Volume 7, Number 4 A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS April, 1978

Who wrote the best first novel of 1977? See page four

How Margaret Laurence, Audrey Thomas, and John Clute broke into print

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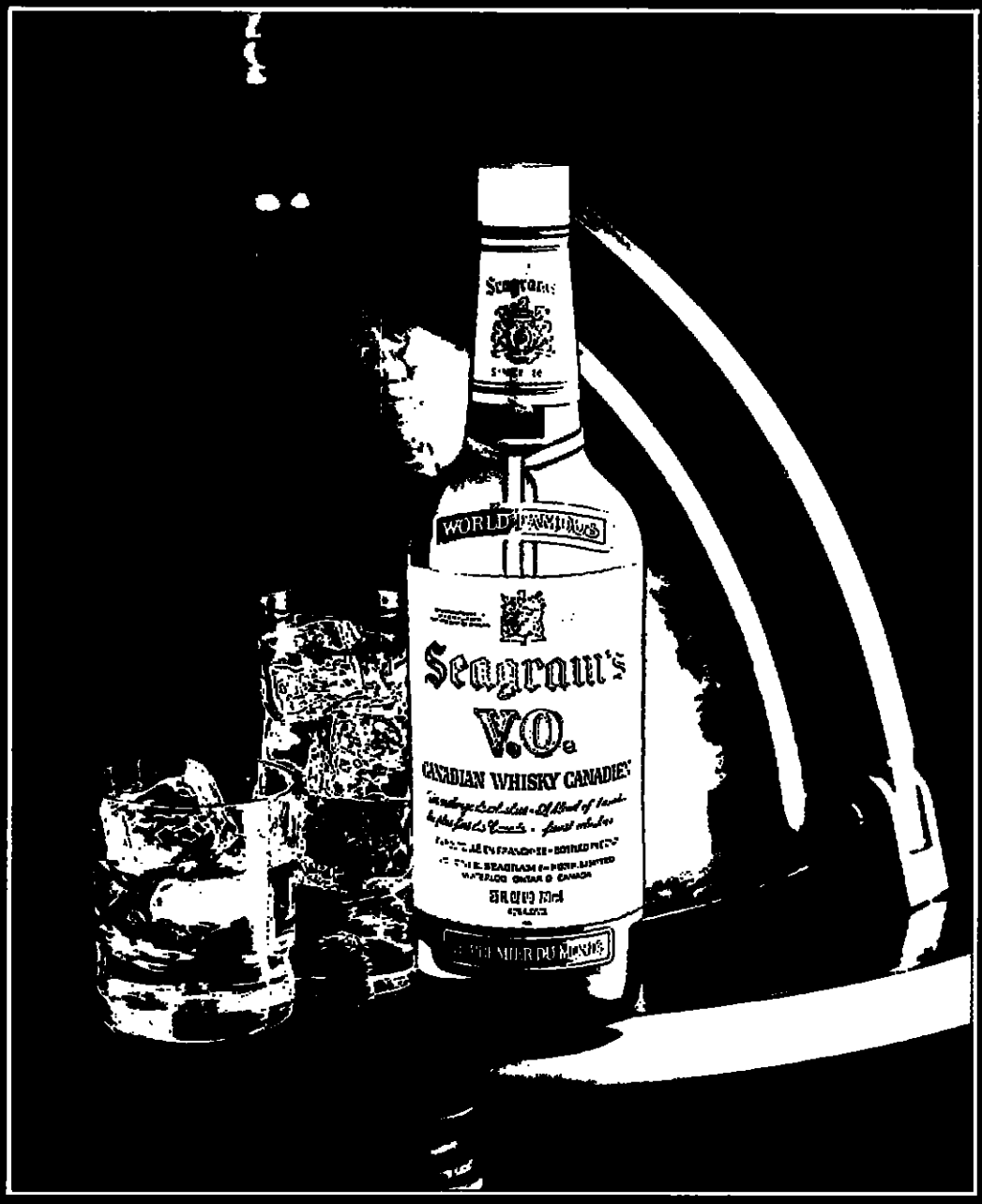

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BOOKS IN CANADA

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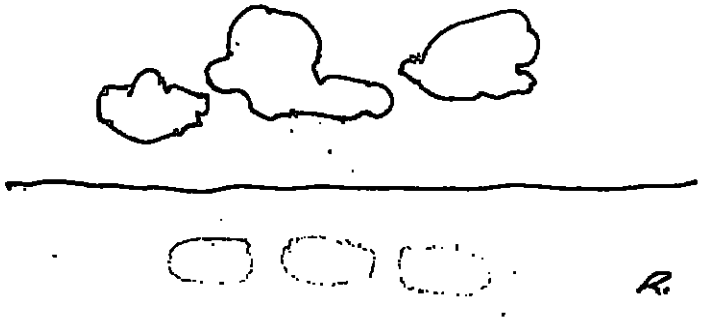
CONTRIBUTORS

Peripatetic *flâneur* **Jim Christy** has spent the winter not in Arizona, as earlier reported, but in Florida and Venezuela. Actress and freelance writer **Doris Cowan** is preparing a special section on drama for next month's *Books in Canada*. **J.A.S. Evans** teaches classics at the University of British Columbia. **Michael Fuhrman** is a Toronto freelancer. **Wayne Grady** is a copy editor for *Weekend* magazine. **Roger Hall** teaches history at the University of Western Ontario and worries about the condition of the Ontario Archives. **Jane W. Hill** is a Toronto housewife and part-time librarian. **John Hofsess** is a freelancer based in Hamilton, Ont. **Christopher Hume** is a Toronto musician and music critic whose avocation is art. **Susan Jackel** lives in Edmonton and recently received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Alberta. **Sharon Marcus** is a music producer based in Damascus, Ont. **Tom Marshall** is the poetry editor of *The Canadian Forum*. **Sandra Martin** has replaced David Helwig as the author of First Impressions, our regular column dealing with first novels. **George Melnyk** is the editor and publisher of Edmonton's *NeWest Review*. **Paul Murray** is enrolled in the U of T's Faculty of Education. **I.M. Owen** is a freelance editor and translator whose wit frequently graces these pages. **W.H. Rockett** is the head of the Communications department at Seneca College. **Adrienne Steinberg-Jones** is a freelance photographer living in refurbished Cabbagetown. **Donald Swainson** teaches history at Queen's University. **Paul Stuewe** runs the Nth-Hand Book Store in Toronto. **Phil Surguy** is a TV scriptwriter who reports frequently on the world of publishing for *Books in Canada*. **Peter Thomas** teaches English at the University of New Brunswick. **Morris Wolfe** is a Toronto editor, teacher, critic, and self-confessed encyclopediaphile.



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WELCOME TO THE RANKS

Presenting this year's winner of our award for first novels and yet another reason why it's foolish to make lists

THE LIST OF "100 major Canadian novels" that emerged from the University of Calgary conference in February was predictable in most cases, peculiar in some, and, more to the point, is probably already out of date. The sheer volume of new Canadian novels now appearing each year suggests the Calgary list will have little enduring validity — even as a guide for indecisive and ill-informed teachers.

Not only new novels but also new *novelists*. In the past two years some 60 first novels have been published in English Canada, 40 in 1976 and 20 last year. It would be astonishing if among those 60 new voices there is not at least one writer of the calibre of Laurence, Richler, Atwood, Davies, Callaghan, or MacLennan. It would be more reasonable to predict there are half a dozen. So if Malcolm Ross, general editor of McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library (and the man who organized the Calgary balloting) intends to use the list as the blueprint for a pruned-down NCL, he may wind up looking pretty foolish by 1980. Too much is happening.

Which leads us to the second annual Books in Canada Award for First Novels, open to any first Canadian novel published in English during the calendar year and carrying a prize of $1,000. The five judges on this year's panel were again impressed by the high quality of most of the seven contenders on the short list. However the winner by a clear majority was Oonah McFee's *Sandbars* (Macmillan), an evocative novel of an Ottawa Valley childhood during the 1920s and 1930s. Ms. McFee, a former CBC employee, now lives in Toronto and is working on the second novel of what will be a tetralogy. She will be presented with a cheque for $1,000 at a ceremony later this month.

The other novels on the short list were: *Child of the Morning*, by Pauline Gedge (Macmillan/ Dial Press); *A Small Informal Dance*, by Helen Levi (Queenston House); *Sidehill Gouger*, by Shane Dennison (Doubleday); *I Do Remeber the Fall*, by M.T. Kelly (Simon & Pierre); *The Invention of the World*, by Jack Hodgins (Macmillan); and *The Abramsky Variations*, by Morley Torgov (Lester & Orpen).

This year's judges were: bookseller David Stimpson, manager of the U of T bookstore; freelance critic Anne Montagnes; novelist David Helwig, who has been contributing a regular column on first novels to these pages; Douglas Hill, who teaches English at U of T's Erindale College; and associate editor Pier Giorgio Di Cicco for *Books in Canada*. Here are their comments:

Douglas Hill: Judged as a national team, as in some Olympic Games for first novels, these books would place fairly high. There are always going to be spectacularly good first books, somewhere in the world, in a given year; if this Canadian contingent parades no stars, it conceals no disasters either.

It's hard to dismiss any of these novels. Each has some virtues: the immediate brilliance of the glamour entries (which can fade over the long haul) is balanced by the tendency of the more modest books to discover strength in the stretch. The result, for me, was some disappointment from the novels I approached with the highest anticipation, pleasant surprises from the others.

If there's a flaw common to them all, it's self-indulgence, an endemic failure of rigorous self-criticism. There's too much dead air, too much easy writing, too much cheating. Somebody — an editor certainly, the writer preferably — should have noticed when the jokes were flat, the lyricism forced, the insights hackneyed, the assumptions flabby. Faults such as these, of course, are practically the trademark of first novels; still, books do now and then appear without them, and one always hopes.

I Do Rember the Fall has a pleasant crudity, some good lines, but its humour doesn't hide its thinness. *Sidehill Gouger* is more interesting, with a rural atmosphere and a sense of adolescent adventure reminiscent of Dennis Sears or W.O. Mitchell. It's finally not much more than a grown-up, sexy *Tom Sawyer*. *The*

Oonah McFee

Abramsky Variations has one memorable character in Louis Brahms, and when he's onstage the novel is tight and often moving; at other times Torgov's vision is reductive and preachy. *A Small Informal Dance* is a curiosity, a quite minor piece of local colour (small-town Manitoba) that's almost perfectly executed.

Child of the Morning was a surprise, a powerful act of imaginative re-invention. It's one of the handful of really good historical novels I've read, founded upon solid research and intriguing sexual-political questions. Ultimately it's held back by the conditions of the genre: the prose and the emotions never quite escape the overwrought, fervid pictorialism of period romance.

Choosing between McFee and Hodgins is difficult. *The Invention of the World* is complex and ambitious, filled with bravura

scenes and effects. Hodgins can talk, for sure, and his rhetorical energy often carries him along; but there's a lot of bullshit in the book, too. His attitude towards his two main characters is pretentious: they are not, on their own, as attractive or as deep as Hodgins seems to think they are; and he doesn't offer enough, in style or insight, to convince me of their unique worth.

Sandbars could have been tightened up — could have been shortened by dozens of pages, and pulled back from its lunges toward emotional overkill and sentimentality — but even with these excesses it gives the impression of a work distilled and concentrated. McFee is precise, subtle, and uncompromising in her perceptions; her attempts to isolate the joy and terror implicit in memory proceed by an intricate layering of detail, image, and association. The act of remembering is subject and form alike; the texture is densely vivid and evocative.

Sandbars, then, for me.

Anne Montagnes: *A Small Informal Dance* is so much better than any other novel I've read recently — first, last, Canadian or even Black American — that I'd give a lot more than this award if I could to encourage Helen Levi to write more. Still, it is literary, a gentle though worldly comedy of manners with several heroines and no hero, so I tried out my giggles, gut thrills, and critical excitement on some friends.

From hip teen high-school dropout to hard-living urban academic, they too became totally absorbed. This small-town tale of life, death, and love is "funny," "fresh," and "about us." Mrs. Andrews, settling the world over tea with her neighbours and her cleaning woman, laying in eggs and bacon for an invasion of sons, and worrying about a moral approach to a young unmarried confidant's pregnancy, stands quietly and contentedly on a level with Hagar Shipley.

Beside the good sense and humour of *A Small Informal Dance*, Pauline Gedge's *Child of the Morning* becomes bubbly, well-artificed costume drama; Oonah McFee's nostalgic *Sandbars* drags; Shane Dennison's funny, fey *Sidehill Gouger* side-slips reality; Morley Torgov's *The Abramsky Variations* overshoots its dynastic structure; Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* out-blarney's a normal attention span; and M.T. Kelly's poor-boy anger in *I Do Remember the Fall* screeches.

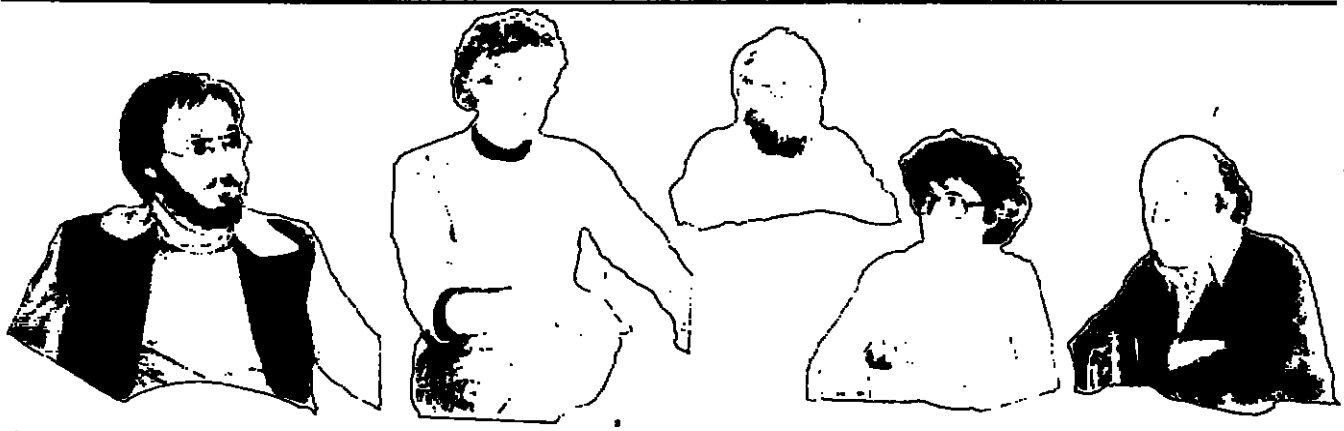
I'm quite taken aback and charmed to see Helen Levi construct such good literature out of our ordinariness. Is *A Small Informal Dance* what we should have been doing all along — Leacock with balls? Never mind the vast myths, guilts, politics, and melodramas. A nation that wants to produce a *War and Peace* must first know *What Men Live By*. This comedy in the manner of a modern Manitoba Jane Austen may just be the kind of grassroots cosmopolitanism we can wing off with.

David Stimpson: The seven first novels that were short listed say a great deal about the state of fiction publishing in Canada. Three titles from Macmillan, two of them the only novels worth considering for the award, and for the second year in succession, nothing from McClelland & Stewart.

I had great difficulty choosing between *The Invention of the World* and *Child of the Morning*, but eventually decided for the former. It's a surprisingly mature work for a first novel, very ambitious in style and I predict a dazzling future for Jack Hodgins. It's probably the best novel of any kind published in Canada last year. *Child of the Morning* is a rarity, a beautifully written historical novel, very much in the tradition of Mary Renault.

The remainder were of little interest. *Sandbars* is a great bore; *Sidehill Gouger* is billed as a comic novel and is not, *The Abramsky Variations* has some good passages but is unconvincing; and *I Do Remember the Fall* is appalling.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco: Oonah McFee's *Sandbars* gets my vote for the best first novel of this short list. It is moving, unpretentious, and not out to entertain. It is a "serious" novel — serious about itself; the author is trying to come to terms with her past and her present and doesn't pretend to know the outcome of such events. The novel postulates; it doesn't tell a story. McFee catches the process of being human with an urgency missing in the other six



The judges (from the left): Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Douglas Hill, David Helwig, Anne Montagnes, and David Stimpson.

novels. The advantage is that McFee is being autobiographical; characters in the other novels have a hard time believing themselves, or are too easily believed. They are being "invented." McFee admits implicitly that she lives in a world that first of all has invented her. There is something in that premise that engages me immediately.

I Do Remember the Fall is fast-moving, realistic, and stays with its realism. The characters are unfortunate, as are their circumstances. They do a lot of coping, only to survive. The main character comes out at the end, sorrier but wiser. I expected more. Kelly's language, however, has spunk. He is, line by line, genuinely satirical. He has a poet's eye for the nuances in human behaviour, but omits a generosity with any of his characters. So I withheld my own.

Pauline Gedge has made a monumental effort with *Child of the Morning*. She has gone a long way to invest an Egyptian Pharoah with life. The guess-work is good for one half of the book; the style is buoyant, replete with exotica, but the mature Hatshepsut is not half as interesting as the child that she was. She becomes predictable and pompous. She strikes no tragic chord.

A Small Informal Dance remains just that. I wish Levi had applied her polished style to a crucial human condition and not to the trials of a small-town menagerie. The characters in her novel are not new to me, nor had I forgotten them, nor had I forgotten anything similar in myself.

Jack Hodgin's style is an experience in itself, but it exhausts in a novel of such length. His language is Joycean in its sweep. His swaggering characters start off heroic and become tiresome. They are larger than life to start with, so they have a hard time becoming human for me.

Sidehill Gouger is a comic novel that tries by turns to be deadly serious. It succeeds at both, leaving me at a stalemate emotionally. It is a *tour de force*, and never lets me forget it. Individual segments, such as Ross's brush with death, are extremely well handled. I would have liked to take them on their own.

The Abramsky Variations is ingeniously shaped and the points are well made. The language is sparse, informative, and pointedly humorous in the right places. There is a benevolent spirit behind it, and what emerges is a documentary of a kind of human nature. But Torgov is too removed from his characters.

Finally, and again, *Sandbars* succeeded in moving me. It tells in less than astonishing language how life succeeds in astonishing us without going out of its way — without our courting the extraordinary, without the disguise of puppets too easily handled. McFee's novel is based on those dimensions, and it is believable.

David Helwig: Reviewing first novels is a good deal easier job than picking a single one as the year's best. Each of the novels on the short list had something to offer the reader, but they varied so widely that it was hard to find grounds for judgement. How to compare Pauline Gedge's *Child of the Morning*, an exciting amalgam of intensely felt historical material with highly romantic and perhaps slightly stereotyped dramatic moments, with the small and disciplined and amusing, but slightly too comfortable world of Helen Levi's *A Small Informal Dance*? Or to compare Jack Hodgin's *The Invention of the World*, a novel with brilliant moments that never add up, to Morley Torgov's flawed but enjoyable book *The Abramsky Variations*, which almost throws away the possibilities inherent in its vignettes. How value Irish mythology beside Jewish comedy?

