

# BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 10

OCTOBER, 1975

## HUGH GARNER

recalls

# DIEPPE

Canada's first  
longest day

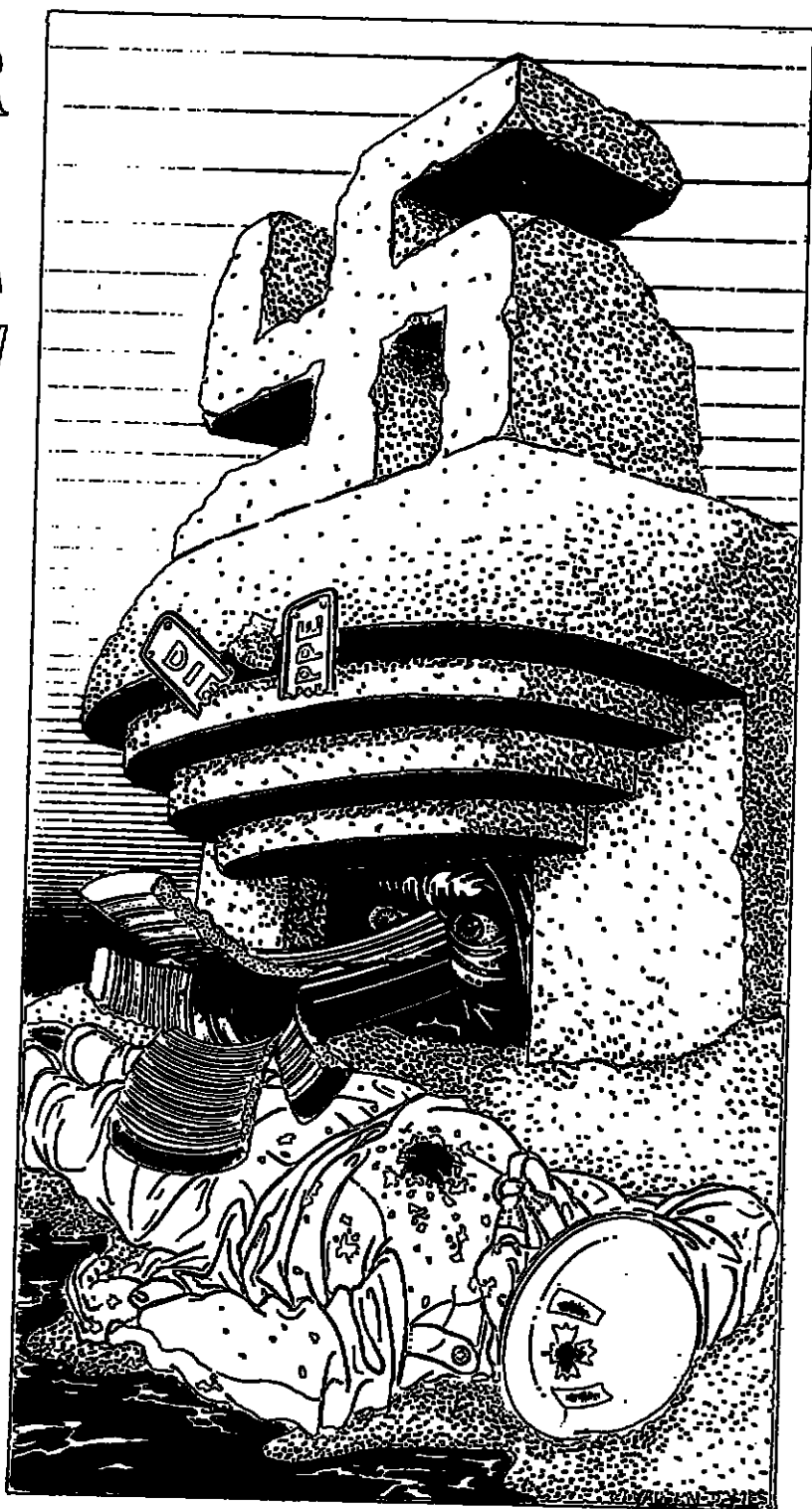
## AL PURDY

discovers

# THE MOWAT WHO WOULDN'T GLOAT

PLUS REVIEWS BY:

Audrey Thomas • Arthur  
Maloney • Linda Sandler  
Arnold Edinborough • Jim  
Laxer • Leonard Gasparini  
Jim Christy • Richard  
Lubbock



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# BOOKS <sup>in</sup> CANADA

Vol. 4 No. 10

October, 1975

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*Books in Canada* is published twelve times per annum, with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, by the Canadian Review of Books Limited, 501 Yonge St., Suite 23, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1Y4. Phone: (416) 921-4466. Subscription rates: \$9.95 a year (\$15 overseas). Back issues available on microfilm from McLaren Micropublishing, P.O. Box 972, Station F, Toronto M4Y 2N9. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2593. Contents © 1975. Canadian Review of Books Ltd. Printed by Heritage Press Co. Ltd. ISSN 0045-2564

# ARMS AND THE MEN

If Dieppe was a 'reconnaissance in force',  
it was also a revelation in courage

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**Forgotten Heroes: The Canadians at Dieppe**, by John Mellor, Methuen, 161 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

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By HUGH GARNER

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THE CANADIAN ARMY suffered two great snafus in the Second World War: Dieppe and Hong Kong. In the defence of Hong Kong, the Winnipeg Grenadiers, Royal Rifles of Canada, and various Canadian ancillary units were wiped out or taken prisoner, along with other British troops, by an overwhelming invasion by the Japanese Imperial Army. At Dieppe, units of the Second Canadian Division were not only defeated but also sailed bravely into a foredoomed nine-hour slaughter that has scarcely been paralleled in the annals of modern war.

Snafu was a serviceman's acronym that used to mean, "Situation normal: all fucked up." Some nice-nelly YMCA speaker, whom I suspect was the same guy who changed the title and key word of the best British Second World War service song into "Bless Em All," changed the acronym to mean "Situation normal: all fouled up," thereby diluting not only its masculine lyrics but its authenticity. The English language is constantly being eroded and watered down by frightened little sissies.

On the night of Aug. 18, 1942, a fleet of 273 naval vessels, auxiliary landing ships and other craft set sail from Southampton, Portsmouth, Newhaven, Shoreham, and Yarmouth for the 65- to 80-mile trip across the English Channel to the French port of Dieppe; what the War Office and Admiralty called "a reconnaissance in force" against the German-occupied coast of Western Europe.

Contrary to what the Germans believed to be an attempted opening of the second front, and contrary also to the wishes of Joseph Stalin and the U.S. State Department, who for different reasons had allowed the British to fight on alone for a year after France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Norway had been defeated — Dieppe is now generally believed to have been a divisional thrust against a fortified coastal town, to test such an amphibious operation for its flaws rather than in expectation of a great success. As a

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*At Dieppe, units of the Second Canadian Division were not only defeated but also sailed bravely into a foredoomed nine-hour slaughter that has scarcely been paralleled in the annals of modern war.*

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matter of fact, the strategic plans called for a withdrawal of all troops during the afternoon of Aug. 19.

Out of its slaughterhouse failure evolved the decision that coastal defences must be softened up by pre-invasion saturation bombing, that there should be sea bombardment and

aerial cover during the amphibious landings, plus the landing behind the enemy of airborne troops, and the brilliant conception of Capt. Hughes-Hallet, RN, that the invading army must take its own harbors with it, the famous "Mulberry" put to use in June, 1944, when the real second front was opened up on the beaches of Normandy.

The code name for the Dieppe invasion was "Jubilee," a lineal descendent of a former well-rehearsed attack coded "Operation Rutter," which had been postponed and finally abandoned. "Rutter" had called for paratroops to destroy the German heavy coastal batteries, a battleship or at least a cruiser to lend firepower to the attacking troops, and pre-invasion and conjunctive aerial bombardment. One by one these prerequisites to success were scrubbed. Sea-borne Commando units were substituted for airborne troops; Air Marshal "Bomber" Harris refused the use of 300 bombers to soften up the defences, calling the plan "a useless sideshow"; Sir Dudley Pound, the Admiral of the Fleet,

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*Most infantrymen go through years of war without having to face up to the sheer extravagance of the incoming rain of shells, mortar bombs, aerial strafing, machine-gun and rifle fire, and even potato-masher grenades dropped on them from the cliff tops, that the Dieppe attackers had to face.*

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was appalled at the idea of putting a battleship, in daylight, off the French coast; and General Bernard Montgomery, then commander of the army in southeast England, had made his own unenthusiastic changes in the original plans.

What remained was the suicidal idea of landing Commandos on both flanks of Dieppe to scale the high chalk cliffs and attack the coastal batteries and other targets, while infantry battalions supported by tanks attacked at two points on the outer perimeter of the Dieppe defences and went in by crude prototype landing craft head-on against what had become a fortified town. Sea-borne fire power was left to the four-inch guns of eight small Hunt class destroyers, one of them a Free Polish ship.

Many other things went wrong: pre-operation intelligence had been faulty in not ascertaining that the new Churchill tanks could cross two key bridges — and if they couldn't, could easily have forded the rivers; that the narrow gulleys leading from the narrow beaches to the top of the high cliffs had been filled with tangles of barbed wire; and that deadly enfilading fire from gun positions on and in the cliffs made a landing on the town's seafront beach completely untenable. Another calamitous error, but this time attributable to the dicey fortunes of war, was the engagement of part of the operation's convoy with a German convoy proceeding to Dieppe from Boulogne, both convoys having identical es-

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timated times of arrival. The gunfire and star shells from this encounter alerted the Dieppe defenders, and by sheer good luck one of the German generals had kept his forces on "Red Alert" one more day after it was supposed to be withdrawn. This was no foul-up; it was a classic fuck-up.

Dieppe was defended by the German 302nd Infantry Division, plus coastal artillerymen and supporting troops. The commanding officer of the 302nd Division was Major General Conrad Haase, who later described the aborted attack on Dieppe as analogous to the Charge of the Light Brigade.

If John Mellor, the author of this excellent book, listed the number of German casualties in the battle, I failed to find the reference, though he meticulously listed the deaths of 48 civilians and the wounding of 102 in the raid. Out of the 4,963 men who set sail from England the night before, 3,367 of them were killed, wounded, or captured — surely one of the highest per-capita casualty lists for a single battle in modern warfare. Most infantrymen go through years of war without having to face up to the sheer extravagance of the incoming rain of shells, mortar bombs, aerial strafing, machine-gun and rifle fire, and even potato-masher grenades dropped on them from the cliff tops, that the Dieppe attackers had to face. Despite this the sheer guts and bravery of the attackers was phenomenal, and three Victoria Crosses were awarded, two of them to Canadians.

Who were the men who fought at Dieppe?

Ordinary Canadians in the main, plus the British and Poles of the Royal Navy and Air Force, and the British members of No. 3 and No. 4 Commandos, who took along 50 U.S. Rangers to get their baptism of fire. The first American killed in the European theatre of war was killed at

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*Many of us have already forgotten the names of the Canadian officers and men . . . who died with their buddies and comrades on the narrow beaches of an insignificant ferryport on the Channel coast of France on Aug. 19, 1942.*

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Dieppe, as also was the first German killed by an American. The overwhelming number of dead, wounded, and prisoners however represented most of Canada, both English- and French-speaking, mostly unknown and poor, but some bearing famous Canadian mercantile Establishment names such as Labatt and Catto. Lord Louis Mountbatten was the strategic commander-in-chief who had fought hard with his confrères of the War Council in vain for more tactical support for the raid, and Lord Lovatt went ashore with his men of No. 4 Commando carrying a sporting rifle under his arm.

The regiments and units who landed on the beaches, along with the British Commandos, were The Royal Regiment of Canada (Toronto), the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, the Essex Scottish (Windsor, Ont.), Regiment Fusiliers de Mont Royal (Montreal), a group from The Black Watch of Canada (Montreal), The Cameron Highlanders of Canada (Winnipeg), The South Saskatchewan Regiment, Calgary Tank Regiment, some tanks from the 1st Army Tank Brigade, The Toronto Scottish (machine gun) Regiment, and the 11th Field Ambulance and 4th Field Regiment, RCA, from Guelph, Ont. All the units fought bravely and well, with the farthest penetrations, apart from the Commandos, being made by the South Saskatchewan and the Fusiliers de Mont Royal. Southwestern Ontario took the

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brunt of the casualties, the deathline zig-zagging like a crazy forerunner of the more direct Ontario Highway 401 from Toronto to Hamilton to Guelph and on to Windsor.

The brave but disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava in the Crimean War has long been celebrated in Lord Tennyson's poem. The foolish and inept generals responsible, Lords Raglan and Cardigan, remain today only as the lower-case names given to an inserted coat sleeve and a sweater coat. There were too many people and too many upper-echelon errors to blame any single one of them for the debacle at Dieppe. The Charge of the Light Brigade is remembered as a military event, but history has forgotten the names of the 600 hussar, lancer, and light-dragoon troopers who went "onward into the valley of death." Many of us

have already forgotten the names of the Canadian officers and men, the 17-year-olds who had lied about their age and the men old enough to be their fathers who had fought in the First World War, who died with their buddies and comrades on the narrow beaches of an insignificant ferryboat port on the Channel coast of France on Aug. 19, 1942.

John Mellor, the author of *Forgotten Heroes*, hasn't forgotten, and has brought the Dieppe disaster to life in this literary historical *tour de force*, to me the definitive work on a defeat Canadians should celebrate rather than forget. Perhaps your own father, older brother, or Uncle George wasn't killed or wounded at Dieppe, but you knew the men who were, for if you are a Canadian you are one of them. □

## ARTS AND THE WOMEN

### From the CBC, two films that show the shadows of Green Gables and the sorrow of Klee Wyck

By CATHERINE L. ORR

TWO OUTSTANDING drama-documentaries, portraying the lives of Lucy Maud Montgomery and Emily Carr, were released this autumn by CBC-TV's Arts and Science Department. Based on the personal diaries of two famous women, these film biographies brought substance to the new fall line-up of the national network, giving some credibility to the CBC mandate to reveal Canada to Canadians. They offered a different perspective on how we see ourselves, bringing to television the dark and private underside of the past that shadows even the most well-ordered and conventional society. Lucy Maud Montgomery and Emily Carr were contemporaries at the beginning of the century, two



Linda Goranson as Lucy Maud Montgomery.

aspiring artists living in isolation on opposite sides of a vast country, each struggling to find herself in a rigid world that had long since defined the proper sphere of women by the narrow limits of bed and kitchen. Theirs was a long and lonely journey to personal freedom and artistic expression, an endless struggle to stake a claim on an unknown territory few women had entered before. They were not equally successful. By exploring the turbulent, and often tragic, internal lives of two courageous women, these excellent films gave us a glimpse of another history, a portrait of our neglected selves.

Growing out of unpublished diaries (more than two million words in 10 volumes), *Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Road to Green Gables*, a 90-minute film, photographed, directed, and produced by Terence Macartney-Filgate, revealed the complex, anguished woman behind the idealized world of the immortal Anne books. Never wholly free, Lucy Maud was a prisoner as much of herself as of the narrow island society in which she lived. Tension lay at the heart of her being; it was in her blood, the hot Montgomery passion held firmly in check by the cold MacNeil conscience. She sought solace in Nature, in the soft, pastoral beauty of her island home, and in her diaries, that internal world where she could soar above the small, cramped conditions of her external existence. Uncompromising in her sense of duty, first to her grandparents and later to her husband and children, she never pushed further, preferring to turn her back on life rather than to defy the limits of her self-proscribed world. So, too, in her diaries. Lucy Maud wrote with a full dramatic style that captured the feeling of her torn sensibility, evoking all the passionate longing and the grim frustration, but ultimately failing to analyse the implications of her trapped condition. Somehow, she needed this prison; it fed her and she clung to that known reality, filling her Anne books with all the mystery, magic, and wonder she could never allow in her own life.

A similar tension pervaded the film. A lyrical, evocative portrait, beautifully photographed and conceived, it only hinted at the dark undercurrents threatening the soft, romantic surface. Macartney-Filgate took Lucy Maud Montgomery at her word, and the evasions evident in the woman and

in her diaries were built into the film. There was a poignant, elegiac, but essentially static quality to the biography that lacked real drama. Instead, a "mirror" image was set up to get inside Lucy Maud's head, the film being punctuated with the mirror reflections of Lucy Maud staring into her own soulful eyes, an image that was both singularly appropriate and ultimately unsatisfying. True, L. M. Montgomery led an undramatic life. The existence of others was secondary to her own, the effect of the moment on herself being more important in any given exchange. She would reflect on such experiences but the reflection would only go so far, often reshaped in passing years to a form vastly different from the original. She looked in the mirror but saw only what she wanted to see. The rest went unspoken, remaining stubbornly eloquent between the lines. One must accept Lucy Maud's limitations but how can one justify the lack of irony, of any real cutting edge in the film itself, particularly in this age of Women's Lib and rampant self-analysis? It seems here more a question of reticence than of style. Lucy Maud Montgomery's diaries are still unpublished, the property of her only living son, Dr. Stuart Macdonald of Toronto. Changing one's awareness of an individual, as of a piece of history, is a slow, often disturbing process. By giving access for the first time to his mother's private world to Macartney-Filgate, Dr. Macdonald knew that the public's understanding of the author of *Anne of Green Gables* would never be the same again. The film biography was only the beginning, an attempt at a possible portrait of a fascinating woman that will only be unveiled when all the truth is known. It is to be hoped that sufficient funds will be found soon to publish the diaries and to reintroduce Lucy Maud Montgomery properly into the Canadian consciousness.

