


Novelist Pauline Gedge deserts the Nile for the Thames
Does Ottawa believe in a free press? A thousand times yes
John Cheever and the 'perilous moral adventure' of life

BOOKS IN CANADA



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ON QUEBEC
From Marie-Claire
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BOOKS IN CANADA

FEATURES		ILLUSTRATIONS	
<p>Departmental Ditties. For every federal department there is a free publication and for some there are scores. A report by George Galt 5</p> <p>"I Am, Simply, a Writer". Sometimes Marie-Claire Blais writes about Quebec, or about women, or about gay people. But nothing, she feels, fences her in. A profile by John Hofsess 8</p> <p>Couples of the Underground. An excerpt from <i>Nights in the Underground</i>, a new novel by Marie-Claire Blais 10</p> <p>Poetic Mêlée Drama. Artie Gold reflects on the community of English-language poets in Montreal 12</p> <p>The Party is the Pen. Roch Carrier discusses the fortunes of <i>québécois</i> writers under the PQ government 14</p> <p>René Goes on Record. Margaret Beattie reviews <i>La Passion du Québec, Lévesque's pre-referendum</i> broadside on sovereignty-association 16</p> <p>The Bite of the Termite. Doug Hill reviews <i>The Stories of John Cheever</i> 19</p> <p>The Romans Are Coming. I. M. Owen reviews <i>The Eagle and the Raven</i>, a new historical novel by Pauline Gedge 20</p>	<p>The Left-Handed Spirit, by Ruth Nichols 21</p> <p>City Boys, by David Lewis Stein; Selected Stories, by Hugh Hood 22</p> <p>Overload, by Arthur Bailey 22</p> <p>The New Oxford Book of Light Verse, edited by Kingsley Amis 23</p> <p>Poems: New and Selected, by Patrick Lane; Names of Thunder, by Scott Lawrance; Carnival, by R. G. Everson 24</p> <p>When Lovers Are Friends, by Merle Shain 24</p> <p>Moon Without Light, by Len Gasparini; The Journey Back and Other Poems, by Christopher Levenson; Rehearsal for Dancers, by Craig Powell; Tree of August, by Mary Di Michele 25</p> <p>Remember Me Well, by Andrei Germanov; Depths: Conversations with the Sea, by Dora Gabe 25</p> <p>The Suicide Battalion, by James L. McWilliams and R. James Steel 26</p> <p>The War Brides, by Joyce Hibbert 27</p> <p>The Cultural Connection, by Bernard Ostry 27</p> <p>The Heritage of Upper Canadian Furniture, by Howard Pain 28</p> <p>The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind, by Julian Jaynes 28</p> <p>The Boy in Buckskins, by Iris Allan; The Emperor of Peace River, Eugenic Louise Myles; Livingstone of the Arctic, by Dudley Copeland 29</p>	<p>Cow photograph of Marie-Claire Blais by Richard Pierre</p> <p>Photograph of Mary Meigs by Lucile Leduc 9</p> <p>Drawings by Bill Russell 5, 6, 7</p> <p>Montages throughout the issue by Joss MacLennan</p>	
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REVIEWS		DEPARTMENTS	
<p>Selected Essays and Criticism, by Louis Dudek 13</p> <p>Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies, edited by Andre Farkas and Ken Norris; Madwomen, by Fraser Sutherland; Letters of State, by Lazar Sarna 17</p> <p>The Underdogs, by William Weintraub 17</p> <p>A Cage of Bone, by Jean-Guy Carrier 18</p>	<p>Notes and Comments 4</p> <p>First Impressions, by Sandra Martin 30</p> <p>On the Racks, by Paul Stuewe 31</p> <p>Letters to the Editor 31</p> <p>CanLit No. 40 33</p> <p>The editors recommend 34</p> <p>Books received 34</p>		

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A Hint of Spring FROM MACMILLAN OF CANADA



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The two forms of censorship

THE CENSORSHIP debate continua (see *Letters to the Editor*, page 32). It was going on 300 years ago and we expect it will still be going on 300 years hence. There are essentially two kinds of censorship. The most pernicious form is the suppression of facts and ideas by authoritarian regimes or institutions. Such censorship presents no philosophical problem for enlightened minds. It is simply intellectual intolerance in one of its many guises and must be countered with every weapon at our command. Indeed, it is one of the few just grounds for going to war.

It is the other form of censorship, that which concerns morality, when the problems crop up. It is not always easy to reconcile complete artistic freedom with prevailing attitudes towards sex and religion. Even otherwise tolerant persons may find themselves advocating limited censorship, particularly when children are involved. The fact that such persons may be woefully ignorant of the work in question or simply parroting propaganda put out by self-appointed guardians of morality only complicates the issue. Knee-jerk reactions by libertarians won't accomplish much; what is needed is an understanding of the attitudes and then a process of intellectual persuasion. That's why we applaud the handbook, *Censorship: Stopping the Book Banners*, published last month by the Writers' Union, as a step in the right direction.

It is important to remember that book banners, whether they be Nazis, Stalinists, the Roman Catholic Church, Renaissance International, or just muddled parents, are all conceding a crucial point: Books matter.

Quebec and cultural isolation

OUR SPECIAL SECTION on Quebec literature, which begins on page 8, prompts some reflections on cultural cross-fertilization. It seems to be largely a one-way process between French and English Canada. A federal study of Canadian books shows that, as of 1975, some 250 French-language titles had been translated into English. Only 120 English-language titles had been translated into French. Put another way, Marie-Claire Blais is almost as familiar to educated English Canadians as Alice Munro. Yet Munro's works have not yet been translated into French and she remains an unknown quantity in Quebec.

True, a high percentage of educated French Canadians are bilingual. But the English they speak and read tends to be the language of commerce. When they read literature, they read French. Moreover, since the election of the PQ government, what small interest Quebec once showed in English Canadian literature seems to have evaporated.

English Canada's interest in Quebec literature, on the other hand, has been growing steadily since 1960 - for obvious reasons. This issue of *Books in Canada* is just one example. Another is the recent special issue of the feminist literary quarterly *Room of One's Own* (\$4, Box 46160, Station G, Vancouver), which is devoted to women writers in Quebec. There is something both poignant and disturbing about Quebec's apparent retreat into cultural isolation. Even if the province finds its future in sovereignty-association, it will be a pity if Quebecers wind up having little or no idea of what and who they are associated with. □

I THE TREASURE-SEEKERS

DEPARTMENTAL DITTIES

Special Issue of the Communist Literary Quarterly *Round of One's Own*

From growing rutabagas to fighting booklice to family planning, the Feds have answers to all our problems. A guide to Ottawa's priceless publishing

by George Galt

THE GOVERNMENT GIVETH. For every federal department, there is a free publication, and for some there are scores. No one knows how many of these priceless items exist (some departments do not provide a catalogue), but my guess is that there are 1,000 or more.. all aimed at the general reader. (The slag beeps of technical and scientific reports Ottawa issues every year were left undisturbed by this survey.)

Free-enterprisers may already have registered shock at this generosity. But before writing your MP, consider that one of the tasks of government has always been to organize and disseminate information and that some departments have a long tradition of doing so effectively. Agriculture is a good example. Each year the Department of Agriculture produces a crop of booklets For garden and farm, usually in response to demand from tillers et large. The 1978 catalogue lists more than 400 entries, mostly little books of less than 50 pages, but also a scatter of folders on subjects such as pest control.

Many of these will interest only the farmer or dedicated hobbyist. *Backfat Thickness and Body Weight in Swine Selection* is for professional pig-keepers and no one else. *Growing Rutabagas, on the other hand, is useful for anyone who has a backyard turnip.* There are booklets on flowers and on fruits, booklets on diseases and pesticides, on preserving and storage. And if you are a book person who still doubts the validity of priceless publishing, there is a folder just for you. It is called "Control of Booklice." Booklice, apparently, eat books (your books) in the dark. Eating habits aside, they are much like people. "Yellowish, grey or brownish. with soft bodies and relatively large heads, they breed continuously and irregularly; all stages can be found at any time during the year." Other pest folders deal with cockroaches, silverfish; fleas, ants, bats, and rats.

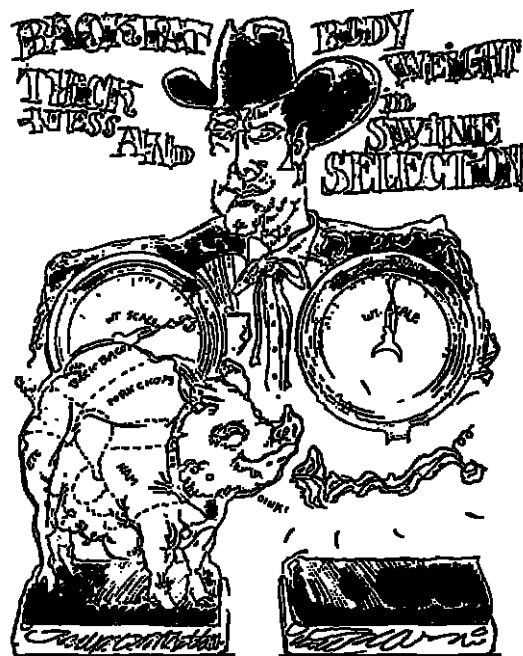
All the Agriculture publications (about 20) that I selected are well presented. The information is extensive and clear. Only one small question: Do the Canadian people really need *All About Sandwiches* to tell them how to make what most of us already eat for lunch? This booklet reveals such eternal truths as, "Butter, like bread, is a basic ingredient of sandwiches." I might have guessed.

If the Agriculture booklets interest you, write for the catalogue (publication 5103) to Information Services, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa K1A 0C7. Only 10 items are permitted per person per year.

After food, shelter. Most of the material published by Central Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) is directed to readers who are in some way professionally attached to the housing industry, or to those who want to build their own houses. There are also a few items of interest to the general public. *Home Ownership Through Condominium and Heating with Wood Safely* are two.

Each is a practical layman's guide to its subject. CMHC also publishes a quarterly magazine, *Habitat*, that covers all aspects of housing and community development. It is available to you for the price of a stamp, and worth much more if you're interested. For a catalogue or the magazine write CMHC, Information Division, National Office, Ottawa K1A 0P7.

Governments ignore popular trends at their peril, and this is nowhere more evident than in the publications of trendy departments like Environment or Health & Welfare. Trendy is not meant here to be necessarily derisive. Popular concern for the environment is, after all, a recent force. One is touched by a suspicion of



corporate spasm, however, on reading a few of the Health & Welfare publications. Corporate spasm is a reflex reaction suffered by established opinion when it is challenged from without. Health & Welfare appears to exhibit this disorder in fact-sheets like "Wonder Foods," a flyer that attempts, among other things, to steer the reader away from enthusiasm for high nutritive foods like brewer's yeast. Yeast is one of the Rags of the health-food movement, formerly known as the counterculture, and this

may account for the corporate spasm. After reading the flyer, I am nonetheless convinced that yeast is a wonderful food, and recommend it with orange juice for breakfast.

Not to mislead, I must add that Health & Welfare publishes much that is helpful. There are more than 100 entries on its free list, everything from "The Laxative Habit" (a folder) to *Voluntary Sterilization* (a booklet). Food, sex, and exercise are predominant. Whether this means that Canadians are doing all three improperly, I don't know. Perhaps it reflects ministerial direction. Monique Bégin's recent reference to sexual energy and peanut butter in the Commons seems to support the latter theory.

Of all the government publications perhaps the book that embraces the broadest reality is *Facts and Fancy About Birth Control. Sex Education and Family Planning*. not because it deals with sexuality but because it recognizes fantasy. Reading a stack of government-issue print over several consecutive sittings leaves the victim suffering from an overdose of fact. The remedy for fact sickness, we know, is either fiction or its looser interior counterpart, fantasy. Our national sex booklet provides relief from factual seriousness, as well as useful information for the sexually mis-



informed. Write Information Directorate, Department of National Health & Welfare, Brooke Claxton Building, Ottawa KIA 0K9.

Fisheries & Environment, to judge from their publications, looks to be a monster of a ministry with an awesome responsibility for all creation ("The firmament of the heaven ... the great whales ... the fish of the sea ... the fowl of the air ... and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth") except man himself, for whose presumably more complex needs all the other departments exist. An excellent book put out in 1978 by these people is the *Environment Source Book*, everything you ever wanted to

I am troubled by the implicit recommendation to read and drive simultaneously. Let's not wait for Health & Welfare to write a brochure about this. Take along a literate passenger.

know about where to turn for environmental advice or authority in 115 pages. All sources are covered, including government departments and agencies, citizen's groups and current literature. Write Information Services, Department of the Environment, Ottawa KIA 0H3.

Much has been written by mandarin Ottawa about Canada's oldest industry. Here I can mention only a few of the better 6 Books in Canada. February, 1979

Certainly the Mounties' distant history is mope inspiring than the revelations of recent activities. Does this explain why their self-advertising history booklet halts in February, 1920? That was when their name was changed to the present one.

publications devoted to fishing. There are two offerings on the seal hunt, the mom complete a 24-page booklet with a David Blackwood rendering on the cover. Also available are a number of fact-sheets (they are actually brochures of four or eight pages) on Canada's commercial fish, useful for students, and a lavishly illustrated booklet called *The Status of the World's Whales* (27 pages). The government apparently believes we ought to eat more fish, and to this end Fisheries has produced a series of cookbooks featuring "taste-proven recipes." I can tell you only that they read well, my reading skills being much more advanced than my cooking. Write Fisheries Food Centre, Fisheries and Environment Canada, Ottawa KIA 0E6.

