the Dorsets had disappeared entirely., to be succe6de.d by the **Thule** people, and later by modern **Eskimos**. There are several theories to account for their disappearance, **including climatic** change and another wave of **Eskimo** emigration **from** the West All that really remains of the **Dorsets** are delicate ivory **carvings** and some ancient weapons and tools. They am gone, and no one knows precisely why.

The Beothuks, an Indian people of **large stature, were also** native to Newfoundland. **J.P. Howley** presents nearly. **all** the known information about them in his book. **The Beothuks**, published in 1915. **They** too are extinct, but this **time** the reason is known. Shawnadithit, last of her race, died in 1829, captive of the white men.

From the time of earliest white settlement, fishermen and **trappers** hunted down **the** Beothuks, killed **them** by ones and twos and dozens, later murdered **them** by hundreds at a place called **Bloody Point, a name found on no** modern maps. Early in the 19th century, white authorities grew alarmed at the indiscriminate slaughter; several **times** they sent emissaries seeking friendship with the **Indians**. But these "peaceful" expeditions **generally** resulted in **more** killings, one of them in the capture of a young woman named Demasduit and the murder of her husband when he attempted his wife's **rescue**. By **this**

time the treatment by whites of **Beothuks can only be** described as genocide, deliberate slaughter of an entire race.

Peter Such's novel **describes** the last 25 years of **the** Beothuks' existence on earth. Reduced to near-starvation, they, wandered between the interior **forest lands and sea coast seeking food, their balance of survival destroyed and probably all hope as well Demasduit (whom the whites called Mary March), Shawnadithit (who was also Nancy), Nonosabasut her husband, and others of the last score or so of "The People" distractedly search for a way to go on living.**

A novel **with** such a theme, **the** death of an entire people, inevitably takes on some of the **dignity and interest** of the theme itself. Part of the **narrative is written in a continual present** tense, has a lyric quality, to some extent a timelessness. **Nonosabasut** in his starvation fantasies **turns** himself into snow and birch trees. The salmon-run up the Exploits River is **archetypal** among hunting peoples, and is **vivid here in recreation. And since legend has it that women were treated very gently in the Beothuk culture, when one of these woman bares her breasts before whites to show that she is a woman and thus avoid being murdered, the bincident has a peculiar poignancy. Of course she was slaughtered anyway.**

I **lii** the novel's ending particularly:

**Shawnadithit, who was left behind with none to sing for her at the hour of ha own death. who went unremembered. the last of The People in the whole high land of the long lakes and the speaking riven that run to the sea forever, bearing no longer the living People through the frogback rapids, bearing only the dead leaves of the woods in autumn. Listen, mother. Listen. This is where the riverrun ends.**

CORNELIUS  
KRIEGHOFF



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Such's novel seems to me a genuine achievement, going some distance beyond the power of its theme, a conveyancing of the lives of the dead to the minds of the living. At times the present-tense device, short sentences, and consequent pronoun repetition are troublesome to the ear. But that is a minor cavil. The fading picture of a people disturbs the mind with its transience and approaches splendour.

And living in Vancouver in 1973 is a young woman I know whose blood is one tenth Beothuk. So perhaps in some tenuous way the tragic race remains alive, the small ghost in the body of another person carried forward in time. And perhaps there are others. □

Al Purdy's latest collection of poems, *Sex and Death*, is reviewed on page 4.

## SOOTHING WILLOW PATTERNS

### UNGLAZED CHINA

J. TUZO WILSON  
*Saturday Review Press*  
cloth \$9.95; 336 pages

reviewed by Richard Lubbock

THE WESTERNER'S reflex response to China is epitomized by the chilling arithmetic of Ripley's famous *Believe It Or Not* item, headlined "The March & Chinese". The text states that "if all the Chinese in the world were to march four abreast past a given point they would never finish passing, though they marched forever and ever!" Ripley explains that the yellow birthrate would be enough to keep the ghastly coolie columns marching for all eternity.

Ripley had cannily rolled up into one image three qualities of the Chinese people that "lost effectively spook the minds of white me". Whites feel intimidated by Chinese discipline, they are overwhelmed by Chinese numerosity, and deep, deep down in

their arrogant hearts they fear for their breed in the face of the yellow man's inexorable fecundity.

Even today, though we have been slightly calmed by the Nixonian rapprochement with China, the old reflexes die hard, and any story is to be welcomed that presents a sane, balanced view of China to the average white Caucasian.

One of the growing band of travelers who have returned from China with the material for a book is Professor J. Tuzo Wilson, the distinguished Canadian geophysicist, who was a guest of the Chinese government in 1958 and again in 1971. The diary of his latest journey has been published under the odd title *Unglazed China*.

Professor Wilson's book poses as a cool and placid account of his three-week visit, hot also it cleverly contrives to cast many fascinating sidelights on realities behind the Bamboo Curtain.

Dr. Wilson has the true reporter's gift of noting the significant detail, and thereby building a strong impression of reality. However, in its overall design and purpose the book seems to falter. In parts we are given a charming travelogue and mouth-watering gastronomic tour; concealed within this is a textbook that could be entitled "A Elementary Introduction to the Geology of China" (I now know, for the first time in my life, what a "Grab" is); and interspersed throughout is a grab-bag of intelligence miscellanea of little interest to anyone except a CIA evaluator. For example, what is the reader to make of the fact that "We also saw an absolute inclinometer made by Askania, Bambergwerk No. 572144, and an inductor type spinner magnetometer"? Is that good news, or bad?

Since Dr. Wilson is a scientist, we would expect something definitive from him on how science fares under the aegis of Marxism-Leninism and the Little Red Book of Mao. In fact he is restrained and cautious on this subject.

It seems clear from what he says that Chinese science has escaped ideological atrocities such as the Soviet Union's Lysenko bloodbath. On the other hand, he reports that younger scientists were especially handicapped



by lack of contact **with** workers from abroad, and because, at that **time**, they were denied access to foreign journals by "members of revolutionary **committees** who are often **rabid** nationalists and poorly educated".

Nonetheless, the Chinese leaders are taking steps to break out of **the** isolation **that** has imprisoned the Chinese mind since **ancient times**:

I quoted Mr. Tien's observation that wine was the only thing the Chinese had teamed from the West, but that the West had learned many things, like printing, from China. To my surprise they heartily disagreed. This view might have been true a thousand years ago, said they, but no longer.

It would seem to be part of a **reassuring** trend, then, that the works of Robert **Benchley** and Stephen **Leacock** **are** to be found on the library shelves of **Peking** University, and Dr. **Wilson** relates a host of similar trivia and wonders.

You **will** learn what it feels like to have a Chinese shampoo, and **that** the bathtub in the Peace Hotel, Peking, is stamped "**Shanks** Victoria Works"; you learn how the Chinese count (no **millions**), and how **they** deal with a visitor who has a cold, **there** are dissertations **on Chinese** shopping, Chinese **agriculture**, and the **whole** economy of the region of **Yenan**. And not the least important, there are 27 lovingly **catalogued** menus.

But in a dry aside, Dr. **Wilson** **re-**minds **us** that tours such as **his** **are** all **carefully** programmed for the "Foreign Friend":

The three Finns were there again. The traveller in China moves in predestinate grooves, and familiar forms keep appearing and disappearing on their well-regulated tracks with the suddenness of tin ducks in a shooting gallery.

This oblique observation makes the point, though Dr. Wilson does not dwell on it, that China is a regimented country, a closed **society**. Not, perhaps, a police state, but undoubtedly a tyranny. Only one flower **blossoms** in China today.

A threat? Dr. Wilson **is** inclined to take the peaceful protestations of his hosts at face value, and he is possibly right to do **so**. But he sets against that an ambiguous prediction that may be read either as a **grim** omen or a token of hope:

Anything the Japanese have done, the Chinese are capable of doing

eightfold, and it would be the greatest folly to underestimate their possible achievements during the next fifty years."

Politics aside, *Unglazed China* makes **amusing**, leisurely reading, and it is **very** likely to dissolve most, if not all, of your **Yellow** Peril nightmares. □

*Richard Lubbock is a Toronto writer, broadcaster, photographer and polymath.*

## SOUTH WINDY

MONODROMOS

MARIAN ENGEL

House of Anansi  
cloth \$7.95; 249 pages

reviewed by Margaret Hogan

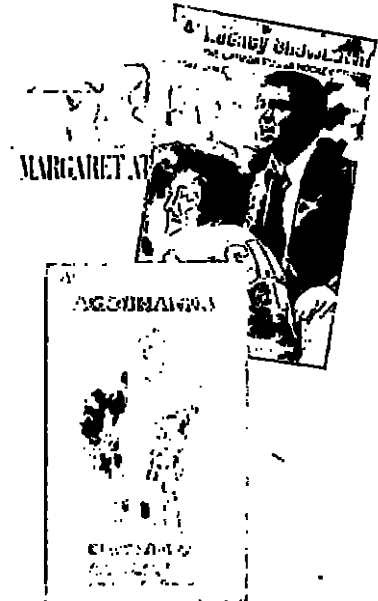
**THE** INVITATION to Byzantium comes in the form of a cable. **Audrey** Moore, mistress of **sickly** poet Max **Magill**, employee of the ubiquitous Pye Information Ltd., **is** also the ex-childhood companion, **ex-wife** of **Lafcadio** Moore, familiarly known as Laddie. **Laddie** is 40, failed, queer, without **sufficient funds** and washed up, beached in Byzantium — in this case a Greek-Turkish **island** to which Audrey is summoned from England.

*Monodromos*, Marian Engel's third novel, takes its title from the Greek lettering of the sign on the street where Laddie lives, in a few **reconditioned** cells of an old **caravanserai**, and where **Audrey** goes to stay. One **Way** Street, the sign also says in English. **Which** is where the **English** population of the island **town is** at; and where somehow Audrey is at, although she at least has a tendency to move about, even if her grid-oriented **bump** of direction (she's a fugitive from Canada, of course) tends to take her **in** circles through the round Middle **Eastern** town.