Emily Carr needs no such introduction. Recognized today as one of Canada's greatest painters, she came magnificently to life in the CBC film portrait, *Emily Carr*, written, directed, and produced by Nancy Ryley. A brilliant production, divided into two parts — "Growing Up" and "Little Old Lady on the Edge of Nowhere" — it was a fitting tribute to the emotional and intellectual stature of this amazing woman.

Emily Carr wrote her journals late in life, trying to articulate the years of struggle and deprivation that led to her emergence as an artist. Published in her lifetime, the writings ironically brought her the fame that had so cruelly eluded her efforts as a painter. From very early on, Emily was acutely aware of the need to free herself from the heavy, controlling hand of her family and of the genteel society of 19th-century Victoria, a world as narrow and complacent as Lucy Maud's Cavendish. However, while L. M. Montgomery was able to keep her private desires well beneath the surface of her conventional life, Emily's inner drives were never suppressed. They came to inform and to dictate everything she did, from her unprecedented escapades to remote Indian villages along the rugged West Coast to her irrepressibly eccentric mode of dress and the menagerie she called her home. She was uncompromising and fearless in her determination never to let the "art" part of her die, that expression of an inner vision of the world that she felt was the true road to self discovery. Unlike Lucy Maud, Emily was focused outwards, forever filled with the wonder of the world around her. She sought to find and to express that mysterious God quality in her majestic land, which found its correspondence in her own soul. She penetrated deep, seeking the light, striving for something "beyond and beyond and beyond into eternity." And in the



Margaret Martin as Emily Carr.

process she came full circle, returning through all the loneliness and despair to that ideal world of Small, wherein life was "one great lyrical hymn," that she had known as a child. A triumph of the will and of the imagination, her struggle to find herself as a woman and as a painter attested to the incredible life-force that sustained her until the end. Emily Carr lived as she longed to live, "pouring until the pail was empty."

Nancy Ryley's film biography matched the spirit of Emily Carr. Like the Indians who carved the totem poles, Ms. Ryley put strong thought into her film, capturing in the wild beauty of British Columbia some sense of the elemental, awe-inspiring world Emily loved and painted. There was so much of the woman to deal with; she kept bursting forth in the spontaneously open reflections of her own writings and in the bemused but considered comments of those who knew her well. Every dramatic stage of Emily's growth was well-documented in a clear, intellectual analysis of her progress, and the whole was interwoven with a rich, visual appreciation of her paintings. *Emily Carr* was a magnificent portrait of a unique woman who had the courage to explore the dark corners of herself even as she plumbed the forgotten interior of her land, leaving for future generations a monumental record of the spiritual wellsprings of an artist, and of a people.

These two superb drama-documentaries confirm the potential of television to translate our historical and cultural heritage into intelligent and provocative productions. The diary-writings of Lucy Maud Montgomery and Emily Carr depict a past that few of us remember. They were not alone. Records have come down from the earliest days of Canada's settlement, telling tales of the small people, the out-of-the-way people, whose lives became the flesh and bone of this country. Having claimed this rich, unturned soil, the CBC has a duty to articulate our forgotten past. Not in the recent style of the TV Drama Department with its slick, throw-away policy, but in the time-honoured tradition of the CBC, telling tales simply, honestly, meaningfully. These two film biographies have brought a welcome assurance that such productions are still possible. The old art is not dead. □

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# PROTECTIVE CUSTARDY

Morton Shulman's 'libwalithm' makes this doctrinaire capitalist reach for his flintLocke

By RICHARD LUBBOCK

IT WAS, I THINK, the French politician Raymond Poincaré who pointed out the truth that "anyone who is not a socialist at age 20 has no heart; and anyone who is still a socialist at the age of 40 has no brains."

The beauty and power of Poincaré's Law are demonstrated in reverse by Dr. Morton Shulman's latest book, *Coroner* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 154 pages, \$8.95 cloth).

For in this we learn how Toronto's former chief coroner, former Ontario MPP for High Park, and general-purpose busybody, complied with the first half of Poincaré's Law in his youth by becoming a stockmarket millionaire — thereby disposing of his heart. Later on he tells us how in his maturity he became a socialist. So much for his brains.

Actually, although he gives aid and comfort to the Reds,

*Perhaps the worst offence in Coroner is that the doctor, by creating sly confusions, gives some good deeds a bad name.*

I think Shulman is more easily identified with their equally repulsive auxiliaries, whom I call the "Yellows," or "Custard" party, a slippery group with an ideology that can best be described as "libwalithm." But more of them later.

In contrast to these deplorable beings, there are a growing number of souls — some, like me, awakened ex-socialists — who have come to understand that the only acceptable form of human society is the "minimal" or "Night Watchman" state. It is our view that the State is justifiable only when restricted to the narrowest possible functions; namely, the protection of the individual against force, theft, and fraud, and the enforcement of contracts.

These activities define briefly the maximum permissible regulatory apparatus of any society of free men. That is a society whose prime rule is the one laid down by the English philosopher John Locke: anyone can dispose exactly as he pleases with his own property and person, provided he does not impair the rights of others. In other words, a society that protects "the right of consenting adults to perform acts of capitalism together in private," and does not one whit more.

Naturally I am appalled by the policies advocated by Shulman (and his back-up group, "The Raving Comrades"). To extend the State's activities by the slightest degree would obviously violate the basic human right, and therefore will inevitably usher in another long dark night of gas chambers and crematoria.

What's more, the Shulman strategy violates the rule offered by Harvard social philosopher Robert Nozick, who

correctly argues that "the State may not use its coercive apparatus for the purpose of getting some citizens to help others, or in order to prohibit activities to people for their own good or protection."

But perhaps the worst offence in *Coroner* is that the doctor, by creating sly confusions, gives some good deeds a bad name. Let's look at an example or two from his morgue of warmed-up dead headlines.

Shortly after Shulman took over as chief coroner there was a drowning from a small boat in Toronto Bay. There were no life jackets aboard. "I was shocked," says Shulman, "to read in the press that very same day that the federal Department of Transport was about to change its regulations to remove the requirement that small boats carry life jackets."

So at once we are embarked on the dangerous slopes of the nursemaid, zero-risk, regulatory, interfering, collectivist State:

I have always believed that the main, sometimes the sole purpose of an inquest is to present recommendations which will prevent similar deaths in the future.

Quite right, and indeed it is judicial offices such as the coroner's that will survive almost unchanged in the Night Watchman State. The coroner's duty will be to inform citizens of various dangers so that they are in a position to take action or not as they freely choose. However, there is never any call for coercive regulation.

It is hard to dispute the correctness of Shulman's line so far, but now having "got the nod" (as we used to call it





in the advertising business) from the reader, he proceeds to exploit the nod, twisting it into a weasel-like argument for dangerous government interference. And he actually triumphs:

Despite the confusion the jury recommended that the government require all small boats to carry life jackets. . . . I don't know if it was a result of the jury's recommendation and all the publicity from this case, but the federal government quietly shelved their plan to change the regulations concerning life jackets in small boats.

And so yet another regulation survives, and yet another fetter on human freedom, silken and trivial though it may seem, deprives people of their right to dispose of their property and persons exactly as they see fit.

What irritates me about this sorry tale is that Shulman clearly perceives, and almost explains, exactly what the correct policy should be on the very next page, in his account of investigations into the construction industry:

The summer of 1963 produced its usual quota of collapsing excavations but this time every death was probed to find out who was responsible. . . . The coroners' juries recommended that contractors be forced to hire full-time inspectors, that they be forced to post safety bonds, that the prime contractor be required to accept full responsibility for safety in his projects, and most important, that criminal charges be laid when failure to follow safety regulations had been proven.

Excellent. But none of this requires a single new regulation, for it is already seen that it is the duty of the State, and its only duty, to take on the monopoly of violence. With a powerful police force, and strong, swift courts unhampered by so-called "civil rights" rules (which actually hamper the police, delight the lawyers, defer to the rich, and deny justice to the poor), the free citizen will be able to assert his

natural rights against violence and negligence through the Common Law and the Common Criminal Code.

The coroner's duty, then, is merely to publish his findings and recommend that the courts and police should act, if necessary. He is obliged *not* to advise the legislature, since the legislature should be under a similar obligation to make no laws, except those that clarify and disentangle the growing body of judicial opinion.

Everywhere in *Coroner Shulman* links the proper investigatory role of the coroner's office with the thoroughly poisonous tendency to legislate against personal freedom. Thus we are led imperceptibly into the slavery of "Friendly Fascism," and the world of Big Brother.

Shulman hammers out his misleading policies and his anecdotes, not the least gruesome of which are political

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*Everywhere . . . Shulman links the proper investigatory role of the coroner's office with the thoroughly poisonous tendency to legislate against personal freedom.*

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rather than thanatographic, in a competent prose that radiates much of the urgent clangour of an iron cartwheel rattling a fast homeward drive over wet, broken cobblestones.

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after the 1966 CNE air crash. And we have also the occasional miscellany, such as his tale of his trip to Mongolia. But finally we come round again to his abominable socialism.

Shulman's true constituency, as I have said, is not so much with the Reds as with the Custard Party, the silk-shirt pseudos who believe that a perfectly safe, zero-risk world can be created by cowering behind a wall of regulations against ozone, DDT, hairspray, and everything useful created by the free, individual capitalist.

It is easy to perceive that this way we sink down into the pit, until liberty dies, and Canada becomes an "east-

berlin." If you doubt this, re-read Ayn Rand's chill history of the future (her 1984?), *Atlas Shrugged*, in which she predicts the trajectory of a society dominated by the Custard Party of "libwalithm." Yellow so easily turns to Red.

If you are still under 40 and still suffering from delusions of leftism, remember all is not lost. As Poincaré assures us, you need only rejoin the cause of capitalist freedom, and your brains will be refunded.

But will Dr. Shulman's brains ever be refunded? I hear that his next foray will be into television public affairs. If past form is any guide, his deeds will be of far less benefit to any human being than he would have the gullible believe. □

## SO LONG SONO NIS?

We subsidize food, oil, and health. Can't we devise a program to keep the small presses going?

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By PAUL STUEWE

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J. MICHAEL YATES is an angry man. The founder of Sono Nis Press is just about ready to pack it in after seven years of high-quality publishing, the victim of confused government and book-industry policies that have failed to help the smaller presses outrun spiralling costs and inadequate distribution systems. I spent an afternoon with Yates recently discussing some of the reasons why Sono Nis is in trouble.

The Centennial fervour of 1967 gave birth to Sono Nis, Anansi, Oberon, and several other distinguished small presses, as a rare conjunction of motive and opportunity inspired dreams of a renaissance in Canadian publishing. The Canada Council and a variety of provincial and local sources dispensed funds freely and generously, and good writers came out of the woodwork to take advantage of the new freedom of print. The money was easy, the living was high, and book-review editors staggered home with the day's new releases muttering, "It will end, it *must* end!"

And it did end. The cash flow dwindled to a trickle of meagre and unpredictably available grants from the Canada Council and a few provincial arts bodies, while poorly publicized and promoted books returned from wholesalers to haunt the back rooms of the young presses. It soon became obvious that the systemic weaknesses of an underdeveloped publishing industry were at the root of these difficulties, and so a variety of schemes proliferated to attack them.

As the intended beneficiaries of these programs, publishers such as J. Michael Yates discovered that their creative energies were being increasingly usurped by the demands of a well-meaning, but thoroughly confused, establishment. Small epics of correspondence were written as policies changed and bureaucrats shuffled; books submitted to the Canada Council for approval required seemingly endless documentation regarding the writers' backgrounds, in sardonic contrast to the economic-development monies being handed out to anyone who could afford a post-office box in Switzerland. "The whole process was essentially a degrading one," Yates comments, "and over time tended to quantify art rather than improve its quality."

The Canada Council's recent shift to "bloc grants" is intended to replace the clumsy "project grants" system, which approved books in a piecemeal, individual fashion that made any sort of long-term planning extremely difficult. But Yates is not encouraged by the results to date: "By linking the amount of the award to the number of titles published in the previous year, the bloc-grant system enables the larger presses to get a greater volume discount from their printers, and in effect subsidizes economies of scale that will never apply to Sono Nis." Although some of the smaller presses are turning to less expensive foreign printers in an effort to cut costs, Yates believes that this can only hurt the Canadian publishing industry as a whole. Thus Sono Nis books are all printed in Canada, even though this means that they will cost more and sell fewer copies than comparable books printed abroad.

The uncertainties of surviving on government handouts led Yates and Sono Nis to join the Independent Publishers' Association in hopes of increasing their access to the Cana-

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*Books submitted to the Canada Council for approval required seemingly endless documentation regarding the writers' backgrounds, in sardonic contrast to the economic-development monies handed out to anyone who could afford a post-office box in Switzerland.*

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dian market, but this experience has been even more disappointing than their tussles with the Canada Council. Yates is explicit:

"In the five years that we belonged to the IPA, I can't recall one thing that it did for us — although, come to think of it, they did manage to lose a whole box of Susan Musgrave's *Songs of the Sea-Witch*.

"During all this time they were supposed to be publicizing our books around the country; but on our order slips, where we ask people to indicate how they heard of our

books, no one has ever mentioned the IPA — whereas they often mention *Books in Canada* and *Quill & Quire*.

"Essentially, the IPA has turned into a monster, run by a bunch of Toronto fops who have nothing better to do than memo the membership to death."

Even these very real difficulties pale, however, before the problems posed by Yates's national and aesthetic origins. Before taking out Canadian citizenship, he was (put the children to bed) an *American*! Even worse (put your hands over your eyes) he writes and publishes work tainted with that dread European disease, *surrealism*! Now there is, in this fitfully enlightened land of ours, a residue of yahoos who maintain that "Once an American, always an American"; and there is also a tiny band of provincials who associate surrealism with verbal diarrhea and monkeys at typewriters and various other silly things that have nothing to do with surrealism as a way of doing art. Unfortunately, many of these same people have some connection with Canadian literature, which means that they have had something to do with Sono Nis.

Most often, they have ignored it, as in Margaret Atwood's *Survival* and Warren Tallman's recent "Wonder Merchants: Modernist Poetry in Vancouver During the 1960s" in *Boundary 2*. When they have deigned to notice it, they have applied the tag of "West Coast surrealism" and assumed that their critical obligations have been met. Yates has little respect for the latter breed: "Since these are usually people who know nothing about the European origins of surrealism, it's rather difficult to have faith in their comments about its manifestation on the West Coast."

It would in any case be stretching a point to describe Sono Nis as a "surrealist" press. It has published a good deal of more-or-less overtly surrealist work — including books by Yates, Michael Bullock, Andreas Schroeder, and Don Thompson — but several other literary traditions are represented in its catalogue. *Volvox* (256 pages, \$15), a superb collection of poetry by Canadians who write in languages other than English and French, ranges all over the aesthetic map; poetry titles by John Robert Colombo,

*"Essentially, the IPA has turned into a monster, run by a bunch of Toronto fops who have nothing better to do than memo the membership to death."*

Eugene McNamara, Stephen Scobie, and others display kinship with the modernist line of Yeats-Pound-Eliot; and R. Gordon Hepworth's novel *The Making of a Chief* (305 pages, \$15) combines gallows humor and sociological acuteness in a way that is probably unique in Canadian writing.

Those Sono Nis publications that do fall into the surrealist camp exhibit an overall clarity and precision of language that effectively refutes the all-too-common view of surrealism as an "unreal" or "far-out" technique. While the surrealist writer seeks to liberate subconscious material from the repression of rational thought, he is also aware of

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how new and startling these visions will be to the reader; the search for the powerful image must be accompanied by the search for the right words with which to describe it. Thus there is nothing obscure or mystifying about the work of Sono Nis's surrealist authors, but rather a consistent accuracy of expression that strikes the right note without moving through a flurry of tentative discords. An example from Yates's recent *Breath of the Snow Leopard* (102 pages, \$10.95) may be the best means of demonstrating this:

*When the darkness appears just a little darker  
Than it should, go liquid, it is only  
The whale rising. The biggest beast is not  
Unexpected; the instant of arrival is surprising.  
Go liquid. Get darker than the dark.*

*When, unexpectedly, the largest darkness  
Is rising darker than all darkness should,  
The ice floe is breaking up instead*

*Of merely melting. Swallow the water.  
The whale is smaller than water. Swallow.*

And as the darkness gathers over Sono Nis, there are no economic panaceas in sight to complement Yates's neat artistic solutions. No one really knows whether Sono Nis ever could be self-supporting — the chances are that it would not — but in a country where everything from health care to farm produce to resource exploitation benefits from substantial government subsidies, it seems odd that we cannot devise some effective program of long-term support for our smaller presses. Limping along from day to day while publishing 100-page books at \$10.95 is definitely not J. Michael Yates's idea of how to serve Canadian writers and readers, but as things are presently structured it is either this or nothing. One can only hope that he is strong enough to carry on until we are ready to listen to the real news from the Western frontier. □

# FARLEY'S FLING AT FICTION

## Mowat has crossed a watershed—and left that obtrusive ego behind

By AL PURDY

A NEW BOOK by Farley Mowat brings to mind a 20-year career of writing, in which he has averaged at least a book a year. His publisher describes Mowat's principal theme as "people of adversity" — that is, people in some desperate situation that requires endurance and even heroism for them to survive. And since the Canadian Arctic has been his principal setting, and his characters actual people of the North (for the most part), it's not difficult to find desperate situations.