The only solution, for me, was to throw myself entire into the arms of personal response. That is, after all, what I value in each of the books, the moments that come alive, that excite me in one way or another. Each one had some of these moments, but the only book that moved me, that seemed to offer the truth of an imagined world strongly enough that I still remember the emotion I felt while reading it, was *Sandbars* by Oonah McFee. Not a perfect novel, any more than any of the others are perfect, it is the book that made me feel most deeply the lives of its people. □

Every novelist was a first-novelist at one point. Even Margaret Laurence. Here she, Audrey Thomas, and newcomer John Clute recall the ink, sweat, and tears shed in their

INITIATION WRITES

by Phil Surguy

IT HAS BEEN calculated that, in the United States, the average first-novelist is 40 years old and that his or her novel is the third he or she has written. Which means, averages being what they are, it's possible there are a few American first-novelists who are around 60 and have already written a dozen or so books. I recently heard of a Canadian writer, a creative-writing professor, who is rumoured to have written 40 novels and had only one of them published.

Statistics Canada hasn't yet got round to measuring writers, but random observation suggests Canadian first-novelists are generally somewhat younger than their American counterparts. At any rate, the three writers whose first novels are to be discussed here were all under 40 when the books were published. Furthermore, by wildly stretching the point, each novel can be said to have been the first its author had written. Margaret Laurence was 34 when *This Side Jordan* was published in 1960; Audrey Thomas was 35 when *Mrs. Blood* came out in 1970; and John Clute was 36 when *The Disinheriting Party* was published in England last year.

In a telephone interview from her home at Lakefield, Ont., Laurence said she started *This Side Jordan* in 1955. She was in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) where her husband, an engineer, was working. Earlier she had done about 100 pages of a novel that she left uncompleted. Then, almost two months to the day after her son was born, she began to work on *Jordan*. She worked at night, starting after dinner and going till 2 a.m. She called those her "Cinderella hours," and said she continued to be a night-time writer until both her children were in school.

A draft of the novel was completed in Africa. The family moved to Vancouver in 1957. Another draft was done there and the manuscript was finally sent off, in 1958, to Atlantic, Little-Brown. This was *still* the 1950s, remember, and Laurence had hardly considered sending her book to a Canadian publisher.

The manuscript sat in Boston for six months and then, as most first novels do, it came back. However, it was not accompanied by the usual rejection slip. Instead, an editor had written several pages of detailed criticism. The novel chronicles the social and psychic turmoil experienced by several Europeans and Africans during Ghana's last days as a colony; and the gist of the editor's remarks was that Laurence had been grossly unfair to her British colonialists. Her personal dislike for these people had gotten in the way of her fiction.

After much rethinking, Laurence decided the editor was right. She scrapped and rewrote all the European chapters, humanized her British characters, even the ones for whom she had no sympathy. That was the final draft of the book. Today Laurence describes it as "a promising first novel and no more than that." Yet, if the book is to be slighted at all, that can only be done reasonably in the light of her subsequent achievements. In *This Side Jordan*, the clarity and precision of her language is already quite evident. The central, unifying vision of the novel, though, lacks the resonance and persuasive power of, for instance, *The Diviners;* but the characters are all convincingly realized people, particularly Nathaniel Amegbe, a schoolmaster whose partial education has isolated him from his tribal past without providing him with a clear idea of his place in the New Africa.

But this isn't a critical article. It's an account of how three first novels were written and published. Early in 1958, Laurence sent the revised manuscript to McClelland & Stewart. Jack McClelland wrote back that he would publish the book *if* he could find a British co-publisher. He asked if she had any ideas. She said to try Macmillan. ("They were the only English publisher I knew.") McClelland followed her advice and eventually, in 1960, after some revisions suggested by each of its three publishers, *This Side Jordan* was brought forth simultaneously by M & S in Canada, Macmillan in England, and St. Martin's in the United States.

Audrey Thomas's first novel is also set in Ghana. *Mrs. Blood*, to cram it into a very small nutshell, is the story of the last weeks of a young woman's doomed pregnancy. The main physical setting is her hospital bed. There is also some pronged observation of life in a compound for the European faculty members of a Ghanaian university. But the central concerns of the book are the woman's inner experience of her pregnancy, the threat of a miscarriage, her marriage, and important episodes from her past life in the U.S., Canada and England. And one of the things the book does most vividly is communicate a sense of the true meaning of the statement that women, by their very nature, are more familiar with blood and pain than men are.

Margaret Laurence says: "If the advances for my first novel had been any smaller, I would have framed them, not cashed them."

Thomas was raised in upstate New York. She graduated from Smith College in 1957, married in 1958, and emigrated with her husband to British Columbia in 1959. She received an M.A. in English from UBC in 1963; and then she and her husband and their two daughters spent the next two years in Ghana, at Kumasi's University of Science and Technology.

In a telephone interview from Montreal, where this year she is teaching creative writing at Concordia, Thomas said she had started writing short stories while at college, but didn't seriously begin trying to get published until she was in her mid-20s. She wrote dozens of stories and had all of them rejected, except one, which was bought by the *Atlantic Monthly* shortly after she arrived in Africa.

That acceptance initiated a process Thomas calls "the glass-slipper technique of getting published." Robert Amussen, the editor-in-chief at Bobbs-Merrill in New York, saw the *Atlantic* story and wrote to her in Ghana, asking to see more of her work. She sent him some stories. He liked them, and the end result of their correspondence was a contract by which B-M agreed to bring out a collection of Thomas's stories if she wrote a novel for them. Before then, she had never considered writing longer fiction.

The stories, *Ten Green Bottles*, were published in 1967, and it was then up to Thomas to provide the novel. She wrote most of a first draft and showed it to Amussen. "I had been trying to write a conventional novel. He was very encouraging about it, but it wasn't right." So an entirely new book was in order and she began work on what became *Mrs. Blood*. However, the book really didn't get going until a year and a half later. With the aid of a Canada Council grant, she then wrote the first and only complete draft, doing one half at home in Vancouver and the rest on Galiano Island. When she was finished, Amussen came out to see the results. His only recommendation was that 30 pages should be cut. That was done and the novel was published almost at once, early in 1970.

John Clute was born in Toronto in 1940. A banker's son, he spent his childhood and adolescence in all of Canada's major cities and Chicago. After high school he lived in New York for three years, and worked six months on a Caribbean freighter. Then he spent four years (1964-68) in Toronto, where he put in some time at the U of T. He also did a new-fiction column for the *Star* until he was fired by Peter Gzowski. Apparently he was not quite on the wavelength of either Gzowski or the *Star*'s readership. "And," he adds, "I was incompetent."

His first novel was a long, naturalistic work written in 1963-64. Four Canadian publishers turned it down. Then he heard through friends that Roberts & Vinter, an English firm, were looking for stuff like his. He sent the book to them in 1966 and they accepted it right away. It was one of the last things Roberts & Vinter did before going bankrupt. The book never appeared.

Still, on the strength of that novel, plus a synopsis of what became *The Disinheriting Party*, Clute won a Canada Council junior fellowship in 1968. He and his wife Judith moved to London in 1969 and lived there until late last year, when they returned to Toronto.

In London, Clute worked as a publisher's reader, published some short science fiction and criticism of that genre, and did three consecutive versions of *The Disinheriting Party*. The new book elaborated several minor characters from, and is a direct evolution of, the unpublished novel. An excerpt from the middle version appeared in Michael Moorcock's *New Worlds Quarterly* in 1973 and was subsequently bought for French translation. And the next version was sold, late in 1973, through an agent, to Allison & Busby, who were already familiar with Clute's short fiction and criticism. Then, after the sale, on his own initiative, Clute substantially revised the third version of the novel.

On the narrative level, *The Disinheriting Party* is the story of Gregory Smythe, an American shipping magnate whose fear of his own mortality has moved him to hate, stunt, and savagely repress his four children. By stopping their growth, he hopes to stop aging himself. The story is told from the extremely private points of view of several severely demented people (one of whom contains, and speaks for, three different personalities), and yet the book, unlike so much experimental writing, is accessible to an uninitiated reader; it is, for the most part, always clear who is speaking and what is at stake for them. Moreover, also unlike run-of-the-mill avant-garde fiction, *Party* is not just another bound volume of academic mannerisms. Instead, Clute has imagined and crafted a personal mythology that is not only interesting, but also rings true as genuine reflection of lived, felt experience.

So first novels do get written and some even get published. What happens next?

The Thomas Wolfe myth of the unknown genius who roars out of nowhere and electrifies the world with his first novel is, if the ads and stories in glossy magazines are any indication, still alive in many areas. The reality, of course, is much more prosaic. A bit of

cash and further obscurity are most first-novelists' only rewards for their years of labour. Margaret Laurence says: "If the advances for my first novel had been any smaller I would have framed them, not cashed them."

For the sad truth is publishers are niggardly when it comes to new fiction and the public is largely indifferent to it. There was a time, in the late 1950s and early 1960s (probably inspired by the enormous success of *The Catcher in the Rye*), when the phrase "a brilliant first novel" clamoured from paperback covers as frequently as "a nationwide best seller" does today. Those days are long gone now. But in Canada new writers are relatively fortunate. Various forms of federal and provincial aid are available to finance one's actual writing, and the Canada Council is generous with funds for publicity and reading tours. The trick, though, is still getting published in the first place.

Audrey Thomas says the importance of publication . . . was that "it made me realize I could write a novel. It fortified my determination to go on."

The ways of doing so are varied. Margaret Laurence was by no means part of any literary crowd. As a result of a story in *Prism* magazine, she had met Ethel Wilson, who provided her with valuable moral support, but she had no contacts in the industry itself. Her novel went in, as they say, over the transom, and her talent was immediately recognized (which is fairly unusual; there are dozens of stories of outright masterpieces that went to innumerable houses before finding responsive readers). Audrey Thomas was lucky to have attracted the attention of an editor and a firm who were still prepared to help develop a new author. And, by working hard, John Clute established a little niche for himself, a base, in London's publishing world.

On the difficulties of getting one's first work accepted, Clute says: "A trusted publisher's reader has a virtual negative veto over the manuscripts he sees, but nebulous positive influence. In a firm of any size, it's an uphill fight for any desk editor, except a whiz-bang, to get anything unknown published." On the other hand, it should be pointed out that most readers and editors want to be whiz-bangs. Their careers depend on their finding and developing winning books. Whether they have the acumen, political power within the company, financial resources, or energy to do so is another matter entirely.

The Disinheriting Party came out quietly last summer in a print run of 1,000 clothbound copies and 500 quality paperbacks. It received positive notices in most of the important London papers, was damned by reviewers in Colchester and Bristol, and by October had sold slightly over the break-even point (which isn't bad at all, if one bears in mind that Christopher Isherwood's first novel is supposed to have sold *six* copies — five to relatives and one to a complete stranger). In Canada, however, there was trouble. The book was to have been distributed here last fall by Nelson, Foster & Scott. It wasn't. And, in terms that echo cries of first-novelists for the past 250 years, Clute accuses the Canadian firm of "damaging, incoherent incompetence that, in a just world, would suffer criminal sanctions." N, F & S has since become part of General Publishing, who will release the novel in the next month or so, though the exact date is still in question.

Audrey Thomas was having her third baby when *Ten Green Bottles* was published in 1967. So: "I was more excited when *Mrs. Blood* came out. In some very ironic way I think it's my best book. I'm very fond of it. The women's movement hadn't really got going when I first conceived it. There was an innocence about it. That is, it wasn't sophisticated. Literary sophistication now tends — or tries — to get between me and my work."

Mrs. Blood received a fair number of good reviews and sold respectably. That reception occurred mainly in the U.S., however. In Canada, both the story collection and the novel were handled, with little enthusiasm, by an agency. Thomas had to wait until the books were out of print before she could reclaim them. She eventually did, with the result that Talonbooks brought out a new edition of *Mrs. Blood* in 1975, and last year Oberon reissued *Ten Green Bottles* in conjunction with their publication of a new volume of Thomas's stories called *Ladies and Escorts*. Furthermore, that abandoned novel, the one that "wasn't right" in 1967, was hauled out of the drawer, rewritten, completed, and published by Talon and Bobbs-Merrill as *Songs My Mother Taught Me* in 1973.

In the Thomas Wolfe myth, publication of the young genius's first novel is followed by a spectacularly glamourous lifestyle that is soon overshadowed by debilitating pressure to write an even better second book. Again, real life is somewhat different. In her case, Thomas says, "I didn't expect any changes. I didn't *want* things to change and was afraid they would." The real importance of the publication of *Mrs. Blood* was that "it made me realize I could write a novel. It fortified my determination to go on. I was determined to find the time to write. I couldn't go back."

Margaret Laurence was under no illusions that the earth would start spinning in a new direction as soon as *This Side Jordan* appeared. In 1957 she had been in London with her college friend Adele Wiseman, whose *The Sacrifice* had been recently published to great critical acclaim and almost no response from the book-buying public. "I had always imagined publication would be the moment of truth, but Adele taught me that the real joy is in the doing of it."

Laurence says *Jordan* "got middling reviews and sank without a trace until it resurfaced in NCL two years ago." Some reviewers complimented her for writing like a man. Her day-to-day life didn't change much. In fact, for years the Vancouver papers, when they noticed her at all, even after she had left town, always referred to her as "the Dunbar housewife and mother of two."

The essential meaning of the publication of *This Side Jordan*, Laurence says, was that "it gave me confidence to go on, gave me contact with other writers and people interested in writing. But I had always known I was a writer. I would have gone on anyway."

Clute and Thomas would also have "gone on anyway," and that *is the key to the only important generalization that can be made, in* terms of this article at any rate, about these three authors and their first novels. Of course, it's tempting to speculate on the fact that pregnancy is an important element in the plots of all three books, or that *This Side Jordan* is not set in Canada at all and *Mrs. Blood* and *The Disinheriting Party* are only fleetingly concerned with this country. But what concerns us here is the conclusion that, as Laurence and Thomas's remarks in particular suggest, publication was gratifying but — in a fundamental sense — irrelevant. That is, Laurence, Thomas, and Clute were committed writers long before their first books were published and they would have continued to write, regardless of how the publishing industry received their work.

John Clute says: "A trusted publisher's reader has a virtual negative veto over the manuscripts he sees, but nebulous positive influence."

Naturally, all writers want their work to be read sooner or later. Acceptance by a publisher is a wonderful morale booster and the attention of a good editor can help a writer clarify and extend the direction in which their fiction is headed. Publicists and the media may try to surround author's lives with an aura of glamour and excitement. But the lot of all serious novelists has always been and always will be a life of nearly incessant writing. Hard work.

John Clute is well into preparations for his second novel; and he will soon return to England, where he will finish writing a critical study of Michael Moorcock for Allison & Busby and continue his work as the associate editor of a science-fiction encyclopedia. Audrey Thomas has just finished her seventh book of fiction, a novel entitled *Intertidal Life*. And after a long period of exhaustion that followed completion of *The Diviners*, during which she thought she might be "written out" as a novelist, Margaret Laurence is embarking on yet another new novel. □

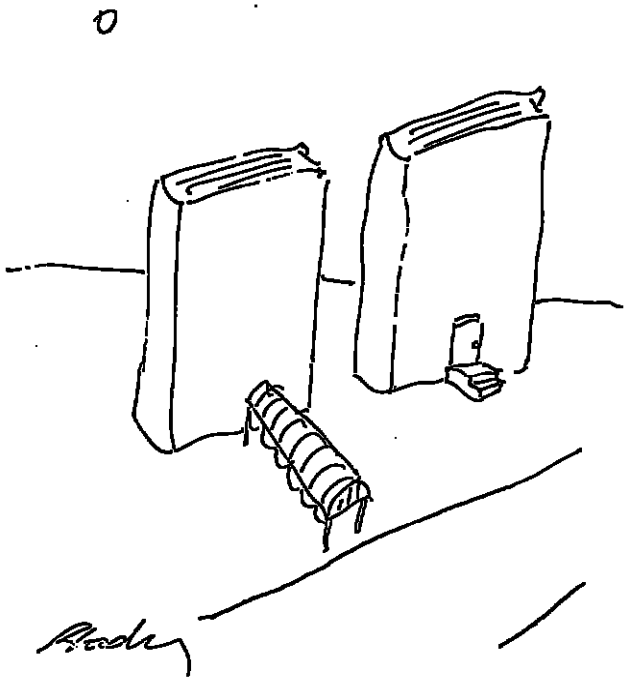
YOU AND 999 OTHERS

There's no limit these days to the business of limited editions, and an old business it is too

by Paul Stuewe

IN HENRY JAMES'S short story "The Abasement of the Northmores" a widow creates a unique memorial to the shade of her departed husband. Convinced that the world's failure to recognize his abilities is a temporary omission that will soon be rectified, she assembles a book of his letters to her, has just one copy printed, and then orders the printer's plates destroyed. She imagines that when she dies this singular record will be reprinted and her husband's reputation at last established. But the reader of the story is left with no such delusions. With perhaps too evident irony, James has assigned her the name of "Mrs. Hope."

Mrs. Hope may not have been much of a judge of literary talent, but she was on the right track in creating a limited edition of her husband's work. Although her "first edition" of one copy may seem a bit *too* limited, it has its real-life counterpart in the first printing of Robert Frost's *Twilight*, which consisted of one copy for Frost and one for his fiancée. In the limited-edition marketplace, where hyper-sensitive suppliers strive to meet the ever-changing demands of cultivated taste, truth is often at least as strange as fiction; and in a game where today's collectible is tomorrow's unsaleable, there are degrees of calculation and anxiety and sheer living by the instincts that belie the staid public image of commercial publishing.



In the beginning, all editions were in effect limited by low rates of literacy and the slow development of printing technology. The medieval scribe copying out a manuscript by hand was in little danger of flooding his market, and even after the invention of movable type (1450) the average size of editions remained quite small. High per-unit costs for labour and materials plagued the publishing trade until the beginning of the 19th century, and as a consequence the phenomenon of "subscription editions" dominated the pre-1800 period. Under this system, a writer or publisher would solicit prior subscriptions for the book in question, usually on a basis of 50 per cent down and 50 per cent on receipt. Thus much of the work of such now-famous authors as Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Johnson first appeared in limited-subscription editions of this sort, although we must remember that here "limited" refers to what the market would contract to absorb rather than the modern practice of the deliberate creation of rare books.

The momentous changes brought about by the industrial revolution included dramatic advances in printing techniques, and coupled with increases in population and rates of literacy they made possible the manufacture of large editions selling at reasonable prices. Once the preserve of an educated or affluent minority, books now became available to everyone from *nouveau riche* merchants to working-class people infected by the Victorian ethic of self-improvement, and those accustomed to treating them as rare and precious artifacts were horrified at their transmutation into the objects of mass-production and mass-marketing principles.

The élitist response to the horrors of popular literature finds a typical expression in John Ruskin's preface to the first edition of his *Modern Painters* (1850):

> But when the *public* taste seems plunging deeper and deeper into degradation day by day... while it vents its ribald buffooneries on the most exalted truth ... it becomes the imperative duty to all who have any perception or knowledge of what is really great in art ... to come fearlessly forward...to declare and demonstrate, wherever they exist, the essence, and the authority of the Beautiful and the True.

The pomposity and self-conceit of such sentiments collapse of their own accord, but for our purposes it is sufficient to take them as representative of an aesthetic reaction that contributed much to the development of the modern limited-edition book. The Pre-Raphaelites refined Ruskin's effusions into codes governing their daily lives, considering that natural objects could through moral uplift and sensitive cultivation be made into things of beauty; and sympathetic fellow-travellers such as William Morris and Emery Walker applied these principles to the making of books by printing

original and classical manuscripts in sumptuous — and limited — editions. Morris's Kelmscott Press edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* is unquestionably one of the most beautiful books ever printed, and it demonstrates that there is an argument to be made for the painstaking, small-scale production of legitimate works of art.