**Partly** out of curiosity and a **feeling** for the **town**, partly to escape from the house and pass the time until Max's **promised** visit. Audrey sets out to explore, to discover, the town, and — for Max — who has **arcane** sensibilities — she launches a search of sorts for an

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island animal-God, the **ikon** of a dog-headed saint. This odyssey is at **first conducted** by day, then by night after Laddie's door becomes the haunt of a toothless old **crone** who bars Audrey's way, hunching every day, all day, on the step "ululating... lamenting my sins... a witch escaped from a fairy tale: one's sleazy conscience come to life."

By dark. Audrey spends a lot of tie at the house of **Aphroulla**, one of a **splendid gallery** of peripheral **characters** in the **novel**. An islander of many appetites who has studied **painting in Paris**, **Aphroulla** tells Audrey: "On **this** island, we interpret every situation by saying slowly, slowly. Impatience **makes life difficult.**"

Well, yes. But patience isn't always rewarded. For Audrey, Byzantium is a bummer; for a hopeful admirer of **Marian Engel, Monodromos** a disappointment "Do you **find** us **more** like **South Wind, The Rock Pool, or The Alexandria Quartet?**" one of the characters inquires of Audrey. The question is rhetorical. but is **Marian Engel** inviting comparisons? Certainly the time has come to stop measuring our Canadian novelists against each **other**. And if **Monodromos** is no **South Wind** (and I don't mean to imply any such intent on the author's part), there are at least faint echoes of **Norman Douglas**: the slightly dippy, **dilletante**, expatriate cast of characters marooned in an island **setting**; the **unlikely** saints; the literary, linguistic, antiquarian allusions; the debilitating heat. AU this, however, is **superficial** stuff.

At what is really a petty level of cdticism, **Monodromos** is marred by some self-conscious cross-references to Canada that don't quite come off; comparisons 'dealing with islanders who are "as bad as **Torontonians** about tearing buildings down ("Half old **Magosa** went to build the sides of the Suez **Canal**") seem a bit overstated. There's "too much **landscape** and too much **architecture**". a fault Audrey herself finds with a thriller she is amusing **herself** by writing. And there are those damn literary, linguistic and antiquarian allusions that are also too much, too frequent and too show-off, really.

The main disappointment of **Monodromos**, however, lies in its peculiar

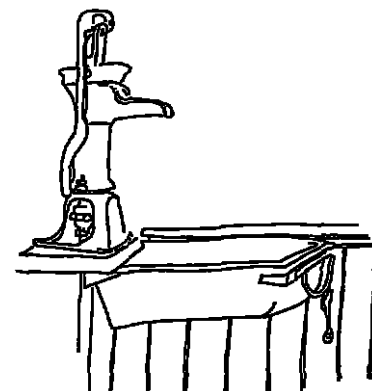
two-fold lack of spirit. **Audrey, dragging herself through dreary days, comes to nothing more than the half-hearted** realization that it's time to go, time to leave Laddie to his young **paramour** (who is the embodiment of the **ikon** Audrey has been seeking), time to return to nothing in England. She learns, presumably, that "to be an outsider is to waste your life", although one suspects that England, to judge by the way she views it, has taught her this already.

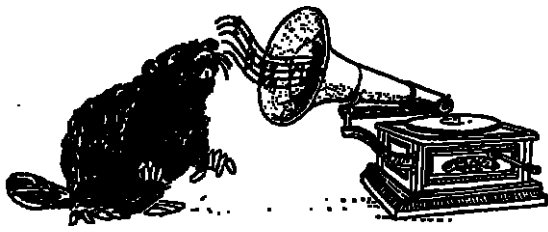
For me, Audrey's lack of spirit is maddening. One gets tired of fiction in **which** nobody bothers to ask any questions, never **mind** look for **answers**; in which nobody goes anywhere in the psychological or spiritual sense, because there's nothing but ennui to be found; where everybody just wallows around dispiritedly in their own **nobody-ness**, joylessness and bleakness.

Further, **even** if one can't really legitimately fault a writer for writing the book she chooses to write, and even if **Audrey is intended to lack spirit**, no character in a novel should lack life. This is **Marian Engel's** failure. How can the reader care, become involved in an Audrey who by and **large** lies numbly, inert. on the page? A woman who seems devoid of any **emotional** content whatever? All **the colours** have turned to **grey**, Audrey says when she learns of **Max's** death, but **it's** almost impossible to believe in any stained glass in **Audrey's windows**.

And if **Audrey is maddening, for whatever reasons, it's perfectly infuriating** that **Marian Engel**, whose intelligence, style and perceptions illuminate every page of **Monodromos**, hasn't **pulled it off.** □

Margaret Hogan is an editor and critic for the *Toronto Globe* and Mail.





# THE SPOKEN WORD

## WHOLLY MOSES

### LOVE SONGS

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### LAYTON

IRVING LAYTON

Caedmon Records  
LP \$5.95

reviewed by Susan Swan

AS A YOUNG MAN, Leonard Cohen admired Irving Layton. He was considered his protégé. Pupil went on to challenge master, and it's now said that neither cherishes the early connection. The connection is them though, not so much in their verses but in their beliefs that have generated much of what can be called great hi Canadian poetry.

Both poets are evangelists despite their Jewish background. They are on the offensive; they attack and batter while Jewish tradition has been to protect and r&force; where Jews have guarded against assimilation, Layton and Cohen are out to proselytize. They are circuit preachers, bloodied by the truth of contradictions.

In this album, Layton describes the universe as "antinomial", a space where opposites coexist. It is in this coexistence that truth lies, so Layton claims: and the same goes for Cohen, who investigates the tension of a contradictory world. One moment he is the murderer, the next the victim, and so on. Expressed in different ways, the message is still identical — embrace the joy and pain, the good and evil with all the passion in your soul.

The evangelical dominates Cohen's latest album, *Live Songs*. It is a rol-

licking, thigh-slapping collection of nine songs written by Cohen in the last three years. Not all the songs are rowdy. There is Cohen's famous "Bird on the Wire" and a few others with the familiar, mournful sounds of earlier songs like "Suzanne".

But the best song on the album, "Please Don't Pass Me By", takes up nearly half of side two and it's a masterpiece of gospel music. Playing hi acoustic guitar, Cohen begins by describing an experience in New York. Walking along, he meets a blind man with a cardboard placard that says "Please Don't Pass Me By For I Am Blind But You Can See". This becomes the refrain that Cohen pumps into the frenzy of a revival meeting. At first, Cohen says it seemed like all of New York was a city of handicapped persons; echoing the blind man's words. Then he realizes he also is saying it — a discovery that prompts the poet to confess his human weakness and ends with Cohen urging everybody to do likewise. "I can't stand who I am, I have to get down on my knees because I can't make it by myself," Cohen shrieks and the audience goes wild with clapping and singing.

"Passing Thru" is another sing along, this time in the country-and-western style. It follows the poet's introduction, in which he promises to heal "all dissension and pain" with his music. "Tonight Will Be Fine" is mom C&W with Cohen the cowboy preacher seemingly a culture away from the quavering sensibilities of a poetic temperament.

Some of the songs were used in "Sisters of Mercy", the 90-minute musical review of Cohen's work that ran this summer at Niagara-on-the-Lake. The show was poorly attended and closed a month early, but it shouldn't reflect on the album. "Please Don't Pass Me By" is enough on its own to make the record a bestseller.

There are 35 poems on Irving Layton's new album based on his



The buffalo motif is from a sixteenth century European sketch based on accounts of early explorers to North America.

## STONY PLAIN

Eli Mandel

Eli Mandel

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PRESS PORCÉPIC  
70 Main St., Erin, Ont., Canada

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Mandel prefers the "bruised eye" of the poet to the deathly accuracy of the camera and hi bruised eye scans the stony plains of contemporary politics and culture with immense interest and compassion.

latest book, *The Collected Poems*, Layton has never made any bones about being a preacher man; his is the real fire and brimstone stuff. But unlike Cohen, it's easy to imagine Layton without an audience. He could be an Old Testament prophet, a wild, unkempt figure braying holy messages to the moon or desert sands with the fanatic's confidence that, in time, his words will reverberate through the universe.. With biblical fervour like that, what else is left for the audience except to hear and repent?

The subject range of the album is standard Layton — love, sex, beauty, loss of innocence, old age, a Rhine boat trip, the statuettes of Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the Church of Notre Dame, and soon. An apocalyptic poem, "The Improved Binoculars", shows Layton's fundamentalist beliefs. From a high place, with a special pair of binoculars (the eyes of a poet), Layton claims to see the world below in flames, raging with hate and hypocrisy. In spite of the horror, Layton, in some of his other poems such as "The Fertile Muck", says he manages to extract

beauty and goodness. It is an anti-nominal universe. Cohen and Layton are preacher men. They salute the saint and the sinner in each of us, in themselves. Poetry will save our souls. Amen. □

*Susan Swan, a freelance writer and broadcaster, is presently experimenting in short fiction.*

## AL LOCUTIONS

### AL PURDY'S ONTARIO

AL PURDY  
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*reviewed by Kelly Wilde*

STRANGE THAT IN this age of Realism, two of the sillier romantic

left-overs should still bum on every stove:

1. Poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity.

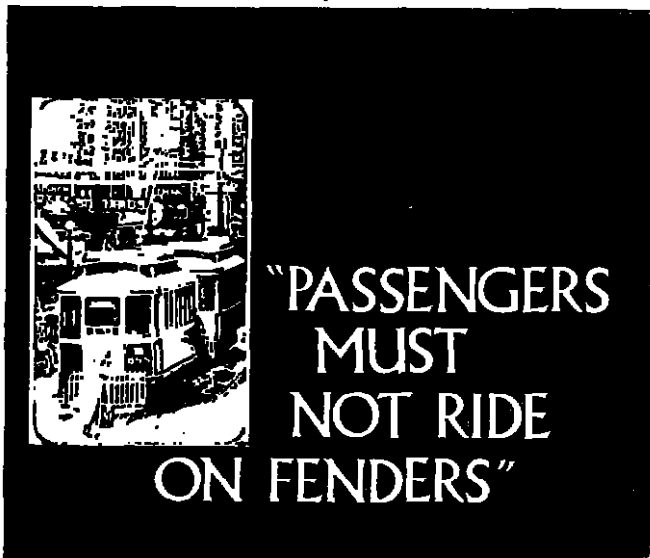
2. The language of the common man is where the action is.