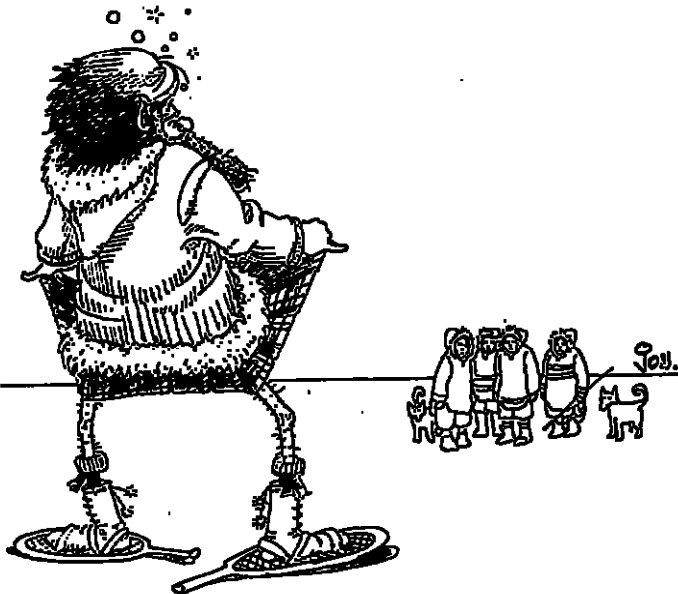
The *Snow Walker* (McClelland & Stewart, 224 pages, \$8.95) is a departure for Mowat. All his other books (except

for children's stories) are based on his own interpretation of factual events; but this book is fiction. The first nine stories have amazingly varied themes, despite their common northern setting: Eskimo carvings in a remote Hebridean pub; a crossbow, descendant of others made long ago by Norse sea rovers in the Arctic; dog mates with wolf; a plane makes a forced landing in the barrens, and the pilot survives through the efforts of a sick Eskimo woman passenger; a white ghost canoe of mystic significance; a woman who is fed with blood from the arm of her rescuer, and who in turn ensures her son's survival in the same manner. They are strange tales, and yet believably natural from Mowat's long knowledge of the Arctic.

But more than anything else, to my mind, these are stories that have a deep emotional content; they are spiritually moving in the way that good fiction should be. There is no razzmatazz language, no sloppily sentimental appeal to the reader's pity. What happens happens, and is related in a calm matter-of-fact language that allows the reader to make his own judgments, and to feel perhaps similar to the way Mowat felt when he wrote them.

With one exception. The last section of the book is not straight fiction, but a long semi-documentary called "Dark Odyssey of Soosie" (a lousy title); in this I think Mowat's earlier sure touch deserted him. It tells of a group of Cape Dorset Eskimos being transplanted to the far-North Queen Elizabeth Islands, and their subsequent efforts to return to Cape Dorset. This narrative has its own merits, but is a *non sequitur* with a moral to point: how badly we treat our native peoples. Of course we do, but if you want to make that point it should be done on a different soapbox.

However, that's a minor quibble. These are excellent and moving short stories. I think they are a watershed for Mowat, for in writing them he has overcome the psychological barrier that has previously prevented him from writing fiction. (Of course, some people believe rather unkindly that he has always written fiction.) His reputation has been



made on a long series of Northern books, whale books, ocean-tug books, and Newfoundland picture books, along with the notable *Westviking*. And it is a popular reputation; his books sell, and sell in great quantities.

Mowat is the sort of writer any country needs to tell the people about themselves and the land in which they live. Pierre Berton and Mowat are the two in this genre who come most readily to mind. Such writers do not generally receive critical kudos and awards; and they live on the avails — of their writing. Generally they are irritable and touchy if the subject of their lack of honours arises. Academic critics are a pretty snobbish bunch when it comes to writers such as Mowat. They demand "great art"; they require other themes than desperate Eskimos. Although, for that matter, Yves Theriault and Gabrielle Roy have both written Eskimo novels, and both those writers are said to be "veddy literary."

Farley Mowat is also a public character, a television gadfly, an entertainer and crusader — on a big scale despite his own dimensions. And so is Pierre Berton. Mowat is proud of never having received a Canada Council award, although I'm a little suspicious of that pride. His own ego has compensated him for lack of critical acclaim, as well as book sales of many thousands. (In fact, I've heard it said that his publishers, McClelland & Stewart, would go belly-up immediately without Mowat and Berton in their stable.) That obtrusive ego is not always pleasant, whether on television or sticking out of books that would better depend on sheer ability as a story-teller. And make no mistake, Mowat has plenty of ability.

But what is Farley Mowat actually saying in all these books? What is he doing except piling up big sales and lining his own pockets richly? Well, one can attempt to answer this by saying that Mowat believes in a kind of elemental human virtue, found far more commonly among

"people of adversity" than on the streets of cities. There is nobility among Northern peoples not always found in the south, and more generally in "men of action." (And in this he is first cousin to Hemingway.) There are under-the-surface things about people that submerge and disappear with the advent of machines and big cities. But that is not Rousseau's "noble savage" theme, nor those of other related writers. Mowat probably does not believe mankind is perfectible or that it should be. And certainly we are all corruptible, more so in corporation and government than the individual. And given those beliefs, Mowat is bound to take a dark view of the world as the world is today.

All these stories reflect the beliefs just mentioned, even

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*Academic critics are a pretty snobbish bunch when it comes to writers such as Mowat. They demand "great art"; they require other themes than desperate Eskimos.*

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"Dark Odyssey of Soosie," which I feel is less than successful. And there is even a lyric quality to Mowat's epigraph on snow, one not susceptible to quotation in part but ending: "Somewhere the snow is falling."

I've read most of Mowat's books; and some are comparable, some not. *Westviking*, for instance, I thought marvellous, especially when Farley struggled to be objective and even scientific against all instincts and habit. But *The Snow Walker* is like none of the others, and yet partakes of them all. In fiction it's pretty hard for a writer's high opinion of himself to overshadow his stories. Now that this ego is absent in his writing, there has never been more reason for Mowat to feel proud of his accomplishment. □

## THE STUD AT BAY

Like his predecessors, Kroetsch's latest hero is a sexual bonehead with a chaotic mission

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By PETER THOMAS

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READERS FAMILIAR with Robert Kroetsch's four previous novels will find him riding his obsessions as furiously as ever in *Badlands* (New Press, 288 pages, \$4.95 cloth). It cheapens a serious writer to describe those obsessions as sex and death, since we've come to think of them as the Siamese twins of sensationalism, but the subject of Kroetsch's work from the beginning has been the finally ludicrous attempt by man to conquer time and mortality by asserting his vital sexual self. Kroetsch's heroes, locked in with their sense of death, fuck on regardless. It is ludicrous, of course, as they know themselves, and they resent women, in particular, who draw their attention to the illusion of sexual triumph in a world of decay. When William Dawe, central figure of *Badlands*, has sex with Anna Yellowbird, an Indian girl, "she made him lose the past. He began to hate her for that."

So these Kroetsch men are compelled to reject women, who care nothing about mortality but live instead in a creative present, and go out on insane searches for mastery over human limitations. In *But We Are Exiles*, Peter Guy becomes pilot of a Mackenzie riverboat and runs away from human ties and emotional needs to the impersonality of his craft. Johnnie Backstrom of *The Words of My Roaring* enters politics with the single platform promise that he will ensure rain in a time of Prairie drought. The extreme, irrational gesture is a rejection of common sense, responsibility, ordinary motives, so that Backstrom is almost literally claiming to be an Albertan witch-doctor. This shadowy line between realistic fiction and fantasy is the borderland Kroetsch's novels inhabit. In *The Studhorse Man*, for which Kroetsch received a Governor General's Award, Hazard Lepage wanders the land with his magnificent stallion, Poseidon, looking for the finest mare in existence. All these characters are trying to do more than is humanly possible, to pull off a trick that will make them, briefly perhaps, more than merely human.

*Badlands* continues this search for a triumph over mortal clay. It contains an account of the Dawe Expedition into the Alberta Badlands, in the summer of 1916, in quest of dinosaur bones. William Dawe, the leader, is another magic-man, at least in his flight from reason, with "a magical hump" on his back. He admits that "there must be some factor in my life that makes me seek out only those disasters that will be total" — making him your average Kroetsch hero, born to chaos, a plague on all who know him. For him the dinosaurs are much more than museum specimens; they are "the dead creatures immortalizing the mortal man. The bones as crazy and obscure as my own."

William Dawe's story is told by the author, but it is also commented on by frequent observations from Anna Dawe, only daughter of the bonehead. She has found her father's field-notes after his death and tries to piece together the man and his motives. A middle-aged alcoholic spinster, she "imagined to myself a past, an ancestor, a legend, a victim, a fate." The man seeks the impersonality of the past; the woman worries after only the confused man who is *her* past, as personal as she can make him.

Dawe's expedition gathers to itself various odd-balls: Grizzly, the Chinese cook; Web, who acts as Dawe's foil since he continues to assert, "There is no such thing as a past"; McBride, a farmer who has the sense to leave the flatboat taking them down the Red Deer River while he still has his wits; and Tune, a boy they "save" from a mining town only to kill him under a blasted heap of bones and rock. Then there is Anna Yellowbird, the 15-year-old widow who follows them to their sites, succours them in their distress, and remains at the conclusion of the novel as the only winner.

It is in the end that the two Annas come together. Anna Dawe and Anna Yellowbird retrace some of the steps of the expedition and during their time together the old woman teaches the younger the strength and joy of woman. Their triumph is expressed best as they witness the struggles of a huge male grizzly hauled over their heads in a net by a helicopter. Drunk and weak with laughter, they watch him "scratching for the gone earth, his testicles following crazily after." Once again, the old Kroetsch stud gets his.

*Badlands* is written at a furious pace. And in his eagerness to squeeze vitality from every line Kroetsch sometimes forces that pace. Readers can't laugh all the time, nor can they respond adequately to the undercurrent of pathetic desperation in Kroetsch's voice. The narrative of this novel is simpler in many ways than that of *The Studhorse Man* or *Gone Indian* but I'm not sure that the comedy of the obscene, the whorehouse scenes, the skunking of Web, and what ought to be the feeling of release and spontaneity in the final scenes with the two Annas on their drunken odyssey, are really pulled off. The book ends with a paragraph so sentimental that, had it occurred at the beginning, it would have been obvious parody of *Redbook*.

Where the strength of this novel lies is in the inventiveness that leaves few pages without some outrageous verbal clowning. Kroetsch likes symbol-making as much as he likes to portray characters in manic attitudes; the pleasures of farce and the intricate game of following the patterns of ideas embedded in the prose are equally present. The flatboat on the Red Deer River may be a ship of fools, but its chronicler is a complex and honourable clown. *Badlands*, though not as successful as *Gone Indian*, is a solid addition to Kroetsch's career. □

# ANNOUNCING



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# Psych-seeing trip

Randolph Cranstone and the Pursuing River, by Michael Bullock, Rainbird Press (Box 35038, Station E, Vancouver) 208 pages, \$10 cloth.

By MARK WITTEN

"WHAT I DON'T like is fiction which presents itself as reality, whereas in fact it isn't, it's only fiction." From the magisterial heights of his authorial mount, Michael Bullock preaches what he most persuasively practises in his own writing. *Randolph Cranstone and the Pursuing River* presents us with a world peopled by strange inhabitants ever subject to fantastic metamorphoses and the current of unpredictable, often bizarre events. It is an imaginative world that boldly asserts itself as independent of the real world, casting its spell through a marvellous visual logic that simply suspends the laws of reality as we know them. But ultimately this independence is illusory, for much of its strength comes also from its source: the rich, undiscovered inner world of which it is a projected landscape, one that for all its strangeness seems disturbingly familiar.

Clearly in sympathy with the enticingly literary cast of Freud's sensibility, Bullock adapts to his own purposes the classical route of a journey into the underworld of dream-logic and free association (fantasy). At the outset, Cranstone is a flat figure, curiously detached from either feeling or involvement, whose psyche displays the promise of a dead cat. Tedium laced with a whimsically dry wit reigns as Cranstone concludes that only "one aspect of living was missing from his experience: he had never consistently viewed the world from upside down." Facetious as the thought is meant to be, it is also to be taken seriously: Cranstone needs a shaking down; he needs to experience the world from those radically different perspectives nurtured in the whorled womb of unconscious fantasies brought to life.

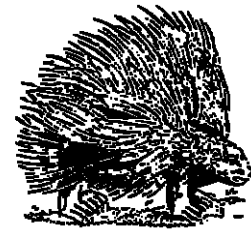
The archetypal descent into the psyche begins almost immediately. And at first, Cranstone is threatened by any such encounter. The monster of the lake emerges to invade his sanctum, disposing swiftly and violently of Cranstone's lovely maid. But in so doing, the process of stripping away the

protective security of Cranstone's estate/world is initiated. While for the moment Randolph is virtually paralyzed, he is soon mysteriously compelled to emerge from the confines of his house to explore the broader reaches of his estate, only to discover that his world has now reached its autumnal phase and is in danger of withering away. This discovery, it would seem, impels him to venture abroad into stranger country, into the vast terrain of the unknown that beckons not only to our slightly buffoonish protagonist, but to his loyal armchair fan-tasts as well.

Cranstone is drawn unresistingly into a netherworld and wonderworld of exotic and oriental horrors and delights, undergoing a series of bewildering transformations, which include a division into himself and his female alter ego, Randolpha (with whom he couples in an episode that could certainly be tagged on Yonge Street's marquees as "Beyond Incest"). Satisfactorily enlightened, Randolph finally returns to his estate, reborn; his estate is now perceived as in its springtime and the monster now seems only a pathetic cur, fawning for his attention. After finding but then losing timeless bliss with the Queen of Wands, the pursuit resumes as Randolph discovers that bliss can only be recaptured by staking his energies to the hazel stick — icon of the pen with which he composes the magical fictions that comprise the remaining half of the volume. Randolph Cranstone becomes not only participant but also creator. The distinction between the artist and his creation blurs: as the pointedly fabled fiction, "The Pursuit," suggests, to try to distinguish the pursuer from the object of pursuit is as much as to say, "Who can know the dancer from the dance?" — or perhaps, Mr. Bullock from his persona.

Bullock's prose more often than not displays an elegance of expression, an economy of structure, and an ingenuity of invention that make for the often-sought, but seldom-achieved combination of imaginative freedom and aesthetic discipline. It is in the form of short fictions, set out in an intriguing collage and linked episodically in the Cranstone sequence, that the dazzling visual impact of poetic image and the dramatic excitement and adventure of narrative mate as complements. While not all fiction need conform to the dictum of anti-realism, within the precinct of his chosen genre Bullock goes a long way towards ensuring that fiction can still serve to exercise our imagina-

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tions so that we return to confront the daily dominion of fact with a sense of mysteries continually unfolding and intact. □

## Theorems from the Portuguese

The Poisoned Kiss, by Joyce Carol Oates, Gage, 189 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By LINDA SANDLER

THERE MUST BE good reasons why a writer has more admirers than readers. Joyce Carol Oates doesn't have much of an audience in Canada although she lives and teaches at the University of Windsor. When Graeme Gibson interviewed her for *Maclean's* last year she said rather cautiously that Canada doesn't need an American writer right now.

Joyce Carol Oates is prolific and versatile — she writes plays, poems, fiction and criticism; she's one of the few novelists in touch with recent ideas

in science and psychology, and her vision of the world is uncompromisingly harsh. All this is intimidating. And then there's her focus: she's interested in people who are powerful or socially significant; she's a gifted psychologist but her people are ciphers — or rather, like Dr. Jesse Vogel in *Wonderland*, they have social identities. Her books are magnificent studies of cultural fatalities — alien perhaps because they are equidistant from survival literature and experimental Canadian fiction.

*The Poisoned Kiss* is in some ways an uncharacteristic book, a collection of gothic tales, ghost stories of impeccable psychological logic. The stories first appeared in magazines disguised as translations from the Portuguese author Fernandes de Briao. Oates explains in the "Afterword" that she was unable to claim the stories as her own because they appeared to have been "given" to her — a species of *contes données* — by an alien spirit that infiltrated her daydreams.

The story called "Letters to Fernandes From a Young American Poet" tells us why Oates fixed on Portugal as the birthplace of her incubus author. For the American correspondent of Fernandes, Portugal is the country of

the spirit, light years away from his native Ohio world of shopping plazas, democrats, and neon lights — the material world. Portugal is the country of "Kings & killers & generals & saints & miracles," and Fernandes' stories are products of a vision where the barriers between men and gods, gods and killers, miracles and delusions dissolve.