But for every William Morris there were many more fast-buck artists with their eyes on the big money. The more innocuous of these attempted, with a gratifying lack of success, to establish a market for limited editions of the work of such moderate critical enthusiasms as George Moore and H. E. Bates. A somewhat more pernicious breed represented by Francis A. Niccolls & Co. of Boston cranked out editions of standard authors "Limited to One Thousand Copies," limited that is until the firm's salesmen finally disposed of No. 1,000, at which point the presses began to roll again with yet another No. 1. And then there were the outright criminals, of whom John Payne Collier and Thomas James Wise were among the most notorious: Collier for his by-subscription-only *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, which included several inventive additions to the text (invented by Collier himself), and Wise for his systematic forgeries of spurious limited editions of English poetry, based on his observation that collectors would spend large sums for books that purported to be both first editions and limited in quantity.

It is to some extent tempting to excuse such practices on the grounds that they take advantage of impulses of greed and possessiveness that seem to beg to be exploited. The lust for limited editions appears to be a textbook case of what Thorstein Veblen identified as "conspicuous consumption," in that the ownership of such rarities is first and foremost a sign of one's ability to afford them. Even where a limited edition has been signed by the author, how much pride can one take in a signature that has about as much meaning for its owner as the "autograph" on a movie star's publicity photo?

The market for limited editions, nonetheless, remains a healthy one, and the post-1967 growth of the Canadian publishing industry has seen a good deal of activity in this area. McClelland & Stewart's Jefferson Press division will handle only limited-edition books, and one of its imprints, the Arctic History Press, has recently issued its first title. *The Exploration of Northern Canada, 500-1920: A Chronology* by Alan Cooke and Clive Holland is being offered to the appropriate professional and academic folk by direct mail, and could well represent the first step in a more sophisticated matching of product and market in limited-edition publishing of the future.

But developments in this field have not been confined to the larger fry among Canadian publishers. British Columbia's Blackfish Press, for example, offers three different versions of Al Purdy's *On the Bearpaw Sea:* you may have it in "Classic Laid Baronial Ivory paper bound in Spanish Weave covers," or in a signed and numbered edition on "Classic Laid Chatham Tan paper with Japanese binding and Mulberry covers," or for the real high-rollers there is a "special signed and numbered issue of 25 bound in calf-skin." Remember the good old days when your only choice was between paperback and hardcover? If this keeps up, we'll have to take along an interior decorator every time we go to the bookstore.

In the case of McClelland & Stewart's deluxe limited edition of *Tom Thomson: The Silence and the Storm*, by David Silcox and Harold Town, you might want to take along an armed guard and an insurance agent as well. The $1,000 price tag on this monument to fine book production may seem a trifle steep, but when you consider what it's buying, it begins to look like a potentially sound investment. The 135 signed and numbered copies include an original lithograph by Harold Town, and are bound in hand-picked, hand-tooled leather stamped with real gold; the endpapers are silk, and the paper is a special antique English stock. In addition to the glitter, a lot of thought went into some of the details: the canvas slipcase recalls the painter's working material, and the plates were cut by hand to conform to the actual physical dimensions of

Thomson's paintings after deterioration and chance had taken their toll. It's a distinctive book in its own right, not just a trade edition with a number and signature added, and as such it must be admired as a beautiful example of book making.

Another limited-edition art book definitely worth having is Helen Dow's *The Art of Alex Colville* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson), of which 125 copies retailing at $150 each were issued in 1972. The interesting thing here is that although it is now out of print, a few years ago a copy sold at auction at Sotheby's of New York for $400, even though at that time the book was still available from the publisher. So before paying through the nose for a "rare" limited edition, you might query the publisher as to the existence of unsold — and therefore almost certainly cheapet — copies of the book in question.

Although the deluxe Thomson and Colville books are likely to appreciate in value, history suggests that today's highly touted limited editions often become tomorrow's expensive bookends. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Canadian poet Wilson MacDonald was at least as well thought of as Al Purdy is today — Rabindranath Tagore described MacDonald's *The Miracle Songs of Jesus* as "one of the greatest religious poems of our times" — but this did not protect his work from a near-total eclipse in both popularity and resale value, even though leather-bound and hand-colored limited editions of his books sold briskly at one time. The major American literary journalist of the 1900-1920 era, James Gibbon Huneker, fell into the same category with the book publication of his *Intimate Letters*, issued in a limited edition of 2,050 copies that proved to be about 2,000 more than posterity could absorb. Perhaps the saddest case on record is that of the German theologian Johann Schmidt's *Prolegomena to a Personal Reading of a Pamphlet by John Lyly*, printed in a limited edition of 10 copies of which exactly one was sold — to his mother.

Changes in popular taste obviously affect the long-term value of limited editions, but even more important is the fact that limited editions have a much greater lifespan than the average book. No one knew that first editions of the early books of Stephen Leacock and Sinclair Ross would ever be valuable, which meant that many perished by attrition before serious collectors became interested in them; but the typical limited edition is issued only *after* a writer has achieved some degree of success, and thus it is marked "collectible" as soon as it appears. Compared to the average book, a limited edition is much less likely to be sold, destroyed, or donated to the local rummage sale, and this means that they have a nasty habit of enduring into an age when their authors have suffered a serious decline in reputation.

This is not to say, however, that you should completely avoid limited editions. Sometimes they are the only way to acquire a particular work by an author one admires, or the book as an object may be especially gratifying. But if you have any thoughts of putting money into limited editions as an investment, better you should essay some safer form of speculation — say commodity futures or penny mining stocks. Remember the case of poor Johann Schmidt, and poor Johann's mother; and to return to our opening exhibit from Henry James, remember that where there's life, there may also be Mrs. Hope. □

Period and full stop

Joy Carroll's costume epic and Doris Anderson's case history have one thing in common. Read on . . .

by I. M. Owen

Proud Blood, by Joy Carroll, Dell, 603 pages, $1.95 paper (ISBN 0 440 11562 0).

Two Women, by Doris Anderson, Macmillan, 240 pages, $9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1653 X).

BERNARD SHAW, reviewing Beerbohm Tree's 1896 production of *Henry IV Part 1*, said: "Mr. Tree only wants one thing to make him an excellent Falstaff, and that is to get born over again as unlike himself as possible." That same advice must be given, with great regret, to Doris Anderson and Joy Carroll if they are to become excellent novelists; though in fairness to Joy Carroll it should be added that the pursuit of that sort of excellence is probably not her aim. In *Proud Blood* she has in fact triumphantly succeeded in writing an ideal Dell mass-market paperback, a good thick one that will be readily picked up in airport or railway station at the start of many a long journey, thanks largely to its blurb, which like the book is precisely suited to its purpose:

Front cover: "Eternally joined . . . forever divided . . . they lived a covenant of forbidden passion."

Back cover: "They were children of a relentless destiny whose strongest desires were their greatest sin. . . . A sin against blood, a sin against pride. She had been born to the golden opulence of Montreal's ruling class, he to the stormy ambitions of the rival French. But the dawning passion that shocked their Victorian society grew amid the tumult of star-crossed loves and twisted desires, of human frailty and human greatness; grew into a towering love that survived his faithless hungers and her fiery will — to blaze unquenched for a lifetime."

Inside: "A HOUSE DIVIDED . . . *Hannah Court and Armand St. Amour* — their passion was the scandal of the decade, their marriage a glorious monument to enduring love . . . *Marc St. Amour* — a man of God tormented by the most forbidden flame of all . . . *Venetia Court* — the legendary beauty destroyed forever by one man's greed, she became a shade in the eternal night of madness . . . *Angela Court and Beau Dosquet* — their tempestuous love blossomed in secret meetings, grew until it could destroy them both . . . These unforgettable characters, and many others, are woven into the rich and wondrous tapestry of *PROUD BLOOD*."

With a blurb-writer like that, who needs reviewers? Or, to look at it from another point of view, with a blurb like that who needs to read the book?

These two books have nothing in common except a certain woodenness of dialogue that marks the born non-novelist. I am not the first to note (for chapter and verse, see *Weekend* magazine, March 4) that the lives of the two women of Doris Anderson's title embody many of the leading concerns of *Chatelaine* under her editorship. There's nothing wrong with that inherently, or with the author's setting out frankly to write a novel with a message, to wit: "Women are strong and resilient and able to cope." Many novels start out that way; but in the best of them the characters take on life under the novelist's hands, become individuals rather than representatives, and acquire a will of their own that determines the course

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Memoirs of a life behind bars
by Roger Caron
foreword by Pierre Berton

"I have read a good many books and articles about life behind prison walls, but this document by a multi-loser, is far and away the best I have yet encountered. This is his first book but certainly not his last." *Pierre Berton*
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by Paul Rutherford

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$12.95

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by Alice Gibson Sutherland
foreword by Fred W. Hotson, President of the Canadian Aviation Historical Society

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IRVING LAYTON
edited by Seymour Mayne
(Critical Views on Canadian Writers Series)
general editor Michael Gnarowski

From his early days as an unknown poet, to the present, as a silver-haired and firey patriarch of poetry readings and writing classes, Layton has seldom failed to astound. This collection of criticism brings together the opinions of many of his fellow literary stars — both critics and poets.
$11.95 hc
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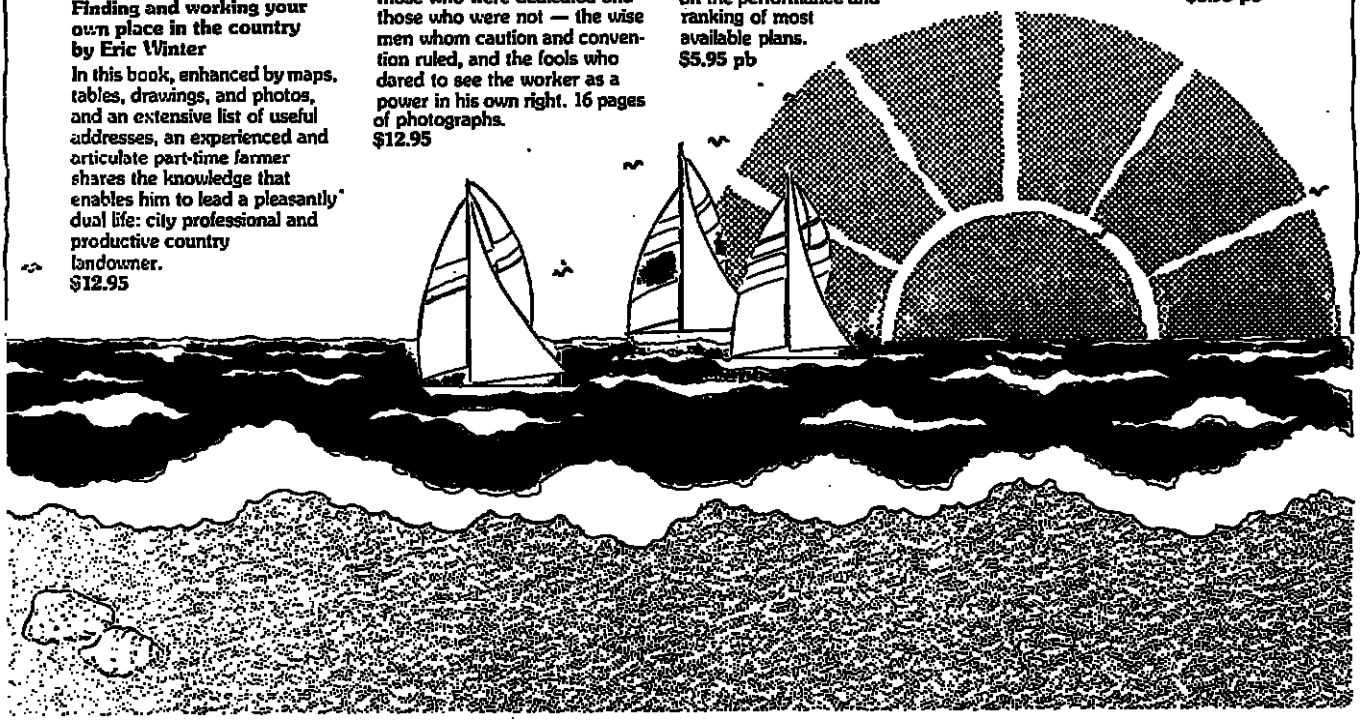


of their stories. In this way the novel transcends the case history and becomes a unique creation. Mind you, case histories are important, and may be interesting. But if I'm going to read them I'd rather read real ones. And if I'm going to read a novel I'd rather read a real one too.

Julia, the more interesting of the two women, is divorced and supports herself and her 15-year-old son by working as an editor in the trade division of a publishing house. In fact she effectively runs the trade division, without of course the salary or the title to match the work. Here, right away, is an example of the dangers of the case-history approach to novelizing. This situation recognizably corresponds to one that the author was in at Maclean-Hunter some 20 years ago. Transferred to the Toronto book-publishing world of today (or of 20 years ago, or of 30 years ago for that matter), it ceases to correspond to any recognizable reality, as a long line of women from Irene Clarke to Anna Porter can testify.

The other woman, Hilary, represents the successful businessman's wife, who spends her time shopping and entertaining friends who are friends only because they are business connections. She is beautiful, charming, and on the verge of alcoholism.

The plot starts with Julia's becoming pregnant by Hilary's husband and considering an abortion. It comes to an improbable climax when Hilary attempts suicide and accidentally kills her husband instead. Julia, who has by now outwitted the men in her office and got the title and the salary, is now free to have her baby. Hilary, we gather, is recovering rapidly from her traumatic experience (as, we are suddenly told, she had remarkably recovered from the experience of being raped just before her wedding), and is showing signs of collecting another man at any moment. Resilient indeed.

I so admire Doris Anderson and what she has done in the past (she made a woman's magazine into something I could read without feeling like a peeping Tom) that I greatly dislike having to say that she is no novelist, and hope she won't put me in this position again by writing another. Meanwhile, to end as I began with the words of the blessed St. Bernard, patron of reviewers: "My criticism has not, I hope, any other fault than the inevitable one of extreme unfairness." □

Someday her prince will come

With eyes clanking like steel balls, Sylvia Fraser's unpleasant lovers try to make the earth move. It doesn't

by Doris Cowan

A Casual Affair: A Modern Fairy Tale, by Sylvia Fraser, McClelland & Stewart, 257 pages, $12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 3180 7).

SYLVIA FRASER'S new novel, *A Casual Affair*, is a confused, frustrating, and finally unsuccessful piece of work. She subtitles it *A Modern Fairy Tale* and prefaces it with a long quotation from *The Arabian Nights*. A genie, imprisoned in a bottle, longs to be released. He promises, "Whosoever shall liberate me, him shall I grant his heart's desire." But 400 years pass and no one liberates him. His hope turns to anger and he cries out, "Whosoever shall liberate me, him shall I slay."

Fraser tells the story of a love affair between a diplomat and an artist. She calls them "sophisticated people" and clearly intends their story to stand as an archetypal modern conflict: the pragmatic sensualist versus the romantic idealist. The man is the evil genie, who no longer believes in the dream of liberation. The woman sees herself as a misunderstood scullery maid, who is really a princess. She tries, through her love, to work a miracle: to save the genie and herself. She fails, but somehow emerges as a winner anyway — liberated through loss, apparently. At least, I *think* that is the explanation; it's not easy to follow the emotional events of the narrative, which is punctuated with fairy-tale parables.

There are really only two characters: the man and the woman. They are not named. At first they are simply "he" and "she". Fraser seems hypnotized by the emotional brutality of her hero; she dwells obsessively (and unsympathetically) on the coldness and coarseness of his inner life. Her heroine is not observed with the same callousness. She is presented uncritically and we are clearly expected to conclude from her words and actions that she is entirely innocent, honest, and vulnerable. But she is armoured in smug self-approval. After a quarrel with her lover's jealous and suspicious wife, she congratulates herself: "I wouldn't demean myself by engaging in phony social chitchat." She sees herself as a heroic idealist, when she is really only arrogantly, childishly selfish and demanding. "She did not want what another woman had, . . . only the things that other women had never dreamed of."

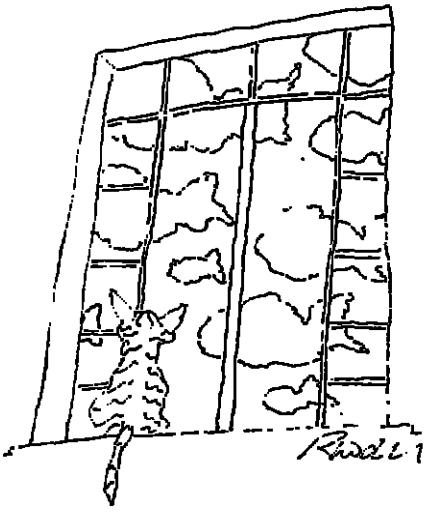
At the beginning of the book, the artist has come to feel that her marriage is a prison. Once it was "a miracle" but now the magic is gone. She requires another miracle; she summons the hero, explains to him what she needs, (pointing out that it will be good for him too) then waits for him to provide it. Love is what she wants — to be rescued, and beyond that, to be the spiritual saviour of the man who rescues her. She will not leave her husband, she says, unless she "can make it count for something." An impressive rationalization: she will not leave her husband for selfish reasons but on an errand of mercy, to save the life of her new true love. He resists her interpretation of his life's problems — he thinks she is a bit crazy — but begins an affair with her anyway. After all, she is beautiful, and he has been attracted to her for a long time. Their "casual affair" is a singularly unpleasant experience for both of them, and the hero's occasional bouts of impotence don't help matters. Their bantering conversations are a trading of veiled hostility and unfunny jokes. He goads her with intentional crudeness, and she irritates him with her pious and banal insights: "The surface of your life is breaking down. You're getting messages from a deeper truer self"; "I speak to the deepest part of you. . . ."

For a time she has power over him, drawing him into the vertiginous emotionalism of her life. Fraser describes him flirting with the idea that the artist is his "Dream Girl — as corny as that." He is inspired to reform his life; he goes away to a spa where he gives up cigarettes and booze, devoting himself to golf and tennis. He doesn't write to her. She is hurt, and tries to forget him. After six months he returns, rejuvenated. She realizes that she still loves

him, and there follows an idyllic time for both — "The Grand Romance." Then reality reasserts itself. He gets tired of her demands; they fight; he hits her with a poker and dumps her outside the door of their romantic mountain hideaway. She gets in the car and drives it off a cliff. End of love story. She survives and in the last chapter they meet again. "It's the damnedest thing," she muses. "I set out to change you, and I'm the one who changed." She no longer cares. She wishes him well, but she is free. I think this is meant to demonstrate her moral superiority. If so, it is unconvincing, and her rekindled, grandiose hopes for the future are unintentionally pathetic.

This is a frustrating book in that Fraser attempts to deal with a potentially fascinating situation of emotional deadlock. But her lack of perspective on her naive and dictatorial heroine fatally distorts the picture. There can't be a fair fight between these two; their arguments are hopelessly uninteresting. They simply state and restate their positions. The narrative lurches gracelessly forward. By this time both lovers have revealed themselves to be thoroughly unpleasant people and we are left wondering: Why does she love him? And why does he bother with her?