Both Forestry and wildlife are branches of Environment, and each has its own publication program. The Ecotours series is "devised by the Canadian Forestry Service to help you, as a traveller, understand the forces that have shaped the landscape you see." If you want to know when the last glacier skidded across your travel path, or when the last forest fire burned out the local rodents, these booklets are for you. I am troubled, however, by the implicit recommendation to read and drive simultaneously. Let's not wait for Health & Welfare to write a brochure about this. Take along a literate passenger.

In a country populated, at least metaphorically, by hewers of wood, it is well to know what then is to hew. A series of me folders is available from Forestry, and in fact they are not so much for tree cutters as for tree lovers. Did you know that the white spruce has deeper roots in our national life than the maple? Not only did Jacques Cartier brew its bark for a scurvy cure, but it grows almost everywhere in the country and is the mainstay of our forest industry. But the maple tree has prevailed, and perhaps because it did the government will send you free instructions on how to make maple sugar. For publications on trees, me diseases and maple sugar write Information, Canadian Forestry Service, Department of the Environment, Ottawa KIA 0H3.

We have beaver and moose on our coins and an amorous bear in our literature. Clearly Canadians are attached, some would say neurotically attached, to their wildlife. I was 30 years old before I saw a moose in the flesh, a deprivation which caused lasting subliminal embarrassment. I'm sun, every time I handled a quarter. Perhaps if I had taken advantage of the Canadian Wildlife Service I would have felt more at ease with my quadruped compatriots in the bush.

I cannot praise the Wildlife publications highly enough. There are a few miscellaneous items, such as the article "Nest Boxes for Birds," but the highlight is a series entitled the *Hinterland Who's Who*, 57 eight-by-11-inch illustrated pamphlets, each devoted to a particular bird or animal. Identifying characteristics are given, habitat and behaviour are described, and notes on population and conservation are appended. Thoroughly readable, with enough information to satisfy anyone but a certified zoologist, these pamphlets are suitable for everyone. There is a limit of 10 publications per individual per order. For a list write Distribution Section, Canadian Wildlife Services, Department of the Environment, Ottawa KIA 0E7.

Energy. This topic is so trendy that you have likely tripped over some of the government's hat&m on it already. The Office of Energy Conservation issues five books that are cluttered with the obvious but also graced with not so obvious ways to save energy and money. The latest is *The Car Mileage Book*. The first was *100 Ways to Save Energy & Money in the Home*. Others deal with garbage, furnaces, and insulation. Conservation Books, P.O. Box 3500, Station "C", Ottawa K1Y 4G1.



Energy, Mines & Resources also produces *Renewable Energy Resources*, a 29-page guide that looks to be well compiled. Write Renewable Energy Resources Branch, Department of Energy, Mines & Resources, 580 Booth St., Ottawa K1A 0E4.

If you like to supplement your newspaper intake with history, you might want more than the Macdonald Commission has to offer on the Mounties. Or you might want less, some people feeling the less said about these matters the better. Certainly the Mounties' distant history is more inspiring than the revelations of recent activities. Does this explain why their self-advertising history booklet halts in February, 1920? That was when their name was changed to the present one. There are good books on the force, but this bilingual booklet (38 pages) is an acceptable if uncritical

An exception is *What You've Always Wanted to Know About Work*, a 23-page booklet for high-school students. . . . I would change it to something . . . more realistic like *In Case There Happens To Be a Job When You Graduate*.

introduction. Write Liaison Branch, RCMP Headquarters, 1200 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa K1A 0R2.

From Consumer & Corporate Affairs there are two comic books: "The Adventures of Binkley and Doinkel in Haunting Signs" about, you guessed it, hazard labels; and "The Adventures of Inspector Phil de Loophole," about consumer tights and responsibilities. Both appear to be addressed to the very young. As a reformed hut nostalgic comic-book reader, I resent this intrusion of well-meant propaganda into the fantasy land of Archie and Little Lulu. All I can say in their favour is that Binkley and Doinkel ate local talent.

The Department of Labour gives away about 50 publications, but almost all are aimed at the with some professional interest in the field. An exception is *What You've Always Wanted to Know About Work*, a W-page booklet for high-school students. It covers collective bargaining in some depth and gives an overview of labour law. Good though it is, I'm afraid the tide is terribly naive. Most people under 18 wisely want to know very little about work. I would change it to something easy-going like *In Case You Ever Need a Job* or more realistic like *In Case There Happens To Be a Job When You Graduate*. For this booklet or the publications list write Publications, Labour Canada, Ottawa K1A 012.

Finally, the Department of Indian & Northern Affairs (DINA)

offers several interesting items. There are two hardcover children's books in French available while the supply lasts. *Les Iroquois* and *Makwa Le Petit Algonquin* (47 pages each) are addressed to francophones between four and eight, but perhaps the age limit could be raised a year for anglophones with only school French. Both books are copiously illustrated.

Left over from an exhibition of drawings is the catalogue entitled *Pitseolak*, featuring the famous Inuit artist of that name. It reads delightfully like a book of primitive poetry, and feels like a privileged peek inside Inuit consciousness.

Canoeists should know that this department has conducted a series of wild-river surveys, available on request. Send the name of your intended river.

My last item is a magazine full of glossy colour reproductions. I like it, but I'm glad I share its costs with all my fellow taxpayers, because it must be expensive to produce. It's called *Conservation Canada* and is published quarterly by the Parks Canada Branch of DINA. Articles are written for popular appeal on subjects either under or related to the department's jurisdiction. The current issue, for example, includes a piece on Sir John A.'s house in Kingston, which is a National Historic Site in the care of Parks Canada.

For a list of DINA publications or any of the above write Publications, Department of Indian & Northern Affairs, Terrace de la Chaudiere, North Tower, Room 2015, Hull, Quebec K1A 0H4.

A great many of the government's publications are unpaginated and undated. It's a small point, perhaps, but I believe books (and booklets) should not be ashamed to tell us how old they are, or how long. I'm sure all this information sits secure somewhere in the desks of Ottawa information officers. They are breeding enormous amounts of fact every year, much of it of high quality, but their product cannot be given a pedigree without dates. I know the government does not like to be pinned down, but in this case it is necessary and, let them be assured, can do their reputation no harm. □



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Marie-Claire Blais doesn't mind being known as gay But she doesn't want to be a 'gay writer' or a 'woman writer' or a 'québécoise writer.' They are all little boxes ...

'I AM, SIMPLY, A WRITER'

by John Hofsess

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago Mary McCarthy wrote a fictional portrait of painter Mary Meigs (Dolly, in *A Charmed Life*) in which she portrayed her as a well-bred woman whose relations with other persons were severely inhibited. "How old are you?" one of the male characters asks Dolly:

Dolly told him her age. "Are you a virgin?" he demanded. Dolly's spine stiffened; she rose, slowly, and backed up against the fireplace wall. Nobody had asked her this question since she was in college. She had often yearned to discuss what was the central fact in her life, but everybody steered shy of it, even her closest friends. Yet, now that she had been asked, finally, her tongue remained paralyzed. She stared at him speechlessly, trying to feel indignation.

That's how the subject of lesbianism was treated in the 1950s: with so much tact that no one knew what was going on. The inhibitions were McCarthy's own. The same woman who in later years would so brilliantly analyze the American involvement in Vietnam, and the origins of Watergate, felt qualms about taking much interest in female homosexuality. For unlike Vietnam and Watergate — issues outside her — any attempt to understand homosexuality might alter her own conscious and subconscious defences against it. So Dolly was left speechless, and the fiction

When I asked her why none of the articles about her over the years ... have mentioned that the most important relationship of her adult life has been with Mary Meigs, she replied: "I guess they do not feel comfortable with the truth."

that lesbians can play only unimportant, peripheral roles in the great drama of life was dishonestly maintained.

There is another factor at work. In a recent issue of *Branching Out*, Marian Engel warned an interviewer: "Don't always expect me to tell the truth. I often lie to interviewers." The line was a variation of one that Engel attributes to Alice Munro. "I was asked to do a story on Alice," Engel once told me. "But Alice said that she didn't want to do it, because she would only end up lying to a friend." The writer interviewing Engel in *Branching Out*, Fellow novelist Aritha van Herk, found nothing remarkable in the admission. "Of course," van Herk said. "Isn't that part of being a fiction writer?" Engel replied: "Yes. I have to protect myself just enough."

The refreshing thing about Marie-Claire Blais is that both in person and in her work (which I believe is the most diverse and distinguished fiction created by any Canadian writer of the past 20

years) she hides nothing. When I asked her why none of the articles about her over the years (in *Saturday Night*, *Maclean's*, and *Weekend* among other magazines) have mentioned that the most important relationship of her adult life has been with Mary Meigs, she replied: "I guess they do not feel comfortable with the truth."

"I DON'T MEAN to alarm you, my dear," Elena Wilson said in 1962 to the young woman beside her. "But then is one couple here in Cape Cod that I should warn you about." The face she looked into betrayed no quickening interest. Marie-Claire Blais had learned early in life to wear a mask 'of impassivity when among people who took respectability seriously. Neither Elena nor her husband, Edmund Wilson, whose influential literary judgment it was that Blais was "a true phenomenon, and perhaps a genius" (based on the manuscripts of *Mad Shadows*, *Tête Blanche*, and *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel*), could completely believe that such passionate and terrifying novels came from the mind of someone so young (looking barely 16, though in fact 23) and seemingly ingenuous.

Elena did not see the sly amusement in the eyes that measured her carefully as she went on to explain that "the strange couple" Marie-Claire should be on guard against were two women who shared a house that had been purchased from Wilson's first wife, Mary McCarthy. "I have nothing against them," Elena said. "One's a writer, the other's a painter. Edmund's quite fond of them both. But we've reason to believe they are lesbians."

"Ahh . . ." said Marie-Claire, suggesting she might have read a novel or two mentioning the subject.

"Just thought you should know," said Elena.

Marie-Claire thanked her. Summa wouldn't be dull after all.

"IT'S OUR BASIC incompatibility that keeps us together," Mary Meigs says. She allows a moment for the paradox to fizzle. Sixteen years have passed since that first summer in Cape Cod. The 100-year-old wooden farmhouse she shares with Marie-Claire on 50 acres of land near Richmond, Que., is filled with Meigs' work of the past 20 years. (In 1968 Editions du Jour issued a deluxe version of *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* containing a set of superb drawings by Meigs. It retailed for \$50 and now is a collector's item. Last year Exile Publications, Box 546, Downsview, Ont., issued *Illustrations for Two Books by Marie-Claire Blair*, containing Meigs' drawings for *The Manuscripts of Pauline Archange* and *St. Lawrence Blues*.)

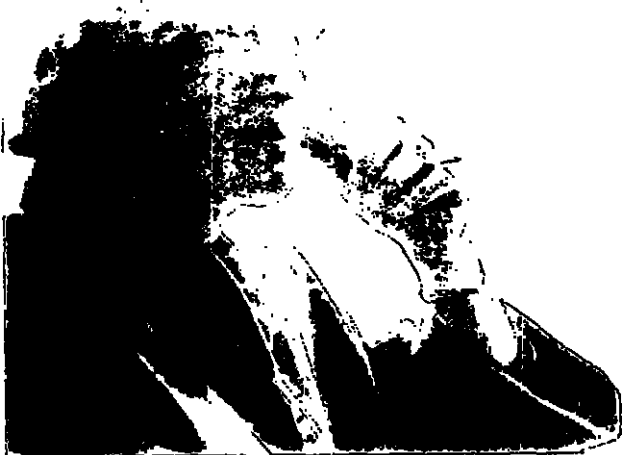
Their relationship runs deep in geological strata. There was hardly a time it could be taken for granted; never a year in which it remained the same. To Marie-Claire, staying up all night, talking and drinking with her friends in the bars and clubs of Montreal,

was an absolute necessity in earlier years. She is a creature of adversity who thrives on crisis, who needs a little scandal and romantic melodrama to feel fully alive.

To Mary, 22 years older, more than four ounces of wine produces a headache and the nocturnal concourse and discourse of gay butterflies is a subject of little interest. For her an artist's personal life has little to do with her work. She would rather tend to her vegetable garden or keep a maternal sod painterly eye on the baby swallows in the barn. But Marie-Claire admires and needs the discipline of her friend, and the exacting logic (sometimes to the point of testiness) of her opinions; and Mary relishes hearing about the flaming creatures of Montreal's Main, if only as testimony to her own sanity.

THE HEAVIEST snowfall of the season isolates the farmhouse for three days from the main roads; the radio warns of possible power failures in the region, with high winds and sleet forecast. The snow, four feet deep and drifting, hasn't acquired a crisp surface; a trek on snowshoes to the highway one mile away isn't feasible. The lack of freedom makes Marie-Claire tense. Cyclonic funnels of windswept snow moving across the fields might, at another time, inspire a contemplative image for one of her novels or poems: but today's weather is just a damn nuisance.