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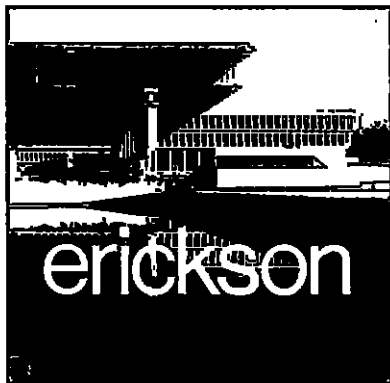
*Fernandes' stories are products of a vision where the barriers between men and gods, gods and killers, miracles and delusions dissolve. And yet the vision is not so far from Oates's as all that.*

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And yet the vision is not so far from Oates's as all that.

Fernandes possessed her imagination while she was writing *Wonderland* in 1970; she found herself alternating his tales with chapters of her own book. *Wonderland*, which she locates in Chicago, is the world of experimental medicine and brain surgery, where specialists have godlike powers over life, nature, and death.

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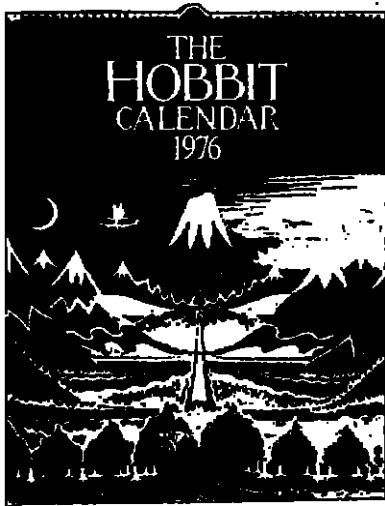
Norman McLaren



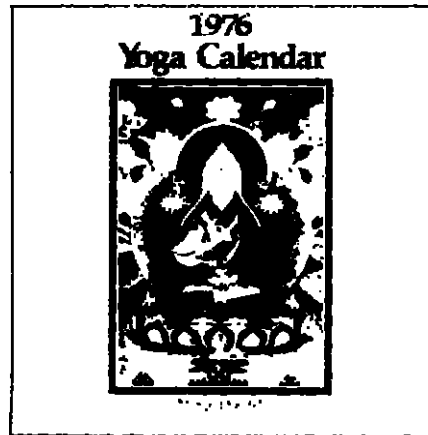
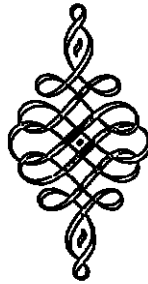
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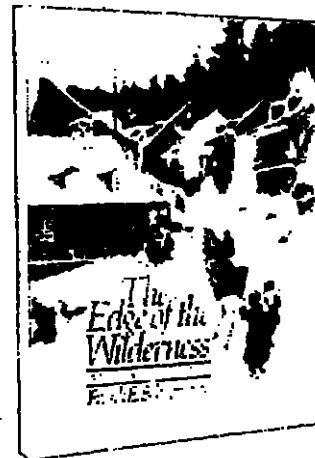
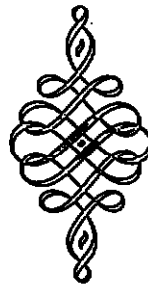
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Themes from *Wonderland* take interesting mutant patterns in *The Poisoned Kiss*. "The Brain of Dr. Vincente," a sort of cross between *Star Trek* and Jorge Luis Borges, is a study of godlike arrogance. When Dr. Vincente dies his brain is removed and placed in an air-conditioned compartment; it can communicate in code with its ex-disciples but is otherwise free from distraction and the indignities of the body. The disciples are anxious to find a suitable body for the great man's brain; they are appalled when the mind of the gentle doctor turns imperious and aloof. Having known what it's like to be *essence*, the god refuses to be human.

*The Poisoned Kiss* is presided over by a wooden statue of the Virgin Mary and her child, and the first story, "Our Lady of the Easy Death of Alferce," portrays a humanized goddess — records her infinite pain when she's confronted with human suffering, her helplessness when a bereaved woman accuses her of being a thief and murderer.

Oates/Fernandes is creating a mirror world where familiar ideas and perceptions are reversed. One of the clearest and most compelling inversions is the story called "Parricide." A team of psychologists is grilling a young boy who has killed his father, and as he drags images from his uncertain memory we see that he's reversing the event, running the film backwards to cancel his guilt. As he understands it, a stranger with half his face slashed off appeared to him in the field, pressed an axe into his hand and led him off into the house to kill his father.

The boy's motive for murder is an unspecified sexual humiliation. In a country presided over by a virgin goddess, the association of guilt with sexuality and procreation is perhaps inevitable: Fernandes' stories about men and women involve a species of rape, and in "The Secret Mirror" an anguished transvestite articulates the idea that impregnation is the mob's way of discharging contempt. Predictably, there's a strong current of tortured homosexuality in *The Poisoned Kiss*.

"Sunlight/Twilight" is a horrific tale about a victim of the Country of Deathly Spirit: a young man is lured into an alley by H., his teenage lover, and H.'s drunken friends. They castrate him. He refuses to betray H.; he sits in the garden convalescing, reading about Moors and gladiators, assimilating the event: "In spite of your pain and sorrow, you understand that the world is put together perfectly." All the savagery of history is in those words.

Some of the stories bridge the gap between Catholic Europe and the modern city. In "Distance" Fernandes explores what happens when you uproot a man from his home and family and project him into an impersonal, anonymous city — when you invert his world and identity. "In a Public Place" proposes a luxurious hotel lobby as a model "reservoir of civilization" — ultra-modern, stagnant, populated by transients who subsist in an impersonal, valueless region between home and destination. In a place like that, as the narrator proves, a man can kill with impunity. He is immortal, he is god.

Portugal, Oates says, is a country she hasn't seen and the stories, she says, are too abstract to be hers. But they are superbly plotted ghost stories — cultural theorems, if you like. Fernandes, like his "translator," understands the cultural ground of poisonous passions, and I'd say that in spite of Oates's preference for the dense existential detail of her own writing, *The Poisoned Kiss* contains some of her most compelling tales. □

## From the Norse's mouth

God is Not a Fish Inspector, by  
W. D. Valgardson, Oberon, 134  
pages, \$6.50 cloth and \$3.50 paper.

By AUDREY THOMAS

IN *Bloodflowers*, W. D. Valgardson's first collection of short stories, Neils (a character in "An Act of Mercy") watches his brother clean a net by lamplight.

The lamplight distorted Helgi, making him all highlights and deep shadows so that there were no middle planes, no soft guys, only sharp angles in pools of darkness. The appropriateness of it pleased Neils for he felt it showed Helgi as they all were — extremes created by isolation and constant struggle.

Valgardson's perception of the Interlake Triangle of Manitoba, and of the people living and working there, is much like that lamplight, for he as artist is consistently interested in the "extremes created by isolation and constant struggle." Of the 10 stories in this new collection, there are two suicides ("A Business Relationship" and "A Private Comedy") one death by bear

(in the story "Bear"), one accidental murder ("Hunting"), one death by explosion, and one by accident and revenge (in perhaps the most powerful story "Granite Point") and all kinds of betrayals brought about by the loneliness and struggle of this northern life. The casualty rate, physical and psychic, is high. We of more temperate zones may therefore, at first, feel a sense of removal or unreality about the stories, both in setting and in content.

The region of Valgardson's interest is peopled by fishcamp owners, fishermen, Indians, small storekeepers (in the story "Capital" the storekeeper is actually referred to as Steini Storekeeper and his wife as Mrs. Steini Storekeeper: "She had a name of her own once but it had long since been lost somewhere in the dark trenches formed by endless piles of canned goods"), blacksmiths, conservation agents (considered to be outsiders), and losers.

There are also wives, like the young woman Runa married to an ailing fishcamp owner, who cook and chop wood and are there to wait on and please the men. Runa packs lunches, fills thermoses, knits heavy woolen mittens for the winter fishermen: "While the men ate, Runa carried in firewood for the cookstove and filled the water barrel by carrying water from the lake. Normally she would have a cookee to do the chores, but this year, to save money, she did them herself." It is her husband's illness — and suggested impotence — that ultimately leads to the crises in this story. (And here, as in the title story and the story "A Business Relationship," illness or old age is a real enemy for this is still a world where brute strength is what brings in the money.) An Indian becomes the scapegoat, with jealousy and impotence and illness the motives behind the husband's actions. Runa's revenge is to walk away; in "Granite Point" the wife's revenge is to walk away also — but first to stand and listen to her trapped husband plead with her to save him from the sled dogs.

The women as well as the men remind me of the characters in the Norse sagas — strong, proud, revengeful. Their names, too: Fuesi Bergman, Valdi Gudmillindson, Herman Finnson, Bodli Fuggui, Helgi, Runa Oilga. The drama of both (the sagas and Valgardson's stories) is the drama of survival. Indeed, the most optimistic of the stories, "The Novice," suggests that one stands a better chance against nature than against men or machines. Men betray; machines trap and crush.

Nature, at least (if one has trained oneself to be prepared for her indifference), can be learned.

Valgardson's images come straight out of the land about which he is writing. Characters have "moss-green eyes" or eyes "the light brown of hazel nuts." A poor man and his son sit waiting for their victims "like two brown hawks." A man has "a head like a boulder"; another strikes his words from his mouth "like wood chips." He makes us see the isolation and feel the cold, imagine a scene that brings light but no warmth, a place where "life . . . was as fragile as the gauze wings of the mayflies that rose from the lake each summer to spiral briefly toward heaven."

Valgardson's insights into the North and the people who live there are as brilliant and chilling as the world he describes. When I finished this book, I went out and bought *Blood Flowers* (also published by Oberon). In both books there is that rare and lucky marriage between author and subject that one always searches for but so seldom finds. He is a story-writer of the first order. Let us hope that these stories are only a beginning. □

## Emissions possible

The Meadowlark Connection, by Ken Mitchell, Pile of Bones Publishing Co. (University of Saskatchewan, Regina), 130 pages, \$4 paper.

By JIM CHRISTY

ONE APPROACHES any vanity-press book with trepidation at the most generous of times. But this one looks so awful — a nine-by-12 format, stapled together with a taped spine, utterly dumb drawing on the cover of a Mountie, a horse, and a girl — that perversity bids you read on despite the added obstacle of an introduction explaining in detail just why no one but the author would publish the book. You can indulge this perversity if you are a reviewer but not if you're a shopper, since the thing costs \$4. Judging by the cover, no one, unless forewarned, is that perverse. Be forewarned then, because *The Meadowlark Connection* by Ken Mitchell is a riot. It's that all-too-rare book that has you laughing out

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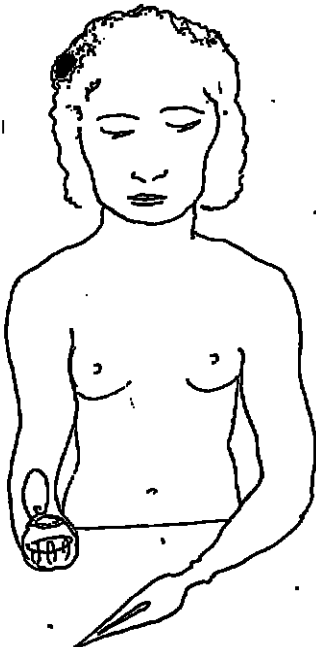
Starting out as a catalogue to the exhibition, the book developed into a self-sufficient statement of the uniqueness and inventiveness of the Pacific Coast Indian.

191 pp., 197 illustrations, 10 in full colour  
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loud while reading, a thoroughly enjoyable bit of slap-stick humour.

I have absolutely no intention of defining the humour or giving away the story. Suffice it to say that *The Meadowlark Connection* concerns a Mountie named Ashenden who loves his horse, loves his horse so much in fact that he cleans her private parts with a toothbrush adoringly. He also is troubled by wet dreams. And he is devoted to the letter of the law. Other characters include a voluptuous seductress straight from the coffee shop of the Four Seasons Motel; a Stingray-driving Ukrainian woman suspected of subverting local young minds with Commie ideas; her cohort, the proper Englishman, naturally suspected of being a "fruit-cake"; a French cowboy who rides into town on a white horse, thereby upsetting the annual egg-and-spoon race; an inscrutable Chinese gentleman, occasionally referred to as "The Jap," suspected of operating a heroin refinery; and various others.

Ashenden believes them all to be part of the nefarious Peking-Moscow-Quebec bloc intent on destroying the free world from a base of operations in Meadowlark, Saskatchewan. *The Meadowlark Connection* thus tells the story of Ashenden's bumbling battle against these forces of evil and his own rise from the radar traps. But it never tells if he solved his wet-dream problem. There is a good movie in all this; in fact, the story almost begs to be translated onto the silver screen. But considering the condition of that particular Canadian industry, it's a possibility as unlikely as the state of affairs uncovered by Constable Ashenden out in the bread basket of the world. □



## From Quebec, with two stars

**The Grandfathers**, by Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, translated by Marc Flourde, Harvest House, 158 pages, \$2.50 paper.

**Jos Carbone**, by Jacques Benoit, translated by Sheila Fischman, Harvest House, 136 pages, \$2.50 paper.

**The Juneberry Tree**, by Jacques Ferron, translated by Raymond Y. Chamberlain, Harvest House, 158 pages, \$2.50 paper.

By BRIAN VINTCENT

WHILE DECLINING interest has forced other publishers to reduce sharply the translations of French Canadian fiction they put out, Harvest House, the small Montreal publishing firm, quietly continues to add new titles to its French Writers of Canada series. No translation of a work of major importance has appeared so far, but if the books selected for the collection are not startling in quality or appeal, they are at least solid second-stringers and representative of what is being written in Quebec these days.

Three new titles bring the list to 11, and these three novels in themselves seem to confirm what has become increasingly apparent over the past decade. French Canadian fiction has become a separate and wholly individual entity with a character that bears little resemblance to fiction from the rest of the country.

Victor-Lévy Beaulieu's *The Grandfathers* illustrates this point very well. Like much recent Quebec writing, it is a nightmarish tale written in intense, often angry language. Beaulieu has no interest in creating a narrative in this portrait of old age down on the farm. Impressions and sensations are everything. And they show that life on Beaulieu's farm is quite different from the experience of characters in so many English Canadian rural stories where the farm is a restricting milieu from which to flee. Beaulieu's farm is a place of revelations where excrement and urine are cherished as sacred, almost mythic materials and where primitive lusts and animal passions are positive, redemptive virtues. There is no place here for any romantic back-to-the-land utopian dream. Beaulieu's

grandfathers, farm and descriptions of old age are too savage for that.

*Jos Carbone*, a first novel by journalist Jacques Benoit, is a fable-fantasy, a literary form almost as popular with Quebec writers as the prose nightmare. Jos and Myrtie live in a cosy cabin in the woods. Not far away lives another couple, also quite cosily, in a hole underground. A lusty villain called Pierrot intrudes on this idyllic existence and Benoit's fairy tale soon becomes a blood-and-gore gothic romance with knives slashing through jugular veins and mutilated bodies stuffed in chests. The innocent world of Marie Chapdelaine is far away indeed.

Jacques Ferron, the prolific doctor-writer of Ville Jacques Cartier near Montreal, can always be counted on for an ironic and witty glimpse into Quebec life. *The Juneberry Tree* is a fantasy about childhood in which Tinamer, a Québécois Alice, divides her wonderland into the "good side of things," which is the forest behind her house, and the "bad side of things," which is the world of streets and schools, the world into which her day-dreaming father disappears each day to work. But the novel is not all charm and flowers. Ferron concludes it with a particularly bitter polemic on the school-hospitals where handicapped children are kept in conditions closely resembling a prison.

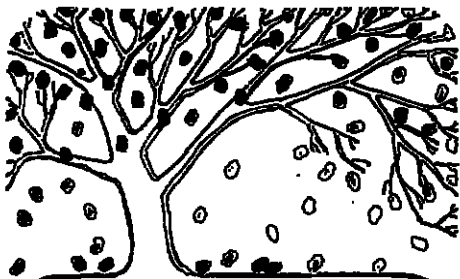
Quality of translation has never been Harvest House's strong point and the Ferron book in particular suffers from periodic blurred imprecisions. But in general these latest volumes have been more professionally translated and read better than their predecessors in the series. □

## Writer with a bloc

**The Fleur-de-Lys Affair**, by Hal Ross, Doubleday, 196 pages, \$7.50 cloth.

By LEONARD GASPARINI

THIS POTBOILER BY Montrealer Hal Ross is a rather pretentious attempt to fictionalize in theory what the once-notorious FLQ attempted to do in fact. And this time we have an array of mannequin-like characters: stereotyped political activists and opportunists and, in the lucrative wake of Mario Puzo,



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even an obese Mafia chieftain who manipulates the neo-FLQ bloc from his Florida penthouse without their knowledge of it. The whole thing reads like a zany whodunit. There are flashbacks in the style of Arthur Hailey, though not quite as effective. Indeed, there are so many of them, each chapter detracting from the previous one, that the story line flaps like a camera shutter gone awry.