Fraser's imprecise and self-indulgent use of language doesn't help matters. The wit and compression of meanings she showed in her earlier books, particularly *Pandora*, are no longer in evidence. Parts of *A Casual Affair* are written with an embarrassing romantic trashiness ("He caught her, arms strong and safe and warm as she knew they would be...."). Elsewhere she splashes image upon grotesque image: "He looked down now as she looked up. Their eyeballs clanked like steel balls. Worlds in collision." And the saddening aspect of this is that when she is in control of her material, Fraser can write well and powerfully. Even in a book as lame as this she occasionally surprises the reader with a fine insight. But, alas, not often enough. □



From the halls of Kakapupu to the shores of triple pun

Izzy Manheim's Reunion, by Martin Myers, General Publishing, 326 pages, $10 cloth (ISBN 0 7736 0059 0).

By PETER THOMAS

THIS BOOK would appear to be a fiction-within-a-parody-of-a-fiction, though the model is the ancient stage-comic routine of "Little did you know that I knew...." rather than, say, Ludwig Wittgenstein. For the most part, the Marx brothers and Spiro T. Agnew are the book's true spiritual fathers. The hero, Izzy Manheim, has made millions out of glue. He is variously described as "the glue magnate," "the glue tycoon," "the glue potentate," "a titan in the tacky world of adhesives," "the guru of glue" — and his "sticky adventures" need to be watched carefully "lest his accomplishments gluewise come unstuck." He can do an imitation of Jack Benny and has "an aura that was electric."

Late in the novel, or routine, or scenario, or "material," 12 reclusive computer experts, chained together by solid-gold chains, explain: "It's all an act. Our answer to show biz." And the potentiality of the book seems to lie here. Is it intended purely as a send-up of the admanic world of cute quippery, the tired one-liner, the old cross-purposes, cross-talk patter, the whole reduction of humour to the staler clichés of performance? At one point Izzy's wife Elspeth, a novelist, utters the name "Harold Pinter" before clamming (gumming?) up.

The characters within the novel keep the show-biz or pop-novel idea before us. A few statements: "It's like something out of a movie"; "It's beginning to sound like a spy thriller, isn't it"? "It sounds like a line out of a movie"; "you could have your way with us as in a movie"; "It would make a terrific movie"; "It sounds like a science fiction movie." This could, of course, be Martin Myers selling soap. But it also says a great deal about the texture of his novel, since the humour is so often of that predictably manufactured sort, typified in the trade as "zany," in which the formula is to bring together exotic unlikelihoods. Elspeth, for instance, was "born in Singapore of a Norwegian operatic soprano's illicit liaison with a Kurd rebel chieftain." Izzy's main collaborator is a witch-doctor called Kakapupu, the funniness of whose name is compounded by those of the two tribes with whom he is connected in "darkest Africa," the Ululu and the Rikitiki. Kakapupu actually has a gold medal in business administration from Harvard, though he speaks parody-ghetto. This latter joke is repeated twice.

There are numerous ethnicities, probably the most extended of which (excluding Kakapupu who, being black, is not ethnic) concerns Cec Potts:

> The evangelical subsect that Cec's family belonged to was an offshoot of a runaway of a splinter group of a reactionary branch of an extremely conservative sect that started out with the name of the Brethren of God, became the Select Brethren of God in its reactionary branch, splintered off into the Select Brethren of a Better God, ran away to become the Select Chosen Brethren of a Better God, and finally shot off to become the Select Chosen Brethren of an Infinitely Better God.

The ethnic part comes when Cec marries a Jew and becomes Rabbi Potts. Relentlessly, ponderous as fate itself, the transformation reaches, yea, unto his very Nose.

Is there any "structure" by which Rabbi Potts's conk can be restored to comedy? The bad joke is a legitimate part of the club comedian's act, itself a parody of desperation. But the *written* word won't allow this unless the tone is controlled with real mastery. Adjit Sri, a private detective, is identified by "Oh my goodness me" and "By golly" — hardly enough to delight the ear. A "Mr. Katzenellenbogan is in show business. He trains professional hockey players to please crowds by fighting during games." There is a Ukrainian doctor who uses an accent professionally. Lefty Fildi, an ex-gangster, is described as a "one-armed bandit."

But I wonder, here in Fredericton, the City of Stately Elms, so full of the accumulated sense of historic grievances against the centre, if there is still a voter innocent enough, sweet enough, to break up, even twitch a lip, on reading that "unlike its natives, Lefty pronounced all the consonants when he said To-ron-to." Perhaps there is. But to read *that one*, there, in a *book*! Mr. Myers doesn't waste gags.

"To-ron-to" tipped the balance for me. *Izzy Manheim's Reunion is* parody. It concerns the writer's block suffered by Elspeth, whose last two books — Martin Myers has two previous novels — showed, in the view of the critics, "untapped literary potential" and talents that "should be put to work on serious fiction." Yet, as Izzy says, "you were always the whiz writer who could do two days work in fifteen minutes, on your cassette recorder. Hell, you were writing books in the bathtub and on the can" — this is close to how *Izzy Manheim's Reunion* reads: a fast-talking genial ramble with a nominal plot and a spuriously arty twist. At one point the narrative proclaims: "Words can't describe it. Why try?" Even for a light comedy, we should, in the language of the book, try harder.

The final section makes its parodic intention fairly clear. Izzy has assembled the 50 other members of his graduating class at

Victory College, Toronto, in a castle ballroom. Kakapupu takes over, incarnate as wise-cracking MC introducing the guests to performances of themselves on the stage. But the novel is 326 pages and that's too long to groan our way towards a dubious redemption. This exchange between Izzy and Elspeth contains its own perception:

> You know what I do when the going gets rough? I get funny and write jokes. That's what I do. I resort to humour, the writer's last resort."
>
> "There's nothing wrong with humour, if it works and your writing needs it. Besides, you have the skills to amend your skills as it progresses.

Was this last Martin Myers' intention? If so, the amending formula provides too little, far too late. □

Keeping up with the Smiths and the Joneses

The Classic Shade: Selected Poems, by A. J. M. Smith, McClelland & Stewart, 96 pages, $5.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 8213 4).

Under the Thunder the Flowers Light up the Earth, by D. G. Jones, Coach House, 110 pages, $4.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910 059 4).

By TOM MARSHALL

A. M. KLEIN once wrote to his old McGill friend, Arthur Smith: "Hotel-registers to the contrary notwithstanding, not everybody is Smith." No indeed. Of our myriad Smiths and Joneses, these two have been central and important in keeping alive a metaphysical tradition in Canadian poetry. At the same time, though, their "classicism" has made for a certain anonymity. The poetry of personality and "egotistical sublime" — Layton's comic self-insistence, Purdy's inspired ramblings, Cohen's eloquent self-pity, Milton Acorn shouting love — is not to be found here.

The art of A. J. M. Smith is lapidary. When he writes a poem it stays written. His lyric grace *is* almost anonymous, a small perfection. Much of his work seems to be pure delighted play with words. For "Angels exist, and sonnets are not dead" in his world. It is a world that can afford much pleasure to the reader sensitive to these things, even if the view be somewhat limited down there in the pastoral literary groves with their classic shade. Delight in life (and in words) and a horrified fascination with death have been the poet's main concern.

The Classic Shade contains Smith's own classics: "Bird and Flower," "The Lonely Land," "Field of Long Grass," "News of the Phoenix," "Prothalamium," "The Plot Against Proteus," "The Wisdom of Old Jelly Roll." However, a number of poems — "In the Wilderness," "To Hold in a Poem," "Three Phases of Punch," "I Shall Remember," "Universe into Stone," and "The Shrouding" among them — have been banished from the canon, presumably because they no longer please the master, or do not please him sufficiently. This is, in some cases (which may well vary for different readers), a pity. But at least the very best poems are back in print, thanks to McClelland & Stewart; and the rising generation of readers and young poets could do a lot worse than take what pleasure and instruction they can from the traditional skills of one of the most notable of the elders among us. For work other than what is currently fashionable may also be of use to them, and in surprising ways.

The blurb on the back of *Under the Thunder the Flowers Light Up the Earth* says that D. G. Jones is "one of the best and most enigmatic poets writing in Canada today." (It also concludes with this atrocity: "Being one of the few bilingual poets in the country, the book includes some poems in French." Well, nobody's perfect, not even at Coach House.) There are indeed some poems in French, and Jones's work can certainly be "enigmatic." The poems are precise and gentle (too gentle?) and full of flowers (too many flowers?). They are sometimes cryptic or just plain private. But some are strong and delicate in ways that remind one of Jones's best work of the past. (Flowers, after all, are very tough.) These include "A Garland of Milne" and "Pictures by Colville," in which the poet's affinity with two of our finest painters is demonstrated poetically, a number of quiet love poems, and a sequence of poems spoken by Archibald Lampman to his Kate (Waddell). In the last part of the collection the scene shifts from Canada (and much emphasis on winter) to the Caribbean, and the garden imagery that dominates the whole becomes even more insistent than before.

I think young poets may benefit from exposure to Jones's precise and controlled free-verse notations as much as they may from the scrutiny of Smith's more conservative craft. *Under the Thunder* contains many fine examples of Jones's mature art, even if the quiet tone (much quieter and less dramatic than in some of his earlier work) and the worrying away at the controlling and unifying theme of wilderness as garden and vice versa make for a sense of repetition and a certain monotony in the collection as a whole. He is still one of our best (and most "classical") poets. □

In all the old familial places

The Sunshine Man, by D. M. Clark, McClelland & Stewart, 224 pages, $8.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 2148 8).

By WAYNE GRADY

A SUBTLE BUT significant scurrying has been going on in the underbrush of Canadian literature. It has to do with the family. In American fiction the family has existed as a form of claustrophobia, a hothouse, something to be endured gracelessly until one can get a driver's licence and be off, a causeless rebel on the road. In England the family is a sort of walled garden; a closed, complicated network of interesting relations; a living structure within which one grows into a sense of self and society.

The family in Canadian literature has been an uneasy hybrid of its two counterparts. It is both the hothouse and the garden; "a trap," Margaret Atwood has called it, from which the protagonist "feels the need for escape but somehow is unable to break away." No matter what happens, the hero can always go home again, usually in defeat. In the past this has been both a strength (as in French Canadian and most immigrant fiction) and an obsession (as with most women writers, from Moodie to Carol Shields). From American literature we have learned that the family can keep us from the abyss at the border; from English literature we know that the family gives us our sense of community. It seems now like the best of two impossible worlds. Perhaps that's why it's disappearing.

In a surprising amount of recent Canadian fiction — fortunately, most of it mediocre — that pattern has been breaking down. The unsuspecting protagonist, beating his head as usual against the soft, familial wall, has been shocked to find that wall giving way, rather like a moth that suddenly finds itself inside the light bulb. More and more lost souls are picking up their kids on weekends, spending a sad day with them at the zoo, waving to their divorced wives through the car window, and wondering in their vague, ineffectual way whatever happened to end it all.

The Sunshine Man is another ripple in this new wave. The title is pointlessly ironic: there isn't a ray of sunshine in the whole book. Figgy Van Rijn (for some reason Clark gives him Rembrandt's last name) is a drug retailer whose mother is in a hospital dying and whose wife has gone home to daddy with the kids. His job is a dead end, his friends are highly unflattering mirror images of himself, and his girlfriend is a reluctant symbol of his own naive hankering for love.

There are only two fictive solutions to the corner Clark has written Van Rijn into: suicide or flight. It doesn't matter which one he chooses: both are equally unsatisfactory from a literary point of view. Van Rijn's position is a false one to begin with, borrowed from too many (American) made-for-TV movies. When the crises come, it is usually unclear whether it is society that has gone sour or simply an isolated case of Van Rijn turning vicious against his own kind.

Either way, Clark fails to inject any urgency into the decision, as if he himself doesn't really believe in it. He seems grandly uninterested in any but the principal character, a not particularly inventive mixture of Helwig's Glass Knight and Wright's Weekend Man. The chapters tumble loosely together, like a shoebox full of old photographs. As a result, the reader is confronted with yet another *fait accompli* — the failed bourgeois — whose ineptitude and complacency finally catch up with him. Who ultimately cares? If things finally do fall apart, it isn't the Figgy Van Rijns of the world we will mourn. □

The man who digs mountains

The School-Marm Tree. by Howard O'Hagan, Talonbooks, 245 pages, $4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88522 129 4).

The Woman Who Got "a at Jasper Static" and Other Stories, by Howard O'Hagan, Talonbooks, 132 pages, $4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88922 130 8).

By JANE W. HILL

ONE MIGHT THINK, hers in Toronto, that the literary impulse in Canada moves from the Maritimes westward as far as Calgary, the" goes underground only to resurface somewhere near Vancouver; the Rockies have been left out. But there has been a "mountain man" writing for decades about the "presence" in mountains, who only now is beginning to get wider notice. He is Howard O'Hagan, born in Lethbridge in 1902 and currently living in Victoria but always inspired by the mountains when as a young man he worked as a guide and packer for tourists, on a survey crew, as a publicist for Jasper Perk Lodge, and where he heard tbe tales that would later be turned into such evocative prose. (O'Hagan has also lived and worked in Argentina, Australia, California. and Sicily, as well as studied arts and law at McGill — a rich and varied background to draw on.)

O'Hagan's first novel, *Tay John*, was published in England in 1939 but saw little light until the New Canadian Library's paperback edition in 1974. His stories have appeared in Esquire, *Maclean's*, *The Tamarack Review*, and *other magazines;* 11 of them are reprinted here in *The Woman Who Got on at Jasper Static Other Stories*. *The School-Marm Tree*, a novel *set in* Jasper in the mid-1920s, was originally a shortthat O'Hagan length in the 1950s but that was previously unpublished.

The School-Marm Tree is only superficially a realistic, anecdotal account of what happened to whom. On a deeper level it is an almost mythic tale. a fusion of events and the philosophic meaningofthose events. o n thatdevelops the deep connection between l a n d s c apersonality,rthat of one'sg d e s t i nSalva, the youtive families here, or social agencies, or woman w h o i s boththestill, brokei"bothers" to look after one. Humour is reaching toward the sky, and the forest that continually renews itself, works as amddi" Yellowhead, a dreary railroad tow" at the foot of the Rockies in Alberta. The story concerns her progress fmm Yellowhead to her job as hostess of a chalet up in the High Valley, and to the horrific but inevitable climax that brings ha back fmm the High Valley. It takes her from her first boyfriend Slim ("They knew one another only through tbe flesh and behind that wall of flesh they were strangers") to Peter. the mysterious outsider who comes to Yellowhead from Montreal and "was the first person who had seen into her and followed where her longings led.. who saw her not only as she was, but as what she might become," and finally to Clay, the good man through whom Selva can realize her dreams and aspirations but still remain close to the earth that is necessary for ha sustenance.

Certain elements recur — the beaver meadow where Selva goes with Slim, the" Peter, and at tbe end with Clay; the mournful locomotive whistle, beckoning one on and also bringing one home — and through it all the mountains are omnipresent, both ominous and inspiring. a place to die, a challenge to live:

> Here in the mountains, man is small, his works impermanent. He lives in crevices. You see him walking here and there near the chalet, to the woodpile. to the stream, riding in a group across the valley. and each man you see is alone in time, alone in the mountains which are time visible and frozen before you.

A long legato line of rich, poetic prose embodies this vision perfectly. And although the characters are not as fully drawn as in a straightforward realistic novel — they *represent* as well as *are* — *the* book does have narrative strength, with a compelling plot and distinctive persons, as in the guests who come to the chalet, Mr. Winnie the undertaker, Rose the hotel cook. O'Hagan is especially fine in his understanding of women, their feelings and their place in this masculine world. Technically I think the only flaw is in the false foreshadowing regarding Slim; the author seems to be preparing him to be the villain but he never does become so. This is a haunting book that reverberates in the reader's mind for a long time.

The collection of short stories is also set in the mountains of Alberta and British Columbia, peopled with the guides and fur trappers, surveyors and Mounties, French and Indians, who can't abide the cities but who have to cope with the physical and mental rigours of this isolated mountain country. Some thrive in their resourcefulness and mutual trust, and fierce sense of ownership of their land; others succumb to loneliness. suspicion, violence. Hen the law is maintained by Mounties on horseback or snowshoe, and also by the individual, who must often deal with hatred or danger as it happens. There are no supporHumour is not much in evidence — when O'Hagan does attempt it, as in "The Love Story of Mr. Alfred Wimple," I don't think he is so successful. But I can't imagine a more powerful or moving description of what it is like to die of exposure to the cold than "A Mountain Journey." The varied incidents presented — a partnership that becomes intolerable and leads to manslaughter. a married woman yearning for a brighter life

and tempted by the young sailor seated next to her on a train, the feelings a trapper has for his old packhorse who gets caught in the woods and dies, a parable of The Promised Land — together interpret tbii often hostile but awesome mountain world for us, with less of a symbolic weight than in *The School-Marm* Tree, but always with sensitivity and power. □

Burrard Inlet's sawdust Caesars

The Enterprising Mr. Moody. the Bumptious Captain Stamp: The Lives and Colourful Times of Vancouver's Lumber pioneers, by James Morton, J. J. Douglas, 183 pages, $13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 147 1).

By SHARON MARCUS

AS A born-and-raised Easterner with a perpetual hunger for mountains and the Pacific. I turned to this particle of Western history thinking here would be some opiate for that longing, some clue to that wayward romance of lotus-eaters, fascinating to the chilled Easterner as he bends in tbe biting wind.

In a documentary approach to the history of Burrard Inlet and New Westminster, Dr. Morton doesn't yield an inch to our curiosity, our desire. The psychological lid is never lifted. We must content ourselves with an emotionless compilation of data: who sailed when from where on what ship; who bought, auctioned or sold what property; who campaigned for what against whom. A balance of English and American interests manoeuvring on an almost invisible, not-yet Canadian fulcrum flattens our self-interest at once: "we" didn't actually exist then. No matter; time enough for that illusion later.

Dr. Morton begins hi account in 1858 with the Cariboo gold rush, a seductive event for the imagination, but we are spared such drama. A8 that happens off-stage. What we glimpse instead is Her Majesty's somnolent officials waking briefly to her interests in New Caledonia, cancelling the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company and their fur-trading interests, and establishing the Colony of British Columbia. The ascendancy of mining interests in the new colony is confirmed by the dispatch of 150 Royal Engineers to plan roads, fortifications, and towns. They don't stay long enough to accomplish much.

Now the scope of the action closes in. Our attention is trapped in the tiny community around Burrard Inlet and New West: minster as the rather constricted, hesitant beginnings of the lumber business in the first 17 years of the colony's existence are catalogued. Without a doubt this is local history, and we ought to be grateful to historians such as Dr. Morton who care enough about a dot in the universe to document its existence stone by stone, building by building. But we are obliged to Focus too exclusively on this little world: great events lii the American Civil War rage close by, yet are barely mentioned; great issues like conservation and the total usurpation of Indian rights are merely alluded to. If mention of the Douglas Street Road, False Creek Trail, or the North Road stirs happy resonances within the reader, all will be well. Otherwise the perspective is too narrow for this demandingly detailed narrative.

We meet the two protagonists of the title, Mr. Moody and Captain Stamp. Mr. Sewell Prescott Moody. invariably described as enterprising in all accounts, was a canny American from Maine, who seems to have functioned in a retiring manner behind the scenes, politically and financially, with considerable success until the scandal concerning land pre-emptions engulfed the last year or so of his life. The logging settlement that grew up around Moody's Mill was benevolently, if perhaps puritanically run. Dr. Morton laments the absence of first-hand descriptions of Mr. Moody, who remains a shadowy figure. The luminous bright light in his eyes, the steadiness of his gaze in the accompanying photographs indicate a depth and strength we can't examine.