The first, it's true, has been consistently misconstrued until it now means that poetry is emotion disconnected in futility (until it can be read in one's sleep).

As for the second, Wordsworth could not have taken it literally any more than Jefferson actually believed that all men are created equal. Certainly, at his best he was deaf to himself in one ear. Yet Jefferson spawned a nation and Wordsworth yawned a notion that simply will not quit.

Beneath the tougher, modern trap-pings Al Purdy's *Ontario* sounds regrettably like a sequel to the "Bon of the Sons of Wordsworth, Canadian Edition, 1971". It seems fair, since the poems themselves have been reviewed so often, to deal with the record as a performance. The fact is that Purdy sounds like any one of a score of lesser talented poets at a Canlit jam session.

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by  
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There is the same **prosy, wilfully anti-poetic** tone (with the odd lyrical flight thrown in to prove he **could** if he wanted to); the same self-conscious tongue-in-cheek' detachment, or the tough shell and tired sigh, the modern romantic's bodyguards.

The poems sound bloodless when he **reads** them — not that all poets must be great actors, or even fully **understand** what they've written. But you'd think that if the experience that led to the poem had been honestly lived, and faithfully recorded, that the reading **would** project a small part of the passion. The **reading sounds sincere** (no, he's not putting us on), **but** not totally **faithful** to "the **original**". (Can he really be that coy about his "genius"? Is he **really** being ironic? **Doés** he really feel so ho-hum about money, so passive and plaintive — or doesn't he sometimes want to scream?)

This is, of course, a record about Ontario, about the places and people the poet has seen, where he's been and what he's done for a large part of his life. But listen to the tone — there is no **feeling** of place. **Robbin Lake** and **Amelianburg**, in the end, **are** little more than occasions for poems. If any life went into the writing **of** the living of these names, the reading is a riddle of silence.

The performance, when not **self-conscious, tends to be solipsistic**: that quiet mumble of a man talking to himself. There is none of the **electricity** of an involved, dynamic performance; not a spark of genuine communication.

We realize as we listen the agony of the artist today: the loss **of** the sense of audience. (Are you out there? Where? Who are you?) There is no easy way out, some will struggle and fall, gone **crazy** on their echoes. A few may "have it made" — and know who their people are. Most will have to take the bull by the tail before getting a half-decent reach for the horns: their own self-consciousness. More time and effort spent on reading and performance skills (that is, concern for their longed-for ideal **audience**) would be a strong beginning. □

**Kelly Wilde, who came to Canada from his native Buffalo five years ago, is at present working on both a novel and the journal of a long winter's exile in Grand Bend.**

# SELVES CONDEMNED

DAVID STERNE

MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS  
(translated by DA VID LOBDELL)  
McClelland and Stewart  
cloth \$5.95; 96 pages

reviewed by Beverley Smith

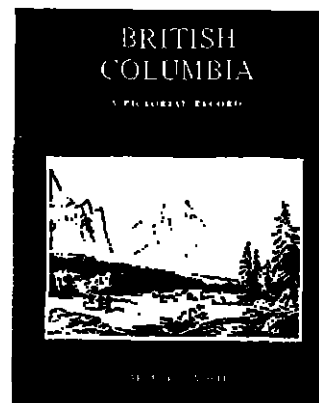
IN THIS BOOK, published in the **original French in 1967**, Marie-Claire Blais **continues** her use of **the poetic novel** form initiated with **La Belle Bête in 1959**. The form, an amalgam of her accomplished poetry and the pure prose of such a **work as Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel (1965)**, consists of loosely-organized sections of prose alternating **with free-form verse**. **David Sterne**, however, leaves the reader with the distinct impression that this marriage of **prose and verse** is an uneasy one, **and that Mlle Blais** herself is uncertain in which genre to continue.

Even the characters and themes of **David Sterne** seem mildly annoying and repetitious to a reader acquainted with **Mlle Blais'** earlier works.

The rebel anti-hem who indulges in **the first-person monologue** of the novel's early sections takes on, this time, the character of a thief. An outlaw **from society and from the proper upbringing** he has received at the hands of **middle-class** parents and **well-meaning** seminarians, David has, as comrade in vice and crime, a friend named Michael Rameau who eventually ends his life by jumping from the seminary's bell-tower, in a public act of self-destruction.

Another "spiritual" companion, a student activist by the name of **François Reine**, sets himself fatally on fire, disillusioned with life and the state of the world around him. Each of the three is, in his own way, a **martyr-figure** who masochistically revels in self-torture and **the final**, definitive act; each refuses to accept the compromise of living in a decaying world that fills him with disgust and horror.

Unfortunately, such an obsession with sickness, disease and self-



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destruction seems **characteristic, not only of Mlle Blais' writing**, but of that of many of her Quebec **contemporaries as well**.

Moreover, the **seminary** setting of *David Sterne* with its stalling routine, its perverted "spiritual advisors", and its vice-ridden inhabitants — interesting as it may be — has already been dealt with by Mlle Blais, at some length, in *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*. Its inclusion, then, in *David Sterne* seems somewhat **superfluous**, if not overdone.

Dialogue fragments, in broken verse, of the voices of the "just" calling David to order, are interspersed with his monologue, as the priests, the various members of David's family, the judge who tries him for theft and rape, and his women friends all try to reason with him and lead him back to the path of righteousness.

Despite the many weaknesses *David Sterne* reveals, it also confirms those positive qualities of Mlle Blais' writing that make her position important in present-day Quebec literature.

Her command of the French language is most apparent in the sections of poetry. In the passages that sing the exploits of her hero, she attains a pitch of lyricism that is reminiscent of the biblical psalms. At other moments, the "cage" images and the powerful, mood-creating **vocabulary** set the background of "entrapment" against which her anarchic hero lashes out. The brittle effect of **certain** sentences seems to echo the cold violence of David's self-derision, as in: "The threads of my life snap beneath the rusty blade of my laugh."

Combining the best and worst aspects of Ma&-Claire Blais' philosophy and style, *David Sterne* is a work that can, I think, be considered very **representative** of her writing — with all its contradictions and complexities. □

*Beverley Smith, a Montreal-born translator and writer, works at present as an editor with the Ontario Department of Education.*

# A FAN'S NOTES

## GARNEY HENLEY: A Gentleman and a Tiger

**ROBERT F. NIELSEN**  
Potlatch Publications  
paper \$3.95; illustrated; 188 pages.

reviewed by Jack Hutchinson

SO MANY football books in the last few years have threatened or promised to expose the evils of the game: drugs, **crazy sex**, racism, authoritarianism, and financial skulduggery. But Robert F. Nielsen is no LaVerne Barnes, Dave Meggyesy, Bernie Parrish, or even Mel Profit. In *Garney Henley: A Gentleman and a Tiger*, he has written an old-fashioned fan's book.

Now in saying that, I have no wish to sneer at Mr. Nielsen or his book, and there is no intention of denigra-



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### BRITISH ORDERS, DECORATIONS' AND MEDALS

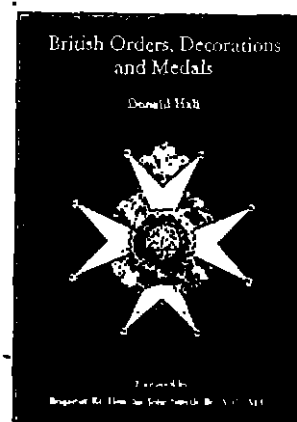
by Donald Hall, with a Foreword by Brigadier Rt. Hon. Sir John Smyth, Bt., V.C., M.C.

As with all militaria, the subject of British Orders, Decorations and Medals has steadily become one of considerable popular appeal. This book, for the first time, makes available full colour illustrations of virtually every Order, Decoration and Medal awarded to men and women of the British Isles and, in many cases, of the Commonwealth.

While there have been several specialist books on the subject of British Orders, Decorations and Medals, this book provides for a need which has not previously been met. The use of full colour illustrations throughout makes it unique and the text has been written with authority.

The practice of collecting medals as a hobby is one of absorbing interest and has grown enormously in the past few years. The book will be of great interest to the general public, to the experienced specialist and also to the new collector. In the campaign Medals section there is set out in very clear form a story of the achievements of British Arms over a period of nearly 200 years. Donald Hall is one of the greatest living experts in this field and he has made this text both interesting and informative. 96 pp., 9.25x7", over 100 ill. Fully case bound. \$8.95.

**of EDGED WEAPON OF THE THIRD REICH, 1933-1945** by Frederick Stephens. A superb and comprehensive book of 128 pages. 8.5x6", over 120 ill., drawings and coloured photos. Soft cover, \$6.35, hardcover, 9.56.



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ting either Gamey Henley or his (sometimes incredible) accomplishments on behalf of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. I suspect Mr. Nielsen is a fan himself.

But I am wondering who would want to read the book besides the football freak, the dyed-in-the-wool Ti-Cat booster, the people we suspect of wearing black-and-gold underwear year round and of only half-living between football seasons. Who else would have the slightest interest in the details of long-forgotten high-school basketball games between the Hayti Redbirds and such other powers as the Waubay Dragons and the White River Tigers — even in an event as prestigious as the South Dakota State Class “B” High School Championship Tournament?