The subhumans in the household have their own concerns. Monkey, a lean young cat with mottled markings of brown, black, orange, and white, the result of an indiscriminate mating among her forbears (mother, pure Siamese; father, a lowlife tom) is curled up in a prenatal ball, catching the last week rays of the day's winter light. Michou, a Persian, two years older ("not mated, and highly neurotic," Mary says) is only sociable at mealtimes and spends the rest of her life avoiding all amusements and companionship, cringing in comers, and glowering at the other animals. Emily, a cross between a German shepherd and a setter, is too ill to notice the antics of Monkey, or the social putdowns of Michou. She has been a faithful friend for many years, but now she limps badly with arthritis, and passes blood in her urine in the



Mary Melgs

snow. Gillou, a 15-year-old Labrador, is the most robust creature in the ménage, always at the leap and yawp for a run. Gillou and Monkey are the best of friends — unaware of what cats and dogs are expected to do in the "natural order of things."

Evening after supper, Marie-Claire picks at her lemon soufflé in a bird-like manner. She is exuberant but not well — a spiritual paradox reminiscent of Greta Garbo in *Camille*. She has a cold and coughs frequently (a few months later she will give up smoking). Her dust-jacket and other public photographs do not do her justice, possibly because she refuses to be vain about her appearance. In real life she is hauntingly beautiful; it's not the skin-deep sort of beauty that disintegrates with age, but rather some radiance that speaks of and to the mind. There are moments when her eyes seem to be filled with all the sadness in the world (200-odd years of

Three years ago, when Editions du Jour went bankrupt, the company owed Blais more than \$50,000 in back royalties. She was able to recover \$9,000 over one year; the rest had to be written off.

Quebec history; 2,000 years of women's history; and the whole sorry business of mankind). But then, remembering some outlandish anecdote or taking another sip of tîne, she will suddenly beam with energy, her androgynous face triumphant with impassioned life.

Her temperament may be too mercurial to sustain the writing of long books. As Philip Stratford noted in his monograph (*Canadian Writers and Their Works, No. 607*), none of her first 11 works (1959-70) exceeded 150 pages in their English editions. Since then we've had *David Sterne* (93 pages) and *The Wolf* (142 pages). Only *St. Lawrence Blues* tons to more than 200 pages.

Her strength is the percipient phrase or observation, the dart of insight, rather than the mechanisms of plot or the structural design of literary epics. Despite what some critics regard as the "morbidly" of her characters and subject material (when *Mad Shadows* was published in English in 1960 *The Library Journal* appraised it with purblind brevity: "Not for library purchase") it seems to have gone unnoticed that her attitude to even the most grotesque cruelties in human nature is never one of pessimism. The Blais sensibility is composed principally of keen clinical inter&z and for the rest, for all that passes beyond understanding, a generous pardon.

Three years ago, when Editions du Jour went bankrupt, the company owed Blais more than SM.000 in back royalties. She was able to recover \$9,000 over one year; the rest had to be written off. But she holds no grudges. Her former publisher, Jacques Hébert, is one of her closest friends. "Jacques may not be the best sort of businessman," she says, wholly without irony, "but he has always been a wonderful friend and I love him very much. Those who prefer money to friendship never amount to much."

"They sometimes amass fortunes," I point out.

"But they don't amount to much as people," she insists. She is not being self-congratulatory over her own largesse. Her attitude toward human frailties—small or large, petty or monstrous — is one of amused, occasionally bewildered, forbearance. Then are few writers who dig more deeply into the lower depths of human nature (Margaret Crosland in her recent study of French fiction, *Women of Iron and Velvet*, calls *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel* "one of the saddest novels written since the end of World War Two"). And even fewer who can stand the pain and the horror.

In the last 18 months, Marie-Claire Blais has published *Durer's Angel*; a third fragment of her spiritual autobiography. *The Manuscripts of Pauline Archange* (which received the Governor General's Award for fiction in 1968); and *The Execution*, a play in two acts about three schoolboys who murder one of their classmates "for the hell of it" and manage to have two other students convicted of the crime. *Exile* magazine published the text of her 90-minute television play. *The Ocean*: Sheila Fischman, who did the fine translation of *The Wolf* (1974), is preparing another novel. *Une Liaison Parisienne* for publication in 1979, and the latest novel, which Blais worked on for more than a year, *Les Nuits de*

l' Underground, became a best seller in Quebec, and will be issued in English in May by Musson. (There is still one novel, *L'Insoumise*, published in 1966, not yet translated into English.)

"In a way *Une Liaison Parisienne* is not as honest, psychologically, as it should be," she says. "For the origin of the story occurred between two women. Although I changed and invented a great deal." *Une Liaison Parisienne* describes the ill-fated relationship between a French Canadian, Matthieu Lelièvre, and Madame d'Argenti. (The name is derived from *argent* — French for money. The real-life name of the woman involved sounded like "money" Italianized. She in Nm wrote her own novel about the affair under the title *Love and Disdain*, not published in English.) "But in *Les Nuits de l' Underground* I write about women in love.. Of all my novels it has taken the longest to write." (*Mad Shadows* was written at age 18, in 10 days. This year marks its 20th anniversary, and an improved translation would certainly be an appropriate commemoration.)

"I don't mind being known as Say," she says. "But I don't want to be a 'gay writer.' Anymore than I want to be known as a 'woman writer' or a 'québécoise writer.' They are all little boxes, I am, simply, a writer, and sometimes I write about Quebec. or about women, or about gay people, but nothing, I feel, fences me in."

Success came easily to Blais in the early stages of her career, but now she is moving to a less secure place. Her novels deal increasingly with the theme of homosexual love. An incident in *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel* becomes an episode in *L'Insoumise*, and the central theme of *The Wolf*. Her new work, *Les Nuits de l' Underground* deals with the relationship between two women. Lali Dorman, an Austrian-German, and Geneviève Aurès, a French Canadian, who meet in a lesbian bar called *The Underground* in Montreal (see excerpt below). She could have been a different sort of writer — one who lies, in her fiction

as well as in interviews. She could have remained a prestigious writer, her life one thing, her art another. But instead she is seeking to integrate her life and work, N become whole, and in touch with her deepest needs and feelings. "How fiercely we aspired to live freely, in the harmony of happy minds and bodies . . ." she wrote in *The Manuscripts Of Pauline Archange*. Each generation has the same dream when it is young; and each generation becomes washed-up and useless when those who comprise it lose the fire of such dreams. Blais aligns herself with youth because she still believes in the intense desirability of social change.

The common theme of her works is of adolescents coming of age, driven from the Eden of their childhood, or from their dreams of such a place, to a chilly, indifferent, barren plain where they must survive as adults — or perish. In the early novels her young protagonists were generally no match for the realities they had N contend with (when their strength ran out, they went mad or died); but in later works her characters (like Pauline Archange, or the youthful narrator of *The Wolf*) are wily and resilient, street-smart, one step down from urban guerrillas but several steps up from orphans in the storm.

There are few rewards in this culture for a sexually honest person. What was heralded in the late 1960s by the glib glossies as the "sexual revolution" never was more than a catchphrase; yet there is a new world being born, steadily, slowly, irreversibly, and of woman born. Women "are confronted with the naked and unabashed failure of patriarchal . . . civilization," writes American poet Adrienne Rich in the preface N her *Selected Poems, 1950-1974*. "To be a woman at this time is N know extraordinary forms of anger, joy, impatience, love, and hope." The works of Marie-Claire Blais are not manifestos of that future, but they are, in all probability, an important part of its poetic legacy. In her hands, literature is more than just the rustling of dead leaves. □

EXCERPT

Couples of the Underground

by Marie-Claire Blais

The following passage is excerpted from *Nights in the Underground*, a new novel by Marie-Claire Blais, translated by Ray Ellenwood, to be published in May by Musson/General Publishing.

PEOPLE MIGHT SAY "René and Louise" or "Geneviève and Lali," binding for the sake of judicious effect what could never be bound, and yet nothing was more flimsy than that official phrase "couple," condoned by love for one night, or two, or a lifetime. So whenever anyone saw René in the Underground, right away they'd shout, "Where's Louise?" But René's reply would often be, "We're broke up right now 'cause I've been seeing my old girlfriend, my great love, Nathalie. Jesus H. Christ I did the whole of Europe with her, you can't stop your heart beating like you stop a clock. She was touring with her dance company and she came to see me, so I make the most of it. I love her and I wheedle everything out of

her I can, but she's so nice she makes me nervous. . . ."

While Geneviève was overjoyed at being near Lali, even though she knew the spell was wearing off and low was shedding its final golden rays on them, Marielle was secretly unhappy. She still welcomed them to the Underground with a spring in her step and childlike little leaps, but she was sorry to lose her favourite friend Geneviève to a "couple," even if she and her overflowing generosity were responsible for bringing them together in the first place. Unable now to monopolize Geneviève's attention, Marielle approached with half-hearted bounds, no longer blanketing her nose and cheeks with moist kisses as she would have done before. Instead, she looked at her and Lali with polite respect, not the special smiling tenderness she'd saved for Geneviève only a few days ago.

"Did you forget my phone number. Geneviève? No. I under-

stand. I was waiting for you here this evening. I had time to write a song. . . ."

"You write songs?"

"well, you know, the factory's not the greatest, so I was learning by do-re-mi's at night. I forgot to tell you the reason Big Yellow's not ken is because she's in jail. Don't worry, she'll be back, but we have to raise some money for her trial. . . ."

"Speed or H?" was Lali's terse comment.

Lali knew it didn't matter if she'd come to the Underground to see René, her frère, "The only brother I have in this country," because René had no eyes for anybody else when she was with Nathalie. "Hey, Lali, mon frère, how are ya?" René tossed out distractedly, immediately turning back to Nathalie. She gazed adoringly at her, seemed to breathe her in, savour her, as she strutted around dressed to the nines, glass in hand, cigarette in the corner

Of her mouth, Nathalie seemed indifferent to René's homage, though in fact she may have been simply an elegant person in a casual group, with her silky blonde hair, spilling over her shoulders, as if René had transplanted her here in the Underground for this moment of joy and passion where even the most mysterious and haughty women could be hers.

"Would you like something, Nathalie?"

"No thanks."

"Are you warm enough?" asked René, stroking her arm.

"Yes."

"After all, in your country you're used to the cold. Remember when we were in Greece, Nathalie? The crazy things we did in Rome? Ah! those were the days. But have something to drink, honey. I ain't got a dime to my name, but we could be happy if you weren't going back to your north country so soon . . . we were living in 70- buck-a-night hotels, it was magic, the two

of us. Every day I was walking around with \$100 in my pocket, and you were so sweet, so supple, like a big cat. Just seeing you in the street used to twist my guts. You're a teal woman, Nathalie, everything about you turns me on. . ."

Nathalie's attitude as she listened to René sweet-talking her was puzzling, as if she didn't realize these homages were addressed to her. Perhaps she felt the same reticence some other women did when René publicly blurted out her passion in all be innocence. At this moment, Nathalie was "woman" incarnate for René, sublime and beautiful, set on a pedestal because of her feminine attributes, soon to be brought back down to earth by René, whose patience was almost priestly as she set about discovering a body and helping it discover itself. Sk would teach Nathalie what vigorous sensual treasures lay dormant under her delicate form, what lechery panted behind that closed mouth, though not much was showing while René chanted: "I love you, yes, you know, Nathalie, sometimes I thought, since you like men a lot, that was the problem. Yes . . . a man. But I couldn't hate you for it. You know, you'll never really appreciate a woman like yourself, there's the scent of your skin, it drives me

crazy, and your voice too . . . end then there's. . ."

Gradually, Nathalie's defences would crumble under this seductive wash of words and it was as if all the qualities René loved in her: her voice, the scent of her skin, even the outline of her sex as René could discern it through her elegant denim slacks; it was as if all those chaste and cloistered flowers, one after another, the voice, scent and sex of a woman, distilled their spell-binding musk into the hot air of the bar. Yet, as she listened, Nathalie showed no sign of trembling under the aureole of silky hair René had already spread out a million times over an imaginary pillow. If she were secretly quivering it could have been from surprise at seeing clusters of unknown women approach as if drawn by René's erotic sweet-talk, each burning like pink fruit as they listened to her canticle. Every face watching René acmes the pagan nave Of her church of lii was the colour of burning coals. They were full of desire, in love like René, living through her. But where was love and how were they to find it? Wasn't it tight here in this bet where we woman was laughing alone, once more freed of all her chains, waiting to meet another? That was how Geneviève lost Lali.

The stranger they'd seen laughing alone at her table, carefree in the midst of the crowd, stretching bet long, muscular body restlessly, got up and marched resolutely up to Lali, drawing her out of the group clustered around René and Nathalie, carrying her off boldly to the dance floor. Geneviève could read those discreetly commanding words, "Would you like to dance?" on her lips, and in an instant the women had received everything Lali sometimes took so long to refuse: the soft consent of her smile. No one would say "Lali and Geneviève" again, but "Lii and Lali," because this new couple already existed. In other people's minds and separate from Geneviève it now existed like that disturbing cohesion Lali used to bring about by associating her head, slowly and deliberately, with mother. And it didn't matter if the head, lii Jill's African abundance, appeared outside the rigorous bounds Lali usually was seen to move in.

"Do you have a lover?" Jill asked.

"Yes and no. But I em free . . . you know . . . Tu veux une cigarette?"

Lali was wearing one of the white blouses she sometimes rescued from the hospital. What an appro

prate unconscious choice it was, Geneviève thought to herself, to be armed in the uniform of innocence all the better to spill blood, because she felt as if Lali had opened her heart with one stroke of a fingernail. But the incision had been so unexpected and so quick she still didn't know whether she'd been wounded or had undergone corrective surgery.