Captain Edward Stamp. on the other hand, an acquisitive Englishman with a taste for lawsuits, contempt for the colony's political institutions, and an engaging capacity For failure in business was always visible and noisily demanding this timber or grabbing that land. The beautiful, grainy impressionist photograph of him reveals a mouth turned resolutely downward, imitating the mask of tragedy. But there was nothing tragic here. Supported by British financial interests and his own political escapades, be embarked on various business schemes. notably in the mill across the inlet from Moody, often failing. sometimes succeeding, always attracting the attention of John Robson, a righteous journalist, and always making the arduous sea voyage to and from England between ventures.

At times the heroes of this history seem to be the sleek but treacherous craft, the *Sparrowhawk,* the *Pacific* (on which Moody and a few hundred others lost their lives in a shipwreck in 1875). the *Enterprise.* the *Great Eastern.* the *Moneta,* the Panama, the *Isabel. the Active, the Emily Harris. the Matilda, the Zealous,* the *Prince Alfred.* Contact with the world beyond the mountains was via ship to San Francisco, and a risky journey it was, especially when ships were allowed to deteriorate in anticipation of an overland mute by rail. But the journey was made frequently, casually.

Men, the sea, commerce, politics, communications, the stuff of history is all here. but without that re-creative depth and pers-

pective that satisfies the desire to perceive another time. to examine the present illusion against the illusion of the past-in the hope of securing an improbable future. □

Where seldom was heard a decadent word

Western Canadian **Dictionary** and **Phrase** Book. by **John** Sandilands, **University** of **Alberta Press**, 52 **pages**, **$5** cloth (**ISBN 0 88864 021 8**).

By SUSAN JACKEL

"THE **WESTERNER** does not await **the** dictum of the **lexicographer**, but generally uses the **words first** to hand and best suitable for clothing his ideas **or** giving force to his expressions." This from J.D. **Higinbotham**, **a Lethbridge pharmacist** who hung out his shingle in the early **1880s** and who evidently enjoyed the talk of his **customers**. After he died. at the age of 97. **a** manuscript **from** among his papers. "Western **Vernacular**," found its **way into** *Alberta History* in 1962. Thus **Higinbotham's lexicographical** jottings reached the liiht of day **a mere** 50 **years after** the publication of what its **proud** author, John Sandilands. **touted** in 1912 **as** the "First Dictionary Eva **Printed in** Canada." **the** *Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase Book*. Expanded and enriched in **a** second edition **a** year later, Sandilands' dictionary (the 1913 version) has just been **re-issued in a hard-cover** facsimile reprint by the **University** of **Alberta Press**.

Editor John Orrell, **in a brief introductory note** to the reprint. calls **this** "**a** celebration, **and** not **a** technical book." **What Orrell** is pointing to here is Sandilands' obvious relish for the extravagance and **verve** of Western speech during the boom **years**. **Irreverence was** its keynote. **Sacred** cows seldom **got past** the heifer stage in **Western** Canada. with old-timers **making a** point of **testing** the mettle of **newcomers through a** wide range of **derisory phrases**.

A **favourite target were** "**green English**," **as Canadians began to** voice **their** resentment of **arrogance** and condescension among recent arrivals **from overseas**. Many of the entries explicitly **instruct** the "Old Country" reader **as** to **customs** and **usages** in Canada. **With the passage** of time, of **course**, this particular **source** of **coinages has waned**; green English **turn** into **Improved** Britishers. and show themselves **to** be good chaps **after** all.

Presumably as a come-on, **the publisher's** blurb **features** the word "ribald," but the **titillation-count** of **Sandiland's** collection **will** probably disappoint. Once again, the **operative factor** here is **variant** usages fmm standard English **(read** "British"). This is where **Sandilands' claim to be useful** is **probably** best upheld. **Foreseeing** some **embarrassing** situations for Old **Country** emigrants. he provides explicit *warnings against* **using certain phrases in** casual conversation with Canadians (*vide* "**knocked** up" and "**pecker**").

The prevalence of American emigrants in the **Canadian** West is **reflected** in&e many adoptions and adaptations of American slang, as **well** as in the **entries** that **identify specific states in** the union (**Lake** State. Hawk-eye State. and so on). **Less** easy to account for, except **in terms** of the **lexicographer's personal experience**, **is** the **surprisingly large** number **of** terms **related to certain** occupations. Did ranching really **give** birth to **more** neologisms **than farming**, **or was** il simply that Sandilands spent **more** time **talking to** cowboys **than** to sadbusters?

The space given **over** to Printing **and newspaper terms is** not difficult to **understand**, and Sandilands' exhaustive list of **synonyms** for "**drink**" can be attributed, by the charitable **observer**, **as** much to popular **Western** wit as to tie pace Bob **Edwards** set **for Prairie journalists**. But **lumbering** has **never** been **a** major **industry in** the **Prairie** region — **and** yet "**bull-cook**," "drive," "pike-pole," "buck beaver," and **a** host of **others find their** way **into** Sandilands' **list** of needful **terms** for **newcomers**.

Which raises the question of regional **versus national vocabulary**. **Sandilands obviously** didn't **worry overmuch** about the distinction: **some** of his offerings **are** identified as "Canadian." **others** as "**Western**"; but for the most **part there** *is no* **specific locale attached**. **Where the question** becomes important is in connection with **later** compilations made by **more** scholarly **students** of Canadian **English**.

A *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles is the most* ambitious and **respected effort** to date in **this** direction, and **Scargill** et ***al***. dutifully list Sandilands **among their sources**. Their **principle** of selection is not at all clear, however, for they leave out dozens of Sandilands' **entries**, among them "bunco." "liquor permit." "split-log," and "**Strathconas**." **For** J. W. **Dafoe**, "bunco" bad a **precise** meaning, and he **used it often; while no** Western **Canadian of** the **'early 1900s** would long have remained ignorant of the high social **place** accorded **to veterans and members** of **Lord Strathcona's Horse** (**Royal Canadians**).

As **for** "snow-flea" (according to **Sandilands**. "**a** leaping insect, found **on** the snow in such **numbers as to become a pest** in **some** parts"), its exclusion fmm A *Dictionary of Canadianisms is* mystifying indeed. As **a** Westerner would say, **this** is semi-ready **semantics**, and we won't stand for it. □

And the deer and the clichés still play

Out West: Stories about Persons and Places on the Canadian **Prairies**, by Bob Phillips, **Western** Producer **Prairie** Books. 106 pages, $3.95 paper (**ISBN 0 919306 93 4**).

Seasons in the Rain: An Expatriate's Notes on **British** Columbia, by **Silver** Donald Cameron, **McClelland & Stewart**, 208 pages, 56.95 **paper** (**ISBN 0 7710 1847 9**).

By GEORGE MRLNYK

CANADA HAS two Wests -the dry, **rolling**, hard **prairies** and the **rain-soft** *mountainous coast*. Each **has** its **own** personality, **myths** and **regional clichés**. Our *West* is an **anachronism of the agrarian past**. **a collection** of **short two-page essays** by the editor and publisher of *Western Producer*. **a** farm weekly published in **Saskatoon** and **undoubtedly** the last major bastion of agrarian **Prairie** culture in this **country**. The **clichéd** railway **tracks straight-arrowing** into the **bald horizon on the cover of the book tell all**. Filled **with commonplaces**, sentimentality. and cheery melodrama (a significant number of the **columns are** eulogies and others sound like a **toastmaster's introduction**), this is pure down-home writing *à* la *Reader's Digest. As the* author says: "The West this little **book** talks about **is** the **West** that **grew out** of wheat."

If Phillips writes like a small-town **preacher** whose **world** is laced **with** fundamentalism, **then Silver** Donald **Cameron writes** like **a wide-eyed** Peter C. **Newman in** jeans. His collection of **profiles**, **taken** mostly **from** *Weekend magazine, are as* **representative of the new Canadian journalism** of the **1970s** as Phillips **is** of his never-ending **1950s**. The tone **is crisp**, **intelligent**, streamlined **for a popular market but with an intellectual's gaze** behind each word. Compare this Scott **Symons-inspired cliché** by Phillips, "The Canadian West door **a** colorful cloak and a mood of quiet thanksgiving when **the harvest work** is done in **the** fall." **with** this **Cameronian description**, "**The** *maître d'* is mottled and wattled, **with liverish spots** on his **talons** and **a** sallow complexion." Or this **Cameron** headline, "**The** Publishers. the **Predators** and the Paranoid **Parrot**," with Phillips' blah, "Wheat Pool Fieldman."

Before joining **Cameron** on the with-it bandwagon, it's worthwhile examining what the "new journalism" is all about. **Cameron's** populism is **nothing more** than an "in-depth" glance. **a** combination **of pop**

biography and living-room sociology. B's brilliant in its portrayal of the moment — the way a camera is — but only Phillips' style can sketch the panorama of a lifetime with quiet dignity end understanding in less then 1,000 words. Cameron alludes to this kind of perception in his introduction when he says: "But there are other values too of which B.C. knows nothing: the values of stability and rootedness, the sense of belonging to a well-defined community, the gentler. domesticated beauty of farmstead end fishing harbour." He is speaking of Phillips' culture. of which he is not a part.

Unfortunately, neither the folksy populism of Phillips. nor the jet-age media populism of Cameron are the real thing. Both have a pretense. Phillips' West is a page of Prairie history that lingers like any anachronism. The mythological West of Allan King's film *Who Has Seen the Wind* is not the new West of massive tar-sands plants. 54-inch pipelines, uranium. and Inco. Even among my contemporary farm friends. *New Times* and *Mother Jones* is as vital reading es the market reports in the *Western Producer. Cameron's* profiles of "just a couple of dozen people living out their lives by the ocean or in the mountains" tell us no more about a de-mythologized British Columbia and West Coast than any of the personality-prone, hit-and-run journalism of the 1970s with its instant-playback perceptions and its fly-by-night understanding. Just because he gives es a bit of everyman ("No beautiful people." he claims) doesn't mean our vision is any further ahead than yesterday's clichés.

In choosing between these two books one can prefer one style over the other, but in terms of content both are equally lacking. □

Diplomacy by dual control

Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies, Volume I, 1867-1921, by C.P. Stacey, Macmillan, 410 pages, $19.95 cloth (ISBN 7705 1428 61.

By DONALD SWAINSON

THIS IS A timely book. It now is 38 years since G. P. de T. Glazebrook published his general history of Canada's external policy. During those years a great deal of specialist literature has been published. From the point of view of scholarship it is easy to defend C. P. Stacey's decision to present us with a new synthesis of thii secondary work. More important *is* the fact that the publication of *Canada and the Age of Conflict* coincides with our current national

crisis. We need to know more about our country, and foreign policy is most instructive. In it we can discover the visage of Canada, her interests, aspirations and national priorities.

A general history of Canadian external/ foreign policy is difficult to write. It is true that numerous studies have been produced during the lest generation. but that literature is mixed in quality end touches on only selected aspects of the problem. As a result Col. Stacey bed to complete a substantial quantity of primary research. This helps explain why he has opted to publish two volumes, instead of the one originally planned.

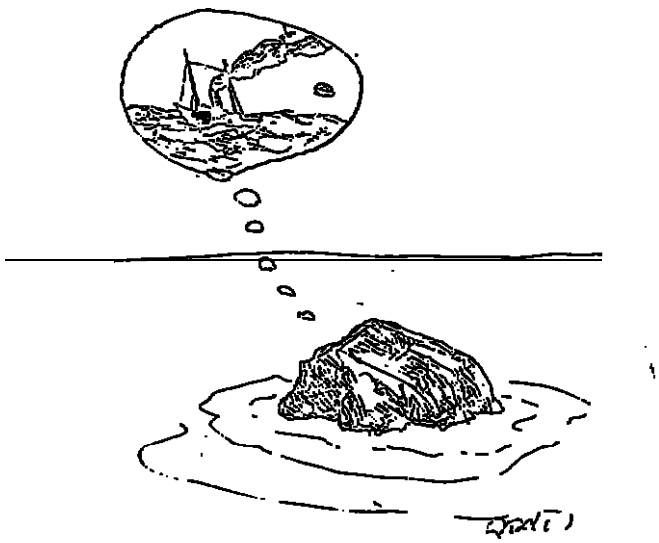
More important are conceptual difficulties, one of which is underscored in the book's subtitle. We in Canada have "external policies" not "foreign relations." We had a wide variety of dealings with Britain before we had autonomy: after autonomy we continued such relations but refused to label them "foreign." Our position within the Empire-Commonwealth makes it mandatory that our vaunted struggle for autonomy be a main theme in any general history of external policy. Another key difficulty in Canada is trade. Our fundamental dependence on external trade is reflected by the prominence given economic pub-lems in our external relations. Those problems in tom cannot really be understood without a solid grasp of the Canadian economy. The historian of foreign policy is foxed to become an economic analyst. Another major problem concerns our two main language groups. English- and French-speaking Canadians have at crucial times violently disagreed about external policy. This situation — our basic dualism — is an omnipresent theme in any good survey of our external relations.

An account of our foreign policy must feature the questions of autonomy, economic swivel. end dualism. Since it is necessary to survey a great deal of basic Canadian history a work on external policy can easily become a general history of Canada that incidentally features problems related to external relations.

Col. Stacey tells his story in a sensible manner. The Macdonald period receives brief but important attention. Macdonald's policies were embryonic, but during his years some basic Canadian positions emerged. We gained a substantial amount of autonomy during the Laurier years, which for external policy constituted a period of apprenticeship. The last 10 years of Col. Stacey's survey, dominated by Robert Borden, were crucial. We showed that we could fight a world war and, for all intents and purpuses, we became a sovereign state. These chronological chapters are well organized and are written in a clear and forceful style.

Col. Stacey's book is a success, but a flawed success. It is easily out best introduction to pre-Mackenzie King foreign policy. Much new research is included, and Stacey provides us with some truly fine commentary. His complete demolition of Borden's naval policy, for example, is superb. At the same time the great issues in external policy do not receive much in the way of fresh interpretation. We are given some excellent insights into the basic continuities in Canadian foreign policy. Fmm time to time the narrative seems to become too general and not sufficiently focused on the theme of foreign policy. Occasionally the military discussions become a b/t lengthy and technical. This might irritate some readers, but is hardly surprising given that Col. Stacey is our finest military historian.

Finally, what do we learn about our history when we use our external policies, their formulation and their effects as a minor of our society? We learn much, but one lesson is paramount. Duality is the central reality of Canadian history. Whenever that fact has been forgotten, suppressed or ignored, the result has been disastrous for Canada. A strong case can be made to support the argument that our crisis of the late 1970s was caused in major part by our refusal or inability to grasp the full significance of that duality. That is by no means Col. Stacey's main concern, but it comes through loud and clear. □



Where McLuhan got the message

Harold Adams Innis: Portrait of a Scholar, by Donald Creighton, U of T Press, 146 pages, $4.95 papa (ISBN 0 8020 6329 2).

By J. A. S. EVANS

HAROLD ADAMS INNIS was never a household name in Canada, but that is no matter, for few members of the Canadian academic establishment are. He belonged to a period when Canadians quite naturally went to the United States or Britain or anywhere to sit at the feet of the great men there, and sometimes found that the aforesaid great men were talking about outstanding men beck home. "You know Harold Innis, of course," I was told when I went from Toronto to do graduate work at Yale. Good Lord, no! I had done a dègree in classics at Victoria College.' I had never heard of the man!

The joke was on me, for Innis was one of the outstanding economic historians of his generation. In addition. he was a pioneer in the new field of communications, and if anyone wants to mine two of Innis' works written not long before he died, *The Bias of Communication* end *Empire and Communications*, he will find there a good many of the ideas that were later to be developed by Marshall McLuhan. Moreover, he was almost an archetvoal Canadian academic, of a variety now extinct for practical purposes. Born on a Southern Ontario farm, with English. Scots, and Pennsylvania Dutch bloodlines, he started his education in a one-room school, continued through high school at Woodstock, Ont., and finally ended up at McMaster University, which at that time was still situated on Bloor Street at the edge of the University of Toronto campus. housed in a great Victorian red-brick pile, and girt round with Baptist sanctity. From McMaster, Innis went to the University of Chicago, taking time off in between to fight in the First World War. get wounded. and survive. He returned to the University of Toronto where he eventually became chairman of the department of economics.

A quarter-century ago, he died, still relatively young es scholars go. Donald Creighton's biography appeared not long after Innis' death, and it is reprinted now, with a new preface but no other change. The Innis of Creighton's biography emerges as a man with a mind set rather like Creighton's own. and perhaps that is not mere coincidence. Before he died, Innis had recognized the close connection between communication end imperialism: a thesis that arose

from his study of the Canadian newsprint industry. The McCarthy era was in full flower in Innis' last years, and the senator from Wisconsin displayed an ability to manipulate mass communications that was frightening. To a close observer, it was cleat that future relations between Canada and the United States would be different fmm the past. and, Innis noted sadly, the Canadian government was doing nothing to prepare itself for tbc new state of affairs.

Like everything Creighton writes, this little biography reads well — better than anything. that Innis wrote himself. Innis lacked a good prose style. and he had none of the promotional skill of Marshall McLuhan. He made his reputation with solid works on the Canadian Pacific Railway, the fur trade and the fisheries. He demonstrated, among much else. how foolish is the old platitude of the geographical determinists that Canada exists in spite of geography because the natural lines of communication run north and south. Innis showed that in Canada, tbe lines of communication have always run naturally east-west, because that is the way the major rivers run, and the railways simply followed the route the voyageurs had used. But it is a gauge of how little impact Innis has made that the old platitude still flourishes. Tomorrow or the day after, I shall doubtless hear someone again telling me how North American lines of communication run north-south and what a geographical anomaly Canada is! □

Paragon of the pagodas

McClure: The China Years. by Munroe Scott. Canec, 409 pages, $14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919000 12 6).

By W. H. ROCKETT

THERE IS MORE Ignatius Loyola than Francis of Assisi in the character of Bob McClure, but more Errol Flynn than either of those worthy saints. Isherwood, who met McClure while on his Journey to *a War* in China. 1938, attributed to him "the energy of a whirlwind and the high spirits of a sixteen-year-old boy." I am told the effect of his personality is only this side shon of overwhelming, and this alone must present enormous difficulties to a biographer. one is concerned not only with freezing on paper a whirlwind, but also avoiding being caught up by it oneself.

I do not know if Munroe Scott has succeeded in slaying clear. *McClure: The China Years is a work* of admiration. if not awe. But McClure has managed a life of awesome proportions, and what he has done has always been admirable. Consequently, the tone of Scott's book is absolutely appropriate. I only wish it read better.

The problem is one of scale, a difficulty Scott himself acknowledges in the foreword:

> Thii book started out to be a full biography of Dr. Bob McClure from hi bktb in 1900 up to the present time. It gradually transformed itself into something that may seem to fall halfway between an adventure story and a history of China through the first half of the twentieth century.

Scott has wisely decided to deal with only McClure's first48 years, leaving McClure's years in the Gaza strip, India, Sarawak, Peru, St. Vincent. Africa, and as Moderator of the United Church of Canada to another book. Even so, 400 pages doesn't seem enough to encompass 48 years — if those years have been lived by someone like McClure.