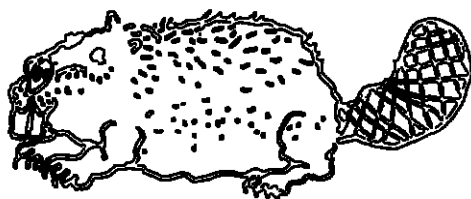
Hal Ross's prose leaves something to be desired too. It limps from one cliché to another, and occasionally there's a heavy word like "memorabilia" thrown in for ballast. It caters to crass taste much like cramming potato chips into one's mouth; it plays up sensationalism for its own sake, and somehow flubs the traditional properties of fiction such as characterization, the evocation of setting, and the poetic unities. Not that it entirely neglects these ingredients, but rather superimposes a kind of journalistic aesthetics on them, thereby rendering any objectivity invalid. It's all blurb and no body.

The novel's protagonist, Jean Guy Parisien, is undoubtedly a schizoid, as are many of the minor characters. And instead of probing this duality, the author opts for the easy formula of evil forces against human goodness. There is also the usual lust and violence.

*The Fleur-de-Lys Affair* is a rather boring one. We've seen better plots on TV's *Columbo*. This one's as predictable as migrating geese. In the end everybody gets what's coming to them. The Don is reduced to a basket case, the once-more disillusioned FLQ members continue to intone de Gaulle's "*Vive le Quebec Libre!*" And the decadent bourgeoisie anglais breed and toast weenies in the suburbs.

Doubleday is undoubtedly a reputable name in the publishing business, but I can't help detecting a bit of tokenism on their part in printing this book. It's like they're saying: "See — we're interested in Canadian Literature!" Yes, that may be — but look what they've given us.

After reading this novel I'm almost certain that the middle petal of the fleur-de-lys is drooping just a bit. □



# Eric Nicol does not write our heads

There's a lot of it going around . . . , by Eric Nicol, Doubleday, 192 pages, \$7.50 cloth.

By CLIVE COCKING

THIS IS A book for the man who has never stopped twitching with anxiety since he received his pants back from the cleaners bearing a little tag saying, ALWAYS LOOK YOUR LOVELIEST. It's also for the man who is convinced that the return of the bow tie means the end of civilization as we know it. And it's for the man who eschews the current passion for encounter groups (preferring, as the author says, to take his "group therapy with a grain of Gestalt") and who is racked with despair at the replacement of his folksy old barber by a sleek stylist who wants to make him look like Julius Caesar. It most certainly is required reading for the gentleman who is determined not to let the New Woman use him simply as an object of idle pleasure (should that possibility ever arise).

*There's a lot of it going around . . .*, the latest collection of humourist Eric Nicol's best columns from the Vancouver *Province*, is full of richly comic variations on the theme of middle-age male culture shock. While women may find some amusement here too (as they do in so much about men), the appeal of the book will essentially be to men — as a sort of whimsical survival guide. Whether it raises the consciousness of unliberated males or not, it will at least raise many a belly-laugh.

The book is essentially full of minicase studies of the problems suburban man agonizes over daily. There is, first, the rising cost of booze. "Imbibing," Nicol points out, "is now so expensive that a person has to choose between having a drink and going to Europe." Then there are the packrat tendencies of the average housewife, refusing to purge the house of its accumulating junk. "What is a man profited," guru Nicol asks, "if he shall gain the whole garbage dump and lose his own mind?" As for the problem of understanding modern education, Nicol emphasizes the importance of relevance as the key:

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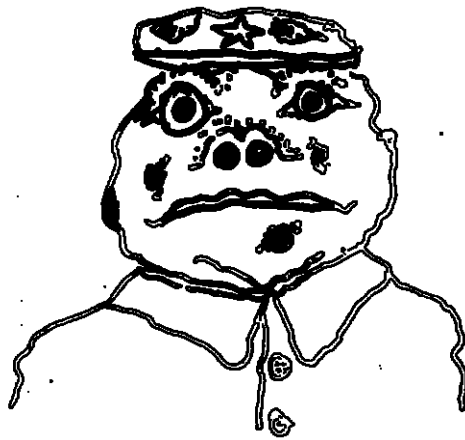
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"Our children do not seek learning. They hunt a herd of relevants."

Eric Nicol, clearly alas, continues his fondness for the pun. But if that can be overlooked, there are many valuable insights here for the contemporary befuddled man. Not only does he clear up serious misunderstandings ("When today's woman dresses provocatively she draws attention to the fact that she is an unfulfilled nuclear scientist"), but also reveals the dangers inherent in some current fads, as in the escalation of men's and women's heel sizes ("Women have seen men's three inches and raised us two inches. They are perched on clogs so high they contravene city zoning laws.") and offers useful suggestions on ways out of modern dilemmas. As for the annual unwilling ritual of fathers flying kites with their sons, for example, he suggests the wise course is for fathers to be out of town in March, leaving full instructions for the boy's mother: "Nothing in the manual of sexual politics says that the father must always be the one to make a kite. Be unselfish about it. Give your helpmate equal rights to your tool box and band-aids. Let her produce the abortion on demand."

Probably the most penetrating piece, in the book is Nicol's last column, "Immature Thoughts," wherein he discusses his slowness in growing up ("I have been growing up for quite a while but am still not very good at it"), current attitudes towards maturity



("Today you can be running around kissing girls and standing on your head in public and dancing the bugaloo at 51 and still be Prime Minister of the country") and notes the little he has learned about life and maturity.

"Life is a farce that we have to play straight," Nicol concludes. "That much I've learned about growing up. The trick is to learn how to time the laughs . . ." □

## Quotes from the Raven

**Coyote the Trickster**, by Gail Robinson and Douglas Hill, Chatto & Windus (Clarke Irwin), \$6.65 cloth.

**Star Maiden: An Ojibway Legend of the First Water Lily**, by Patricia Robins, Collier Macmillan, \$5.95 cloth.

**Sky Man on the Totem Pole**, by Christie Harris, McClelland & Stewart, \$7.95 cloth.

**There's a Sound in the Sea: A Child's-Eye View of the Whale**, by Tamar Griggs, Scrimshaw (Gage), \$10.95 cloth.

### By CHRISTINE FORSYTH

THE LEGENDS OF the North American Indians provide substantial material for recycling to serve the present moods in literature and art. We are conserving the simple and time-honoured tales once told with wry humour by our native peoples, and adapting them as cultural antecedents for our children. Coyote and Raven keep company with Aesop's fox and the crow. So it is in the best interests that our culture plunders native folklore, although we may be conscious that it is a limited resource. For where are they telling new tales of Coyote and Raven today?

Western Canadians are probably more familiar with the character and the adventures of Coyote than those in the East. Gail Robinson and Douglas Hill, the authors of *Coyote the Trickster*, have lived among the Indians, and their narrative is faithful to the formality of ritual story-telling and to the tone of wise indulgence toward creature folly. Throughout there are hints to the reader of 10 or older that people can be just as dangerously foolish and admirably brave.

*Star Maiden* is for younger readers. It tells the story of how the Chippewa boy heard how the Star Maiden so loved his people that she came to live on earth as a water lily. The illustrations by Shirley Day that accompany this warm story are evocative of astral space and human scale, and the young child will be impressed with them, as with the thought that there was a time when earth and its people appeared so inviting to a young star princess.

In *Sky Man on the Totem Pole*, a personable creature from another planet, observing the ways of the West Coast Indians, comes to earth to take an Indian bride. His planet is so ravaged and wasted that the green earth with its pristine forests and plains becomes the chosen home for his descendents. They, however, despite the wise counsel of their astronaut ancestor, wreak the same devastation. The book threads together Indian tales of human exploit, wars, and wanderings, leading up to the figure of a young Indian boy today. Although the narrative is sometimes confusing, young teenagers are likely to enjoy this story of Indian legend, space travel, and ecological concern.

Naivety simplifies the central issue of wildlife conservation in Tamar Grigg's *There's a Sound in the Sea*. It's a slim book with many excellent reproductions of children's whale drawings and selections of verse and Indian legends about the whale, paraphrased by children. This represents part of a larger program to make children aware of the ecological situation. Their work demonstrates that their understanding and interpretations vary widely according to their experience and what they have been told. Here, as in the fables and the Indian legends that have been preserved through generations, we learn more about the people who tell the stories than we do about the animals they portray. □

## Curious bookfellows

**Three Voices**, by Joan Hind-Smith, Canadian Portraits series, Clarke Irwin, 235 pages, \$7.50 cloth.

### By JUDY STOFFMAN

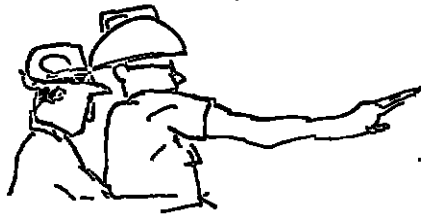
THIS RATHER ill-conceived addition to Clarke Irwin's Canadian Portraits series lumps together Margaret Laurence, Gabrielle Roy, and Frederick Philip Grove. They have no more in common — despite the author's convoluted preface in which she attempts to explain her choice of subjects — than any other three Canadian novelists worthy of the name.

The series, says the dust-jacket blurb, is "designed to encourage interest in Canadians who have led interesting lives." The three whose lives and works are discussed here are not



exactly struggling unknowns waiting for Clarke Irwin to "encourage interest." Probably more has been written about the quixotic Grove than about any other Canadian writer, and both Margaret Laurence and Gabrielle Roy have been thoroughly studied.

Joan Hind-Smith does not contribute anything new or original to our under-



standing of these writers. But she has done her homework, weaving biographical facts and plot summaries into three neat little essays. Margaret Laurence's life follows the classic pattern for Canadian writers of her generation: small-town Protestant upbringing, long period of self-imposed exile in Africa and England, eventual return to Canadian roots. Along the way there is a marriage lasting 22 years, two children, fame, friends and moderate fortune accompanied by an ever increasing knowledge of herself and her powers. It appears to be a life remarkably free of compromises. And then there are the novels, beginning with *This Side Jordan* in 1960 up until *The Diviners*, her crowning achievement, which appeared in 1974.

Gabrielle Roy grew up in St. Boniface, Man., the youngest child in an enormous family, surrounded by love and poverty. Her relationship with her plucky and imaginative mother proved to be the most important in her life and in many of her books the figure of the strong, loving mother is seen as the source of the life force. Because her mother did not wish her to become a writer, she fought against her impulse to write until she was 29 years old. Then she faced a peculiarly Canadian dilemma: Should she write in English or French? She chose French. By the time her first novel appeared, she was 36 and her mother was dead. She was honoured in France and even in Canada. She married Dr. Marcel Carbotte, regained her faith through her friendship with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and went on to write a string of haunting and powerful books. Her stories tend to be more metaphysical than those of either Laurence or Grove.

Frederick Philip Grove was paranoid, fantastical, impractical,

moody, tormented, and brilliant. He achieved critical, but never popular success and in the 1920s and 1930s (the bad old days before the Canada Council) that meant constant financial crises.

It is his wife Catherine who emerges as the unsung heroine in the essay on Grove. She was a tireless, patient, and optimistic woman, with a boundless confidence in her husband's talent, who made herself the family's chief breadwinner. Grove had recognized what he called her "pedagogic genius" when he was a school principal in Winkler, Man., and she an elementary teacher 20 years his junior. She continued to work after their marriage and eventually founded her own school in Simcoe, Ont., where she became famous as a teacher of children with learning disabilities, rejects of the conventional educational system. The essay ends with the well-known story of Prof. Douglas Spettigue's discovery, after Grove's death, of his disreputable European origins; he had once been Felix Paul Greve, a penniless young hack with a jail record.

I am troubled throughout these pieces by the author's simplistic pre-

sentation of the relationship between the writer's life and his or her work. Is a person who lives an interesting life invariably an interesting writer? How exactly does it help the reader to know that in the novels of Margaret Laurence, Riding Mountain near Neepawa becomes Galloping Mountain near the town of Manawaka? Is writing novels simply a clever way to disguise autobiography? Ms. Hind-Smith does not trouble her head with such questions.

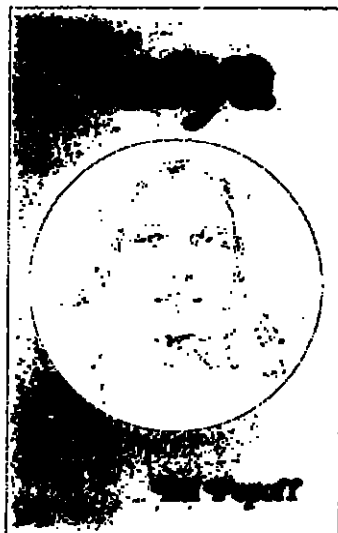
Yet it would be wrong to say that the book serves no purpose. While the middle-brow approach will irritate the sophisticated reader, her three easy pieces are sufficiently enjoyable to appeal to high-school readers about to dip a toe into the icy waters of CanLit. There is the sort of reader who checks before starting a book to make certain it does not have too many pages. He or she may not be ready for Clara Thomas's 212-page *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence*, but will happily read 62 pages about her by Ms. Hind-Smith. Whether a book of such boring design will reach the juvenile reader who might profit by it is another question. □

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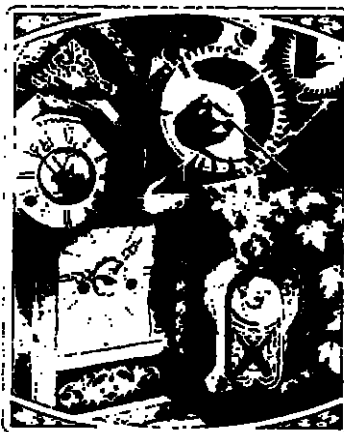
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# As the world yearns

I, Adam, by Don Crossley, CE Publications (81 Walmsey Blvd., Toronto 7), 107 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By CLYDE HOSEIN

READING CROSSLEY is like having a refreshing conversation with someone who feels deeply about the state and future of our world. He is sensitive to suffering and to beauty, and often profound in his observations of iniquity. But sometimes he allows indignation to overcome him, so he loses control. The results are uncertain diction and faulty metre.

But in the bitter truths of the reality the poet describes, these shortcomings refuse to be literary crimes. Instead they intensify his wide-ranging disgust, which, to his credit, comes over without descent into the snare of a political position.

In the title poem, "I, Adam," there is that epitome of human potential described within the framework of the poet's view of a future spiritual cosmology. He says:

In the asking  
I am burning  
For a yearning of your love.

Call the wind to seek the dying...  
I at last am free to flee...

Crossley has this uncanny ability to sound other-worldly without becoming metaphysical. He achieves this by trying sincerely to find a truth. And in that attempt, he saves himself from petty sentimentalities, like nationalism, and all those versy juxtapositionings that inspire the mentally arthritic and over-awe the young.

His poetry is pure poetry; no approved form, no required cadence. Most of these 77 poems confirm that poetry should be an attitude of mind revealed by the illuminating light of vision, what the psychologist Abraham Maslow calls "the peak experience." They sing of the death of the ego trip, of ceasing to wallow in the unspiritual, man-mangled remains of the great humanist tradition begun by Gallileo, Descartes, and Newton, of an equality and balance between cortical and di-encephalonic behaviour and standards in a cold world. To me, this is the essence of poetry.

So if you really care about the killing of old farmers in Vietnam and the

assembly-line aging of young men, then you should read *I, Adam*. It says something, and sometimes is very moving:

*But the scroll that remains  
talks about immortality:  
That great wish.*

*Feel your face  
and tell yourself  
It will dry away  
Some day.*

## Flat, muddled, and egotistical

What is on Fire is Happening, by Kenneth McRobbie, Four Humours Press (St. Paul's College, Winnipeg), 32 pages, paper unpriced.

The Barbarian File, by Christopher Wiseman, Sesame Press (663½ Campbell St., Windsor), 47 pages, \$2.50 paper.

He & She, by Douglas Barbour, Golden Dog Press (15 Ossington Ave., Toronto), 28 pages, \$2 paper.

By LEONARD GASPARINI

DON'T LET THE title of Kenneth McRobbie's third, thin volume of poems, *What is on Fire is Happening*, mislead you into thinking that you're going to be in for some heavy, high-powered writing. Although the title sounds like the war cry of a riotous Detroit black, there is nothing even remotely revolutionary or Dionysian in these poems. Most of them focus on some aspect of the Prairie landscape, and what makes them noteworthy is McRobbie's lyrical sense of metaphor and perspective. In the poem "In Open Prairie," he more or less tells us not to expect a vision that can be arbitrarily defined by the usual process of division, but simply to accept unquestioningly what is:

*They exact from us no response.  
Our wide, dry sea affords  
no purpose for action.*

At least one half of the 13 poems in this booklet are vivid because of their oblique approach to a poetry of spatial and geometric interrelationships, much like that of a horizontal distance or the mosaic of farmland as seen from an airplane. The rest resemble flat landscapes with the occasional grain elevator painted in for effect.

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McRobbie's pedestrian stanzas plod along until there is no beginning and no end. Aside from the title, there isn't too much happening in this collection.