"I'm a geographer," Jill explained happily. "Just back from a world tour. Stopping here a while . . . you know, the world's a beautiful place. . ."

"I see, I see," said Lali, offering Jill a cigarette, wetting it first with her lii "So you did, hey, so you did all that alone, by yourself. . ."

"Then I come in her tonight and find you," said Jill, laughing, "really, life's amazing, I always thought that, but if you already have a lover I won't bother you any more. . ."

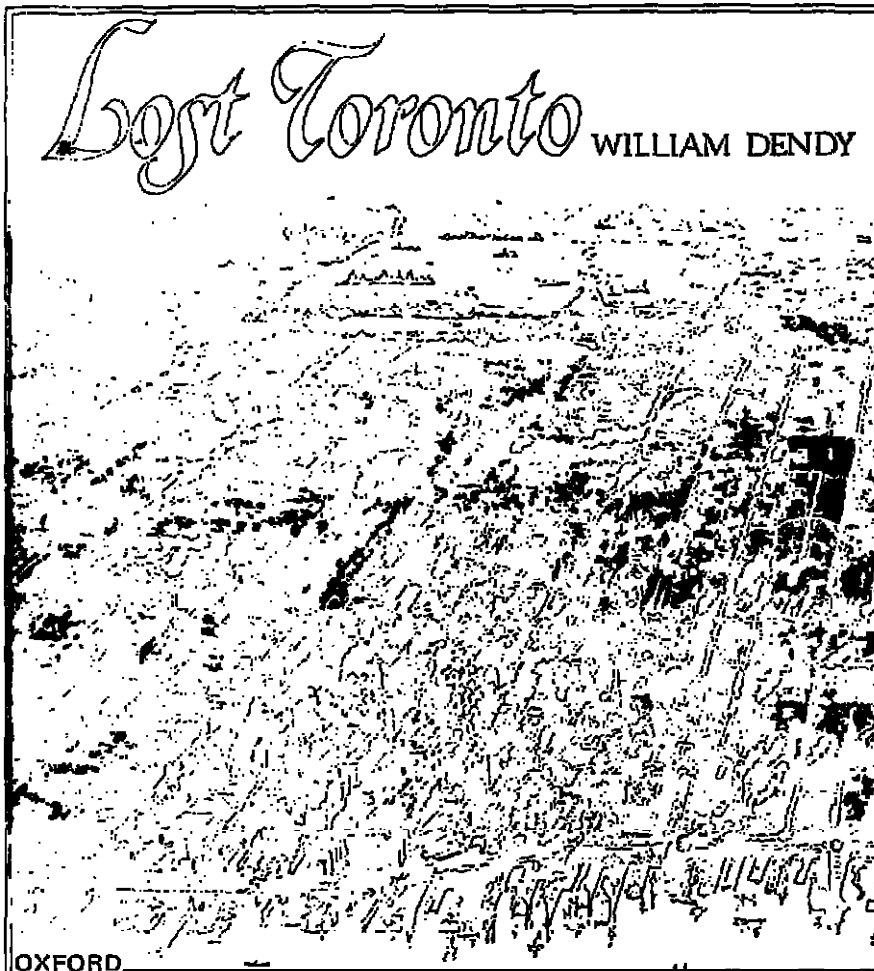
"Why? I am free," Lali repeated. "You are free tonight?"

"Always and anytime," said Jill, chuckling.

"Good, perfect," said Lali.

"But I don't want to hurt your friend, you know. . ."

"C'est la vie," rid Lali firmly, "we all know tkt. come on, let's dance. . ." □



Lost Toronto is a valuable and fascinating portrait of a city that was dominated by richly detailed, often extroverted architecture that expressed its business, public, religious and social life. An architecture that during the sixties fell victim to the wrecker's hammer. William Dendy, a young architectural historian, who has devoted several years to researching the building history of Toronto, has assembled some 140 photographs, drawn from various archives, of nearly 100 demolished or defaced buildings and ruined streetscapes, which he discusses individually in engrossing detail.

224 pp., 132 plates, 32 modern photographs \$19.50

Poetic mêlée drama

A Montreal poet reflects on how the local scene has picked up speed in the past 10 years

by Artie Gold

TOSAY ONCE AGAIN that Montreal is finally coming of age, a mothballed cliché of the 1940s and 1950s, is a little silly, even if it weren't coming from our own mouths. To say that things are beginning to happen in Montreal, that Montreal is now going through an interesting phase, would be more correct. The crying need for an indigenous English publishing industry has been met, and in some ways exceeded. Certainly in the 10 years I have lived, written, and published in Montreal, I can say that it and I have developed some sort of eccentric rapport. I have watched an older generation draw back from the local scene, see? a Dudek, a Layton, a Cohen even, who though "ever far away are somehow no longer integral to the pulse of English poetry in the late 1970s. They teach, are adored, stand as good and bad examples, but we are the ones now in the mêlée.

And who are we? Well, there always is, thank God, an I to lock cut from. There are my immediate peers, many of whom teach poetry at community colleges, brought out their first books in the 1960s, and now stand as minor constellations' brighter stars, acolytes just beginning to stir around them: Peter Van Toorn, David Solway, Michael Harris, Richard Sommer, André Farkas, Claudia Lapp, Ken Norris. And newer even than them, a subgeneration half beside the above poets and half stemmed from them: Stephen Morrissey, John McAuley, Tom Konyves, Guy Birchard, Ray Filip. Then: these many names named and so few more needed to bridge the spaces in the finite list, what a shame not to name those who have come, stayed, passed through, and still remain with this city in some context or other. A nostalgic Fraser Sutherland, now moved to Pictou County, N.S.; an Opal L. Nations, here for a year or two and now residing in Toronto.

It seems to me that what has happened here has been the limited sum of exactly and only what or who has been active here, by which I mean that poetry in Montreal is a continuing act, a struggle, a living organism. From the virtual vacuum of the late 1960s, a few poets meeting and reading their brave poetry at a certain Karma Coffee-house, a very articulate thing began to happen. Poets began meeting, discussing

where they could secure a permanent reading space. Véhicule Art Gallery, then a pioneering artspace on Ste. Catherine Street, began to be used for readings, and a series was organized that in its first year (1970) comprised 32 readings — everybody, literally everybody, around with a poem in hand. Then a gradual articulation, a decision to venture into publishing taken by four poets with Véhicule owner Ian Burgess, the task of printing given to a press that would become Véhicule Editions, its first four Eldorado chapbooks carried in only a few book stores: Mansfield Book Mart, Argo, The Word (then selling only from Adrian and Luci King-Edwards' living room until miraculously, the Chinese laundryman next door, next door, moved). Even in the living room, however. The Word began a reading series, albeit a small cue, and bent their policy of carrying only used books to include the local new poetry chapbooks. Then the arrival of Delta Press, edited by Glen Siebrasse alone. In the mid-1960s Delta had been a triumvirate ruled by an older Louis Dudek, a middle-aged (relatively) Michael Gnamwski, and a youngish (comparatively) Siebrasse. I remember being asked at an early Eldorado strategy meeting to submit a chapbook and realizing that I had already placed all my eggs (poems, fig.) in Delta's basket. What a delight, I thought at the time, for one's first book to have two people eager to publish it.

Of the triumvirate only Dudek and Siebrasse stayed in Montreal; Gnarowski has moved on to Carleton University. Dudek left Delta and started DC Press, a way of coming to the rescue of young and worthy poets: while Delta, left to Siebrasse, collected Richard Sommer and Michael Harris and became New Delta, which continues to be fairly active in local publishing. To their credit: books by Sommer and Harris, David Solway, Marc Plourde (*The Spark Plug Thief*), Bob McGee, Robert Allen, and Anne McLean. And much has risen with Delta. Bonsecours Editions has published four or five books by local (chiefly women) poets, who somehow have been only marginally represented by other houses: Carol Leckner, Joan Thornton-McLeod, Patricia Ewing, Carol Ten Brink.

Meanwhile, Véhicule Press seems to be

pulling ahead, somehow ending up with more interesting poets (perhaps only my bias, but expect it). It certainly is the oldest, most active press here for English poets. Its books are distributed far beyond the city walls and are actually reprinted when an edition is sold out. Its recent effort is an Island-wide anthology of 22 Montreal poets, edited by Farkas and Norris and conceived as an ambassador to other cities of Canada, the U.S., wherever. Things may now begin to move at the speed of written poetry here, an overly optimistic view of one's guns, perhaps, but any optimism must spend all the currency around, appearing just as flush as creditable. That's its job.

Magazines. *CrossCountry* has weathered a three-year trial period and seems here and healthy among us, able to draw funds from private pockets when needed to branch cut into publishing chapbooks as well. Its editor is Ken Norris. It has most recently been joined by *Versus*, founded by Fred Louder, poet, and by *Villeneuve Press*, run by Fred Louder, editor. *Versus* now is into its sixth number, and *Villeneuve* has brought out books by August Kleinzahler, Jack Hannan, and others, always others.

Book stores. It is a strange observation that a town's best reconnaissance points for the poet are the stores selling second-hand books and poetry — the stores that care. They represent some sort of pool deeper and often more varied in yield than the city's best library. I've already mentioned *The Word* and its biweekly readings (to go with *Véhicule* and its Sunday afternoons), *Argo* with its very pleasant Mr. George (Fred Louder also works there), *Mansfield Book Mart* (ask for Jack). I am not forgetting our all-Canadian book store, *The Double Hook*, sure to carry any title you can print if you do it in Montreal. The trick seems merely to lie in keeping Montreal in Canada. Oh, and we must not forget the doyen of a gossip column of a now-on-strike *Montreal Star*. Its book page improved immensely during the past year or so under Sheila Fischman, who now has gone back to translating.

It seems one is or isn't here. I mean one can be here lethargically, but it is the putting in of energy, time, often money, that keeps Montreal and its poetry alive. A tidal pool,

perhaps, this small English community isolated from the rest of English Canada and the United States, but it has its field marshals, its heroes, its lovers, its intrigues; always the new alongside the continuing, the waning, and the ceasing to be. The individual is the important quantity here, not the press, the group, the movement. The poet who can write with Power, astound at a reading, fulfil promise with a book. I don't see any true central rallying point, any sure place or area where a new, important-to-be, somehow critical-to-all-at-any-given-time poet will emerge except as an individual force. No trendy regionalism wherein poets writing here one day slowly or suddenly are doing something somehow manifestly fated to be. Not hue, where new ripples suddenly catch old ones, stealing with the capture some of their energy. □

When Delta was a high mark

Selected Essays and Criticism, by Louis Dudek, The Tecumseh Press, 380 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 919 662 609).

By SHERRY SIMON

"THIS IS MAINLY to let the reader know that the book is cut: not the least service one can perform in a country which for the most extensive tracts has no book stores at all, or book stores which do not supply the best contemporary literature except on special order..." Thus begins Louis Dudek's 1953 review of the translations of Ezra Pound. Its evocation of Canada's cultural misery during the 1940s and 1950s points to one of the central interests of Dudek's *Selected Essays and Criticism*. The collection can be read as a contribution to a future cultural history of Canada.

Spanning three decades of critical activity, from IWO to the present, the essays not only provide important studies of major Canadian poets; they also chronicle the



development of the role of poetry in Canadian society. As Poet, editor, anthologist, teacher, journalist, and critic, Louis Dudek has been involved in every aspect of poetry-making. He was editor of *Delta* from 1957 to 1966 and collaborated with numerous other little magazines, where most of the essays in this collection were first published. *Literature and the Press*, based on Dudek's doctoral research, was published in 1960. Dudek's essays then, like the poetry he prefers, are grounded in experience and an awareness of the social context of poetic activity.

The early essays evoke images of a vast and empty land, a "conventional, narrow and materialistic society" whose few poets, united in struggle against the Philistine society, huddle around mimeographed little magazines. Poetry is an expression of revolt; the poet is James Dean. "The way to freedom and order in the future will be through art and poetry," Dudek asserts. Most of the studies of this period are devoted to the Montreal poets F. R. Scott, A. M. Klein, and Irving Layton.

The short, almost hortatory pieces of the 1950s give way to longer, more analytical treatments of Canadian poets and traditions. Dudek turns from his own previously unqualified championing of Layton and Klein to more rigorous analysis of their work. The fight for the very existence of serious Canadian poetry has not become the struggle for the very highest standards of poetry and criticism.

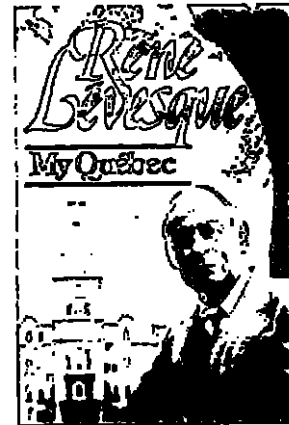
The values of his own poetic mission explain why Dudek did not exult in the burgeoning of poets and publications in the 1960s. The phenomenon of the "poet as popular hero" — Leonard Cohen, Al Purdy, Layton — for Dudek only obscured the work of less flamboyant but far superior poets such as Raymond Souster.