McClure had his own mathematics of life: he wrote it as a formula, a = r + p. Simply, risk with purpose equals adventure. At a guess, there must be nearly 100 concrete examples of incident and anecdote with which the text establishes McClure's enthusiastic pursuit of excitement through necessary encounters with danger: he was one of the first to make use of the Burma Road; he mastered the art of demolition, detonating activated shells plucked by him from the pocked walls of Tengchung, the City Of Jade; he went on cycling trips through bandit country. But there was always purpose. supplies had to be moved

down the Burma Road. Too many children were turning up with missing limbs, lost playing with undetonated shells. Bandits had to be convinced to lel McClure visit the sick safely, us well us to make use of his hospital themselves.

11 takes both endpapers to map the China McClure knew better than must men of any race. It takes 400 pages to amass a respectable heap of events in the Chins life of McClure. But I simply do nut Feel I now understand any better the character and mind and heart of the man. Four hundred pages of Scott merely multiplies information of the CM found in the 14 pages of Isherwood and Auden. I think a great deal of the spirit of McClure is contained in an anecdote Found in Journey *to a War:*

> The American flag in his [White, an American Baptist missionary] garden had stuck half-way up the pole. McClure volunteered, of course, to shin up and get it down. McClure was in his clement here. When the centrifugal pump at the hospital went wrong, he knew why; when the gas-plant failed, he could put it right: when the engine was making the wrong kind of noise, McClure detected it at once. Dr. Brown. his friend since college days, provided a mock-admiring audience for all these feats of energy and skill.

This sort of glimpse of McClure abounds in Scott's Book. but in Isherwood it has the additional value. real or imagined, of eyewitness energy and authority.

And there. I believe, lies the solution to Scott's problem. This stuff has to be seen to be fully comprehended, let alone believed. I think a 13-part series of hour-long television episodes, with option to renew, might make a beginning. At the very least, it would be a highly marketable adventure series. More-&given careful carting. McClure might emerge through a visual medium as a real if over-sized human being.

Munroe Scott, essentially a film and television writer, would be more comfortable with his medium, and might therefore be more comfortable with as well as successful in, shaping hi material. He did wonders with Diefenbaker and Pearson on television, and Bob *McClure* is more interesting than 'either of those politicians. □

The chickadee in winter

Lusty **Winter,** by *Max* Braithwaite, McClelland&Stewart, 208 pages, $12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 1609 3).

BY WAYNE GRADY

LITERARY HISTORIANS will one day be asked. to their astonishment, to compare the careers of Stephen Leacock and Max Braithwaite. They will mumble about such parallels as rural childhood. urban migration followed by much yearning For rural childhood. schoolteaching and concomitant mental rot, early literary lapses, humourous reminiscences, popular lecturing, and ultimate oblivion. Both Leacock and Braithwaite wrote travel books, they will suggest hopefully, and Braithwaite won the Leacock Medal in 1972.

But it will be no good. Chip the paint off Braithwaite and no new Leacock shines through. Leacock wrote demonically, not mechanically. He was compelled to laugh, the historians will be bound to say. by a genius that was if nut tragic at least darkly comic. Compared to the contemptuous edge that runs thmugh a book as innocent us Leacock's *Montreal* ("The new age of expansion threw upon the city a larger need for public works and a greater opportunity for public theft"), the laboured inanities of Braithwaite's *Ontario* ("Toronto's growth is as natural as that of a healthy child with all the advantages in life") seem dangerously ingenuous.-

Ingenuous because Braithwaite gives the impression of a writer who likes to grab a problem by the shoulders and shake the stuffing out of it. Dangerous because at the cud of the shaking nothing has been resolvcd. In Fact, Braithwaite's style is one of vagueness and evasion. These lines. from the humoumus reminiscence fur which he is probably best known, *Why Shoot the Teacher* (1965), illustrate the technique:

> What is this ability [in a teacher] to keep discipline? Who knows. I do know one thing, though, and that is that the thought of kids getting out of hand is a nightmare to most teachers.

Overlooking the awkwardness. the clichés and the possible inaccuracy, the rhetorical device is disarmingly simple: the reader is casually introduced to a complicated question to show that the writer has a bold, enquiring mind; the writer then excuses himself from answering the question on grounds of its unanswerability, and hurries the reader on to a distant cousin of the question with inducements that are emutional and sentimental. The same device is used In *Lusty Winter:*

> Is love real? Or is just biological urges? Do people die for love? Care niore for the loved one than for themselves? Who knows? All I know is that I'd give anything to feel like that again.

The old awkwardness, the old clichés, and the old sentimental evasiveness. What is meant to seem honest and informative is actually a hasty retreat from omniscience.

The style is reflected in the plot. George Wilson. the protagonist, is a disillusioned schoolteacher who has retired to a cabin in Northern Ontario to ponder the meaning of life while "preparing the definitive photographic record of birds and animals thal live contiguous to man." Wilson, though older than the nameless youth in *Why Shoot the Teacher,* is nut a whit wiser: he still ponders imponderables, still promises the undeliverable. And he is still alone ("The worst of all human conditions, *loneliness,"* said the nameless youth who wasn't shut. "Loneliness," echoes Wilson 45 years later, "the must desperate and deadly of all human conditions"). Wilson, like the birds and animals, has been bred to live contiguous to man. Family and friends visit, neighbours drop in, romance follows hard upon: a tiresome catalogue of the many ways in which life keeps a man Fmm the great task of photographing chickadees upside down. Sex may be the city man's poetry, as MacLennan called it, but il is the rural man's bread and butter; there are times when Braithwaite seems personally cub cerned to prove that senior citizens can still experience the biological urges. Wilson goes north to grapple with the great mysteries. He ends up evading them.

But the book is too flawed to be convincing, even on the minor issues. In scene after scene Wilson jumps up in the morning, plants his hoary feet on the cold floor ("a living cold, a clean cold"), and liihts the

CORRECTION

THROUGH FAULTY communications, there were a numbs of errors in Eugene McNamara's review in our March issue of *Personal Fictions,* edited by Michael Ondaatje, and *Here and* Nos. edited by Clark Blaise and John Metcalf. In the first book, the story "Material" was written by Alice Munro, not Audrey Thomas. In the second book. the story "A Monday Dream at Alameda Park" was written by Audrey Thomas, not Leon Rooke. The correct title of the Metcalf story cited is "Gentle as Flowers Make the Stones." Our apologies to all concerned.

fire. Again and again the snowmobilers come and ruin "the nice, calm, peaceful, sweet-smelling day" until peace-loving Wilson bashes one of them on tbe head with an axe. And the amateurish way in which the logic of the last chapter defeats the structure established in the first chapter spoils the only real twist in an otherwise unrelieved chronicle.

Braithwaite is a spinner of yams, more interested in holding an audience than informing it. The state of psychosis produced by the conflicting demands of sex and solitude is a theme older than the Old Testament, and a novel in whiih a once-active man chafes in his self-imposed hermitage (like Tennyson's Ulysses) has obviously grander potential than Braithwaite is capable of developing. □

A paean to neon and other lights, dim and bright

Electric Art. by Michel Proulx, Oxford University Press, 57 pages, $5.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540279 0).

New Brunswick Images, text by John Porteous, translated into French by Paula J. 0. Read. Brunswick Press, 76 pages, $14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88790 094 1).

Photography for the Joy of It. by. Freeman Patterson, Van Nostrand Reinhold. 168 pages, $9.98 paper (ISBN 0 442 29883 8).

By ADRIENNE STEINBERGJONES

SOME BOOKS OF photographs require an illuminating text; others let the pictures stand alone. One of the latter is *Electric Art* by Michel Proulx. Thii book displays 57 varieties of the art of neon advertising signs culled from the photographer's travels around North America. What is unique here is Proulx' technique of removing all background from the pictures. so that the neon tubing stands out in all its gaseous glory on a field of glossy black. Aptly described by the photographer as "irresistible objects of 20th century folk art," the signs are pun kitsch, but show the inventiveness and economy of line that mark. good cartoons or effective advertising.

The photographs accomplish what Proulx set out to do; the pictures stimulated my vision so that while driving across downtown Toronto at 4 am. one recent morning, I noticed for the first time a gorgeously garish neon parrot in pink. blue. and green. perched atop a familiar restaurant.

This book does not provide profundity or variety of photographic technique. However, if you went a visually entertaining experience, it's a good buy.

New Brunswick Images. a collective effort. is one of those books that doesn't succeed either as a book of photographs or as a portrayal of its subject matter. Arranged according to the province's live basic regions. the photographs cover all the conventional sights: landscapes, local industries. people at work and play, historic buildings. and quaint villages. But the photographs. despite the prestigious talents that have contributed, lack vitality and point of view.

Fuzziness in some of the pictures, es well es murky colour, is probably caused by poor reproduction. The printing. however. can't be blamed for the trite visions and ordinary compositions, or for the lacklustre text provided by John Porteous. The combined effect is that of a hardback, glossy travel brochure.

At the other extreme. offering both imaginative treatment and powerful images, is *Photography for the Joy of It, text* and photographs by Freeman Patterson. Patterson's clarity of vision and superb technique make this a stunning book. The images are personal statements about his subjects, made luminous and arresting by the seeming simplicity of his compositions. HI photographs remind me a bit of Alex Colville's paintings. precisely constructed without apparent effort or extraneous detail. And the colours are exquisite-sharp and primary or muted end fragile.

While the photos could easily stand up alone, they are enhanced by a text as simple and articulate as is the photography. Patterson gives a brief but thorough description end evaluation of 35 mm photography equipment. Each picture is used to illustrate uses for the equipment, or to exhibit techniques of composition, lighting. camera angle, and so forth.

The writing is unpretentious and non-technical, yet conveys a wealth of sophisticated information. *Photography for the Joy of It is sheer* pleasure, the sort of book that makes you want to run out and become a photographer. □

The churner and the teacher

Cornelius Krieghoff: The Habitant Farm, by J. Russell Harper, National Museums of Canada, illustrated, 35 pages, 81.50 paper (ISBN 0 88884337 2).

Anne Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter, by Anne McDougall, Harvest House, illustrated, 215 pages, 819.95 cloth (ISBN 0 887 2 182 6).

By CHRISTOPHER HUME

ALTHOUGH THEY are in no way connected, the subjects of these two books provide some interesting comparisons, particularly in their reactions to the demands of necessity. Krieghoff, an extremely hard-working professional painter with a wife end child to support, churned out canvases. Anne Savage, who died in 1973. became a high-school art teacher and as a result remained a

minor figure in Canadian art. Dcspitc her lofty notions of painting. she remained basically an amateur throughout ha life. Were it not for her teaching career and 50-year friendship with A.Y. Jackson she would by now likely have been forgotten. Krieghoff. on the other hand. seems to have spent little time contemplating the roles of art and the artist — he was too busy painting. He was, in the best sense of the term, a commercial artist. Having discowed what the market wanted he set himself to fulfilling its demand. During his 56 years he produced hundreds of those anecdotal, almost gossipy. but highly saleable paintings for which he is so famous.. Author J. Russell Harper provides one revealing example: "Popular taste was so intrigued by the sauciness of 'The Tollgate' that Krieghoff painted more than 20 versions of it between 1856 and 1863." Certain other subjects appear nearly as often.

It is interesting to note that Krieghoff must surely deserve recognition as one of the world's most-forged painters. Even during his own lifetime he had the pleasure of being the first to spot a number of "newly acquired Krieghoffs" hanging on people's walls. These days the art of counterfeiting Kreighoffs Is almost a cottage industry in both Britain and Canada.

Harper's study is the ninth in the Masterpieces in the National Gallery of Canada series. It is short (35 pages) but substantial. Harper has managed to convey the essential elements of the man and his work; an altogether admirable. if slightly academic effort.

Annc Savage: The Story of a Canadian Painter is an entirely different matter. The author, Anne McDougall, is Savage's niece and her writing of this book was obviously a labour of love. McDougall says "Anne Savage's life is worth recording because she was not only part of a painting renaissance but also an inspired teacher who broke new ground in art education in this country." Both of these claims are true. However, the portrait that emerges is one of a woman who never fully developed ha very large talent. She was always too busy satisfying the demands of those around her. For 30 years she taught art at Baron Byng High School in Montreal. She retired in 1948 only lo be made supervisor of art for lhe Protestant school board in that city. During this time Anne Savage was unquestionably the best-loved and most highly respected art teacher in Canada (with the possible exception of Arthur Lismer). The 1968 exhibition of her work at Sir George Williams University was entirely organized by graduates of her classes. One of the most fascinating aspects to her story is her lifelong relationship with A. Y. Jackson. The pair maintained a lively correspondence, which is referred to throughout the book. The most intriguing letter is one written by Jackson in 1933. In it he proposes marriage:

> You are the dearest and sweetest soul I know and if you will be my wife I will try so much to make you happy. If you want me to help you as you say you do it seems the only way to do it. We can go on being friends for the rest of our liver as we would no doubt. Whether marriage would mean perfect happiness or not it is no use being afraid of life. . ..

They never did marry — each other or anyone else. He was, after all, 14 years older, a confirmed bachelor and a committed artist; she had her job teaching and family matters to attend to. What A. Y. lost in a wife — total dedication and endless compassion — became a high-school art department's gain. Anne Savage always gavc a lot; unfortunately shs also gave away ha opportunity to develop into a great painter. □

Tasty tidbits and junk food

Beyond the Sun (ISBN 88776 031 7) and If I came from Mars **(ISBN** 88776 032 **5), written** and **illustrated** by Jacques de **Roussan, Tundra Books,** each 23 pages and 52.95 cloth.

Toko (ISBN 88776 045 7) and Jingo **(ISBN** 88776 **044** 9). written **and illustrated** by **Ryokichi Ozawa, translated from the Japanese by Ebbilt Cutler, Tundra Books.** each 32 **pages** and $2.95 cloth.

Kids Like Us, by **Beverley Allinson** and **Barbara O'Kelly, photography** by David *Street. A set* of four titles of which **three are** reviewed **here:** Turkey **Pops (ISBN** 0 458 **92480 6), Shortstop (ISBN 0 458 92510 1),** and Small Talk **(ISBN** 0 458 92500 4). **Methuen,** each 32 **pages** and $3.25.

By PAUL MURRAY

wow THAT children's literature has become respectable the questions involved in buying your favourite kid a book have multiplied. Mother Goose is still mound, thank God, but she is hard to find amid the shapes and colours of a new generation of story writers and illustrators. The whole world of children's literature is as confusing as grocery shopping. There are as many fast books as there are fast *foods;* it takes careful sorting to get your money's worth. The variety offered by Tundra and Methuen typify the problems inherent in distinguishing between the quality and the calories.

Jacques de Roussan's *Beyond the Sun* presents no problem for any reader. This little masterpiece, which won the Canadian Library for Children award for best illustrated book, narrates the dream adventures of a small boy. He travels through an outer space presented as a breathtaking series of simple geometric shapes. The prose is informative but always straightforward so as not to detract fmm its complementary illustrations. One can't help but regret that de Roussan partially abandoned his geometric wizardry in the sequal, *If I came from Mars.* Once again we join Peter on his dream Right but now space is a little too familiar. It is cluttered with unimaginative planets and predictably six-sided stars. Fortunately de Roussan does not wander too far from the original format; the result is two books that are effortlessly instructive and enjoyable.

Jingo and *Toko strike* a *more* traditional. note. Jingo in a rather bungling feline, reminiscent of the much-too-famous TV coyote. devising intricate and hopeless schemes to enhance his diet with mice. His counterpart in the second Ozawa story. Toko, is a flower-loving barber. While dreaming of morning glories he accidentally curls his friend Gensan's moustache. This leads to immense complications unraveling themselves in a rather tired but happy conclusion. Ozawa is not experimentalist but he has a sense of delicacy both in his prose and the attendant water-colours. There is nnhing wasted but there is likewise nothing forced. It is possible to relax and respond to the experience of reading these books without being concerned about their cleverness.

By sorry contrast, the Methuen series, *Kids Like Us.* belongs to the fast-foods category of children's literature.. Don't let the flashy covers fool you; the insides arc pale grey. One story is repeated throughout the series. Each one of the three friends arrives at an imaginary 13th floor of the apartment building in which they live at a time when they are hampered by domestic duties. Here they fantasize on possible alternatives to babysitting and laundry. Innocent enough at the outset, this device quickly *degenerates into the banal* after two or three repetitions. Moreover the accompanying photography is not first-rate. Move on quickly, there are better choices to be savoured. □

Big trama in old Traunna

The **Revenge** of the **Methodist** Bicycle **Company: Sunday** Streetcars and **Municipal Reform** in Toronto, **1888-1897,** by Christopher Armstrong and H.V. **Nelles,** Peter **Martin** Associates. illustrated. 214 **pages,** $12.95 **cloth (ISBN** 0 8877 8 168 3).

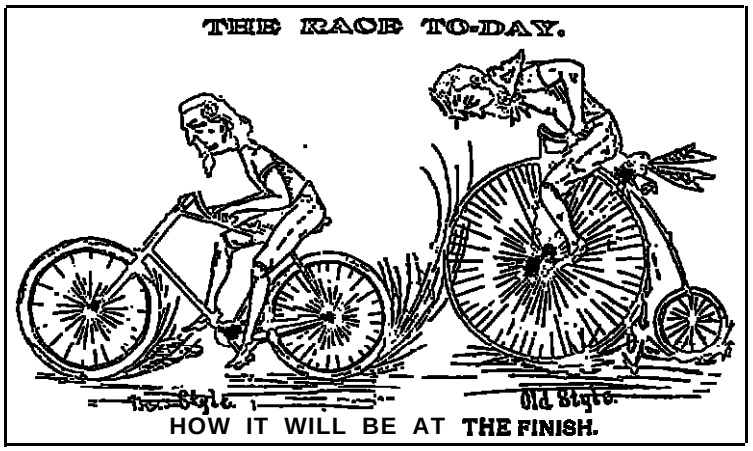
By ROGER HALL

HISTORIANS, it should be noted, **sometimes have** fun; occasionally they **even** have **fun** with **history.** And **that,** happily, Is the case **with** this tale of a tempestuous **teapot — Toronto** by any **other name —** in its (supposedly) gray **nineties.** The saintly image of Toronto the Good is attached in

this book and will remain forever *tarnished.* Boodle, bribery, and corruption are exposed as the real life-forces of the city in its high Victorian heyday, and the vehicle, if that is the term, for this startling revelation is the vicious fight that was waged over (gasp) Sunday streetcars.

Christopher Armstrong and H. V. Nelles stand firm in the ranks of sober-sided and serious scholars -when they want to. But they are also capable of high humour and a breezy, breathless comic style that brings cut all the absurd and hilarious nuances of a largely forgotten incident. Commencing in the late 1880s, the owners of Toronto's then-private street railway system decided they would help the poor working man get to church on Sunday, and after give him a chance for fresh air in parks or out of the city, by operating their cars. Profit, of course, didn't enter into their consideration; it was only generosity and good-heartedness that motivated them. Not so, shrieked the guardians of Tcmntc's Sunday sanctity; Sunday streetcars were clearly the work of a free-enterprise devil, bent on corrupting all that made Toronto good.

The fluctuating battle between these titanic forcer is chronicled through an examination of city administrations. Eventually, after a struggle of seemingly gigantic dimensions (if you read the Toronto papers), bii bucks won out and the cars ran on Sundays by authority of popular referendam. The victory was short-lived, however, for in. the background lurked a further menace — CCM bikes, product of a merger financed by the same Methodist zealots who had led the anti-Sunday car crusade.