Christopher Wiseman's *The Barbarian File* is concerned with the various atavistic impulses of an imaginary character who, like Berryman's *Henry*, experiences the civilized world only to transform his impressions into a kind of ritualistic myth-making, a ceremony of emotions, as it were. Thus we have the "barbarian" in all his archetypal guises, sowing his word.

Wiseman's poems hang on the edge of fantasy. They are mostly rhythmless in construction, and rely, to a great extent, on certain shock devices such as violent imagery and slang: "I'll get the bastards/this time he said/and build a fucking/great robot/and set it loose. . . ." For some peculiar reason these lines fail to ignite my corpuscles. They completely lack what I would reverently term the *poetic*. And most of the other pieces in this collection are no different. There is, however, one particularly good anti-jock poem called "The Quarterback."

As if to substantiate his "noble savage" theme and totally immerse himself in his creation, Wiseman has even included epigraphs from Karl Shapiro, Helen MacInnes, Saul Bellow, and John Barryman. Such single-minded devotion to his hero is exemplary, even if somewhat neurotic. But it's unfortunate that Wiseman's poems don't live up to the exhortations of these writers. The poems are pretentiously dull, muddled with third-rate metaphysics, and exude an academic vicariousness that wants to live dangerously cliché. It's enough to make the most stolid reader dare the *barbarian* to come out of his office hiding-place. *The Barbarian File* is just that: all paper clips and mucilage — and no muscle.

*He & She* is a pamphlet of Douglas Barbour's love poems. After reading them I'm afraid the Muse Erato would blush in disgrace. What these poems lack in music, language, imagery, and emotion, they make up for in egotism. The diction is hackneyed and often an amalgam of the phraseology of pop tunes. Their cloying subjectivity numbs the soul, and the lines jerk across the page as if to give one the impression of a person reading aloud while he's running. Barbour seems incapable of writing a line more than four words long. Perhaps the poems in this collection should have been left in the drawer along with his other work sheets. □

## Laying it on the bar

**Courts and Trials: A Multi-disciplinary Approach**, edited by M. L. Friedland, U of T Press, 161 pages, \$4.95 paper.

By **ARTHUR MALONEY**

DEAN FRIEDLAND has once again contributed greatly to Canadian legal literature in this interesting collection of articles he has edited. The papers originate from a series of lectures given at the University of Toronto Law School. As Friedland states in his preface:

The purpose of this collection of papers . . . to put it quite simply [is] to show that non-lawyers can make a significant contribution to the study of legal institutions. Each paper looks at the judicial system from a different perspective and thereby gives the reader a better understanding of the institution studied.

The book contains the views of nine non-lawyers who comment on the workings of our system of justice, looking at it from the perspective of their different areas of academic expertise. As a lawyer, I found it refreshing to observe our judicial system from these nine different vantage points.

Reginald Allen, a philosopher and classicist, writes of the trial of Socrates



in 399 B.C. It is interesting to note the similarity between Athenian criminal procedure and that of our own today. In his paper he stresses the importance of the principle of legality and the ideal of procedural fairness.

The next paper is by Professor Anatol Rapoport, well known for his work on game theory. His historical approach to the adversary system is entitled "Theories of Conflict Resolution and the Law." He discusses the Marx-



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ist theory of law and expresses the opinion that the adversary system reflects the ethics of the "free enterprise" system. According to Rapoport, the adversary system, like the capitalist system, is based on the theory that the clash of competing interests will result in justice being done.

Anthony Doob, a psychologist, demonstrates in his paper "Psychology and Evidence," what contributions psychologists can make to the legal process. He concludes:

The court should [not] turn to the psychologist to act as the trier of fact. The psychologist is no more skilled at this than is anyone else. All the psychologist can do is aid the court in giving the proper weight to certain kinds of evidence.

The famous case of Regina vs. Stephen Truscott is analyzed by philosopher and part-time psychoanalyst Charles Hanly in his article "Psychopathology of the Trial Process." Professor Hanly examines five psychoanalytic principles and applies them to the psychological issues that are likely to arise for jurors during the course of the trial. The view of a non-lawyer such as Hanly, an expert in his field, about the operation of the jury system as he examined it in the Truscott case is immensely interesting to lawyers like myself who strongly favour the retention of the system. I would dislike it intensely if his proposal that the members of the jury be drawn from a pool of experts were carried out.

Both Professors Doob and Hanly make the point that the recent amendment to the Criminal Code prohibiting jurors from discussing what went on in the jury room make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to study our jury system. I was disturbed about this amendment. As long as jurors felt they were under no compulsion after a case had been decided to discuss what had motivated them, we had a source of valuable information about a vital area of the administration of justice.

Two political scientists examine judicial power in our system. Peter Russell argues that our courts exercise political power in his paper "Judicial Power in Canada's Political Culture." Professor Donald Smiley's paper makes the point that Parliament, not the Canadian Judiciary, should make decisions regarding human rights. He concludes:

Elected politicians working within an environment of public discussion and debate are well equipped to deal wisely with questions of human rights. It is yet to be demonstrated that the Canadian judiciary can do better.

In the next article, James Giffen, who is in my opinion one of this

country's best sociologists, is disturbed about the ineffectiveness of the existing machinery in our criminal courts and in the judicial mechanism generally for dealing with problems of alcohol and drug addiction. Since so many of the cases that come before our courts are concerned with addiction in these areas and are directly related to them, it is an important indictment of the system to say that existing procedural methods are inadequate. This reasoned criticism by a non-lawyer renowned in his field should not be ignored.

Donald Dewees examines the role that courts have played in the past and can play in future in regulating private economic behaviour. He deals primarily with the problems courts encounter in coping with environmental law and anti-combines legislation.

The final article in the book is written by historian Kenneth McNaught and is entitled "Political Trials and the Canadian Political Tradition." He discusses a number of famous Canadian political trials and voices the opinion that in this area the court system has been most effective. He argues that the rejection by Canadian courts of the use of violence by any entity other than the state and their refusal to become agents of social change has resulted in an "encouragement of democratic party organization and, indeed, of a multi-party system which is distinctively Canadian."

In the preface Friedland writes: "I hope that this series will serve to stimulate other non-lawyers — and lawyers — to study the legal system." After reading the example of his most recent work, I am certain his hope will be realized. □

## Plumaging the depths

Not as the Crow Flies, by Terry Shortt, McClelland & Stewart, illustrated by the author, 255 pages, \$12.95 cloth.

By ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

BIRDWATCHING IS not one of my hobbies. As between a sparrow and a thrush, no problem. But the distinctions between a medium ground finch and a purple finch beats me. Yet Terry Shortt, who is now the chief of the exhibits department at the Royal On-

tario Museum, has spent his life making such distinctions, collecting the more interesting ones and then putting them on display for all. He has pursued his quarry in most places of the world and in *Not as the Crow Flies* he relives some incidents in what he modestly describes as "a lifetime of adventure in exotic and untamed lands."

He bags a huge bald eagle on the Yatuk River in Alaska and gets blackfly fever as well; stumbles on a tired bushmaster snake in Trinidad; is scuppered by a bikini in Africa (it has to do with flamingoes); and is driven mad by Indian officialdom. ("We should have a reply in a week isn't it?")

Through it all, he shows a zest for life that is infectious, and an eye for detail that is insatiable. For example: "Once they [siafu ants] fasten their enormous pincers into flesh they never release them even if the body is torn away from the head. The people of the Budongo, with typical human ingenuity, have turned this characteristic to their advantage: they use the ants to suture wounds. Once the jaws of the living ant have drawn together the flesh and skin, the head is snipped off still clinging firmly like a surgeon's clip."

*But it is his style that marks the man:*

To say there was a flock of flamingoes, a throng, a multitude or swarm would be an understatement: there was a congestion of flamingoes, a vast pink broadloom of flamingoes, so densely packed that it was almost impossible to see singles for the mass. The halation from the almost solid crush of birds under the bright sun blurred and dazzled the eyes and stunned the senses.

And when marooned on a rock by a bear, he writes:

I lay as flat as a hound's ear, and he dropped back on all fours. I had often read of people who, in certain circumstances, feared that their heartbeats could be heard. I was now one of them. I could feel and hear mine. They sounded like the mating hoots of a blue grouse rooster.

Eccentric, sometimes overblown, Shortt's adventures are like an adult *Chums* story. But for all his attention to detail, his endless cataloguing of different species ("we could just hear the squeak of a granulated toad"), he has a saving sense of humour:

We discovered a white-throated leafscraper, a small, earthy brown-coloured bird resembling in its actions a little thrush. It wasn't scraping leaves; so, I added it to my special list of "silly-ass" bird names. (I've never seen a nuthatch hatching a nut, a bananaquit quitting a banana, a plantain-eater dining on one, a woodhewer chopping wood, and certainly not a leaflove being amorous with the foliage!)

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All in all, *Not as the Crow Flies* is a sort of extended Blackwoods, as Blackwoods used to be in the old days. The perfect present for a birdwatcher and a super hostess gift for a country weekend. It should be by every cottage master-bed. □

## There's no business like sowbusiness

**The Politics of Food, by Don Mitchell, James Lorimer & Company, 235 pages, \$11 cloth and \$4.95 paper.**

**By CLARENCE G. REDEKOP**

THE APPEARANCE OF this book at a time of rapid and continuous escalation of food prices is most opportune for those wishing to gain some measure of understanding of the operations of the food industry. In *The Politics of Food*, Don Mitchell has analyzed some of the corporate, political, and international forces that have been responsible for the sudden inflation in food costs after several decades of remarkable stability. In the process he clarifies the Eugene Whelen-Beryl Plumptre dispute over the usefulness of marketing boards, the various national and international forces at work forcing up the prices of bread, beef, and dairy products, and the confused and ineffectual role of the federal government in attempting to blunt the price increases.

What emerges should hardly be surprising to anyone remotely familiar with the functioning of the food industry. Farmers and producers in general have not benefited markedly from the continuing price increases as they remain caught — as they have been for decades — in the cost-price squeeze of rising costs of production outstripping the return received from the sales of their produce. It is the misfortune of the producer to be squeezed by the powerful forces of agribusiness at both ends of supply and sale. The ever-increasing domination of the food industry by a few large international firms characterized by horizontal and vertical corporate integration has resulted in the creation of an agribusiness oligopoly that is practically immune from the

forces of supply and demand. Their corporate power enables them to establish both the selling price of farm machinery, fuel, fertilizer, and feed and the buying price of grain, beef, and dairy products. Like the oil industry, the profits of agribusiness have been rising significantly faster than the rate of inflation.

While Mitchell demonstrates convincingly that the plight of the producer remains precarious and that the consumer ripoff by the food-industry giants continues, the book is marred by several defects. Little is said of the great waste in the packaging industry, the advertising, and the deteriorating nutritional value of the overprocessed food, all of which forces prices upward. In the discussion of the Canadian role in the international food crisis, no mention is made of factors beyond Canadian control such as the rise in oil prices, the population explosion, and the de-emphasis of agriculture in favour of industrial development by many underdeveloped countries. The responsibility for the creation and alleviation of the international food shortage obviously does not rest with Western governments alone.

In addition, Mitchell devotes only three pages to recommendations on how to restructure the food industry. Taken individually, most of his 12 proposals are eminently sensible. But as an entire package the recommendations are utterly utopian. The proposal to have an integrated "state-owned food industry" from farm supply, production, processing, and retailing is totally unrealistic, given the Canadian social and political milieu. Nor is it necessarily desirable. Total centralized control over the entire food-producing industry would probably result in more, rather than less, farmer/worker alienation, endless reams of bureaucracy and red tape, and a drop in production. Instead, the logic of Mitchell's book points as much in the direction of a return to greater capitalist competition (for agribusiness), although Mitchell's own ideological position would probably rule this out. This would involve vigorous anti-combines action by the government to break up the agribusiness oligopoly and create market competition, as well as drastically increased consumer protection against the profiteering practices of the food-industry giants. Although the government has shown no inclination that it has the stomach to force through legislation of this kind, the option, nevertheless, remains much more practical than that of



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demanding the nationalization of the entire food industry.

The book contains numerous useful charts and graphs, although those on inter-corporate ownership are neither well-constructed nor particularly useful. □

## An auld acquaintance not forgot

**For Friends at Home: A Scottish Emigrant's Letters from Canada, California and the Cariboo, 1844-1864, edited by Richard A. Preston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 338 pages, \$12 cloth.**

By ROBERT CARLGREN

HISTORIANS DOING research on the early days of European settlements in Canada are professionally obligated to read and evaluate a plethora of primary-source documents, relatively few of which would be likely to appeal to the general reader's taste. *For Friends at Home*, a collection of letters and diary excerpts dating from 1844-1864, is unusual inasmuch as it provides the sort of circumstantial account of places and events that specialists revel in, yet is written in a vigorous, sinewy, sometimes eloquent prose that should satisfy anyone who appreciates narrative skill and refuses to be put off by erratic spelling and occasionally vagrant syntax.

James Thomson, who wrote the diary and most of the letters, was a baker's apprentice who emigrated to Canada from his native Scotland in 1844. He stopped first to work at his trade in Montreal, then moved on to Edwardsburgh, a township in the Upper St. Lawrence Valley. Depressed conditions in Canada next prompted him to try Chicago, where he worked as a clerk in a lumber yard; in 1850, he set out for the California gold fields by the overland route. Having worked there at mining, lumbering, and baking, he returned to Canada in 1853 with money enough to buy a farm in Edwardsburgh. His subsequent marriage to a local girl produced five children. In 1862, he resumed his search for gold, this time in British Columbia's Cariboo country, but was unsuccessful and returned to spend the rest of his life in Edwards-

burgh, eventually becoming reeve of his town. He died in 1895 at the age of 72.

But a bare summary of Thomson's life in the *New World* conveys nothing of the book's descriptive richness nor of the man's character — a blend of doughty practicality, perseverance, Presbyterian piety, generosity, and stoical endurance in the face of disappointment, loneliness, pain, and death. At the time of the ghastly potato famine in Britain and Ireland, he subscribed more than a week's pay for overseas relief. For years he sent large sums home to Scotland towards the support of his impoverished relatives, until finally he brought them out to Canada and established them at Edwardsburgh. Not that such moral earnestness impaired his sense of humour; he reports that when a telegraph line was being strung near town, certain people who were "not overstocked with scientific knowledge" speculated that "a letter will be put in the wire and pulled along with a string," while others wondered "how will it get past the top of the poles without being torn and how will it do in a heavy shower."

Although Thomson's generously accommodating temperament allowed him to appreciate the merits and attractions of the many places he saw in the course of his travels; he never seriously considered settling anywhere but in Canada. He seems to have been captivated right at the outset; Québec City, Montreal, Niagara, and the St. Lawrence Valley all receive their individual tributes in Thomson's vivid, heavily cadenced prose. The contrasts between the emigrant's excellent prospects in Canada and the dismal stagnation of Britain is a persistently recurrent theme, even though he loved Scotland and was proud of his ancestry.

The letters often close with a prayer or a piece of pious reflection, and to the modern ear Thomson's Bible-flavoured rhetoric is apt to sound quaint if not bizarre. But he was entirely sincere — a good man whose religion was no mere conventional pietism. *For Friends at Home* is the kind of book that leaves the reader with a sense of loss; one can, it seems, care about a man long since separated from us by "the narrow line that divides time from eternity." □



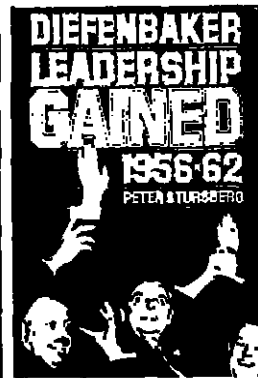


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# How Pearson waffled on nationalism

**Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Volume III**, edited by John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis, U of T Press, 338 pages, \$15 cloth.

By **JIM LAXER**

THE THIRD VOLUME of the Pearson memoirs provides us with an intimate record of the former prime minister's political priorities and concerns during the years of his greatest power — 1958 to 1968. Three major themes dominate: Canadian-American relations; federal relations with Quebec; and Pearson's attitude to political organization and political campaigning during a period when petty scandals and personal bitterness tainted Canadian politics.