Hamilton, of course, appears to be a city of football junkies, and it is even possible that enough of them can mad to care about all those obscure games worth remembering — if they are to be remembered at all — only because Garney Henley once played in them.

Anyway, Nielsen tells the complete Henley athletic story — in sometimes tedious detail — for those who are interested. It is all here, and more: including summaries of all Henley’s seasons with the Ti-Cats since 1960; what appears to be a transcript of a taped conversation between Henley and his wife; and, to my mind the most interesting section of the book, a chapter entitled “What It’s Really Like Out There”, which seems to have been written or dictated by Henley himself. There are tributes from team-mates, rivals, coaches, and sportswriters; and fan letters from children, girls, adults and George McGovern. In short, what we have here is Garney Henley’s athletic scrapbook, reworked into a nice little book that will undoubtedly appeal (as I’ve said) to the fan.

There are more than two dozen pages of pictures, most of them excellent. The typography and layout are attractive. Need I add that it’s already a best-seller in Hamilton and district.

*Jack Hutchinson, a native of Moose Jaw, who in his time has played football for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, supervised, produced and written programs for the CBC, acted and made films, now uses Toronto as his base.*

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*Poetry is everywhere,  
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In the hyssop on the wall,  
In the wandering Arab's tent,  
In the backwoods settlement;  
Have we but the hearing ear,  
It is always whispering near,  
Have we but the heart to feel it,  
AU the world will reveal it.*

-Alexander McLachlan, *The Emigrant* (1861)

IF IN THE world of letters, book reviewing is only one cut above writing ad copy, at least the compensations provided by each of these two lowly trades are wholly different. Copy-writing pays well. Book reviewing finagles you into perusing material you would otherwise never have read, guides you to what is ancient or recondite or unfashionable, and bullies you into acknowledging its often considerable worth. Result: paycheques for the heart and wits.

Take the NCL's "Poets of Canada" series. Specifically, the volumes titled *Poets of the Confederation* and *Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems* uninvitingly packaged in the familiar NCL manner, overpriced when compared with similar U.S. anthologies, promising page after page of Bliss Carman and Isabella Valancy Crawford (who?), they appear no more appealing than athlete's foot. crack them open, though, and your indifference is undone. You are disarmed by the poems themselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

### *Poets of the Confederation.*

Edited by Malcolm Ross;  
130 pages, \$1.50.

Around the time Sir John was building his railroad, other men were hammering wordspikes, lining tracks of their own across this unknown country. The best of them were the four whose work is represented in this volume: Charles G.D. Roberts, Blii Carman, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott.

AU four are thought to owe too much to the methods and habits of mind of better poets in other places. Labelled "The Maple Leaf School" of Canadian poetry, they are disparaged and ignored. Yet, as Malcolm Ross suggests in his introduction to this volume, they borrowed no more from their exemplars than our newest poets do from Eliot, Auden and Robert Graves. Nor are they any less unique:

"Then as now, voices are heard with individual accent (Lampman, Layton, Carman, Klein -- not one of them sits on the ventriloquist's knee)."

Carman is "a lyrical impressionist whose images project ecstatic feeling". Try as I may, I just can't stomach such swooning stuff as Carman produces in *Songs from Vagabondia*, *The Green Book of the Bards*, *Songs of the Sea Children* and *Sappho*. From "The Joys of the Open Road":

*A taster of wine with an eye for a maid,  
Never too bold, and never afraid,  
Never heart-whole, never heart-sick,  
(These are the things I worship in Dick)*

Fortunately, the work of Carman's cohorts is much tougher stuff.

Roberts, born in 1860 in New Brunswick, has a painter's eye and the pure religious feeling of an acolyte. In "The Sower", he describes the measured stride and heavy face of a stolid farm labourer, but concludes: "This plodding churl grows great in his employ -- /Godlike, he makes provision for mankind." Even some of Roberts' titles make miniature poem\*. "In the Wide Awe and Wisdom of the Night" and "When Mary the Mother Kissed the Child" are somehow medieval in rhythm and diction and function in the same way as Malcolm Lowry's "Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place".

Archibald Lampman, born a year later than Roberts; graduated from Trinity College, University of Toronto, became a clerk in the Post Office Department, and died in his 39th year. He crafts his poems with an excellence at once more truly inspired and more disciplined than any of his three contemporaries. Here is the concluding stanza of Lampman's "The Frogs":

*Morning and noon and midnight exquisitely,  
Rapt with your voices, this alone we knew,  
Cities might change and fall, and men might die,  
Secure were we, content to dream with you  
That change and pain are shadows faint and fleet,  
And dreams are real, and life is only sweet.*

Though his poetic techniques are those of another century, Lampman's self-requesting persona still intrigues us, his ideas and images still attract.

# SERIES ○ NEW CANADIA

reviewed by ISSI

Duncan Campbell Scott, an Ottawa native, remained in the city he thought "too bright for guile, too young for tears", to become an administrator with the Department of Indian Affairs. Of his poems reproduced in his volume, it is those set in the forests and in the tipi villages that are most successful. "On the Way to the Mission",





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c Bickerstaff

"Thee Forsaken", "Night Burial in the Forest", and "At Cull Lake: August, 1810" are sombre songs of tomahawk death and ritual tragedy. This segment from "At Gull Lake" is reminiscent of some of Michael Ondaatje's latter-day grotesqueries:

*At the top of the bank  
The old wives caught her and cast her  
down*

*Where Tabshaw crouched by his  
camp-fire.  
He snatched a live brand from the  
embers,  
Seared her cheeks,  
Blinded her eyes,  
Destroyed her beauty with fire,  
Screaming, "Take that face to your  
lover."  
Keejigo held her face to the fury  
And made no sound.  
The old wives dragged her away  
And threw her over the bank  
Like a dead dog.*

All things considered, three good poets out of four is more than you can reasonably expect from most anthologies. The collective, achievement of Roberts, Lampman and Scott, those lyric gandy-dancers, is quite as impressive still as the railway, now so heavily subsidized, Sir John built.

• \*\*\*\*

## Nineteenth Century Narrative Poems

Edited by David Sinclair;  
190 page, \$2.50

Herein, six long narratives: Oliver Goldsmith's *The Rising Village* (1834), Joseph Howe's *Acadia* (1874), Charles Sangster's *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay* (1856), William Kirby's *The U.E.: A Tale of Upper Canada* (1859), Alexander McLachlan's *The Emigrant* (1861), and Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie* (1884).

"The poets here," David Sinclair tells us, "all felt the pentecostal urge described by Bishop Mountain; the reaction to the new land, its challenge, its beauty, its inhabitants and their institutions must be voiced above the roar of cataracts, the whoop of savages, the wild beasts' cries, even the busy hum of the rising cities." Most of them strive to express the Canadian pioneer experience in epic terms, to stress the heroic in man's daily activity. In this unheroic age, when Beowulf designs computers and Sir Gawain sells real estate, these innocent narratives are a delight to read.

The best of them, to my mind, is Malcolm's Katie. Yet each of the others has sufficient charm to sustain the reader's interest through several pages of verse. Goldsmith, for instance, is occasionally satiric, as when he describes the "half-bred" village doctor who "cures, by chance, or ends

each human ill", and the teacher, "some poor wanderer of the human race,/ Unequal to the task... Whose greatest source of knowledge or of skill/ Consists in reading, and in writing ill". Howe's *Acadia* limns the New World in rhyming couplets, while Sangster, as every epic writer should, devotes two stanzas to wooing his muse.

It's interesting to find Kirby's ap-  
praisal of Toronto so similar to one's  
own:

*There, Legislation holds her high de-  
bate;  
And Freedom stands the guardian Of  
the state;  
In spotless ermine, Justice sits  
supreme,  
And lifts the scales of law with even  
beam.  
While rich in future hopes, in  
memories past,  
Toronto's glorious destiny k cast;*

As for McLachlan, his pioneer history is peopled with a gallery of stalwarts and rogues: "There was doubting John, the teacher,/ Spouting Tom, nicknamed the preacher,/ General John, the mechanician,/ Lean lank Tom, the politician,/ Lazy Bill, the bad news bringer,/ Little Mac, the jocund singer. There was Aleck, the divine,/ Bristly as the porcupine."

Before I read it, I'd always imagined Malcolm's Katie to be the autobiography of a mule. But no, it's a love story, a variation on the eternal triangle theme, involving Katie and her two suitors, Max and Alfred. And it's exciting stuff:

*Max, gaunt as prairie wolves in  
famine time  
With long-drawn sickness, reel'd upon  
the bank -  
Katie, new-rescu'd, waking in his  
arms.  
On the white riot of the waters  
glean'd  
The face of Alfred, calm, with close-  
seal'd eyes,  
And blood red on his temple where it  
smote  
The mossy timbers of the groaning  
slide.*

Who is Malcolm, then? Why, he's Katie's father who, by poem's end, sits on Max and Katie's trellised porch, "Upon his knee a little smiling child".

*Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems* is no more expensive than your average first-run movie and I guarantee it's quite as entertaining. Besides, you can pass it along to a friend. □



# TO A FULL STOP

## ONE COSMIC INSTANT

JOHN LIVINGSTON  
*McClelland and Stewart*  
 cloth \$7.95: 243 pages

reviewed by *Clarence Tillenius*

**THE MOST** frightening fact in the world today most sorely be the **explosive** population of human beings. John Livingston quotes figures: "From an absolute **maximum** of perhaps **10 million** during Pleistocene pre-history, **the** numbers of people jumped to at least **50 million** by classical times ... by the time of **Christ**, to between 200 and 300 million ... **By 1650** ... about 500 million ... **By 1890** we had reached our first **billion** ... Today we stand at **approximately 3.1 billion**. By 1980 (world **population**) could easily be **6,000,000,000**."