Now this book can be taken at face value, as above, bat there is much more here and a good deal of it is fresh and carefully considered scholarship. Toronto's dull, dull Sundays, the authors reveal, were more than tke will of the populace; they were carefully orchestrated by middle-class Protestants as a way of controlling potentially dangerous elements in the society — that is. alias, immigrants. Catholics, and so cit. Clearly this little bock points the way to some useful re-thinking of the whole progressive impulse in turn-of-the-century Canada.

But getting there is still more than half the fun, and Armstrong and Nelles have two capable collaborators — J. W. Bengough's splendid cartoons fmm *Grip,* which am used throughout the bock, and Tcmntc's contemporary newspapers, which reported every gay and grievous detail. In an age of hyperbole, Toronto could make certain claims through its press to have been a leader. A French-Canadian politician once claimed he spent a week in Toronto one Sunday; if he had used his time wisely he just might have gone tc heaven in a Yonge Street car. □

Wilson's scrappy voice, Macon Dead's black past, and Bowen's fine monument

Letters on Literature and Politics, 1912-1972. by Edmund Wilson. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 768 pages, $22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 374185 08 5). Edmund Wilson was a fighter. Throughout his career, and cot only during his radical phase as a Communist sympathizer in the 1930s, he took a sharply critical view of American culture sod society. He saw the serious writer not merely confronting the corruptions of commercial society-that was an old story. Other temptations, both gross and subtle. had a way of sneaking up. IF you wanted to be a serious writer, you had to fight every inch of the way: fight against the lures of the world. against vulgar against, academic aridity, against élite snobbism. and perhaps most of all, fight against your own weariness and weakness. As Daniel Aaron notes in his introduction, Wilson "considered wiling a discipline as well as a profession. It had its code, its own responsibilities and obligations, which often into conflict with tbe values of the commercial world. To stick to that code took and

writer ght

engtth heroism."

The unnumbered letters (roughly 2.000 of them) and edited Fragments of letters collected here by Elena Wilson arc almost entirely devoted to literary matters. Love letters and Family correspondence were excluded. For 60 years Wilson practised his positive Faith as a man of letters, with seemingly only occasional dark nights of tbc soul, including a "sort of nervous breakdown" in 1929. He read voraciously but (we now find) there were surprising gaps. In 1966, he told one correspondent: "In regard to the question you raise in connection with Sons *and Lovers, I can't* contribute an opinion because I've never read the book. I've always been meaning to read Lawrence's novels -other than *Lady C,* but have never got around to it. I met him once and thought him ill-bred and hysterical, and his writing mostly affects me in tbe same way." On another occasion he remarks "I never could read Hazlitt...." He seems never to have read Hermann Broch *(The Sleepwakers, The Death of Viroil)* whom George Steiner has called "the greatest novelist European literature has produced since Joyce," and the letters contain no references to Gunter Grass, Heinrich Boll, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Italo Calvinó, B.F. Benson. among others who one would expect a critic of Wilson's stature to have some acquaintance with if not a thorough knowledge.

In addition to black holes there were blind spots. In 1964, he wrote to Barbara Epstein of *The New York Review of Books* saying: *"The* Nabokov Pushkin has come . . it is Full of flat writing, outlandish words, and awkward phrases. And some of the *things* he says about the Russian language are inaccurate." Wilson's intemperate attack (for Russian was not *his* native language) on Nabokov's Four-volume translation of *Eugene Onegin,* which later appeared in tbe *Review. was a* classic example of how his reach often exceeded his grasp. Wilson never recognized Nabokov's mastery of language or his importance as a writer. Hc thought *Lolita* an insignificant book. Wilson's study of Canadian literature, 0 *Canada* (1965), similarly purported to be more knowledgeable about the subject than he truly was. His claims on behalf of Hugh MacLennan, Morley Callaghan, and Marie-Claire Blais undoubtedly helped their careers, but there were vast blank areas in his education concerning our literature, which he showed no signs of correcting after the book's publication. In 1967, he wrote to Rupert Hart-Davis in London, saying, 0 *Canada* "was not always well received in English Canada. There is too much about the French in it. The accepted idea up there — quite wrong — is that the poetry of English Canada is excellent and better than their fiction. and it irritated them to be told that the best Canadian poet was French. *Most* of them had never heard of him [Emile Nelligan]."

The best sections of Wilson's letters deal with his years of discovery during the literary Ferment of the 1920s — reading Joyce, Pound. Eliot, Fitzgerald -and his work in helping to acquaint general readers with the values of modernist fiction. When he was young and the world seemed young. and social change still seemed possible — *with* modem writing being one of the advance flags — there were few critics who wrote better, more plainly and persuasively than Edmund Wilson. The letters do not add to his stature but they give us Wilson's scrappy young voice, adventuresome and joyfully alive.

— JOHN HOFSESS

* * *

Song of Solomon, by Toni Morrison. Random House, 337 pages, $10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 394 49784 8). Thoughts about what this novel might have been. had its exceptionally talented author not shifted styles so frequently, are hard For the reader to resist. Parts of the book (especially the entire first chapter) are bravura displays of imagery and wit and precise language so beautiful that one can only wonder why Toni Morrison often adopts a much weaker, more diffuse and conventional method.

She tells the story of a black man's discovery of his past. Macon Dead, nicknamed Milkman, lives affluently in the northern United States, indifferent to his past although only one generation separates him Fmm the time of his grandfather's slavery in Virginia. Unlike his close friend

Guitar. whose deep hatred for whites manifests itself in a determination to requite acts of violence perpetrated against blacks, Milkman is an unwilling student of a past that is continually used by his parents to justify their own conjugal hostilities. But Milkman's indifference gradually turns into an obsession. and he journeys south to discover a past that. at its farthest reaches, merges with legend.

Names are one of Morrison's main preoccupations. and she does marvellous things with them. Macon Dead, a name that is a family inheritance and has been owned by three men in as many generations, was originally a slip of the pen, scrawled by mistake on a piece of paper by a drunken Yankee in the Union Army and handed to Milkman's grandfather. Milkman has an aunt who was named when her father's finger, travelling over a page of the Bible, landed on Pilate purely by chance. A considerably eccentric woman, Pilate keeps the scrap of paper on which her illiterate father traced her name folded inside a box hanging from her ear. There are a host of other names with stories behind them, and some whose sound alone makes them evocative: Reba, Hagar, Circe, Empire State, Corinthians, Sugarman, Magdalene.

Song of Solomon is a rich and satisfying novel (the third by its American author) and is justly acclaimed south of the border.

— MICHAEL FUHRMAN

* * *

Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer, by Victoria Glendinning, McGraw-Hill Ryerson". 331 pages, 913.95 cloth (ISBN 0 297 77369 01. So much died with Elizabeth Bowen when she succumbed tc lung cancer in 1973. Born in Dublin in the dog days of tbe 19th century, the only child of a prominent Anglo-Irish family, she was herself childless, the last of the ancient Bowen lice. Even before she died Bowen's Court. her ancestral home. disappeared, victim of a developer's rapacious hammer. More important, Elizabeth Bowen marked tbe end of tbe Anglo-Irish literary tradition for during her lifetime tbe 26 counties seceded from Britain; no significant writer after her would embody so naturally the peculiar English and Irish alchemy.

Bowen's monument is her body of work: nearly 30 volumes comprising short stories, novels, history, criticism, and travelogue, besides countless articles and essays. As well she is, as Victoria Glendinning points cut in her loving and finely crafted biography, "what happened after Bloomsbury," the "link that connects Virginia Woolf with Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark."

In her fiction Bowen wrote most often about women --sensitive women, their relationships and feelings — a preoccupation that has led to her inclusion in Jane Rule's study of lesbianism in literature, *Lesbian Images*. But while Bowen was fascinated by women, she was a confirmed heterosexual — as readers of Canadian diplomat Charles Ritchie's diaries will attest. Bowen, who was complacently married for 30 years tc the stalwart, if dreary; Alan Cameron, bad an abiding dislike for what shetcld Charles Ritchie was the specifically middle-class complaint of guilt and during her lifetime enjoyed several passionate and loving friendships, affairs her husband numbly tolerated. She was a woman of enormous talent and magnetism, qualities that Victoria Glendinning fully exploits in tbis fascinating and literate biography.

— SANDRA MARTIN

the browser

How the media reaches the masses. from Dismal Cove to Flin Flon

FOR SOME TIME now we've lacked a book on the Canadian mass media that could serve as an introduction for the general reader or as a text for students taking college courses. John Irving's *Mass Media in Canada* (1962) is terribly out of date and Wilfred Kesterton's A *History of Journalism in Canada* (1967) is both too specialized and too boring. Two new books do their bit to fill the need — The Tangled Net: Basic Issues in Canadian Communications by Patricia Hindley, Gail M. Martin, and Jean NcNulty 1183 pages, J. J. Douglas, $12.95) and The Making of the Canadian Media by Paul Rutherford (141 pages. McGraw-Hill Ryerson. $12.95). *The* Tangled *Net* offers a frankly regional (British Columbian) perspective on Canadian communications. The bock argues that our present highly central Canadianized communications systems may be helping tc destroy rather than to unify the country. Its polemicism aside, The *Tangled Net* offers a good overview of the Canadian mars media fmm book publishing tc satellites. *The Making of the Canadian Media offers* a brief readable history of the media with particular emphasis on print journalism. Rutherford thinks we spend too much time worrying about the media 'and too little enjoying them. Tbe two books complement one another extremely well.

* * *

AS I'VE travelled across Canada over the past few years, I've picked up here and there dictionaries of provincial and local place names. One excellent free booklet pot out by tbe Quebec government, for example. was a guide to the names of all the small towns along the St. Lawrence. When I tried to find a guide for all of Canada. 1 learned that the only national dictionary of place names — Armstrong's *The Origin and Meaning of Place Names in Canada -had* been published almost half a century earlier and was hopelessly cut of date. Now, happily, we have The Macmillan Book of Canadian Place Names by William B. Hamilton (340 pages, $20). Although tbc book includes only 2,500 place names, all the ones I've wanted to know about seem tc be there. There's the Ha .Ha River in Quebec, for instance. It derives its name from the fact that "the French on first going up the Saguenay mistook the bay for a continuation of tbc river and on coming to the end of it said. Ha! Ha!" There's Malignant Cove, N.S. (home of occasional BiC contributor Mavis Volpe). The H.M.S. *Malignant* was wrecked there. There's Dildc, Nfld., whose name, we're told, is "of obscure derivation." Then there's Flin Flon, Man., which takes its name from the character Josiah Flintabbatey Flonatin in the novel A *Sunless City*. Apparently a copy of the novel was found on tbe site in 1913 by a prospector.

* * *

I COULDN'T put down Arthur Johnson's Margaret Trudeau (210 pages, Paper-Jacks, $1.95). I don't know whether it's the latent voyeur in me or what but I found it fascinating -like reading a case history in Wilhelm Stekel's studies on sadism and masochism. Johnson's sensationalism aside, one has a sense. as one reads the story. of a woman who structures situation after situation so she can't help being hurt by the results. There's something pathetically out-of-synch about her.

* * *

SOME MONTHS ago I criticized U of T Press for publishing an atrocious piece of Shakespearean scholarshit called *Mousetrap: Structure and Meaning in* Hamlet. A new U of T Press book, Role-Playing in Shakespeare by Thomas F. Van Laan (267 pages. 517.50). is as good an example of what scholarly publishing can and should be as the earlier one was bad. Renaissance writers inherited from the Middle Ages the notion that "all the world's a stage" and histrionic metaphors are to be found throughout Renaissance literature.. That's particularly true of Shakespeare. Van Laan's book traces the mle of the role-playing metaphor in Shakespeare's plays.

* * *

IVAN AVAKUMOVIC's Socialism in Canada: A Study of the CCF-NDP in Federal and Provincial Politics (316 pages, M&S, $6.95) offers a comprehensive but plodding overview of the development of democratic socialism in Canada. Avakumovik, who teaches history at UBC, is at his best when

piecing together the story, at his worst when it comes to generalizing about it. His final chapter, for example. on the future of Canadian socialism is so full of empty platitudes — "Today the NDP is very much part of the Canadian scene" — as to make me yawn. Avakumovic's gratitude to sources (T. C. Douglas. Stanley Knowles. David Lewis, Ed Broadbent, *et al.*) seems to have rendered him over-polite. □

sentimental journeys

by Jim Christy

A lament for the writers who never travel beyond conferences and cottages

AS A YOUNG MAN I never dreamed tremendous feats of attainment. I never wanted N be President and certainly not Prime Minister or even the driving force of my neighbourhood action committee. I did consider for a time being John Garfield until I realized I would have to join a union. My reveries always had me going places. forever disembarking from a steamer in exotic ports, dressed in white linen suit, conk topped by a new Panama. exploring the docks and sniffing the air for adventure and the aroma of spices. Soon after I began having these dreams I began chasing them down. But most often I was alighting not from a quaint steamer but from a boxcar onto the soot-packed yard of an industrial no man's land striated by train hacks or from a Trailways into tbe plastic-seat bus-station gloom of America.

Very romantic.

My first plane trip was the day I moved to Canada. Since then I have called on various ports. some of them exotic. But I have still to disembark in white linen suit and Panama hat. although I was wearing a greasy fedora like Humphrey Bogart's in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* when a bend in the river Amazonas revealed the town of Benjamin Constant, Brazil -shanties leading N the top of a hill where the Church and the Whorehouse vied for prominence. I still dream the same dreams and I don't take adequate measures to hide this fact. Obviously. Not that I should — except I leave myself open for questions and unwanted comments about my life and the manner in which it is lived.

The point is travelling. Why I lii to do it and why. it seems. others of my generation — writers, that is -don't. And what that means.

"Aren't you tired of all that travelling back and forth?"

"Haven't you, by now. collected *enough* raw material?"

"What ate you trying to prove.?"

Questions such as these are usually followed by a suck on the pipe stem, a deep look, and an expression that means "I can tell *him.*"

A year or so ago I was described in *Saturday Night* magazine as being a "flaneur" and two friends called to offer condolences. I assured them I felt none was in order and the author, Sandra Martin, assured me she had meant tbe first Larousse definition, "inveterate observer," and not tbe third, which means "idler." Then it occurred to me maybe they thought ceaseless observing was synonymous with frittering away time.

I travel because I am a flaneur and not to collect those experiences. I firmly believe that by tending my own garden. or at least staying in the neighbourhood, I will collect enough experience N satisfy any big liver and it is not the recording of experience that makes good reading but rather the transmutation.

After many years I decided it might not be so presumptuous of me to attempt putting words on paper. The last excuse for not having done so concerned radical politics, for I believed the world was going to hell in a hand cart and it was sheet folly and frivolity, in the face of *everything*. for me to write anything but polemic. I told myself Jack London would have behaved the same way. God, I *was* naive. Of course, if I never found myself in a position to build a million-dollar estate in Marin County, neither have I had to buy plot outlines from someone like Sinclair Lewis whose life Blaise Cendrars saved in Rome when he found him drowning in a hotel bathtub, thus enabling the redhead *N* continue on to Stockholm and collect his Nobel Prize.

So, it occurred to me I might put words on paper and be a poet of the coming and tbc going. It was all I knew. Like old one-armed Blaise. I declared:

> ***I know all*** the ***timetables***
> ***all the trains and their connections***
> ***The*** *rime* ***they*** *arrive* ***the*** *time* ***they leave***
> ***all the liners all the fares all the taxes***
> ***It's all the same to*** *me*
> ***Live*** *by* ***grafting.***

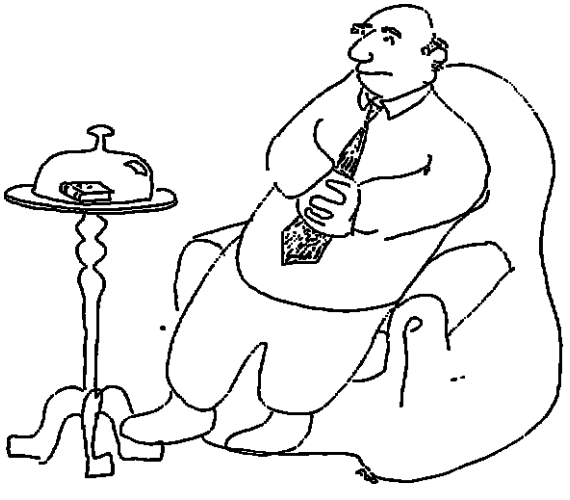
That interested me for approximately two days, during which time I believed the coming and the going meant something in itself. Then I smartened up, although I'll stand by the last line. Later. I also realized I was born out of the proper time. It is not tbe 1920s; the tramp steamers are charter jets filled with computer programmers (God bless them). The globe-trotting reporters don't tote a roll of Thos. Cook and Sons tickets tied with rubber bands. The credit card takes care of everything. Richard Harding Davis is reincarnated as a *Time stringer* in a leisure suit asking directions to the Dakar McDonald's. The Hilton's are all the same and I travel precisely because the Hiltons are all the same and around them are carried on valiant little struggles to maintain cultures intact and in spite of. A thumbing of the nose at tbe homogenized cancer. On the other hand. a little kid in tbe casbah in Tetuan bragged N me, "Last week, I see Mick Jagger."

I ceased being a romantic long ago. That is not why I travel.

If I was to go to the South Seas tomorrow, I would probably meet someone waiting for the charter flight back *N* Etobicoke who

men and their libraries: 1

by Foo



insisted on showing me seven days' worth of Polaroids. That's all right. The world is very small. Everyone has been to Tangier. Canadian writers excepted.

So I am criticized for travelling because it is supposed I am wasting my time collecting experiences to relate. What dullards. How obtuse. Do they thiik I would bore myself by relating them directly? What could be more boring to read than a direct account of a common mm's experiences the way they really happened? Now, if I was Winston Churchill. William Burroughs' *Junkie* was originally rejected with the note that had the experiences related happened to Winston Churchill, well.. . .

Which is not to say one should lie. It is not necessary. All things have their place. It is impossible to fabricate. One discovers the journey inward.

"To live is to see and traveling sometimes speeds up the process" wrote Edward Hoagland in the New York *Times. lie went on to lament* that the writers of his generation in his country were stay-at-homes. His generation? what of mine, the next one, in this country? It astounds me that I don't know any Canadian writers under 35 who have been anywhere except on a Canada Council holiday to Greece or on tbe VIA to Ottawa. Should you take any other kind of trip you will be compared to various dead beatniks. Perhaps the Canadian writers of my generation have other ways to speed up the process. If so. I haven't seen the evidence. Perhaps a nationalist will argue . that we have quite enough in our own country to explore, to discover, as we discover ourselves. Partially true, no doubt, only no one goes there. This is a generation of writers who have never travelled anywhere beyond conferences and cottages.

Ironically, it is Hoagland, a New Yorker, who has written the definitive book about the British Columbia wilds. *Notes Fmm the Century Before.*

If someone would like to send me to Africa on assignment I am prepared to sally forth immediately. Or New Guinea. Wherever. This is only secondarily an advertisement for myself. It is primarily because 1 believe wholeheartedly that to live is to see and I wish to keep on living.