On Pearson's mind a good deal of the time, appropriately enough, was Canada's relationship with the United States. The memoirs demonstrate that in his retirement years after 1968, Pearson became concerned about how the nation would evaluate his role in helping or hindering the emergence of Canadian nationalism and resistance to American domination of Canada — currents that began to develop during his years as Liberal leader. The memoirs record the following paradox: while Pearson, in retrospect, wanted us to believe that he basically shared Walter Gordon's concern with the need to free Canada from American control, the volume's treatment of events shows us that at every turn Pearson sided with the conservative wing of the cabinet against Gordon. Pearson justified this by claiming that a political leader, particularly a Liberal leader, has to act as a balance between the progressive and the conservative wings of his party. While his sympathies were with Gordon's objectives, his instinct for political power meant that as the years went by he came to see Gordon increasingly as a potential embarrassment to the party. Pearson candidly tells us that his motivation in bringing Gordon back into the cabinet in 1966 was to prevent public criticism of the government by the former finance minister and to prevent the public from concluding that the party had moved to

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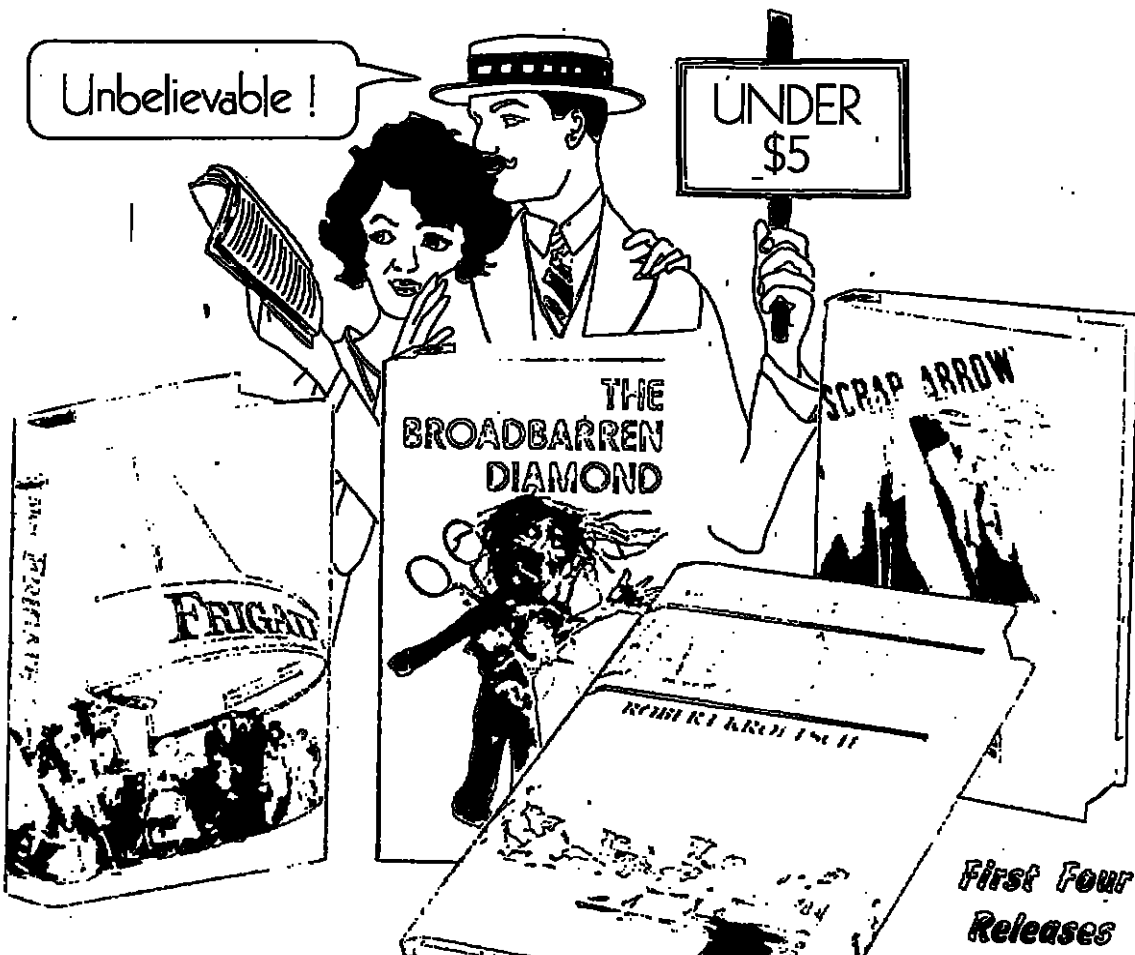
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the right. The tone of Pearson's comments about Gordon confirms the approach to the relationship between the two men taken in Denis Smith's biography of Gordon, published in 1973.

Pearson's treatment of Gordon flowed from the Liberal leader's highly developed sense of Canada's place in an American-dominated world. Pearson fully and openly accepted the fact that Canada was tied to American leadership in both domestic and world affairs. Thus the government's failure to proceed with an effective program of repatriation of the nation's economy or its decision to maintain the Canadian status of *Time* and *Reader's Digest* flowed from fears of retaliation from the U.S.

In world affairs, Pearson believed that whether the U.S. behaved for good or for ill there was little that Canada could do beyond attempts to modify the tone of American policies from time to time. For Pearson, John Kennedy represented the "good" liberal America that he could easily identify with while Lyndon Johnson personified a boorish, uncouth America that was profoundly disturbing. Pearson's trip to Hyannis Port to visit Kennedy shortly after the Liberal victory in 1963 is a happy moment, contrasting sharply with a later visit to the LBJ ranch, where the Canadian prime minister was met with the presidential greeting: "We are so happy to have Mr. Wilson here with us."

But for Pearson, American leadership was both inevitable and acceptable, whether it was of the liberal or the uncouth variety. He was deeply fearful that Johnson's Vietnam policies could lead to a wider conflict, yet his strongest criticisms of American actions were always contained within a basic acceptance of the U.S. role in Southeast Asia. In 1965, when Pearson made his famous speech in Philadelphia calling for a U.S. pause in the bombing of North Vietnam, he was summoned to Camp David for a meeting with LBJ. The American president was furious with him. Pearson noted in his diary: "If there had not been a kind of 'et tu, Brute' feeling about the assault, without any personal unpleasantness of any kind, I would have felt almost like Schuschnigg before Hitler at Berchtesgaden!"

On his return to Ottawa, Pearson penned a long letter to LBJ, which revealed that his criticism of American policy in Vietnam was merely tactical and not fundamental. Explaining that he had to deal with criticism of U.S.

policy within Canada and that this had motivated his speech in Philadelphia, Pearson stated:

I want to assure you that my Government, and I particularly as its leader, want to give you all possible support in the policy, difficult and thankless, you are following in Vietnam in aiding South Vietnam to resist aggression.

Further confirmation that Pearson's careful treatment of the U.S. was based on his appreciation of American power was evident in his totally different treatment of French President Charles de Gaulle during the general's famous Montreal visit in 1967. When de Gaulle compared his trip to Montreal to the liberation of Paris in 1944 and shouted "Vive le Quebec libre," Pearson had no doubts about meeting this challenge to Canadian sovereignty with a decisive rebuke.

Volume III of the Pearson memoirs is a work of significance for historians as well as an illuminating book for general readers. The volume is drawn from a number of sources: an uncompleted manuscript written by Pearson in the last months of his life; transcripts of interviews done by the CBC; segments from a partial diary; and excerpts from Hansard.

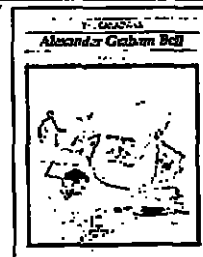
The editors are to be congratulated on their preparation of a volume that is coherently organized and that retains the freshness and candour of Pearson's own words. □

## Origins of Leif

**By Great Waters: A Newfoundland and Labrador Anthology from 1003 to the Present, edited and introduced by Peter Neary and Patrick O'Flaherty, The Social History of Canada series, U of T Press, 262 pages, \$3.95 paper.**

By ANNE ROCHE

HAVING MYSELF grown up on schoolbooks that maintained against all scoffing Newfoundland's claim to be the site of the Viking Vinland, I can imagine the sense of quiet pleasure it must have given Newfoundland scholars Neary and O'Flaherty to be able to open their anthology of writings about their province with that passage from the ancient Norse *Vinland Sagas* that celebrates the discovery of the New World by Leif the Lucky in 1003. A very satisfying little piece of one-up-



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# COMMEMORATIONS

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manship on the rest of Canada. We may have lost John Cabot to Cape Breton, but the archaeological discoveries of the Ingstads at L'Anse-aux-Meadows in northern Newfoundland in 1960 strongly suggest that Cabot was a Johnny-come-lately. "The Mainland" is welcome to him.

*By Great Waters* is part of the Social History of Canada series under the general editorship of Michael Bliss. It consists mostly of first-hand accounts of life in Newfoundland, with a final section devoted to "imaginative writings with Newfoundland as a setting." Obviously, a collection that tries to cover the distance from the aforesaid Leif to the present in 250-odd pages has to content itself with short and tantalizing dips into the rich fare possible. The end result is necessarily unsatisfying, but it does manage to convey something of the excitement, violence, and tragedy of the history of Newfoundland and something too of the exotic flavour it still retains, late into the 20th century.

It samples the vigour and optimism of the early explorers, Viking, Elizabethans, and Jacobean, and remembers that Newfoundland was for centuries a theatre in the French-English wars. It recounts the swashbuckling of pirate Peter Easton, who held a governor of Newfoundland captive for 11 weeks. It recalls meetings with two doomed forms of native life — the first encounter of Jacques Cartier with the wingless great auk in 1534, the last glimpse of the tragic aboriginal Beothuck in 1823. There are a couple of fine ballads and a typically grandiloquent flight by Joey Smallwood.

Less satisfying is the sampling of modern writings about Newfoundland. No doubt it was their fear that Arthur Scammell's "Squid Jiggin' Ground" had been over-anthologized that led the editors to choose instead his "Six Horse-Power Coaker," but the former is much the better, funnier song, and probably unknown to most Canadians. Also, anyone who didn't hear Ted Russell inimitably read his "Chronicles of Uncle Mose" on the radio will probably not catch their delicious flavour in the selection included here. But Paul West's impression of Newfoundland — "... a community of Irish mystics cut adrift on the Atlantic, talking an arcane incomprehensible language and tending to make no vowel sounds at all" — is perceptive, as is his warning that "not all is idyll," a warning that visitors to Newfoundland would do well to remember.

It doesn't do to be sentimental about

Newfoundland. The harsh reality that drove away the first colonists was finally too much for latter-day romanticist Farley Mowat. When his idealized "race apart... these men who do not properly belong in our time" behaved badly towards a big fish, he savagely repudiated them. He is represented in the collection by an undistinguished, early piece that is far from his best writing about Newfoundland. The unenthusiastic choice probably reflects the hurt feelings of Newfoundlanders at his tirade.

The best of the modern selections is the splendid and terrifying excerpt from Franklin Russell's *The Secret Islands*, an account of the author's visit to the Funks, the islands of the great auks. It was good to read it again. Russell's book is a model of unsentimental writing about nature and about Newfoundland. Anyone who hasn't read it, should.

There is one curious and serious omission from this anthology. Anyone reading it for what it intends, an overview of the history of Newfoundland, wouldn't gather that Newfoundland had become part of Canada in 1949. The Confederation debate produced oceans of bitter eloquence, some of which might have been reproduced here. Perhaps the editors simply forgot. St. John's-men have always found it hard to remember that intelligent life exists beyond the Avalon Peninsula.

But all in all, *By Great Waters* is a useful addition to a popular history of Canada. □

## Pro and conurbation

**Cities of Canada, Volume I: Theoretical, Historical, and Planning Perspectives**, by George A. Nader, Macmillan, 404 pages, \$15.95 cloth.

**Contemporary Cathedrals**, by Robert W. Collier, Harvest House, 201 pages, \$6.50 paper.

By FREDERICK H. ARMSTRONG

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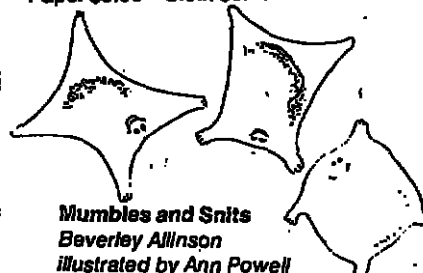


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by Morton Shulman

From the moment of his appointment in 1963 as Chief Coroner of Toronto, Dr. Shulman brought his extraordinary energy to bear upon a variety of hazards to public safety and security, which in previous years had been overlooked or ignored or covered up. He believed that the coroner's job was not merely to determine the causes of unnatural deaths, but to take steps to prevent similar deaths in the future. Apparently fearless in pursuing his objectives, he at various times clashed with civic and provincial leaders. Dr. Shulman tells of these years with a gusto and pace which make for compulsive reading. Illustrated with cartoons. \$8.95

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edge of Canadian urbanization. The difficulty is that some premature or incompletely prepared works may well make their appearance; both these books suffer from such faults.

George A. Nader's *Cities of Canada* is described as the first volume of an exhaustive examination of Canadian urbanization. It is to be followed by a second volume containing profiles of 15 Canadian urban centres. Here Nader, a geographer from Trent University, takes on three topics: the theoretical basis of urban development; the history of Canadian urbanization; and planning perspectives. Each would seem to require an expert on the field, or rather a team of experts, especially considering the lack of material on Canadian cities.

The first question facing the reviewer is who is the intended audience? The attractive dust jacket, with its descriptive notes, appears to be aimed at the general reader; but the volume reads like a text, complete with tables, diagrams, unnecessary jargon, and even some mathematical formulas. It is economically oriented, statistical, and in places repetitive. In short, this book is not for the general reader with an interest in urbanization. Any prospective purchaser is warned to browse through the first section; the conclusion to chapter one on page 39 is an example of the style at its worst.

For the student, however, the book again presents problems. A potential planner would not require all the history provided and an historian would not need the planning data. In addition, much of the history section is a study of staple theory and seems to avoid the questions that an historian would want to examine. In sum, what we have here is a work that attempts too much and does not carry it off. And one that, while attempting to embrace all audiences, really does not fulfil the requirements of any.

*Contemporary Cathedrals*, by Robert Collier, a professor of planning at the University of British Columbia, is better described by its subtitle: *Large Scale Developments in Canadian Cities*. The analogy between the mediaeval cathedral and the metropolitan megastructure has its aptness and the subject is certainly a topical one. Yet here again one has the impression of a manuscript that has been insufficiently prepared in order to get it on the market. Although this is an area of urban development in which both attitudes and legislation are rapidly changing and there are important, more

recent projects, the author states that the research was basically done in 1969. The case studies have been updated, but the book still reads like a government report, which carefully balances 11 studies chosen from seven cities ranging from Halifax to Vancouver.

The inclusion of examples from all the major regions has meant that there can be no attempt to group the projects by types. Thus a single large structure set on a finite piece of land, such as Place Bonaventure in Montreal, is not differentiated in treatment from the multi-towered St. James Town in Toronto, with its constantly expanding acreage. Then too, abortive projects are ignored — except in the case of Vancouver, where they appear to have been included to complete regional coverage rather than to illuminate specific problems. Yet such projects could well illustrate many difficulties related to the topic. Similarly, experience from outside Canada is ignored, although British or American experience might well answer questions raised in the study. An up-to-date examination of fewer but carefully selected examples, even if it lacked the appeal of cross-country coverage, might provide far more answers to the problems involved.

The planners' attitude to certain key questions related to the quality of life makes interesting reading. Is the fact that pedestrian malls connect the buildings *underground* such an advantage as Collier constantly stresses, even considering Canadian winters? Certainly, underground malls expedite traffic flow. But should we become a nation of moles while traffic roars overhead? The frequently noted "plazas" are merely a euphonic name for a block covered with a skyscraper, or a forecourt, or a wide sidewalk. These are taken as a positive factor, but something more gruesome than the "plaza" in front of Toronto's Toronto-Dominion Centre would be hard to imagine, with its howling wind currents, baked pavement, and Mies van der Rohe's funereal black glass staring down on three sides.





Aesthetics are another question. One argument presented by developers for such large plans is that there can be an overall design. Nevertheless, one can walk past such examples as Lombard Place in Winnipeg, or Place de Ville in Ottawa, and never realize that there was any overall planning. Historical preservation is another neglected but related problem that is barely touched

*Something more gruesome than the "plaza" in front of Toronto's Toronto-Dominion Centre would be hard to imagine, with its howling wind currents, baked pavement, and Mies van der Rohe's funereal black glass staring down on three sides.*

on. And the historical parts of the introductions are among the weakest. (The Halifax Citadel was not built in the 1860s.) But a developer who ignores historical monuments today is likely to run into difficulties. Any executive involved in the first redevelopment plan by Eaton's in Toronto could probably give a stirring lecture on the problems presented by old City Halls.

Despite these criticisms, Collier has chosen an interesting topic and does raise many important questions. He is also careful to draw a moderate line between the positions of the developer and of the citizens' groups, pointing out the problems raised by both, as well as the weaknesses and indecisiveness of municipal governments. The main regret is that the manuscript was not reworked for the book, and the publisher fails to provide such basics as adequate maps and an index. □

## Voice from the chair

**Trapped: A Polio Victim's Fight for Life**, by Betty Banister, Western Producer Prairie Books (P.O. Box 2500, Saskatoon), 102 pages, \$2.95 paper.

By KEN WAXMAN

THIS IS THE story of a Winnipeg woman who was crippled in the Canadian polio epidemic of 1953, and who has gradually readjusted herself to a

productive life and something approaching a normal existence. It leaves me with mixed feelings.

On one hand, there are genuine emotions in the book. Mrs. Banister tells us she really wanted no more from life than "a husband, a boy, a girl, a home, a woman's work, the cooking, the sewing, caring for those I loved and taking part in community work." Then she suddenly found herself imprisoned in a respirator ("a tin can," she calls it). She had to be taught to breathe again, and to relearn the things we "normal" people do as second nature. Now, 22 years after she was struck by the disease, she is still living at a Winnipeg hospital and dependent on a hand-controlled wheelchair to get around.