Can mankind find room on the planet? It is known that overcrowding among animals causes stress and severe mental disorders. However, man — with his superior intelligence? — can perhaps overcome this threat.

But will there be food enough? Will life be worth living on an overcrowded globe? Already smog, air and water pollution have reached frightening levels in the great industrial cities. In the southern United States the falling water table is disquieting.

Only a scant year ago the vast herring fishery that was the mainstay of Iceland's economy ceased to be; the herring were gone. Today Iceland appeals to the United Nations to keep other fishing nations outside a 50-mile limit so that she may survive. Britain, in turn, sends armed warships to convey her own trawlers into the cod-fishing waters off Iceland's coast, defying the threats and pleas of the Icelanders, since Britain's own economy is hurting.

The world population of whales shrinks yearly under the onslaught of the whalers; policing may not be ef-

fective until the whales, too, are gone.

The signs all point to a cosmic instant when man may suddenly be made aware he has exceeded his ability to cope with forces in the universe he has never understood. If that tie comes, it may be Rangoarok for the race of homo sapiens.

Is John Livingston optimistic about man's chances? No one can call him mealy-mouthed. I quote him again: "Vasectomy — male sterilization — is suggested as the best contraceptive device. It is not very encouraging, however, on the basis of a little mental arithmetic. Generally, the operation takes about half an hour. An eight-hour day, with an hour off for lunch, represents 14 vasectomies per surgeon per day. A team of three surgeons, working around the clock on eight-hour shifts, could perform 42 operations per day. Let us imagine further a clinic with 10 operating tables and 30 surgeons, and our count comes to 420 sterilizations per day. Assuming no holidays or days off for this dedicated team, we come up with 153,300 operations per year. How many clinics

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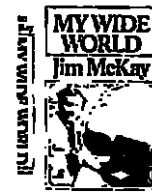
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of 30 surgeons would be needed to, **take** care of even **one** tenth of the world's estimated **1,850,000,000** males?

Man has already exceeded the "carrying capacity" of planet Earth for his species, and in so doing he has crushed the life from species that, in the Pleistocene, were his brothers. There has been a breakdown in homeostasis. Despite the brash confidence of **those** who promote **agricultural** technology and the "Green Revolution:" and despite the best intentions of those who call for the re-distribution of wealth and food, nothing is working:

In his historic address to the United Nations in 1965, Pope Paul said (in translation): "**Your task is to ensure that bread is sufficiently abundant on the table of humanity, and not to favour artificial control of births, which would be irrational, in order to diminish the number of guests at the banquet of life.**" **Life in underprivileged countries is no banquet. His Holiness notwithstanding. Also, no banquet was ever crashed by a babe in arms: it is seared into my memory that the dying Guatemalan infant did not ask to be there.**

Not light-hearted reading, this book of **Livingston's ...** but a book full of disquieting thoughts, of provocative insights into a more foreboding cosmos **than we** usually allow ourselves to think about.

How else **than** with apprehension can one read a paragraph such as **this:**

**The hope for survival of nonhuman nature is dim. There is a familiar scenario. As conditions worsen for human populations - as they will, initially, in underprivileged parts of the world - every ounce and erg of our most refined technological skills and energies will be brought into play to extract from Earth and its non-human inhabitants the basic ingredients for human survival. We will first destroy all of the larger animals, either for meal or because they compete with us for space, together with those which may be intolerant of our activities because of their specific natural specializations. Extinction of nonhuman species, without replacement, will continue at an accelerating rate, until the only nonhuman living beings remaining will be those who are willing to share their squalor with us - rats, gutter curs, and parasites and micro-organisms that thrive in times of environmental dislocation."**

**Clarence Tilenius is a painter with a special interest in wilderness and wild animals. His work includes dioramas for several Canadian museums - one of them the Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg, where he lives.**



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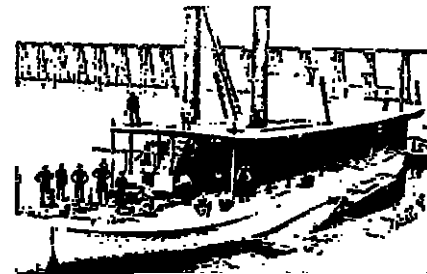
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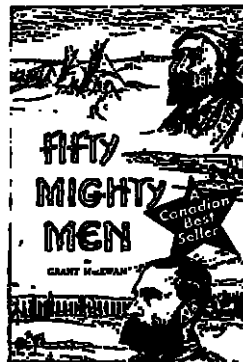


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# HOT OFF THE TOP

## ANNALS OF THE FIREBREATHER

**MARCEL HORNE**  
Peter Martin Associates  
cloth \$8.95; 180 pages

reviewed by Howard Engel

THE TURNING point in Marcel Home's life came when he followed an old gypsy to New Mexico to learn from him the secrets of firebreathing. Painfully he discovered that there were no tricks or shortcuts, that the art was a matter of learning how to control and distribute pain. It was a toughening up process; the fingers, the lips, mouth and tongue had to become hardened.

In a way, too, Home's earlier life has been part of this hardening process, part of the preparation that led to his being known as El Diabolo, the proprietor and chief exhibit of his "Circus of Wonders".

He was born in Canada or Switzerland, according to whichever of his two passports you happen to be looking at, and grew up in Leamington, Ontario's cannery row. He dropped out of highschool and into poolrooms, and street comer gangs and petty crime. He was in and out of prison several times before he was 20.

He possessed a drifter's drive to be where he wasn't. I lost track of the number of times he hitch-biked across the continent, only to turn around and head back again. He mixed with bums, beatniks, hippies, speed freaks and pushers, and was at one time or another all of these. He made friends with carnival people and the carnival became a touchstone in his chaotic life. He learned to run a sideshow and how to wire an electric chair so that it will illuminate light bulbs without executing the girl holding them. Making the whole arcane volume of carny lore his own, he topped his education when he learned the art of firebreathing.

In this unusual autobiography, Home traces his own progress out of the drunk tanks, the harsh reality of sleeping rough in skid-road doorways, mooching and stealing to stay alive, to the relative success and stability of headlining a night club act, and waiting for the diaper service to call.

In Marcel Home there lives something of Matthew Arnold's Scholar Gypsy. You remember the poor Oxford student who abandoned his fellows, wallowing in the sick hurry and divided aims of modern life, and went to learn the gypsy lore. The lives of both of them serve as a rebuke to the square world. Arnold's gypsy disappeared without telling of the secrets he had learned. Marcel Horne, also a man "of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain" has been able to come back and tell the tale.

In spite of this, some will say that opening the book is like lifting up a stone to watch the maggots crawl away. There are plenty of maggots to be sure, but the act of observing life under a rock can be a rewarding experience if the observer is a Linnaeus or a Darwin. While Home is not a trained writer, he has rubbed his nose deeply into the scruff of life itself, and he has been able to get much of it down on paper without letting the rules of syntax or grammar get in his way. So often we miss the richness of a book like this because the publishers have put an amanuensis in the way of the reader. "As told to" books always read as though they were written with a towel over the keyboard: the whos and whom win out in the end. I give Mr. Home and his editors full marks for keeping the skin on this story, letting him tell it in his own way, and in his own language.

In his Introduction to *Annals of the Firebreather*, writer Jim Christie, to whom we owe a debt of thanks for discovering Home's manuscript and taking it to Peter Martin, says that the book may be regarded "as a sort of loser's Papillon." Marcel Horne may be a loser in the sense that he hasn't written a great book — he's not Dickens, and he's not Farley Mowat either — but he has helped to map this country at a level and in a way that few real writers are doing. I can almost feel the dust of the Prairie towns he

## "Musts" for '74

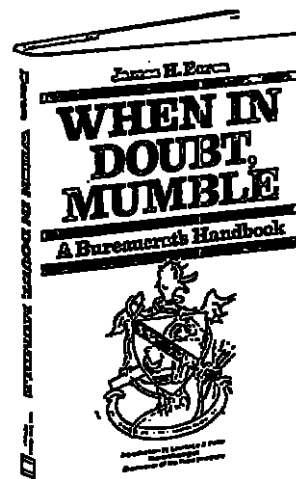
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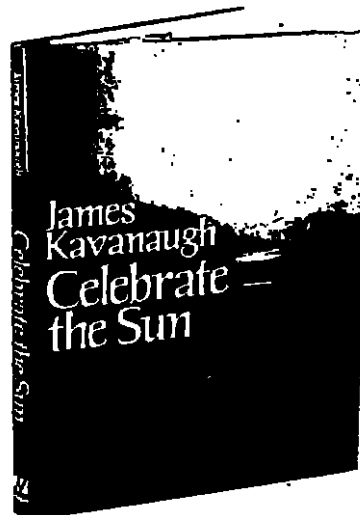
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*Howard Engel, a reformed hitchhiker, is the executive producer of two CBC radio programs about the arts.*

## PETER AND THE WORD

### HOME COUNTRY: People, Places and Power Politics

PETER C. NEWMAN  
McClelland & Stewart  
cloth \$ 7.95; 244 pages

reviewed by Jon Ruddy

THE FIRST, and almost the last, time I met Peter C. Newman, he, told me that Arthur **Hailey** was the greatest Canadian writer. **Having** got through Newman's own collection of magazine and newspaper articles, I can see that Hailey has influenced him. **Stylistically**, Peter Newman might almost be described as the Arthur **Hailey** of Canadian journalism.

There is the intricate but always predictable narrative. There are the **trite** figures of speech that make this prose so much worse than plain — Newman's apartment towers must "stab the sky". **There** is the irritant of self-indulgent **Time-isms**, usually allitensive: "brilliant, bespectacled", "**the** gullible **Gulliver** of the North". **There** is the **muddiness** of expression with its **constant** threat of total incomprehensibility.