Anyway, I repeat: it is to see that I travel and not for any other reason including a concern for my manhood, which-has also been intimated. As if one travelled to prove oneself. But, perhaps the males of my generation are enervated from fighting the sex wars. Perhaps the times have left them in a malaise so all-engulfing that they wouldn't know where to go if they could get unstuck. Perhaps it *is* a question of manhood. or womanhood. in the sense of being unconcerned and unconfused about one's "role" and the need to affirm it. That writers don't travel, that their gaze never even reaches the horizon let alone tries to penetrate the realms beyond, is a loss for us as much as for them because such limited vision does not translate well onto the printed page. □

Letters to the Editor

COLONIALISM AT CALGARY

Sir:

Your editorial note (February) on the "100 major Canadian novels" game at the University of Calgary conference was justly derisive. I have now seen the final listing and, while there's no point In quarrelling *with* its depressing predictability (*The Stone Angel*, that contrived "symbolic" work. first, and the shapeless, self-indulgent *The Diviners* high), *I* must ok when will CanLit be truly Canadian? What are two novels by Malcolm Lowry, an English novelist who never even in so passing as sense as Brian Moore became Canadian, doing there? And. even granting his presence, how could any discerning group of critics and writers not give Under *the Volcano* first place? I only hope that many did not select his works at all, recognizing that he is not a Canadian writer, whatever his sense of spiritual affinity with a corner of Western Canada: by a similar token the Italians might claim Lawrence or Joyce. the French Henry Miller, and so on. The origin of this anomaly, of course, lies in the felt weakness of Canadian fiction back in the 1940s and 1950s, when Lowry was recruited to give backbone and style. That's no longer necessary, a cultural

"colonial" throwback, but when will this be generally recognized?

Another point is more personal: the absence from as many as 100 titles of David Adams Richards's Blood *Ties*, a remarkably vital. poetic novel set in the Miramichi area of New Brunswick, surely reflects the provincial limitations of many of tbe delegates' awareness of Canadian fiction?

Michael Thorpe
Department of English
Mount Allison University
Sackville, N.B.

DISAGREEING ON ROY

Sir:

Re: "Keeping tract of the Quebec Novel" (February).

One would like to tbii that book reviewers will write well and knowledgeably about a work in question. It seems to me that your reviewer of my book. *Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel*, is somewhat wanting in regard to these two qualities. More seriously, though, she has misquoted my book, which she accuses of a certain bias. in order to reinforce MC of her own. While discussing the deletion of some radical statements by the character Alphonse In the definitive edition of Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion*, I made the point that even witb these statements present the author "stops short of explicitly proposing a socialist *solution*" (p. 83). This sentence has been transformed by Joan Hind-Smith thus: "Gabrielle Roy stops short of explicitly proposing a socialist *revolution*." She prefaces this "quote" with the remark that I have stated the above "a little wistfully." Anyone familiar with Gabrielle Roy's writing would not be so naïve as to write anything as ludicrous as the transformed quote. with or without wistfulness. Your reviewer, too, has distorted my comments on another Roy novel, *Alexandre Chenevert*. While insisting most questionably that there is only one level of alienation in that work — "in the sense that was understood by Camus" -she claims very simplistically that the book's hero "has no compassion whatever for his wife, his neighbours, his co-workers, his unhappy daughter. . . ." Clearly, in a book on social realism. my emphasis was on those aspects of Chenevert's alienation most closely related to hi economic and social status. I did, however, note other "important symbolic and universal dimensions" in Roy's book: "These latter elements ate accentuated by a number of philosophical themes in the novel which delve into the human condition in an asocial and atemporal manner. . . Examples are the treatment Of the themes Of happiness, Of the absurd, Of the nature of God. eternity and salvation. and the Ill." (pp. 199-200).

B. Z. Shek
Department Of French
University of Toronto

Joan Hind-Smith replier: I apologize to Mr. Shek for the slip of the typewriter that transformed his "socialist solution" to "socialist revolution." However, it seems to me that this doer not greatly, if at all, change the meaning of his sentence. When be suggests a socialist solution to the problems revealed in *Bonheur d'occasion*, he is also speaking of a socialist *revolution*. The environment in the novel is capitalist: a socialist solution would be a revolution.

My point about *Alexandre Chenevert* was that a socialist reading of this novel tends to reduce the complexity of Alexandre's character to tbc extent of distorting it. I had occasion to discus Alexandre with Gabrielle Ray while I was preparing thy study of her and it was she who pointed out that while Alexandre had great sympathy for far away sufferings, he did not have equal compassion for those close to him. Thi may seem a simplistic interpretation to Mt. Shek, but it is Gabrielle Roy's.

CARPING ABOUT CARRIER

Sir:

In Jean-Guy Carrier's review of *Out-Posts/Avant-Postes* (January) there are many mistakes. He begins by stating that the book contains interviews, samples of the poets' work, and bibliographies; yet to Carrier the book is "puzzling" because it attempts too much. Then, without knowing tbe procedure we followed, he asserts that tbc interviews "fall in line with the current notion that placing a microphone in front of a talking mouth is enough to produce a book." In fact, the interviews were revised, often as many as three times.

Carrier is fond of the quote out of context. He forces George Bowering's single comment on Earle Birney's alphabeings to represent all Bowering's feelings on visual poetry. He plucks bp nichol's remark on the small audience for his critical TRG Reports and makes it refer equally to nichol's poetry.

Lastly, Carrier notes that there are French and English interviews, and that this limits the book's appeal. But he adds that the poets' "similar and respective concerns about the use of language" are not explored and compared. Any reading of the introductions and the interviews would demonstrate that language — both French and English — is the key to the entire book.

Jack David
York University
Toronto

DEFENDING THE WASP

s i

A long time ago I thought that *Books in* Canada was an objective reviewing magazine that do cided that Canadians need to know about books being published in Canada. After reading the March issue, it seems to me that it's a magazine that tells people that any vestige of that horrid nationalism is so terribly unfair and unfashionable that even to think about it (let alone write about it) is enough to ruin a reputation forever.

And then there is Irving Layton. Isn't it wonderful, he says. that the Jewish miter in Canada has been allowed to escape tbc stagnation of French culture and the sterility of the English.

As a Jewish Canadian, I simply do not agree. Writers such as Adele Wiseman, AIM. Klein, Eli Mandel, Miriam Waddington and Leonard Cohen have made a tremendous contribution to international writing by Jewish people as they have to Canadian writing. Their contribution, internationally, is that they have written excellently from a Jewish-Canadian perspective; that is. a sensibility and perspective largely created by two so-called stagnant and sterile cultures. It hardly seems that Klein's *The Rocking Chair* and Adele Wiseman's *Sacrifice* or *Crackpot* are reflections of stagnant or sterile cultures. It is. I suggest. a coming to terms with the experience of being Jewish in Canada that makes their writing sparkle. The meeting of Jewish, French, and English culture in Canada has been eclectic, and that speaks for tbe validity of all three. not just one.

Layton's crack about ethnic writers being tbe only pod writers in Canada is nonsense. As a major figure in our literature, one would expect that Layton could possibly play an important role in the life of literature and letters in the country. That he could help to make the flower grow, or, in fact, to ensure that there Is such a thing as Canadian literature in 50 years. But no, for some strange reason he, along with all the others, believes it is his duty to say that Wasp nationalism is "in essence, a cowardly flight from reality."

I would ask Layton what reality is? Is it an integrated North America where a Canadian's attempt to protect the integrity of his or her country, be be or she Jewish or Italian or Hungarian, is considered fantasy?

Why is It, Mr. Layton, that an Israeli's attempt to fight for the integrity of his home is heroic, and a Canadian's attempt. because he does not carry a gun, is a flight from reality?

Joyce Wayne
Toronto

A SURVIVOR PROTESTS

sii

Mark Witten's article (February) did a good job in a small space of making sense of some aspects of the complex happenings in Canadian publishing for the last decade.

However, I find his "twice-bunted" reference to Dave Godfrey exceedingly unfortunate, since it clearly implies that not only did New Press go up the flue, but Anansi as well. (And is our maple leaf in the illustration, pointing as it does to New Press, another subtle indication of the same?)

If Mr. Witten does not know belter, then the editors. who presumably read the reviews of our titles in their own pages, should have deleted it.

Anansi was one of the starters of the publishing revolution. Mom Important. we are one of the survivors.

Ann Wall
President, House of Anansi
Toronto

Editor's note: Ms. Wall has misconstrued the context of Mr. Witten's reference. It does *not* "clearly imply" that Anansi has gone up the flue. It merely implies that Dave Godfrey now prefers one-man publishing ventures to partnerships or co-operatives. Anansi, during Godfrey's days there, was far from being a one-man venture.

MOSCOW'S BIG BACKYARD

Sir:

I Iii reading letters to the editor: I always learn something. For instance, in your January issue I learned from I. M. Gwen that Robert Fulford, decent and honourable man as he is, blundered into some nasty bit of quicksand, logically speaking. Mr. Fulford, it seems, got stuck in the following syllogism: tyrants are evil; wanting to conquer the world is evil; therefore the tyrants of Moscow ate bent on conquering the world.

Clear-headed Mr. Owen, Of course, sees no evidence of that. On the contrary, he feels that the rulers of the U.S.S.R. or indeed tbe Czars who preceded them, were veritable isolationists. Unlike the Americans, says Mr. Owen, "they have never committed troops in a distant theatre of war."

Well, gee, Mr. Owen, 1 always thought "troops" were those husky fellows in field-gray prancing about tanks. warships, and fighter planes. And wherever tbcy were shooting or threatening to shoot at other people — me, for

instance — well, I thought that was a "theatre of w r." Now "distant" is a different story because the U.S.S.R. has become such a big country, especially in the last 40 years or so. that nothing is really that distant from it. Maybe that's what isolationism does for you. For instance, if you start out by committing troops just across your own backyard in Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bessarabia in 1939.41. by the time you get to commit your troops in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), or Czechoslovakia (1968), shy. that will be across your own backyard as well. But. come to think of it. even Canada's North would be across the Russian's own backyard, wouldn't it? Or India. Or China. And talking of China, didn't the papers report the odd bit of trouble somewhere in those parts? I don't mean the reactionary *Time* magazine or the bourgeois Kitchener-Waterloo *Record*, but the impeccably progressive Peking press. *They* said those Russians are up to no good.

Then there were all those warships with missiles in 1962, making for Cuba. Now surely that wasn't nice, what with Cuba being kind of distant, too. And Egypt was kind of distant, end Ghana. People kept seeing Russians in the Sudan, as well, until they were asked to leave. Then they turned up in Somalia (maybe that's where Mr. Fulford saw them) but now they aren't there any- they're in Ethiopia, shooting back at Somalia. Not in full force, of cause, just in sufficient numbers to keep the Cubans and East Germans from feeling lonely.

But I still think Mr. Fulford is in a bit of a spot when clever Mr. Own challenges him to show just where did the Russians ever say they wanted to *conquer* the world. I don't know how Mr. Fulford will wiggle out of this one. A good thing Mr. Owen didn't challenge him to show where tbe Nazis wet said they wanted to *murder* the Jews because be couldn't answer that, either. Everybody knows the Nazis simply wanted a Final Solution, just es the Russians only want to Liberate the Oppressed Masses. *Vide, to* borrow a leaf from Mr. Owen's book of erudition, any o f Pravda, *passim*.

George Jonas
Toronto

s i surprised t h a t bothered print the letter fmm Eugene Benson (January). Mr. Smith had already suggested, rather too kindly I thought, that material written by Benson was not worth reading. Now Benson comes along in person to prove the point beyond any doubt.

Reviving "rare and obsolete" words does not equate with "using language exactly and with precision." Considering the language Benson uses in his letter, I would prefer that all such. authors should become rare and obsolete.

Murray Charters
Department of Music
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Nfld.

CanWit No. 32

DESPITE THE GREAT strides CanLit has made in recent years, our authors are still not es close to the common people as they might be. To be truly popular, they should have nicknames. We're thinking along the lines of Irving "Lovable" Layton, John Robert "Collectable" Colombo, and Al "Pedigree" Portly. We'll pay $25 for the best set of CanLit nicknames we receive by May 1, and $25 goes to Michael 0. Nowlan of Oromocto, N.B., for this idea. Address: CanWit No. 32. Books *in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4.

EUGENE BENSON

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 30

OUR APPEAL FOR slang words or phrases that are distinctly Canadian yielded a poor numerical response. Perhaps it's the old problem of being midway between an Anglo-American slanging match. However, we were impressed by rho case made by Mrs. Clare McAllister of Victoria, B.C., for the verb "to 'rangitang," as in: "He was just 'rangitanging it 'round town." Mrs. McAllister notes that this verb. which is used extensively in West Coast pubs and deserves wider currency, received semi-' official sanction from the British Columbia bench in 1969. At that time a provincial judge, hearing a case against an MLA on a charge of drunkenness, opined that "there is no evidence that this was a wild 'rangitang affair." Mrs. McAllister, who advocates more "Westalk" in our language and worries that Eastern oars may not have detected that "orangoutang" is the derivation, receives $25 for her *outré* entry.

Helen G. Buckler of Wolfville, N.S., must be given honourable mention for her

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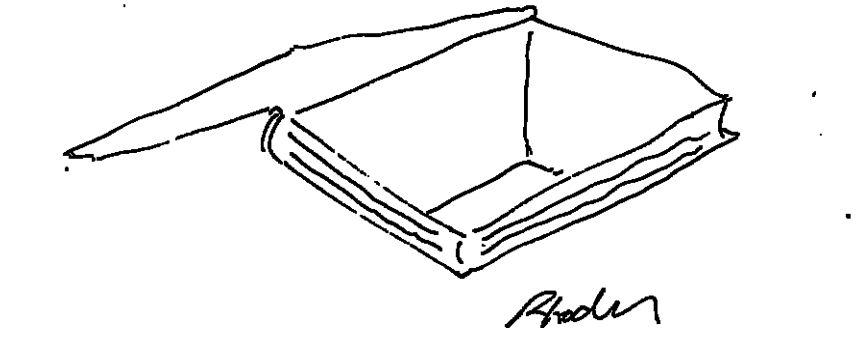
inventiveness. She points out that in the Maritimes the suffix "less" is frequently applied to create such slang terms as "footless" for a clumsy person and "doless" for a lazy one. Therefore, she argues. why not "clockless" for the unpunctual. "wow-less" for human beings who fail to excite immediate responses fmm the opposite sex. "up-less" for persons who sleep in, "you-less" for egotists, and "domeless" for those of us who run the risk of being in bad odour?

The,, there were the crude entries. The only one that intrigued us came from Patrick Elos of Halifax. who reports that the phrase "seven barrels of shit" now is a vernacular catch-all in the Maritimes. Oneexample: "I worked harder than seven barrels of shit." Disappointing. when one remembers that this was the region of Canada that a couple of decades ago gave us the slang classic: "He was off in a cloud of sheep-shit, alfalfa. and small stones."

Books received

THE FOLLOWING Canadian books have been received by *Books in Canada* in recent weeks. Inclusion in this list does not preclude a review or notice in a future issue:

Diasporas, by Seymour Mayne. Mosaic.
Irving Layton: Taking Sides. edited by Howard Aster. Mosaic Press.
Goatsong. by Cyril Dabydeen. Mosaic.
The Sun Builders: A People's Guide to Solar, Wind & Wood Energy in Canada. by Robert Argue, Barbara Emanuel. and Stephen Graham. Renewable Energy in Canada.
A Fist and the Letter. translated by Roger Prentice and John M. Kirk. Pulp Press.
The Complete Cross-Canada Quiz & Game Book. by John Fisher. M & S.
Girl of the Golden West. by Beth Jankola. Intermedia.
Black Wings White Dead. by Michael Bullock. Fiddlehead.
Shadowplay. by Robyn Sarah. Fiddlehead.
Esse Nobilior, Non Esse Luelus. by J. Michael Yates. Fiddlehead.
The Water Book. by Ann J. West. Fiddlehead.
Reflections, by Kathleen McCracken. Fiddlehead.
Zicnlo. by Daphne Marlatt. Coach House.
Jamie of Thunder Bay. by Elizabeth Kouhi. Borealis.
Bluebottle. by Pat Friesen. Turnstone.
In Praise of Older Women. by Stephen Vizinczey. Totem Books.
La comparaison interculturelle. by Roberto Miguelez. University of Montreal Press.
L'activité symbolique et l'apprentissage scolaire en milieux favorisé et defavorisé. by Yvon Gauthier and Simon Richer. University of Montreal Press.
Le T.A.T. et les fonctions du moi. by Monique V. G.-Morval. University of Montreal Press.
The Blue Sky. by David Donnell. Black Moss.
'Anima, or, Swann Grown Old. by George Woodcock. Black Moss.
The Expanding Room. by Brian Henderson. Black Moss.
Mohammed Dib. écrivain algérien. by Jean Déjeux. Editions Naaman.
Mousse et paille en touffe. by Nicole de la Chevrotière. Éditions Naaman.
Another Dimension/Une autre dimension. by Mayo Graham. The National Gallery of Canada.
Le défi des dieux, by Marthe B.-Hogue. Editions Naaman.
Paysages intérieurs, by Denis Juhel. Editions Naaman.
Le vaisseau reprend le large. by Halim Barakat and translated by Claude Krul. Editions Naaman.
From Duck Lake to Dawson City. edited by R. G. Moyles. Western Producer Prairie Books.
Uphill All the Way: An Autobiography. by Edna Jaques. Western Producer Prairie Books.
Vilhjalmur Stefansson and the Arctic. by Alexander Gregor. The Book Society of Canada.
The Farmers in Politics. by William Irvine. M & S.
Of Glorious Loss, by Bernard Narvey. Queenston House.
Loose Change. by Sara Davidson. Paperjacks.
What Does Quebec Want?. by André Bernard Lorimer.
Ox Against the Storm: A Biography of Tanaka Shozo. Japan's Conservationist Pioneer. by Kenneth Strong. UBC Press.
Becky Swan's Book. by Susan Musgrave. The Porcupine's Quill.
Hockey Masks and the Great Goalies Who Wear Them. by Michael M. Cutler. Tundra.
Wheelchair Air Travel. by Clare Millar. Box 7. Blair. Cambridge, Ont.
Bricklemanship. The New Brunswick Grief Book. by Still Pickens, Omega Publications.
Vancouver Aquarium Seafood Recipes. compiled by Ainley Jackson. photography by Finn Larsen. Gordon Soules Publishers.
141 Dives in the protected waters of Washington and British Columbia. by Betty Pratt-Johnson. Gordon Soules Publishers.
The Lifestream Cookbook. edited by Maureen Harwood. Lifestream Natural Foods Ltd.
Pemberton: The History of a Settlement. by Frances Decker, Margaret Fougberg, and Mary Ronayne. Pemberton Pioneer Women.
Both Ends of the Candle. An Autobiography. by Alfred Shaughnessy. Lester & Orpen.
The Symons Report. published by the Book and Periodical Development Council. distributed by M & S.
Recreational Farming. Finding and Working Your Own Place in the Country. by Eric Winter. McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
Especially Babe. by R. Ross Annett. Tree Frog.
Farewell to Nova Scotia. by Jeffrey Holmes. Brunswick.
Provincial Government Banks. by John N. Benson. The Fraser Institute.
People of the Valley: Twin Valleys Community. by George J. Bullied. Twin Vallies.
Mrs. Blood. by Audrey Thomas. Talonbooks.
Number One Northern: Poetry from Saskatchewan. by Robert Currie. Gary Hyland. Barbara Sapergia. and Geoffrey Unell. Coteau Books.



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