Dudek is remarkably consistent in his aims throughout the collection. Through analyses of the work of many of the major figures in Canadian poetry — including Lampman, Klein, Scott, Pratt, Souster, Mandel — Dudek argues for a Canadian poetry of value and of values. He maintains a long but evolving opposition to the mythopoetic theories of Northrop Frye: the initial uncompromising refusal becomes a more tempered response to formalism. Some of the more polemic pieces, however, come close to quibbling.

The essays are remarkable for their resistance to academic style. Such pieces as "The Role of the Little Magazine in Canada" and "The New Vancouver Poetry" make fascinating reading. And particularly interesting are Dudek's studies of French Canadian poets. Everywhere Dudek speaks with a conviction and a personal commitment that are as rare as they are admirable in a critical enterprise. The publication of this volume is a significant contribution to the tradition that Dudek himself has helped to build. The essays deserve the wide audience to which they are addressed. □

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The Party is the pen

Under the PQ government, says this Quebec novelist, literature is in power. And not only does the giant know how to write, it can also turn dreams into reality

by Roch Carrier

translated by Sheila Fischman

TALKING ABOUT Quebec writers isn't the most restful activity in the world for another Quebec writer. If I were so bold as to say that I find a good part of our literature a chore. I'd risk being tied to a stake and subjected to the same sort of treatment the cursed Indians once inflicted, so we are told, on our blessed white and Catholic missionaries. And if I were to declare that the literature of Quebec, teeming with magnificent books and useless books, is an undertaking of cultural construction that fills me with enthusiasm. I'd be suspect: people might accuse me of using our literature to further the cause of my own work.

Things move fast in Quebec: notice that I didn't say they move forward. They move. I could suggest today that it's essential to read a particular writer; tomorrow the same writer's work might be as interesting as a five-year-old phone book.

The election of the Parti Québécois has silenced a whole group of writers who used to yell loudly in works that would make us tremble as we read them. Their books have become as old as the pop songs of another age, and the prophets are now applying themselves to bringing about their curses and carrying out their own prophecies. You can find them in various government departments. One might be at work on a document that will teach us that driving a québécois nail into a québécois plank on a fine québécois Saturday afternoon is an act of cultural creation; another prophet, serving on another committee, has been working for six months on the important task of deciding — within the overall perspective of the destiny of Quebec — whether it's better to use Sony or Teac tape-recorders to teach French, in keeping with the requirements of Bill 101, to young anglophone citizens of Quebec; yet another, also working within the overall perspective for Quebec, but working more specifically to bring québécois architecture back into favour, has been given the task of writing the epic story of the fine craftsmanship and genius of québécois locksmiths; while another, finally, a great poet who has lost his voice,

has been given the privilege of buying the blue shirts his cabinet minister will wear on television. If you can't reach these people in their offices it's easy to find them, busy building Quebec, in one of the fashionable restaurants: they've all put on weight since the PQ came to power.

In the past, Quebec literature was written in opposition; it demanded and, more or less openly, it denounced. But since the PQ has been in power it's rather as though the literature was in power. And the former prophets will tell you that it now must find a new voice.

I would have liked to talk about a few of these writers, but they all seem to me to reject as rather futile what they wrote before the PQ. If they've stopped writing for the time being, I fully expect that they'll be giving us something in the future, for all were people with broad scope and lots of talent. So I won't talk about the poet Gérard Godin, who I saw the other day in the National Assembly, sleepy and all dressed

up as the Honourable Member for Mercier.

Now let me correct the impression I might have been giving you. Not all our writers were silenced once the PQ came to power. New authors have appeared, important books have been published, others will be. However, it's important to state that the greatest poet in Quebec today is the Parti Québécois and our little books are swept along in its river of intellectual production like so many wisps of straw. The PQ as poet celebrates with quavering voice our québécois virtues; it magnifies our pest, making lyrical associations between 1837 and today, stirs up a new nostalgia for Duplessis, tickles the right Acadian chord and strokes the exoticism of Louisiana.

The PQ as novelist tells the story of Jean-Baptiste the Québécois who, driven to suicide by the existential pin of living in a place called Canada, suddenly finds a reason for living when miraculously a group of petit bourgeois from Outremont come into power, who beneath their professional masks are really Messiahs come to save him through their Word. When Jean-Baptiste hears them he's born again; he dances in the streets, he starts making babies again, for the PQ will give them a future — if Jean-Baptiste is willing to submit to the PQ. Guided by the Outremont Messiahs, Jean-Baptiste is proud to pay the highest taxes in the country; he thumbs his nose at all the exploiting companies, he is able at last to impose his language as the language of work, he can buy up all the asbestos in the town of the same name. Under the PQ, Jean-Baptiste no longer thinks about his own despair. He has a thousand reasons for living now, because the PQ is offering him a future. Jean-Baptiste has only one word to say: OUI.

The PQ as essayist produces so profusely that it seems as though nothing can escape its pondering: insurance salesmen, artists, smokers, anglophones, women, homosexuals, flowers, trees, business, skating. The PQ, then, is the most important Quebec author, the most well-rounded, the most profound, the most dynamic, the most advanced, the hardest, and the most



Roch Carrier

reasonable too. In any case, that's what the Party says.

Compared with this giant, the Quebec writer is a puny creature indeed. He's quite alone. Why work when the PQ does our job so well for us? Why write when the PQ writes so well --and not only does the giant know how to write, he can also turn dreams into reality. If the writer thinks the same way as the government, the act of writing becomes derisory. The Quebec writer has always written in order to be, in order to become. But now the PQ is doing what we are and what we are to become: so why write? If the writer's thinking doesn't coincide with official PQ thinking, a feeling of remorse is inevitable. We're convinced that we have a good government, one that takes the interests of Quebecers to heart more than any other government; no one else is so concerned about our destiny as a people and as individuals on this American land. Under such conditions, how can we write anything that goes against the thinking of the PQ? Authors are sometimes stifled by guilt, or they choose to put off the act of writing till later, telling themselves they must do nothing against the PQ before it's been given a chance to test its wings. Under such circumstances, it's not surprising that those free spirits who still dare to write and publish will be awarded more merit.

You must understand that the PQ government represents more than just a government. Quebecers expect that the PQ will relieve all their frustrations, respond to all their hopes and accomplish all their dreams. With an ordinary government, voters generally expect it to put to work at least the broad outlines of the platform that has caused it to be elected. In the case of the Parti Québécois, we expect a God who will remake Quebec, Canada, America, history, the economy, and human nature. And that's scarcely an exaggeration. You can look at a Liberal Party or a Conservative Party the way you look at your accountant, gently making fun of him when he tells you how to save a dollar on your income tax. But looking at the PQ with the same expression, the same mocking smile, would suggest you were betraying something very valuable, some essential force, some vital desire.

The writer learns that in Quebec more freedom is to be found in criticizing power than in exercising or celebrating it. It's an astounding observation, one that takes the breath away; it makes the writer lose his voice. If he's very brave, like Pierre Vallières, he will seem -- as a critic of the Party -- not so important, not so essential as he was when his writing was preparing for the Party's rise to power. As for the rest, they write as the birds sing, for their own pleasure and for ours. I sometimes wonder if that might not be the highest form of human and political engagement, in fact. In any case, our recent books (1977-78) have made fewer and fewer demands.

And so, because the Party is always right and because in the long run it can't be wrong, since it is the incarnation of all the aspirations of our people and all its hopes,

because the government is necessarily right when it silences for nationalistic motives -- the growing number of disastrously negative reports on the exploitation of asbestos, the political debate is slowly slipping into something else, the discussion centering on questions that are not primarily political.

As I write, public opinion is fascinated by two problems. Some 500,000 people have signed petitions demanding that the sale of the text of a play, performed at Montreal's Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, be forbidden. The Church and the courts both bowed to their force. In thousands of letters to the editor, thousands of calls to radio stations, dozens of intellectual confrontations before the cameras, Quebecers have been sounding off about this play for some six months now -- but what they're talking about isn't the play at all. The play has become a skating rink on which two teams confront each other: one represents the old nostalgic values; the other, new values like freedom of expression. The teams share the frequently expressed desire to bum their opponent in the name of the triumph of true freedom. I heard Maître Colas, the great lawyer with a small mind who succeeded in having the sale of the play forbidden, explain that he had pleaded the case in order to help Quebecers to tame their freedom. (Freedom through censorship. . .) Throughout this debate, the PQ, busy counting the OUI votes it will need for its referendum, has been silent. No one in the government has shown enough signs of health to burst out laughing when a religious grouplet, inspired by some cretinously Catholic far-right thinker from Brazil, comes and sprinkles holy water on the building that houses the theatre in order to purify any echoes left by the accursed play. The PQ keeps quiet and makes the rounds of old peoples' homes, counting votes. According to nationalist philosophy, the PQ celebrates officially all the old values that have allowed Quebecers to live: by officially singing the praises of the richness of our heritage, celebrating old houses, historic sites, old craftsmen's techniques, celebrating all that is most characteristic about Quebec, the PQ is throwing the doors wide open for a return to the conservative ideas that gave rise to the Great Darkness of the years before the Quiet Revolution. (The *Petit catéchisme à l'usage des catholiques*, recently reprinted, is a best seller but a new printing of the *Refus global* is gathering dust on booksellers' shelves.) We're suddenly discovering that there are many Quebecers who would like to wipe out the years of the Quiet Revolution.

The other problem that public opinion is finding so fascinating (I wouldn't be surprised to see Quebecers fighting in the streets about it) is this: in the days of Bill 101, which word should appear on mad signs: STOP or ARRET? Contrary to what you might think, STOP is a French word, while ARRET, although it is French, is incorrect French if it's used to mean STOP. In these two problems everyone must

choose sides: you must have an opinion and defend it, in intellectual pubs and in discothèques as well as in country kitchens. Public rumour, swollen by all these voices, becomes an immense tumbling, while the small voice of the writer-bird, whether it is celebrating or protesting, is all too quickly drowned out. To date, no writer has been able to step back enough to have a broad vision of this intense seething, nor enough breath to undertake the task of giving a written form to our &y-faceted life. And that is why, at the table where the intellectual meal is served, what the writer has prepared is not the main course; it's scarcely more important than the chocolate served at coffee time.

If I were to find myself on a desert island like Robinson Crusoe, I'd like to find, in a box that had drifted to my island, a dictionary (the book that contains all books); and to remind me of Quebec I'd like to find at the bottom of the box, not the platform of the Parti Québécois but a few poems by Paul-Marie Lapointe, a few poems by Roland Giguère, a novel by Réjean Ducharme, a collection of stories (*Children of My Life*) by Gabrielle Roy, and a novel by Jacques Poulin. These are important works that have been knocked about by the trivial events in our intellectual lives; most of them are recent works (like Louis Caron's novel *Le Bonhomme Sept-Heures*) and all of them give me *le goût du Québec*. □

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René goes on record

With the aid of a sympathetic interviewer, Lévesque explains the PQ in Q&A style

by Margaret Beattie

La Passion du Québec, by René Lévesque with Jean-Robert Leselbaun, Editions Québec/Amérique, 238 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 58552049 1).

RENÉ LÉVESQUE'S passion for Quebec and the passion of Quebec, as expressed in this long interview, may surprise the uninited. It is a plea for sovereignty-association of Quebec, without which, Lévesque says, the other goals of the Parti Québécois cannot be achieved. Lévesque's views are elicited by a sympathetic interviewer, Paris journalist Jean-Robert Leselbaun, in a way that many English Canadians may find "usual. But for anyone who has followed a modicum of good journalistic coverage and the flowering of books on Quebec since the days of "Bi and Bi" (the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism), this book does not produce any startling new insights.

Its beauty is that it is topical — we now are witnessing the passage of bills that Lévesque outlines in the book—and that it reveals the Quebec Premier as a master communicator. The neophyte gets a quick biographical sketch. Lévesque's former métier as a journalist, his experience as a minister in Jean Lesage's Liberal government, and his role in the foundation of the *Mouvement Souveraineté-Association* and then of the Parti Québécois are portrayed as stepping stones to his present mission.

Those who regard recent political developments in Quebec as an aberrant new phenomenon would benefit from the quick history lessons give" by Lévesque in his discussion, for example, of *l'Action libérale nationale* in the 1930s — a thwarted (by Duplessis) movement in which the PQ finds some antecedents. In fact, those clamouring for a definition of "sovereignty-association" — the term Lévesque stresses as the only true description for what others perversely label "separation" or "independence" — should also look at the movement in the '60s bearing this name for historical insight as to its meaning for Lévesque and the Québécois.

Two of the five chapters deal with

sovereignty-association and the referendum, the issues that cause English Canadians the most anguish and apparently motivate Lévesque fundamentally. His social-democratic philosophy, he says, cannot be "n-hitched" from the need for sovereignty and association, although many pundits claim the voters in 1976 made the dissociation in their ballots. Lévesque denies this interpretation; he may or may not be tight in general but I do know "progressive" English Quebecers who aren't ready to take the final leap of faith toward sovereignty-association, but thought they could still vote "social-democrat." Even more voters, the pundits claim, were attracted simply by Lévesque's promise of good and clean government, and certainly prominent in the PQ's campaign publicity was the palliative of a delayed referendum. The interpretation of election results does not seem as unambiguous as Lévesque or some analysts think.