Consider a **Newman** sentence, on Robert **Bourassa**: "He appears even younger than 36, a man so gaunt his neck muscles **are** taut and his Adam's apple juts out incongruously below a face whose eyes incongruously mirror the sensitivity of a nun." I suppose I have read that sentence 10 times. The effect of it is to **make** you want to put

Newman under a bright light and demand to know what the hell he **is** talking about. If **Bourassa** is really that skinny, why is it incongruous that his Adam's apple sticks out? Why has Newman —repeated the adverb? Are nuns more sensitive than anybody else? If **so, what** is the proof of it? Or is Newman flirting with sarcasm, suggesting that nuns are insensitive? What is this man trying to say?

One reads the book like a **man** plunging through a swamp, eyes **fixed upon** the **farther** shore.. Why are our political **writers**, with the exception of **Bain**, so **humourless**, so relentlessly pedestrian? Why can't some sprightlier pen take up **the** valid cause of Canadian nationalism before its present champions drive us into the arms of the Americans out of sheer boredom?

In his foreword, Newman describes Home **Country** as "the chronicle of a political education." What he has learned is "not **to** believe in magical leaders **any** more.. ." Good God! Nor was **this** "insight" easy for the editor of our national magazine' to grasp. The Newman **technique** has been to set up "**magical** leaders", then **knock** them **down**; his career is largely based on the gradual displacement of unbounded enthusiasm by weary diiillualonment. "What happened to the magic?" he quotes 'Canadians as asking of Trudeau. "Or more important, what happened to the man? Did he ever possess the qualities we endowed him with?" It is typical of Newman that he foists his own naivete on us all.

Newman's **success** is the result of his assiduous cultivation of **highly** placed personal contacts, determined reportorial **sniffing** and, most of all, ever **so** anonymous "leaks". His self-serving foreword quotes an unnamed privy **councillor** in the Pearson **government** describing the PM's "**inveighing** against" Newman at a Cabinet meeting. I for one **do not** believe that the late Mr. Pearson ever **seriously** "inveighed against" Peter C. Newman **during** his amiable administration. Newman never grasped the **man**, was incapable of catching his **self-deprecatory** style, his wry goodness.

A Newman strength **is eavesdropping**, and to the extent that he does so — and avoids fatuous **interpretation** —

the **collection** has the undeniable attraction of a" overheard tiff in the bedroom. By' far the best **thing in** it is a report of Mr. **Diefenbaker's** extraneous and pathetic **commentary** on the proceedings at the **Conservative** convention where Stanfield **secured** the leadership. One can see **Newma**" **squatting behind** the old Chief, tap ing his remarks on a Sony (or has this ambitious reporter mastered **Pitmann** shorthand?). Newman belongs there if he belongs anywhere, **concealed** in the stands, recording the petty show of Canadian politics. □

**Jon Ruddy, formerly of the Toronto Telegram and Maclean's currently a columnist with TV Guide, joins Books in Canada as associate editor with this issue. His first novel, The Running Ma", will be published by McClelland & Stewart.**

# OUT OF THE GARDEN

## THE BOOK OF EVE

CONSTANCE BERESFORD-HOWE  
Macmillan of Canada  
cloth \$6.95; 170 pages

reviewed by **Chris Scott**

AFTER 40 YEARS of marriage. the heroine of **Constance Beresford-Howe's** fifth novel walks out on her husband. Inevitably, she asks herself why, and answers: "Truly, I'm not sure **yet**, although my name is Eva." Truly, this reviewer is not sure yet, though he has asked **himself** what a writer like Samuel Beckett would have **made** of the situation.

Heroines in the **first** paragraph are seldom sure of their motives, but Eva spends a" entire novel trying to answer **that** question, **why** Is it **senescence**, perhaps? "This century and I are about the **same** age:" says Eva, "so it would be easy, if not really true, to say I'm a typical **twentieth-century** product of desiccated **moral** codes." No, that is not the voice of decrepitude, even though Eva's **first old-age**

pension **cheque** has arrived "like a hint."

Original sin? Hardly. Eva feels no guilt, feels nothing in fact — as if the primal mother had simply quit the garden without so much as breaking the lease. Atavism? Eva does take a copy of **Withering Heights** with her, though — so far at least — there has been no Heathcliff in her life. Sexual desuetude, then? Her husband is stricken with arthritis. "Caged up inside his pain:" he is ill-tempered, petulant, useless. But, **as** Eva explains in a" epistle to God: "It would have been different if my life before Burt got Arthritis had been full of **colour** and interest and the richness of loving and being loved." Whatever the "richness of loving and being loved" means, Eva clearly feels she has had none of it.

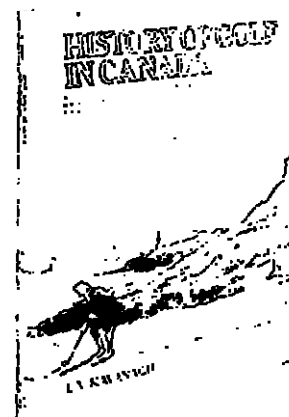
In the same letter, she informs the **deity** of **woman's** lot in life. **Does He realize** what submerged identities women like Eva have? Of **course** not. He is a man. "Unless You really are female after **all**, as the Women's Lib girls **insist**, even You can't know what it's like to be invisible for years on end."

The theological poiht is debatable. More problematical is the question of **fictional** credence. Eva's passive suffering throughout **her** marriage is well enough established. What is **not** established is the. reason — or indeed the character — behind **this** dismissal of what she has previously regarded as the unholy state of holy matrimony.

The fault is in the characterization. There is one **Eva** who is quirky, independent and tough — hardly the kind of woman to endure 40 years of connubial ennui. This Eva takes a basement mom in a seedy quarter of **Montreal**, spurns the blandishments of her **implacably** bourgeois son, and resists **all** offers of money and a holiday in Florida. She even **finds her Heathcliff, John Horvath, a Hungarian-Czech, who arrives one night, drunkenly and biliously, at the foot of Eva's stairs. Johnny, it transpires, is a deracinated intellectual who quotes Horace, cooks, and is a great lover.**

There is also another Eva, nostalgic and dreamy. **It is this Eva, describing an old affair with a schoolteacher colleague, who is capable of lines like:**

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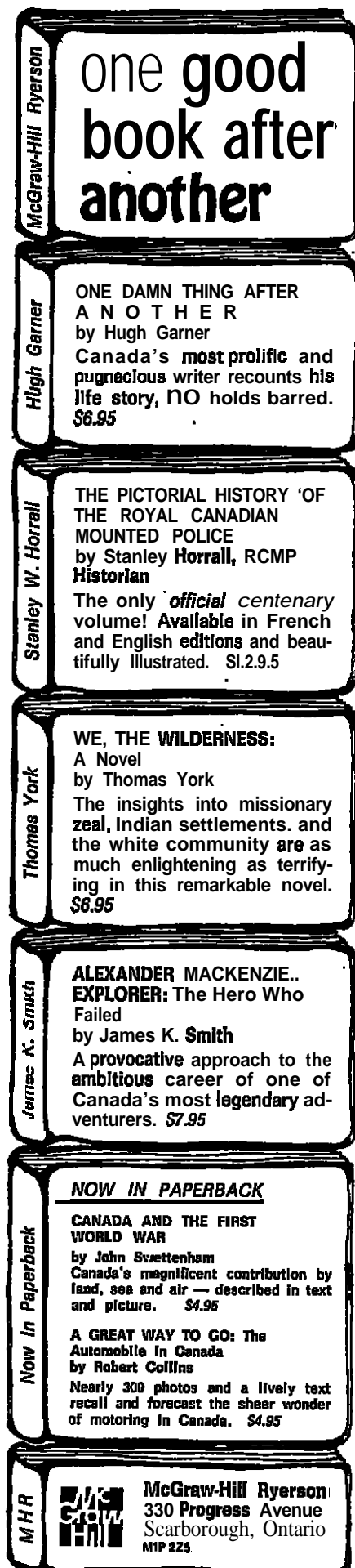
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"More than three weeks went by before I saw Pat again. Every hour of it like a year."

Or: "As for me, I didn't know what I wanted, I only felt my blood singing."

or: "I . . . lay awake a long time, tingling everywhere, in a whirl of confused, crazy hopes and other delusions. And that was, oh God, only the beginning —"

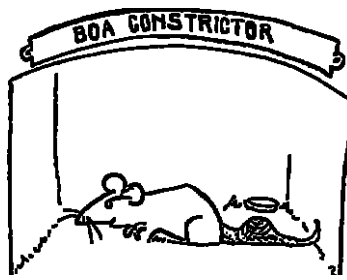
No doubt this singing and tingling, oh God, is meant to sound girlish; it reads exactly like a writer striving for that effect. There are other moments, too, when the narrative tone is off-key and the observation questionable. A chance encounter with her granddaughter leads Eva to this judgment: "I was thankful, for once, that like all her generation she was inept with words, as if they were an alien form of expression. But I'd forgotten the ruthless honesty behind this fractured syntax and vocabulary." **Pish!**

As for John Horvath, the gigolo from Pest, he has an inexplicable tendency to omit verbs from his speech. "Poor Johnny," one is expecting him to say; "Me no good Bohunk." He doesn't, of course-not quite.

All this is a great pity, for Constance Beresford-Howe has an excellent sense of atmosphere. The nuances of place and weather, the changing moods of the city and its people, these are superbly realized.

The Book of *Eve* ends optimistically. Jeanne Leblanc, a tenant in Eva's building, gives birth to a daughter. I suppose this is meant to be "life-affirming", the moral being that it is never too late to start life over again.