To add to her burdens, Mrs. Banister must live with the knowledge that other people will always have to help her dress and take care of her personal needs. She has also experienced the deaths of close relatives and friends, separation from her small children, and finally divorce from her husband. As she muses at one point:

To live was to run, to sing, to make love, to wash dishes. To live was a bed that rocks, a room without drapes, a wheelchair. To live was to be hurt.

But this book is also about someone who went on to finish high school through correspondence courses in the hospital, and then learned to paint and see her canvases displayed and win prizes. It's about a woman who joined the Winnipeg Writers Group, and successfully sold pieces for publication (this book was originally published in serial form in the *Western Producer*), and who was the subject of a television documentary.

Much as I can admire Mrs. Banister for her perseverance and courage, I still wonder about the universality of her experience. Does not her talent remove her from the status of "average" polio victim? Also, Mrs. Banister took a creative writing course and the book shows it. When she starts ruminating in her psyche and dredging up her past, the writing smacks of technique.

Finally, there's just too much detail here about a very ordinary life, a problem that even the biographers of Lord Thomson and John Bayne Maclean had to deal with. When the book concentrates on Mrs. Banister and her personal struggle with the disease, it succeeds. But when we start hearing about her relatives and the members of the hospital staff, the level sinks to an Ann Landers-like parable. □

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JOHN BURRY

THE *Canadian Essay and Literature Index 1973* (U of T Press, \$27.50) provides an index to essays, book reviews, poems, plays, and short stories published in 91 anthologies and 38 magazines in Canada during 1973. The aim of editors Andrew Armitage and Nancy Tudor has been to concentrate on books issued by small publishers and magazines that are not already indexed in the *Canadian Periodicals Index*, although some works from larger publishing houses are also included. Thus the books range from *Modern Fiscal Issues: Essays in Honour of Carl S. Shoup* (U of T Press) to *An Anthology of Poetry by Saskatoon Poets* (Saskatoon Gallery and Conservatory Corp.) while the periodical section encompasses the *Antigonish Review* and *Three Cent Pulp*. As the eager researcher plunges, looking for his own name, there is an initial impression of confusion. Going back, however, to where he should have started, the introductory section "How to use this index," he

discovers that the index is divided into five parts, each representing a genre, and that authors, titles, and subjects (with first lines for poems) are all included in one alphabetical sequence. The entries conform to standard library practice. The subject headings for the poems and short stories provide interesting indication of Canadian sensibilities during 1973. Three poems are listed under "natural theology" and one under "Jack the Ripper." Such unlikely subjects as "Moving, household" and "Anatomy, artistic" appear together with the standard "Love" and "Salmon fishing." Any work that facilitates the finding of specific articles by author, title, and subject is useful and to be welcomed. This one appears to be compiled with accuracy and some inclusiveness. Subject headings for poems and short stories do, however, seem to carry the principles of librarianship rather far. Would anyone really look for Sinclair Ross's "The Lamp at Noon" under "Dust Storms"?

RICHARD LONDON

JOHN CRAIG'S latest, *The Clearing* (Longman, \$6.95 cloth) is another book about maturation, the relationship of the boy, the youth, and the man to his "foster parents" the Hendrens. They live in poverty and simplicity on the still-primeval north shore of the lake where the boy's parents have a cottage on the other side. Why do they live in the wilds at subsistence level? The boy doesn't wonder about it much, but the youth learns that it is because they are expiating their sin. They met while Howard Hendren was visiting an army buddy who had been badly wounded and had to be hospitalized permanently — Millie's husband. And though they "fought against it with all their strengths and wills," they fell in love. Since they had to be together, they also had to cut themselves off completely from the world of the conventional values they both believed in. The youth accidentally meets the only girl he ever wanted to dance with (but was too afraid to ask), Judy Johnson. Oh God, Judy Johnson? They fall in love, decide to marry after he does his stint in the army. And guess what? While he's away she falls hopelessly in love and marries someone else. So much for the plot. The situation might possibly have some impact, but Craig relies entirely on this to get his response. And that's just melodrama. His sentences are often appallingly clichéd, and at other times so stark (like the woods, get it?)

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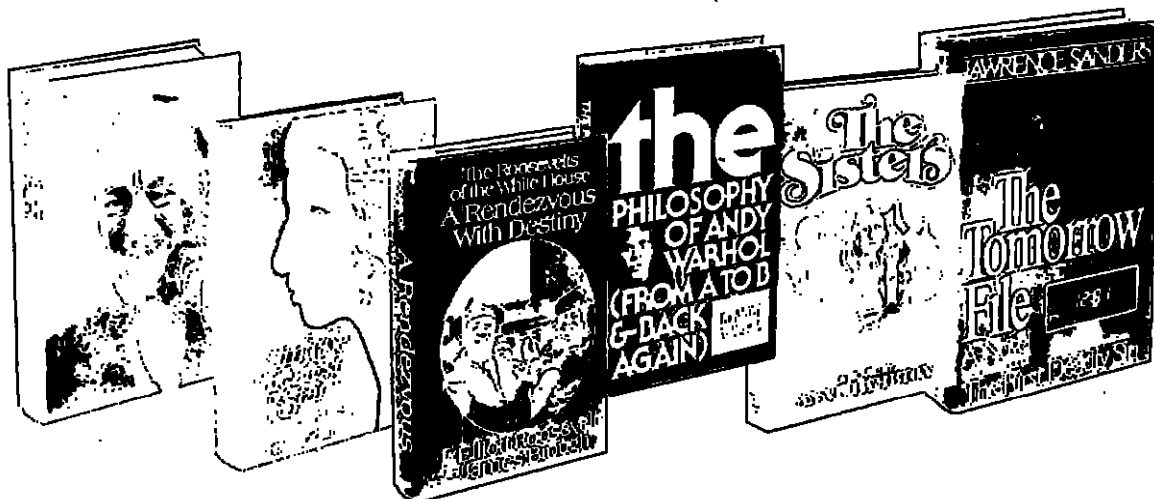
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that they read like classified ads. The theme is, of course, creation ("a kind of Genesis"), and again of course, survival, and it runs through the book like baked beans through the body and has about the same effect.

JEAN E. MELUSKY

ONE OF McClelland & Stewart's attempts to reach the summer-cottager and subway-rider market is *The Battle of Salt Bucket Beach* (\$8.95), an arch-Canadian bit of fluff by Ian MacNeill. An experienced media man, MacNeill here makes his first run at the genre. Freightened with "grabbers" like a kidnapped prime minister and a horse American lady who enjoys jockeying for position, it includes a host of Maritime "characters" who owe quite a bit to *Whisky Galore* and the *Carry On* gang. The author, or rather his mother, calls it "bawdy," though to this reviewer it vacillates between Richard Rohmer without the point and Harlequin Romances with a dash of Robert Kroetsch. Characters appear quite well-flattened and its plot treads water wearily enough for it to be put down and picked up frequently without any sense of regret. It really won't matter if you leave it unfinished at the cottage or you find yourself having to get off at Bloor Street. There's no doubt the country needs this kind of farm-team literature to add depth (or rather money) to its peculiar publishing program and it might even lead to an intelligent readership. That M & S should be trying to fill that gap, while ignoring the development of young writers, is putting the best light on their reason for publishing *Salt Bucket Beach*.

PS

## NOTES & COMMENTS

ONE WAY TO put the present state of the Canadian publishing industry in some sort of perspective is to glance at the imprints represented in this issue. They range from McClelland & Stewart to Pile of Bones Publishing Co., from Doubleday to Golden Dog Press. Clearly, it is no longer enough simply to distinguish between Canadian and branch-plant publishers or between the Canadian Book Publishers' Council (the majors) and the Independent Publishers Association (the minors, with some overlaps). It might be more meaningful to rank the industry in a five-tier

hierarchy: big presses, small presses, smaller presses, basement presses, and vanity presses. And having done that, the question is which tier or tiers should most concern Canadian readers midway through the 1970s.

At this stage the big presses must be left to work out their own destinies. Presumably the branch plants will be around as long as the law allows them to be and there is a buck to be made in this market. The big Canadian houses have now received all the financial help from the public purse that they are likely to get — and, indeed, all that they deserve. Whether they sink, merge, or swim from here on will depend on their editorial judgment and their business acumen, both dubious factors in some instances.

The basement and vanity presses are a different matter. They come and go like fireflies, each burning up tiny quantities of the limited public and private resources available for publishing. The latest edition of *Canadian Books in Print* lists 656 active book-publishing entities in Canada and the editor has addresses for some 400 more that are presumed dead or dormant. It's a safe bet that a further 100 or so have hatched since that edition appeared. Such proliferation in a country this size is ridiculous and wasteful. But given cheap printing technology and the human craving for self-expression, it is also inevitable. Let them be.

That leaves the small and smaller presses, most but not all of which are members of the IPA. (The distinction between small and smaller presses is roughly the distinction between active and associate membership in the IPA; active members must have at least 10 books in print and an ongoing program of at least four new titles a year.) These are the publishing enterprises that in the past 10 years have done most to create and sustain what now can fairly be called a renaissance in Canadian literature.

Unfortunately, these are also the enterprises that are most vulnerable to periodic economic recessions and to the enduring pressures of competition from abroad. Consequently many now are in trouble. Paul Stuewe reports on the plight of Vancouver's Sono Nis Press elsewhere in this issue (see page 10). And as we go to press another West Coast publisher, Talonbooks, has received an emergency one-time grant of \$22,000 from the British Columbia government in order to stay in business.

What can be done? Small-press publisher James Lorimer presents a

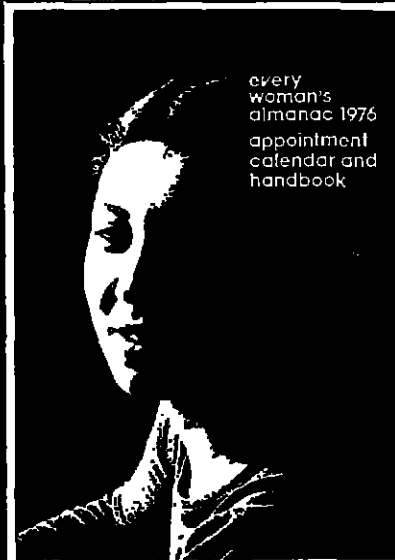
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definitive analysis of the situation in the July-August issue of *This Magazine*. He concludes: "To reverse the rapid downward spiral of Canadian publishing — and to reverse the federal government's current publishing policy from a continentalist to a nationalist one — would take a comprehensive package of legislative measures to regulate various aspects of publishing and distribution." Lorimer argues that the Canadian publishing industry should be regulated and protected by a federal agency in much the same way as the Canadian broadcasting industry is regulated and protected by the Canadian Radio-Television Commission. And for the same reasons.

We tend to agree — with one major reservation. Because of the limited channels of distribution, the broadcasting industry has been regulated since its birth. The enterprises that came under the CRTC's protection were already in reasonably sound financial shape. Such is not the case in publishing and any regulatory agency would be confronted with some agonizing decisions. Should it continue to protect and, in effect, subsidize quality at the expense of business efficiency? Conversely, should efficiently produced trash enjoy the same protection just because it's 100-per-cent Canadian? Who would determine what is quality and what is trash? Using what criteria?

We don't know the answers to those questions, and we're pretty sure Lorimer doesn't either. But the lessons we've learned from broadcasting make it obvious that in any creative endeavour nationalism by itself is not enough. There must also be either excellence or financial intelligence — and preferably both. On that count there are a number of small and smaller presses that should close down tomorrow. To keep them artificially alive is a form of cultural cruelty we can ill afford.

\* \* \*

WITH THIS ISSUE we welcome Peter Such to our masthead as the new Managing Editor. Peter is the former Editor of *Impulse* and the author of the critically acclaimed 1973 novel *Riverrun*. Currently he is also co-ordinating a Canadian Studies program at York University and working on two more novels. He replaces Sandra Martin, who resigned to pursue a more active career as a writer.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CO-OP WITH A POINT

Sir:

Forster Freed's review of David French's *One Crack Out* in the August issue of *Books in Canada* failed to mention that the play has been published in script form by the Playwrights Co-op.

The Co-op also published French's earlier *Leaving Home* and *Of the Fields, Lately* prior to their paperback publication by New Press. In the case of *Fields*, our script version circulated for over a year until New Press issued its edition. The Co-op is therefore justifiably proud of its contribution to Canadian publishers (over 30 of our titles have been published by other presses) by keeping plays alive and creating a market for subsequent paperback editions.

Our contribution to David French's theatre career as well as that of 100 other playwrights whose scripts we have published from productions at over 35 theatres besides Tarragon should also not be ignored.

Anton Wagner  
Dramaturge  
Playwrights Co-op  
Toronto

### SCHOOLS WITH AN "S"

Sir:

With regard to the review of Robert Stamp's new book in the September issue of *Books in Canada*, I would like to point out that the correct title is: *About Schools* (with an "s"): *What Every Canadian Parent Should Know*, and it is available only in quality paperback at \$6.95.

These changes are very recent developments and I am advising you of them just for the record.

Marian A. StuParick  
New Press  
Toronto

### DAULT WITH A BIAS

Sir:

Not everyone will agree that Leonard Hutchinson is a fine Canadian artist and a great printmaker worthy of having his work collected and reproduced in book form.

And not everyone will agree that representational Canadian art has any great merit for Canadians.

And not everyone will agree that there is or should be a large body of "people's art" in Canada.

However, a very large and growing number of people do agree with some or all of these points. But one of the people who can almost surely be counted on to disagree with all of these points is Gary Michael Dault.

That's why I think it was wrong to have Dault review *Leonard Hutchinson, People's Artist* (In Brief, July issue).

A lot of people who are interested in Hutchinson's work and many more who don't know Hutchinson would be interested to read of a collection of woodcut landscapes and portraits from the 1930s. But that interest would be unlikely to survive Dault's one-sided review.

I believe that *Leonard Hutchinson, People's Artist* is a strong beginning for the *Toward a People's Art* series, a good start in the process of documenting this art in Canada. Gary Dault is a spokesman for a completely different view of art — diametrically opposed to representational

Canadian art — and that is why he must scorn and scoff so thoroughly at this work.

Dault has some valid criticisms which we appreciate and these will be useful with later numbers in the series. But as the series progresses, I hope *Books in Canada* will take into account the dichotomy of the Canadian art scene when selecting reviewers.

Greg Kelly  
NC Press  
Toronto

## CanWit No. 4

SOME PEOPLE arrange their books by subject, others by author. But we have a friend who rejects these traditional notions. She mates her books. Thus on her shelves *Paul Martin Speaks for Canada* stands next to *Who Has Seen the Wind* by W. O. Mitchell; Donald Jack's *It's Me Again* jeans against *Columbo's Canadian Quotations*. The usual prize (see below) is offered for other appropriate pairings. Send entries to: CanWit No. 4, *Books in Canada*, 501 Yonge Street, Suite 23, Toronto M4Y 1Y4. The deadline is Oct. 31.

### RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 2

READERS WERE asked to contribute hypothetical titles from the Canadian best-seller list of 1980. There were several duplications, all variations on *After I Was Seventy* by Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Thomson. The winner was Patrick Oliver of Toronto. He receives a copy of the award-winning art book *John Fillion* by Dorothy Cameron and John Reeves (Martlet Press, \$19.50) for these three entries:

*ExLaxperation*, by Richard Rohmer.

*Why Quebec Wants Back In*, by René Lévesque.

*Peter Gzowski's Book About Peter Gzowski's Book About This Country in the Morning*, by Peter Gzowski.

Honourable mentions:

*The Great, Great Canadian Novel*, by Harry Boyle.

— Tom Tonner, Halifax

*Les Miserables*, by Dr. Henry Morgantaler.

— Lee Leibik, Vancouver

*Hug: Margaret Trudeau in Power*, by Walter Stewart.

— Barry Baldwin, Calgary

*The Gay Moose: An Irreverent Look at 19th-Century Canadian Poetry*, edited by Irving Layton.

— Keith Garebian, Dollard des Ormeaux, Que.

*The Last Spike Colouring Book*, by Pierre Berton.

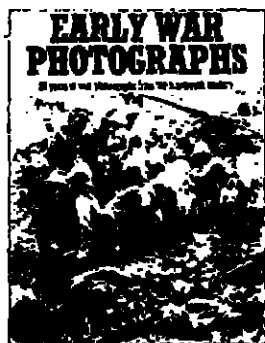
— Gordon Black, Toronto

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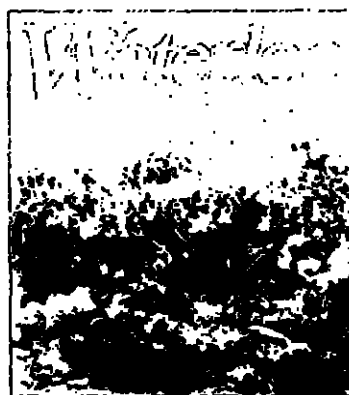
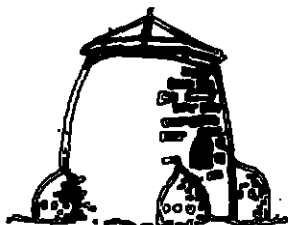
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