The definition of "social democracy" amuses the other major controversy about the PQ's ideology. Lévesque makes his own preferences fairly clear; he prefers the Swedish model but says Quebec's social-democracy will be *québécoise*. He stipulates that the essential elements are equality of opportunity for all, a levelling of incomes (though there will always be differences to

create motivation), and citizen-participation. To the fear that investors might avoid a sovereign and social-democratic Quebec, Lévesque responds that if there's still a profit to be made, investors will come. He relegates to secondary rank the disappointment of those Québécois who feel that the PQ has not gone far enough fast enough with its proposed reforms owing to Lévesque's preoccupation with the referendum.

A more aggressive interviewer than Leselbaun would pursue many questions further and perhaps reveal some inherent contradictions. Someone with a "inside track" might also put Lévesque's ideas in perspective — as those of a sometimes "on-dominant leader who frequently holds minority views in the cabinet and the party. A new book by Pierre O'Neill and Jacques Benjamin, *Les mandarins au pouvoir* (Editions Québec/Amérique) discusses this situation.

Lévesque's relations with English Canada are of course of consequence to our future, but only passing reference is made to his very personal experiences — once to say that he never felt personally oppressed and otherwise to explain how he feels like a foreigner when he ventures outside Quebec. He considers Pierre Trudeau, Jean Marchand and Gerard Pelletier to have lost their roots in moving to Ottawa rather than making the choice as he did, to stay in Quebec. Because of his legitimate claim to know English Canada well, I was astounded to read Lévesque saying of John Diefenbaker: "He comes from Alberta and he kept Alberta with him, even in defeat; even today, Alberta has still stayed Conservative." (Though born in Ontario, Diefenbaker made his political career in Saskatchewan.)

Apart from two speeches (one to the French National Assembly and one to the Quebec National Assembly), the book is a series of questions and answers. Lévesque's responses are clear, simple, and plausible in their argumentation, but he is not pushed to his limit. The book is a timely introduction to the man and his ideas, but should be balanced with a reading of the opposition's



René Lévesque

arguments. It is an interesting re-cap for the already initiated.

The English edition is to be published this month by Methuen. In the transition from the France to the Quebec edition, editorial changes were made in the text. Will the same be thought politic in the transition/translation from the French to the English edition in Canada? □

Crumbs in a plastic bag

Montreal English Poetry of the Seventies, edited by André Farkas and Ken Norris, Véhicule Press, 149 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919890 13 x) and \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 919890 12 1).

Madwomen, by Fraser Sutherland, Black Moss Press, 95 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88753 0451).

Letters of state, by Lazar Sarna, The Porcupine's Quill Inc., unpaginated, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88984 003 2).

By BRIAN BARTLETT

C. M. BOWRA SPEAKS in *The Creative Experiment* of those poets who "give to reality the same intense concentration that they give to their art." A characteristic of several poems in the timely *Montreal: English Poetry of the Seventies* is a failure to forget the act of writing, a constant mirroring of one's methods. Too often there seems to have been, in place of a vital need to write, merely an anxiousness to produce a poem.

"I am aiming for the hermetic statement," one poem begins, later to conclude with Boethius, the four horsemen, "dos-toevsky's desk. I executions I in bangladesh... / a season in heaven & a season in hell." as if name-dropping were a sure way to wisdom. In the most extreme case of a piece aching to be a poem, we find: "this is a poem / ... a nice now piece she says / and cracks a nut / i'll put that in i say / cookies and poems she says / ok i'll call it that i say." Such thinness of substance crumbles after one reading. Elsewhere the two poets quoted, Stephen Morrissey and André Farkas, are richer and nimbler.

Though some trends evident in this anthology are not heartening, editors Farkas and Norris have selected a generous cross-section of Montreal poetry as it existed in mid-1977. The reader can be stimulated by poets as dissimilar as Peter Van Toorn, Marc Plourde, and Artie Gold. The introduction would have been more persuasive if the editors, who over-represent themselves in the book, had not claimed that in Montreal "the poem has been established as

an open and plastic form." (*Established?* That word suggests something closed, especially since "open and plastic" evokes one grouping of poetics — à la Tish in Canada — more than many orientations. The only other influences the editors mention are Dada and North American Indian verse.)

After three slim chapbooks Fraser Sutherland, who is skimpily presented in the anthology, has delivered his first substantial collection. *Madwomen*. Sutherland gives both art and reality intense concentration. "Bones," "Traces," "Some Cases in Point," and "A Fairy Tale," all superior poems that might fall under that watery term, love poetry, cover a territory of philosophic, celebrative, despairing, and droll moods. Women help stir up many of Sutherland's supplest poems, yet he also can speak as a visitor in a foreign country where loneliness runs deeper than the absence of women: "Now all is dark, all obscure. In the rushing rain, the crying cat. / Let it in."

Other travel poems in the book, though diverting, hardly rise above artfully-told anecdote. The satin, with such knock-down victims as poetry workshops and vegetarian women, usually has less than Mayakovskian bite. Another poet could satirize Sutherland's own suckering for flamboyance, for equating booze and furniture-smashing with "life." If in truth he admires the imaginative passion more than the dramatic compulsiveness of his heroes (Lowry, Thomas, and Hemingway), why in *Impossible Men* does he say so little about writers who burned imaginatively with less flare of ego?

Numerous good poems and six or seven superior poems in *Madwomen* make a potent body of work. One hopes that Sutherland's best, like the lovers in his quietly apocalyptic "Bones," will survive to "walk on that last day."

Next to *Madwomen*, Lazar Sarna's *Letters of State* often feels frustratingly fragmentary. Despite exciting moments, the two poems that occupy more than one half the book cannot carry the weight of their length. The pair of narratives in "Camillien Houde and the Convict" sit side-by-side rather than mesh into significance. Stem pride in "Memoirs of an Elder Statesman," which builds up bunched poetry ("study my autograph / deliver it like milk / make it as basic to thought / as a triangle"), elsewhere falters into commonplace like "power I is no better than man I at avoiding arthritis."

Among Santa's briefer poems, "Poet as Leader" breathes new breath into the metaphor of wind as a tongueless, irrational force surrounding man. Sometimes *Letters of State* has a cool obliqueness and a grotesque beauty ("there is nothing we can trust / but our great ear floating on the ocean") that show Sarna, like Sutherland, has the courage to take risks. □

Gulliver in Dominion Square

The Underdogs, by William Weintraub, McClelland & Stewart, 240 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 9012 9).

By DAVID MACFARLANE

TO OBJECT STRENUOUSLY to William Weintraub's *The Underdogs*, a satirical novel about life in Quebec 20 years after separation, would be an expense of energy greater than it deserves. Doubtless, it is a book that is expected to elicit an impassioned response from someone. For example: "As for the English classics, such as Shakespeare and Dickens, most Quebec scholars were convinced that they had more artistic merit in French translation." Exactly what kind of impassioned response, however, and from whom, remains unclear. If Weintraub's outrageous prophecies (the deserted Sun Life building is turned into a high-rise farm by the impoverished Quebec government) are meant to be funny, readers of humour will laughlessly wonder why. If the kidnapping of an African diplomat by the Anglo Liberation Army is intended to be exciting, thriller enthusiasts will be hard pressed to stifle a collective yawn. And if, as I suspect is the case, the dangers of nationalism and the reasons for its existence are meant to be exposed in the heady light of satire, if parochial disputes are intended to be ridiculed by a more cosmopolitan and sensible wit, then Canadians, so in need of a wise and funny book about Quebec, will be sadly disappointed.

Life, you see, is hard for Anglos in the new Quebec. Relegated to the lowest of the lower classes, paying for some very bad, very colonial karma, the English perform menial tasks for minuscule wages, kowtowing to French overlords and living in gruesome boarding houses that have more rules than a reform school — not the least of which is No Fornication. Under the circumstances, it seems fall to wonder why any Anglos have stayed in Quebec at all. Even Wasps, one would suppose, like to get laid. Weintraub offers a simple explanation for this display of cultural masochism: the borders are closed. But the real reason, of course, is that without the Anglos in Quebec there would be nothing to write about. Lacking a certain subtlety, this is the sort of contrivance that does little to endear an author to his readers.

We are told that Mona and Paul are young lovers with no place to make love. Mona is a seamstress who dreams of becoming a costume designer. Paul plants vegetables in the corridors of the Sun Life building. Renting separate moms in the same board-

ing house. they live in a perpetual state of pre-coital *Angst*. Paul, for his part, reads G. A. Henry novels.

When Mona and Paul both join the Anglo Liberation Army, Mona becomes infatuated with Kevin, a fellow terrorist. At this torrid juncture the prose fairly crackles: "He was one of the *handsomest men she had ever met*, with steady blue eyes and a great mass of blond hair." Kevin, unlike the plodding, reliable Paul, is apparently possessed of a certain *je ne sais quoi*. Women find him irresistible. Perhaps his secret is that he does "ct read G. A. Henry novels.

The plot, such as it is, revolves around Operation Thunderbolt. While visiting Quebec for the 20th anniversary of its independence, a "African Diplomat is kidnapped by the ALA and held for ransom. The ultimate objective of the terrorists is the creation of a new country on the western half of the Island of Montreal and a portion of the Eastern Townships, to be linked with a de-militarized auto-route. This, needless to say, is highly ironic. But irony, left on its own for page after page, can become a very dull commodity. Like a guest at a boring cocktail party, the polite smile fixed on the reader's face slowly fades with fatigue.

Satire, it has been said, is a conspiracy between intelligent men. Its humour and its power emanate from the fact that the writer and the reader know something that the

subject does "ct. Satire endeavours to observe a specific situation in the light of more universal, more important considerations. On these grounds alone, *The Underdogs* is a failure. There is precious little in its pages for intelligent men to share. Weintraud offers little amusement and less illumination. □

Charting the continental self

A *Cage of Bone*, by Jean-Guy Carrier. Oberon Press, 175 pages, \$15 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 287 3) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 288 1).

By MICHAEL SMITH

THERE'S MORE MEANING than Jean-Guy Carrier is willing to give away in the scrap of pocky that provides both the epigraph and the title of *A Cage of Bone*. "I am a birdcage, a cage of bone with a bird," is all the epigraph says, but its author, Hector de Saint-Denis-Garneau, took the image much further in his poem, "Cage d'oiseau." The poem goes on to say, translated literally, that "the bird in his cage of bone is death building his nest." This fatalistic, perhaps fatal, idea that our destinies are products of our inner selves — a notion espoused in the political catchphrase "self-determination" — seems to be essential to understanding Carrier's book.

On first blush, Garneau's poem applies most easily to the two characters who are chronologically closest to death — Joseph Moreau, for 30 years the mayor of St.-Camille, and Marie Vallaire, an elderly widow probing for some meaning to her life amid the wreckage of her family. These two give the novel about as much focus as it gets, considering that it's written almost entirely in the third person but with a narrative point of view that shifts from chapter to chapter. At first, and for a long distance into the book, it looks as if the individual chapters are self-contained units — almost stories — until the lives of the various characters begin to entwine. The novel opens with Joseph, a corrupt, ambitious whoremaster of a politician, and ends after his grandiose scheming spins like a grindstone against Marie and they lovelessly couple on the barren land of her farm.

Most of the other characters are related to Marie and Joseph who, like their biblical namesakes, are primarily important as parents. Both have sons who have left Quebec and return during the course of the book. Joseph's son, William, is a foundry worker in Southern Ontario who brings back his girlfriend to meet the family, while

Marie's son, Donat, is a diseased, death-tainted wanderer who comes home to analyze what he's seen on his travels. The two sons are also probably closest autobiographically to Carrier himself, who was born of French parents in Welland, Ont. and now lives in County Bellechase, Que., the setting of all of his novels (this is the third in a series of four), which he writes in English.

At the centre of all this allegory is Donat — significantly, the only chapters written in the first person are about him — whom Carrier describes as "haunted by [the] vision of his people's genesis . . . collecting traces, signs of that monumental gestation." As he travels around North America, he discovers that his French heritage thrives outside Quebec — in place names and people as far away as Louisiana, for example. Similarly, it's his observation that explains the intense bond between Joseph and his bastard son, Joe Mackamo, a predatory half-caste Indian who lives in the forest and spies from the shadows on Mark's daughter (Donat's sister), Thérèse, with whom Mackamo eventually joins: "You had but to look at your own eyes, hair and features to recognize vanished tribes. There was not a vein, not a family in Quebec that was not strengthened by the blood of Huron, Algonquin, Montagnais, Etchemin and Micmac forebears."

Like Donat, Mackamo is obsessed with his own roots. He has forgotten the old chants and lost the amulets that connect him with his Indian grandfather, the legendary Abraham Mackamo (to whom a chapter is devoted), but seeks redemption by exhuming his dead family and giving them a ritual burial. He also contemplates murdering Joseph, the cynical rural politician, and witnesses in Thérèse, who is reading *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* by Pierre Vallières, the beginning of a political sensitivity that Carrier appears to equate with the late 1960s, the period in which the novel is set. However, both here and in a later chapter, where Joseph compares Pierre Trudeau to Maurice Duplessis, Carrier manages to avoid becoming overly polemical.