For a novel that is so obviously an essay into literary realism, *The Book of Eve* failed to suspend my disbelief. Or, to borrow a phrase from the ruthlessly honest users of fractured syntax. Constance Beresford-Howe does not tell it like it is. □



# LOVES LABOUR LOST

## ORGANIZED LABOR & PRESSURE POLITICS:

Canadian Labour Congress 1956-66

DA VID KWA VNICK  
McGill-Queen's University Press  
cloth \$12;

## CANADIAN LABOUR IN POLITICS

GAD HOROWITZ  
University of Toronto Press  
paper \$3.50;

## NATIONALISM,, COMMUNISM-AND CANADIAN LABOUR

IRVING MARTIN ABELLA  
University of Toronto Press  
cloth \$15, paper \$4.50;

reviewed by Walter Klepac

SINCE THE TIME of Marx, the left has viewed the labour union movement as the natural medium for instilling class consciousness and collective action among workers. To one extent or another, the unions were regarded as a necessary tool in socialism's ultimate victory over capitalism. In the case of Western industrialized countries, however, this alleged "radical potential" inherent in the organized Working class can hardly be said to have been realized; rather than bringing about revolutionary transformations in the economic, political and social order, the labour movement seems to have been absorbed into the existing industrial system. Three recent books on the labour-union movement in Canada this century go a long way in correcting this misconception. Firmly based on the assumption that organized labour has become an institution of vested interest and most exercise what political and economic influence it can within the framework of democratic capitalism,



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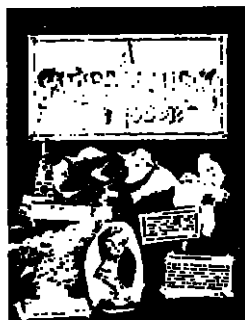
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It contains the work of distinguished *Saturday Night* editors like Edmund E. Sheppard and B.K. Sandwell, and the work of first-rate Canadian artists like Fred Varley and Arthur Lismer. *A Saturday Night Scrapbook* is about Mackenzie King, the Hupmobile, the Kaiser, Mazo de la Roche, the Bolshevik menace, Victory Bonds, the Lord's Day Alliance, and a wonderful new invention called the bicycle (see above). The book has an introduction by Robert Fulford which tells the magazine's history.

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these books will offer little comfort to doctrinaire leftists, new or otherwise.

Professor David Kwavnick's book-length study, *Organized Labour and Pressure Politics*, systematically examines the relationship between the Canadian Labour Congress and the federal government from 1956 to 1968 on the basis of the following premise: "The most important... organizational goals of the Congress are the preservation and continuing growth of the organization itself and the continuation of the leaders in their position of leadership." Kwavnick's comprehensive and dryly academic approach provides an overall perspective that dramatically undercuts the rhetoric of conflict and antagonism that has traditionally characterized discussions of labour relations with business and government. It is fortunate that, in breaking new ground, Kwavnick is able to state his case in an authoritative and convincing manner.

Kwavnick devotes the major part of the book to elaborating two concepts — legitimacy and mandate — that he believes underlie the motivation,

strategies and elaborate bureaucratic structures adopted by the CLC in carrying out its role as the recognized spokesman for organized labour in Canada.

The overwhelming conclusion one draws from the evidence marshalled in this study is that the position of the CLC is fundamentally a defensive one both in its dealings with the government and in its claim to represent organized labour. The Congress' initiative is limited to two areas, according to Kwavnick. It serves its affiliates, the majority of the large crafts and industrial unions in Canada, by acting both as a public-relations organization for the labour movement as a whole and as a lobby group whose membership on important advisory boards and committees and whose daily contact with government officials ensures that labour's interest will at least be heard. Furthermore, it is Kwavnick's contention that the CLC's lack of power over its affiliates and the fact that its larger affiliates are international unions who naturally look to the AFL-CIO as their trade-union centre,

significantly weaken its position as spokesman for labour when confronting the federal government on fundamental issues and in times of crisis. Kwavnick's numerous examples of such confrontations strongly suggests that the lordly demeanor and demagogic tendencies of American labour leaders such as George Meany and the young James Hoffa would hardly be in character for the members of the CLC executive. The Congress' pressure on the federal government for specific legislation is effective only when it happens to coincide with public opinion.

Gad Horowitz's *Canadian Labour in Politics (1968)* has recently been reissued in paperback by the University of Toronto Press. The book deserves a wider readership, even though it only partially succeeds in realizing its author's intentions. Horowitz sets out to explain why socialism succeeded in becoming a natural part of the political landscape in Canada while failing even to survive in the U.S. His highly intriguing theoretical account is based on ideas developed by Louis Hartz in

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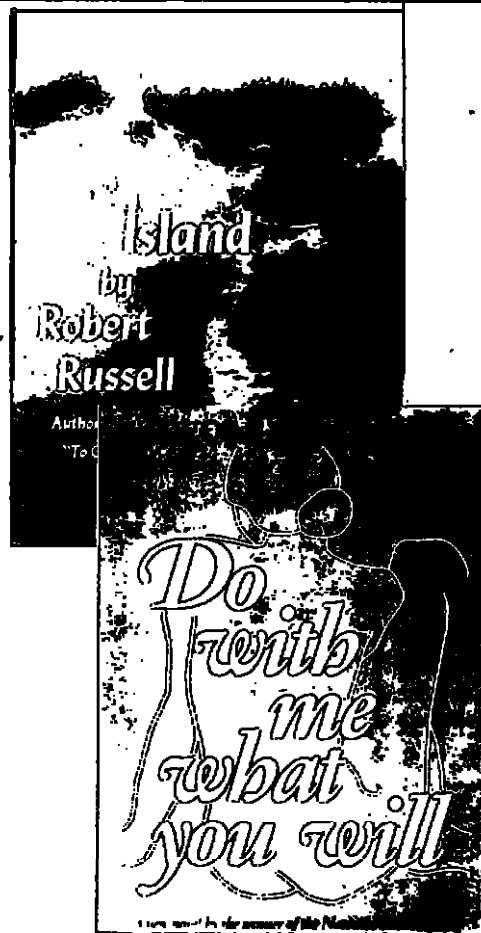
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his *The Liberal Tradition in America* and *The Founding of New Societies*. The rest of the book is a well-documented history of the evolution of the New Democratic Party out of the first **labour-oriented** political party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). This section is valuable in itself; as a concrete example of Horowitz's initial thesis, however, it is altogether misleading.

Ironically, professor Horowitz's incisive history of the CCF-NDP clearly demonstrates the step-by-step watering down of socialist ideology in the parties' **platform** and general philosophy in order to attract larger public support. The final chapters show that it is the **NDP's** relative success in winning elections to really matters to as-yet skeptical or uncommitted voters and not that party's socialist doctrine. The fate of the Waffle faction of the NDP is ample indication of what happens when party members take their **socialism** too seriously.

In his *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, I.M.* Abella provides a detailed account of the expulsion of the Communist **party members** from the Canadian **labour** movement and eventual domination of **that** movement by the large American-based international unions. Though Abella has no **favourite theories** to expound, he does come to two significant and, by now, well-known conclusions. The most famous is that despite the heroic efforts of Canadian organizers, (of whom many of the most competent **were** members of the Communist party) to unionized unskilled **industrial workers** throughout **the** country, the masses of Canadian **labourers** themselves felt that only the CIO had sufficient power and prestige to deal effectively with the large corporations and militantly **anti-labour governments** such as Mitch **Hepburn's** in Ontario. Abella's other finding is **that it was the close** ties of local Communists' to Moscow-formulated **policy** that **finally** proved **the** former's undoing.

Of the three books, Abella's by far offers the greatest insights into **the** mentalities and personalities behind the **labour-union** movement in Canada.

*Walter Klepac is a Toronto journalist specializing in economics, politics, and contemporary art.*

# MUSICALES

## BLUE IS THE COLOUR OF DEATH

DOROTHY FARMILOE  
paper: 31 pages

## KINDLING

LEONA GOM  
paper: 40 pages

## NO LINGERING PEACE

MAR VYNE JENOFF  
paper: 52 pages

## THE IMMACULATE WHITE FENCE

MARILYN CROWSHOE  
Fiddlehead  
paper \$0.50; 20 pages

## I AM WATCHING

SHIRLEY GIBSON  
Anansi  
paper \$2.95, cloth \$6.00; 58 pages

## OTHERS

CAROL SHIELDS  
The Borealis Press  
paper, unpriced: 60 pages

reviewed by Susan Zimmerman

MARGARET ATWOOD told an audience at the University of Toronto that she had found **Canadian** poetry an open field for women. Certainly there have been **many successful** female poets in **this** country, and their **number** is increasing. **Here are** six new books by **Canadian** women.

Two of them will be familiar to readers of Dorothy Livesay's 40 *Women Poets of Canada*: Dorothy Farmiloe and Leona Gom. **Two** years ago, in her **preface** to *Contra Verse*, Farmiloe listed some of the characteristics of the Windsor poets: "The rhythm of the speaking voice, use of current idioms, directness of presentation, an awareness of **what** is going on in the world beyond our own suffering souls." Now, in *Blue is the Colour of Death*, she proves how powerful such poetry can be. The book takes its title from a suite of 24 poems in which the writer **traces** the **gradual** conquest of nature by the forces of death. Blue is

Where to Eat in Canada 73/74  
by Anne Hardy

This is what the *Toronto Star* said about it: "Every traveller in Canada should carry a copy... All other guides are suspect as merely disguised advertising."

FPG: The European Years  
by Douglas O. Spettigue

In this remarkable book Professor Spettigue reveals the true identity of the Canadian novelist Frederick Philip Grove. This could be the most important literary biography ever published in Canada.

73: New Canadian Stories  
edited by David Helwig & Joan Harcourt  
This is the third in Oberon's annual series of storybooks. This series has been designed both for the student and for the general reader.

Schoolboy Rising  
by Nigel Foxell

Nigel Foxell's second novel explores the driver and inhibitions that shape a boy's growing-up: his developing sense of himself as a person, his discovery of women, his growing need to destroy the world of his fathers.

Coppermine  
by Don Gutteridge

An epic poem based on Samuel Hearne's journal of his expedition to the Coppermine in 1772.

Letter of the Master of Horse  
by Gary Geddes

This extraordinary poem tells the story of the horse latitudes, so named because a shipload of horses bound for the Spanish Main was driven overboard there and left to drown.

Flies/Flight of the Pterodactyl  
by Lloyd Abbey & Gail Fox

The sixth volume in the New Canadian Posts Series. Lloyd Abbey writes clear and devastating poems about insects, fish, birds and animals. Gail Fox assumes the voice of an extinct bird of prey in an extended monologue depicting the seventh circle of hell.

The True Life of Sweeney Todd  
by Cozette de Charmoy

A collage novel about Sweeney Todd the barber who cut his customers throats and gave the bodies to his wife to make pie with. A collector's item of great beauty.

Fords Eat Chevs  
by John Sandman

If you Hum Me a Few Bars  
I Might Remember the Tune  
by Don Bailey.

Women & Children  
by Beth Harvor

Bloodflowers  
by W.D. Valgardson

The Governor's Bridge is Closed  
by Hugh Hood

The October Men  
by John Mills

# oberon

first associated with **the** bluebird, but "the symbol/ is obsolete **now**", then with the lost purity of **the** Detroit River and the now-extinct **passenger** pigeons:

*they used the blue feathers of passenger pigeons - there were so many of them - to fill the potholes in the roads*

But it is also associated with the ice fields waiting "blue-brilliant" in **the** North, the inevitable death by freezing which is **essential** for our purification. Like Birkin in *Women in Love*, the poet **envisions** a fresh evolution after the extermination of man, and prays that next time we can "evolve without a trigger finger". She contrasts the **impotence** of her poems with the power of glaciers to **change** the landscape, and ends with a vision of death as the "mangled body of/ a **dog**" on the road, its tail curled like "a dark blue question mark". The suite is broad in its reference: it alludes to explorers and settlers, fairy tales and myths, Eliot and Wordsworth, geology and evolution, Hiroshima and **Auschwitz**. **Farmiloe** sets out to make you **sick** of

man's deathdealing nature and **succeeds**.

The rest of **the** book relates the **first** suite to the poet's **own** life. In "Letter to Marty", she tries to explain "why your **poems/** speak of life and mine of death". The **reasons** are scattered throughout the section. In "The Quarrel", for example, she **links** the constant **fighting** of her parents with her present condition: "I have the genes of **both** of them/ **quarrelling** in my blood".

**Leona Gom's** strength does not lie in her social criticism. Such poems as "O Canada" and "Lhude Sing O Canada" (an echo of Pound) are less **successful** than **similar** work by others. But about half the poems in *Kindling* deserve attention. **Best** are those dealing with her parents, life on the farm, and herself as a child: "The Lantern", "The Separator", "Späne", "Hitching Home", "Moved", "Rain-Maker" and "Busing Back". In the **first** poem, a sister has made the old barn lantern into a flowerpot; the poet says:

*I look for a metaphor in this, some comment on art and life,*

*at least on drawing-rooms and stables. But always, I see only my father . . .*

Looking for metaphor, she **finds** instead the actual lives of her **parents**. In "Späne", she keeps slipping into German. **This** recreates for the reader **the** sense of **separation** ("alien among my books"); yet the lovely image of the kindling gathering like snowflakes around the mother's **feet** balances the separation with **fascination** and tenderness. In an earlier version (in 40 *Women Poets*), the speaker would catch herself and translate some of the German words; here her touch is sun; she **moves closer** to the foreign **language** as she does to her mother, culminating in the image of the **snowflakes**:

*white Schneeflocken around die Fusse meiner Mutter . . .*

Other interesting pieces are "The Kindest Month", "Graves", and "Persephone". I won't abuse the ones I didn't list: one in **two** is a **good** average.

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Marvyne Jenoff and Marilyn Crowshoe seem to have the same problem, a lack of correlation between situation and emotion. If Crowshoe expresses anger without giving us enough information about its source, Jenoff describes the source of her grief without expressing enough of the grief itself. Crowshoe's "Time Out", "Night Winds", and "Last Time" are pure sensation; we accept its veracity, but we want more. Perhaps we want to see the sensation projected onto a landscape? or explained through historical allusions, or simply given a narrative framework. Jenoff knows how to be concrete. Surely she is right when she says, "Now that my father is dying/ I have something more immediate to write about/ than old loves". Yet we never really see "the subject matter... hit/home"; the poet retreats from the fact of death to deal only with its effect on herself. She says, "my father and I are dying/ at different speeds". Yes, but the difference in speed is essential. However, some of Jenoff's poems on other subjects show a refreshing exuberance and wit.

Shirley Gibson, long active in publishing, makes her debut as a poet with I am watching. According to the blurb, each of the figures addressed as "you" in the three sections of the book is "distinctly individual!", but I don't think this comes across in the poetry. The others involved hardly come alive at all; they never speak directly; most of their activity takes place in the dark. The first "you" is French-Canadian, but the cultural difference is not exploited; nowhere are the reasons for the disaster given. At one point, the poet says:

there are times when words  
fill space  
close gaps  
bridge distances  
but not today

This is the trouble. The words are somehow failing to bridge the gap between poet and reader. For example, her descriptions of the train-trips are flat; she must state, "We move through a dead land" instead of recreating it for us. The men in these poems are violent: "your hands grip my bones;" "you take me like/ a conquistador", and:

I make a token protest.  
You respond perfectly,  
with my hand pin both  
wrists above my head.



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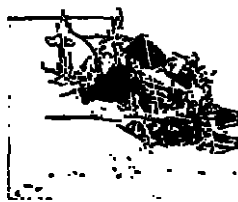
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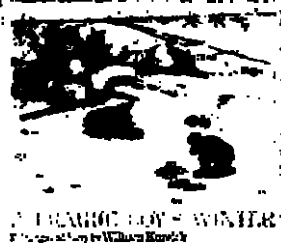
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Perfectly for whom? This seems to be what the woman wants: she calls herself a "complacent victim" in one poem; in others, she puts up a token resistance. **Sex** is a battle in which the male conquers the female, leaving her bruised and cut.

The book is strongly influenced by such poets as Atwood and Ondaatje, but this need not condemn it. Some of the poems using this idiom are moving and effective, for example "I promised/ to make your leaving". Still, I'd rather see Gibson break away and find a more distinctive voice.

The main difficulty in reading Carol Shields' poetry is deciding the tone, the writer's attitude to her subject. This is especially true in **Others** because the titles seem to pull against the poems. Most of the titles stress the "other-ness" of the people described, in contrast to a united "we". The effect is one of distance, irony. Yet the best of the poems are not about "Others," but about ourselves. "Helen's Morning" stands out precisely because the poet makes us understand and identify with Helen. Several of the poems have an old-fashioned air, especially the ones that rhyme; and sometimes the imagery is questionable ("our limbs/ trailed silent/ like lumber"). But there are some good poems here, for example "A Fiftieth Aunt", "No One's Simple" and "A Friend of Ours Who Knits". □

*Susan Zimmerman, who lives in West Hill, Ont., is a graduate student in English with a special interest in the poetry of women.*

**STAR GAZING**  
*continued from page 2*

locutor could wish. What I noticed was this:

1. Kirk Douglas is not as ugly as he looks.
2. Kirk Douglas' jaw is not as big as it looks.
3. Kirk Douglas is not as tall as he looks.
4. Kirk Douglas does not talk as funny as he talks.

In short, I was tempted to revise my impression of hbn as a man, and, after paging through Tony Thomas' excellent history of his works, it also becomes necessary to revise my impression of Kirk Douglas as an

actor. The book reminds me that he also did *Paths of Glory* and *Lonely are the Brave*, two very fine films indeed, end in which we see the finer, deeper and more sensitive side of Douglas the actor. In his all too brief biography, Thomas shows us the intelligent side of the man that is rarely seen in the glitz and glare of those films in which he is Douglas the image of Douglas. Comparing my own impression of Douglas from that party to the revelation of Douglas in Thomas' book, I can only wish that someday I might see Kirk Douglas do some real acting — on stage.

In his *Films of Marlon Brando*, Thomas presents a man with a troubled intellect. I am tempted to speculate that it is this intellectual drive that has not found satisfactory expression in Brando's prevaricating career as superstar.

A friend of mine, who knows Brando and subsequently appeared with him in *The Godfather*, told me about their early days together at New York's Dramatic Workshop of the New School of Social Research There, under the tutelage of Erwin Piscator, the students received generous doses of liberal socialism. The effects of this are obvious in some of Brando's public actions. Strangely though, as Thomas points out, Brando's major film disasters were those in which he was committed to what they were saying.

This same friend told me another story that illustrates Brando's general dissatisfaction and discontent particularly, as Thomas points out, with his career as an actor. Brando appeared knocking at my friend's hotel room in the middle of the night. My friend let him in, congratulating him on a recent success. He was quickly silenced by one of Brando's characteristic grunts of disparagement. To which my friend, envious of success, concluded, not without exasperation: "Marlon never knows what he wants." And this is precisely the impression you get from Thomas' brief but fascinating profile of the man.

Both these books are compendia of each artist's work, and there is little attempt at critical evaluation. However, that is not their purpose: they are histories, and as such show painstaking research. They are well put

together; the illustrations are clear and solid. In fact, the effect, in each case, of such a variety within two covers of the same book is somewhat overwhelming in the versatility, range of expression and force of each actor. They are good books for people who want a permanent record of each man's achievement. □

*Hans Werner, a former actor is now a poet, playwright and CBC scriptwriter working in Toronto.*

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