A Cage of Bone is titled in deceptively compressed, impressionistic style. Sometimes — especially in the opening chapter, which deals with Joseph's remembered liaison with a spectacular prostitute — it's reminiscent of Roch Carrier. The same echoes are heard in its occasional grotesquerie — as when, for instance, Marie recalls how her father was incinerated by lightning. As in real life, the characters bang together without much apparent plot, though admittedly the lives of some become connected by something that can't be dismissed as coincidence. In writing a testament to his culture Jean-Guy Carrier avoids preaching, and keeps his voice below a scream. Like a good poker player, he doesn't want to show too much of his hand. 0

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The bite of the termite

If loss and regret are Cheever's stated themes, they imply a faith in something, somewhere, to be regretted

by Doug Hill



The Stories of John Cheever. by John Cheever, Random House, 693 pages. \$19.50 cloth (ISBN 0 394 50087 3).

SUBTLE AMERICAN FICTION doesn't travel well. While Mailer, Barth, Bellow, Vonnegut, Brautigan tumble noisily across countries and borders, seizing book stores, classrooms, minds. John Cheever — man and work — slip modestly into Toronto for a couple of low-key interviews, a reading, a seminar. Then back to his city streets and suburban lanes, to the sort of clear but unassertive reputation that, like Isaac Singer's before the Nobel Prize, for instance, or Hortense Calisher's, wins quiet recognition and honour, but doesn't much like to fly.

The imponderables of taste, promotion, and mass-cult market trends have something to do with this situation; so does subject matter, or "relevance"; so do scope and range. This last points to a deeper cause: the sheer impossibility these days of gaining great popular success with the short story. Novels give an audience more to talk and think about, more room to rummage in, more surfaces to stick to. If to reread a novel that one has lited is to spend time with an old, long-absent friend, to rediscover a personality, then to go back to a volume of familiar short stories is at best to encounter acquaintances — faces, bodies, voices vaguely remembered from some crowded, elegant cocktail party. The age — post-

alienation — demands Meaningful Relationships.

For an established *New Yorker*-phile, a recent weekend with this huge collection — 61 stories from three decades and five books — was filled with such pleasant but ultimately casual meetings. And so is the freshness of the experience fades, as the aesthetic highs and emotional lows level out, the shopworn questions intrude again: Does a good short-story writer offer as much as a good novelist? Why not?

Cheever apparently learned how to handle tone and point-of-view at the age most of us were trying to socialize our sex drives. His assurance is dazzling: he's able repeatedly and without the slightest evidence of strain to find the exact amount of pressure, the "cc necessary temporal and spatial angle, that will give the sharpest edge to his insights. He attempts few experiments with his Jamesian gifts; and when he does, when he pushes tentatively into the Barthelmeic or Gasseous, the effects are at most provocative, not profoundly unsettling.

Cheever's style is equally sure. One catches from the start his ear for social speech, his versatility in the middle register, the half-tones of the colloquial. No matter what cadenzas his characters invent upon the motifs of exurban life, no matter what distortions of the world's melodies (or Shady Hill's or St. Botolphs') his stories slide into, the prose is denotative, precise, dead on pitch. At its best it's both concrete

and suggestive, it tells and evokes. It's fair to say that Cheever trusts language, trusts the power of sound and rhythm and metaphor to generate meaning, a good deal more than O'Hara or Bellow, somewhat less than Updike and Nabokov.

These are stories basically about fear and loss, about the humbling of what is human in us before the challenges — emotional, physical, domestic, economic — that time imposes. Families break, traditions lapse, security vanishes. Little wonder Cheever's primary images mix leaf and light — the colours of the season's am, or the day's — with rock and ocean. Or that his vision of instability embraces scenes that are regularly as bizarre and occasionally as violent as anything Faulkner or Flannery O'Connor have imagined.

Cheever's characters — flawed, fading, or failed, down on their financial or marital luck — are driven to devise strategies against the chaos that impends. There's a not surprising Puritan force to this struggle, the "feeling of life as a perilous moral adventure," as one story puts it. The assumption is of lives controlled by order and decorum, by "common sense, legitimate passions, and articles of faith." But, expectedly again, it's Calvin infused with Emerson, with the need to "celebrate a world that lies spread out around us like a bewildering and stupendous dream."

The result of Cheever's version of this on-going American conflict he locates its epicentre in "that enormous stratum of the

middle class that is distinguished by its ability to recall better times" (and by its corresponding "inability to understand that the past plays no part in our happiness") — can be transcendence, can be illusion. Chewer suggests it will most likely be the illusion of transcendence. Of course he affirms such illusion—he's an idealist — but he's a thorough-going ironist, too, and thus consistently undercuts, or at least qualifies, his own affirmations. To look from the other side of the glass: loss and regret are his stated themes, but these imply

a faith in something, somewhere, that can be regretted.

However viewed, the tension between opposing modes gives Cheever's work its character — both its special bite and its special limitations. Romantic irony is a slippery cliff-face to cling to through a 40-year career; Fitzgerald, whose attitudes and talents Cheever's resemble in numerous ways, couldn't hold it for one half that time. The price Cheever has paid for a ridiculously high number of superbly poignant stories — for survival and mastery in

his art-is, a cynic might observe, to have written the same story 61 times over.

It's true that no other modern American writer of significance has strayed so seldom from the short-story fold, nor remained so comfortably and productively within it. I'd note only that small effects can exact their toll, that termites can often accomplish what hurricanes can't. Who better than Cheever (and Fitzgerald, for that matter), growing up in large old frame houses on the ragged fringes of gentility, to know and demonstrate this? □

The Romans are coming

Pauline Gedge's saga of Heroic-Age Britons is a sad waste of an era made to order for the historical novelist

by I. M. Owen

The Eagle and The Raven. by Pauline Gedge. Macmillan. 702 pages, 512.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1714 5).

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL WAS once one of the principal kinds of fiction. Nowadays the paperback racks are filled with so many mindless, unimaginative romances masquerading as historical novels that the form is in disrepute, receiving no attention from serious critics and little even from frivolous reviewers. Yet our time has produced some of the finest of all the practitioners of this difficult art: Robert Graves, Rex Warner, Mary Renault (sometimes), Rosemary Sutcliffe, and above all the nearly faultless Alfred Duggan. And now we have Pauline Gedge of *Hanna, Alta.*, whose massive first novel, *Child of the Morning*, was published in the spring of 1977. With astonishing rapidity her second massive novel, *The Eagle and the Raven*, appeared in the fall of 1978.

Child of the Morning has an ideal subject in Hatshepsut, the only woman Pharaoh: ideal because, while we know almost nothing about her (her successor obliterated most of her inscriptions), we know a lot about her times. Hence the author could give her imagination free play within a firm framework of known religion, laws, customs, and arts. She did it superbly well, never putting a foot wrong.

In *We Eagle and the Raven* she has moved forward from the Egypt of about 1500 BC to Britain, AD 32-61. Pardonably, this takes her to a place and time

of which we know far less. And she puts a foot wrong at nearly every opportunity.

This is sad, because she has chosen a good story, set in the kind of period that seems made to order for the historical novelist: a time when a Heroic-Age people was making its last stand against the inexorable advance of organized civilization.

Most Indo-European peoples seem to have lived through the Hemic Age, and though it happened for the different peoples at vastly different times the societies it produced were strikingly similar. The manners, customs, and ethics of the Homeric heroes and of the Scottish Highland chiefs of the 13th to 18th centuries are virtually indistinguishable from each other. It was a society in which wealth consisted essentially of herds; the dominant ethical value was honour; and the only honourable method of increasing one's wealth was armed robbery, which was called "war" and gave the necessary opportunities for glorious exploits worthy of being put into immortal verse by the household bard.

In a transitional period, when a Heroic-Age society was on the point of being overwhelmed by the modern world of cultivators and city-dwellers, the dominant figures in the doomed society were likely to be themselves transitional, belonging already to both worlds, and this is what gives them their peculiar glamour. Fergus MacIvor in *Scott's Waverley* is such a figure: in his banqueting hall the perfect barbarian chief, in his sister's drawing-room the perfect French-bred courtier;

deeply divided within himself, and inevitably doomed. This is what they must really have been like, the actual chiefs, chieftains, and duniwassals who charged headlong to their destruction in 1745-6.

Seventeen hundred years earlier, we find a similar figure in Caradoc ap Cunobelin, whom the Romans called Caractacus or Caratacus. He was a king of the Catuvellauni, a Belgic tribe who had invaded Britain about 75 BC, and had steadily expanded until they controlled virtually the whole southeast of the island. The only substantial result of Julius Caesar's two abortive raids on Britain in 55 and 54 had been that from then on the Catuvellauni were in a close trading relationship with Rome and Roman Gaul. (Among their chief exports were hounds and slaves.) By Caractacus's time they were already half-Romanized, preferring Roman art to Celtic, Gallic and Italian wine to beer and mead. Yet when the Claudian invasion came in AD 43 it was the Catuvellauni under Caractacus and his brother Togodumnus who put up the stoutest resistance; and when that resistance was broken Caractacus didn't make peace but fled into the west, where he organized the wild tribes of what now is Wales into a guerrilla force that stopped the Roman war machine dead in its tracks for eight years. When at last he was somehow inveigled into a pitched battle and inevitably defeated, he took refuge with Cartimandua, queen of Brigantia (Yorkshire, roughly). This was odd of him, because she had been a collaborator from the first, and she immediately sold him to the Romans.

It is for the end of his story that Caractacus is chiefly remembered, because it's one of the rare pleasing moments in the grotesque history of the Julio-Claudian dynasty: he and his wife and children, though they had arrived in Rome eight years too late to adorn Claudius's triumphal procession, were paraded through the streets in chains anyway, but when they came before the emperor they were not garrotted (the usual custom); instead, to the cheers of the mob, their chains were struck off, and they spent the rest of their lives in Rome as Caesar's honoured pensioners.

It's a good story, and then is much that's good in Pauline Gedge's telling of it. But she doesn't bring it off with the same triumphant rightness as Hatshepsut's story. Partly it is that she never succeeds in getting inside Caradoc's mind. R'S not for want of trying, but for me he remains wooden throughout. She does much better with her two other main characters, the villainous Cartimandua and the queen of the Iceni, Boudicca (Boadicea). The latter in particular seems to have captured Gedge's imagination in a way that Caradoc failed to do, and she has formed a highly original and very engaging conception of the nationalist queen and her collaborator husband, so committed to each other that they can only make a running joke of their opposing views.

We know extraordinarily little about British society in this period, and any

novelist who tackles it must make large guesses. This Gedge does, but her guesses seem to me uniformly bad. For example, I refuse to believe that women were trained from childhood in swordpersonship and regularly took their place in the battle-line. If it had been so, Julius Caesar and Agricola would surely have noticed and reported such a remarkably un-Roman activity. Or is this Gedge's daring new reading of Caesar's statement that British warriors didn't shave their upper lips? Likewise, her Druids have introduced the ordination of women, which I deeply doubt.

The book is riddled with minor historical inaccuracies, and strange confusions in the names of people, places, and gods. The author seems unaware that the Gaelic spoke in Ireland and the language of the Gauls and Britons were two quite separate branches of Celtic, and that then is no evidence of contact between the two cultures at this period.

I conclude that somebody — probably Dii Press, her America publishers — pushed Pauline Gedge too hard for another book in a hurry to follow up the success of the first. Either this is an early effort that she dug out of a drawer, or she wrote it to order in extreme haste. Either way, it was obviously sent for typesetting without editorial scrutiny. I hope she is now being given a decent stretch of time to work on her next book. A talent like hers should be treated with reverence. □

Omnia amor vincit on the old Silk Road

The *Left-Handed Spirit*, by Ruth Nichols, Macmillan, 220 pages, 59.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1701 3).

By AERON ROWLAND

RUTH NICHOLS has certainly had a prolific career to date. This is the fifth novel (her second for adults) by this 30-year-old writer, who has a PhD in religious studies and is widely read in history, archaeology, and the occult. She is most at home in the fantasy genre, where she can transpose her childhood and academic experiences into vividly imagined adventure stories. *The Left-Handed Spirit* is historical fiction, just shy of historical romance. It takes the reader on a fascinating journey through the ancient Asia world. Nichols often fails to weave her historical details and philosophical ideals subtly into the fabric of her story, however, and tends to bore the reader.

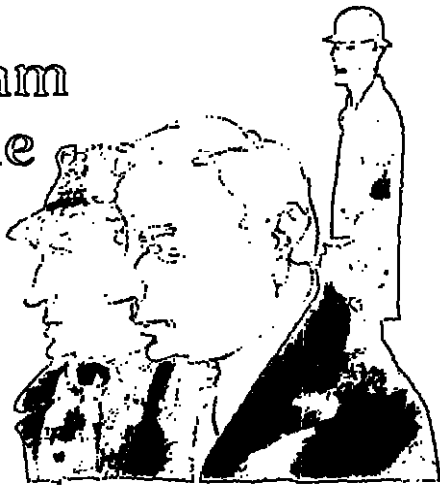
The novel is the memoir of Mariana, a Roman jeweller who lives in the second

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century AD and who has been mysteriously endowed with the gifts of healing and prophecy by Apollo. A Chinese ambassador, in Rome to capture silk thieves, hears of Mariana's powers and abducts her. The major portion of the novel takes the reader on an incredible journey along the Silk Road (the ancient silk-trading route) from the Rome of Marcus Aurelius to Imperial China just preceding the collapse of the Han Dynasty. For Mariana the journey is both physically and spiritually challenging. Away from the protection of her family, she begins to understand and take responsibility for the gifts Apollo has given her. She is also forced to grapple with her feelings of repulsion and then attraction for her abductor, Ambassador Paulus.

Nichols' knowledge of antiquity, her vivid imagination, and her fine use of metaphor make this a potentially captivating odyssey for the reader. Unfortunately, the author's choice of the first-person narrative emphasizes the weaknesses in her prose style. Were Mariana really writing in the second century, she would not need to explain as much as she does. Her voice often shifts mood as Nichols takes over to explain background to her 20th-century audience. The resulting passages tend to be oversimplified and didactic, possibly indicating that Nichols does not have her audience clearly in mind: she tends to patronize her dull readers, while writing beyond the scope of most children.

Nichols freely admits that she does not write with an audience in mind, but writes for herself. As a result, her books, like their author, are precocious offspring. As Nichols and her writing style mature, one hopes she will learn to incorporate her wealth of imaginative ideas more successfully into her narrative. □

Recycles built for two

City Boys, by David Lewis Stein, Oberon Press, 186 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 27.1 1) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 276 8).

Selected Stories, by Hugh Hood, Oberon Press, 232 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 279 2) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750280 6).

By MICHAEL SMITH

DAVID LEWIS STEIN can write good short stories, but not many turn up here. Like Pollution Probe's press releases, *City Boys* is made of recycled material. One of the stories, "The Avenue," is an excerpt from a forthcoming novel and, though it provides a provocative introduction to Max Himmel-farb, boy hustler, it suffers from its 22 Books in Canada, February, 1979

fragmentary nature. Two other scraps, which can only loosely be described as stories, are from Stein's previous two novels, and yet another is from his non-fiction book, *Living the Revolution: The Yuppies in Chicago*. These latter three, which appear under the omnibus title "The Demonstration," are really mostly reportage from D. L. Stein the journalist (*Star Weekly*, *Maclean's*, *The Toronto Star*, and so forth). And like almost all reprinted journalism, they suffer from old age.

"The Demonstration" falls in particular because it lacks the structure that makes a real short story into a self-contained unit. Instead it is presented as a collage of events, full of blanks. The second segment, an insider's account of the rioting at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, is very likely the most familiar territory for many readers, but there isn't enough external narrative to refresh our memories and give the story some focus. After all, it deals with something that happened more than 10 years ago and reached Canada largely through the distortion of television. Apart from the "The Demonstration," three of the six remaining stories were written between 1965 and 1967 (the others were written after 1975); with its references to Lester Pearson, the war in Vietnam in "The Night of the Little Brown Men," and the Columbia student strike in "Fresh Disasters," a lot of this book lags a decade behind.

By far the best of the older stories is "Marvin, Marvin," written in 1966 and not previously published. Max, the narrator, is remembering his friends — the Greenie, Herbie, and Marv — their years in high school, at the University of Toronto and beyond, and especially their mutual relationship with Jake Wells, a tantalizing, bruised young woman from Buffalo, a city that, believe it or not, once represented sophistication and decadence to Toronto boys. ("We measured ourselves against her," Max says of Jake, "and usually discovered that no matter what we'd learned in the time since we'd last seen her, she still knew a little bit more than we did." By contrast, "In There" (1975), also previously unpublished, is a lightweight piece of science fiction, and "Beck Where I Can Be Me" (1967) abruptly hits a hokey ending that spoils the rest of the story.

Hugh Hood's *Selected Stories* are recycled too, of course — the 16 stories are drawn from his four previous collections — but in this case it's more a matter of skimming cream. Conventional wisdom long has held that Hood is a good story writer and inferior novelist — a notion that has been disputed by Hood in critical discussions of his excessive, pseudo-Proustian series of novels that began with *The Swing in the Garden*. On the evidence of these stories, I'd argue that Hood is mistaken, at least from the reader's point of view. While all of them build on the same attention to detail as his novels ("Fallings from Us, Vanishings" even dramatizes a men's encyclopedic obsession with the

recent pest and its pitfalls), they enjoy, as stories, a control that his New Age novels appear to lack.

Unlike many collections of "selected" stories, this one doesn't include Hood's best-known work, such as "Getting to Williamstown," "Recollections of the Works Department," and "Flying a Red Kite." It does provide two title stories from previous collections, "The Fruit Men, the Meat Man & the Manager" and "Dark Glasses" (the premise of which I find hard to swallow), and both prove, I think, that title stories are chosen as much for the supposed snappiness of their titles as for their merits as short stories. The stories from *Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life* (1967) tend toward a documentary flavour that's rooted in their sense of locale, and two — "Light Shining Out of Darkness" and "The River Behind Things" — seem somewhat reminiscent (this is a compliment) of Not-men time. My favourites are among the earlier stories, such as "Silver Bugles, Cymbals, Gold & Silks," an account of the narrator's career in a Catholic boys' band, and "Nobody's Going Anywhere," about the parents of a three-year-old daughter and their impending confrontation with bigotry and death outside the home. □

Grid and bare it

Overload, by Arthur Hailey, Doubleday, 402 pages, \$13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 02104 6).

By DOUGLAS MARSHALL

ARTHUR HAILEY'S novels need no byline. If the one-word title were not clue enough, we could be absolutely sure we were embroiled in a Hailey plot by the bottom of page 19. Our protagonist is Nim (for Nimm, the mighty hunter of Genesis) Goldman, planning vice-president of Golden State Power & Light — California's giant public utility. GSP&L has been running all out under a heatwave. There are no reserves left. Then saboteurs knock out the Utility's newest and largest generator, plunging much of the state into total electric blackout and incidentally killing Nim's best friend. He is off to console the widow when he encounters plump, fortyish Teresa Van Buren. GSP&L's vice-president for public relations. The dramatic dynamo Hailey has set spinning with fine economy and his usual perfect control of technical research abruptly blows a fuse as poor puppet-like Teresa is made to deliver a key psychological insight:

"You've got a few things to learn about women, Nim — other than calisthenics in bed, and from rumors I hear, you're getting

plenty of that." She regarded him shrewdly. "You're a hunter of women, aren't you?" Then her motherly eyes softened. "Maybe I shouldn't have said that right now. Go, do the best you can for Walter's wife."

The best Nim can do is improbably bed the sobbing widow, at her invitation of course. In fact, by narrative's end he has bedded or is about to bed every major female character in the book except Teresa of the motherly eyes.

Readers will require a minimum of cerebral wats to figure out that this is a novel about power-sexual and electrical. The sexual passages are unashamedly trendy. Since quadriplegics are in this year, one of Nim's conquests is a saintly poet paralyzed from the neck down and dependent on GSP&L for her very survival. ("Could a quadriplegic woman have an orgasm? Empathically, yes!") A minor character has his manhood fried to a crisp in a pylon accident; later we learn how a penile prosthesis works. For all its trendiness, however, the sex remains as straight as Nim's rod. No AC-DC currents in *Overload*.

As always with a Haiky novel, the mechanical wiring is far sounder and much more believable than the emotional circuitry. At issue is a fundamental question of modern civilization — energy versus environment. Haiky sides with the forces of power and light and loads the argument in their favour. Goldman and GSP&L repre-

sent reasonable compromise; the environmentalists, unwittingly allied to a pathological terrorist group, are eventually exposed and humiliated. Apart from the terrorists, the chief villains in the piece are the proliferating regulatory boards and the power-hungry political appointees who sit on them. In Halley's view, enlightened big business knows best.

But forget the simplistic politics, the neon-sign dialogue, and the crude connections — like awkward lumps of solder — between the characters and the issues. The author doesn't claim to be Forster. In its coiled plotting, this is high-voltage Hailey. It is also, he has announced, his last novel. As *Overload* ends, Nim Goldman, after hesitating for a second, accepts the sexual offer made by the black woman reporter who has been his chief public critic. Hailey, fittingly enough, is going out with a bang. □

IN BRIEF

The New Oxford Book of Light Verse, chosen by Kingsley Amis, Oxford University Press. 347 pages, \$15.50 cloth (ISBN 0 19 211862 5). When W.H. Auden edited the last edition of this anthology in 1938 there were murmurs that his was not the surest hand to place at the helm of a collection of light verse. Auden's idea of what was light and what august was, to say the least, eccentric (Amis politely calls it

"optimistic") and is fairly summed up by Antis as the work "of a poet who unself-consciously shares the common life and language of ordinary men and writes of the one in the other, in something close to the speaking voice." Auden seems to have hit on this definition first, and then gone digging about for things to fit it. He found, to the consternation of some, that Wordsworth, D.H. Lawrence, and Siegfried Sassoon fit it nicely. Clearly a new approach was in order.

Kingsley Antis is a happier choice. He went about looking for verse he enjoyed that also satisfied his aesthetic and moral criteria, and then sat down to write an introduction in which he realized he couldn't define or really defend what he had chosen. He borrows definitions from A. A. Milne ("true humour expressing itself in perfectly controlled rhyme and rhythm") and Charles Dibdin ("To raise a good-natured smile."), but evidently feels somewhat more exalted claims needed to be made. "Light verse need not be funny," he writes, but it also "must not, cannot be difficult." The former justified the inclusion of some unfunny nonsense by Samuel Johnson; the latter accounts for the exclusion of Chaucer's otherwise very funny "Miller's Tale" and Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot."

This insistence on rigid form (rhyme and rhythm) does seem crucial to light verse, and it is surprising how many lofty poets



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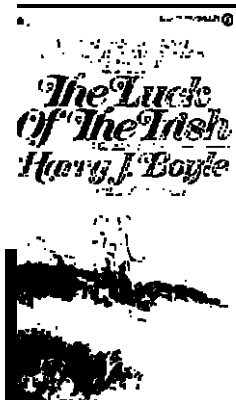
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has used it to such comic effect, from Ben Jonson through Swift to Robert Graves, Louis MacNeice and, oddly enough, W. H. Auden, whose 1937 poem "Letter to Lord Byron," Auden himself rejected and Amis has in. And certainly Amis is right to include a poem that is virtually *about* light verse:

*Light verse, poor girl, is under a sad weather;
Except by Milne and persons of that kind
She's treated as démodé altogether.
It's strange and very unjust to my mind
Her brief appearances should be confined,
Apart from Belloc's Cautionary Tales,
To the more bourgeois periodicals.*

—WAYNE GRADY

Pain, thunder, and rainbows

Poems: New & Selected, by Patrick Lane, Oxford. 112 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 5402% 0).

Names of Thunder, by Scott Lawrance, McClelland & Stewart, 95 pages, 85.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 47401).

Carnival, by R.G. Everson. Oberon Press, 58 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 272 5) and \$4.50 paper (ISBN 0 88750 273 3).

By LEN GASPARINI

WITH SO MANY presses pumping out poetry these days you'd think there was an insatiable market for it. The truth is just the opposite. I think it is fairly accurate to assume that there are many people who enjoy reading poetry, but not many who are willing to buy a book of poetry. Why this is so gives rise to some curious speculation that might even confound a market-research expert. Perhaps most publishers fail to follow through with the necessary promotion and distribution of poetry books. Whatever the reason, one thing is certain: something is drastically wrong. Most poets publish and perish. That's how the system works.

Patrick Lane is one poet who's had a rocky time of it, but he's come a long way from the wretchedness of "Calgary City Jail" where his cellmate "laughed when I carved my name above my bed./What does it matter? he said/ they'll only paint you over." Lane has been plugged into the poetry circuit for the past 15 years or so, and his latest justification for it is a collection of new and selected poems. He was also appointed writer-in-residence at the University of Manitoba for 1978-79.

I have always had the utmost respect for Lane's work in books and magazines, and this new volume is an ostensible culmination of his poetic talent. His themes are earthy, steeped in raw experience, the sweat

of working and loving, and his language rages with pain, a violent beauty, and Neruda's "confused impurity of the human condition." His imagery is seldom bland; in fact, it often relies on a shock effect, as in "If," a grim poem about a Mexican woman "who fed her family by fucking a burro/ on a wooden stage in Tijuana."

Lane's poems are poignantly impressionistic observations on the menacing aspects of man and nature. He writes about his native British Columbia with passion and irony, like a man who knows its moods inside out. He can soar into the lyricism of "Macchu Picchu," or dive into himself with "The Trace of Being." The feeling is always there, taut with emotion, every word a muscle expressing the imagination of a true poet whose sensibilities thrum like guitar strings. Patrick Lane speaks first and last for himself, and his *Poems New & Selected* is a testament toward that end:

Ah, heart, I cannot scorn the armies of your pain.
It is night, air, and I am drunk again on words.
One stone would be enough,
One leaf a feast.

Heralding the debut of a new voice in Canadian poetry can be exciting, especially when the voice is amplified by a publisher as reputable as McClelland & Stewart. Scott Lawrance's *Names of Thunder* is an exuberant collection of poems that wavers hope fully, falls impressively, and rises again to vivid heights of emotion and expression. I'm not so sure of his quirky syntax and punctuation à la Bill Bissett, but he does have a certain style that brings to mind Hare Krishna chants and Bob Dylan's more socially conscious lyrics. There are some genuinely good poems in Lawrance's book, but not enough of them to combine other poetic influences into a vision that is his own. Too often he inhibits himself by paraphrasing the dialectics of his favourite poets — Whitman, Neruda, Pound, *et al.* It is only when he drops the role of poet that he comes across like one, natural, and in touch with his own rhythm. But the splitting of the ego is tempting and sometimes inevitable for survival: "I found that I had one voice/ in Toronto & one quite different in the wilderness."

Scott Lawrance is definitely worth listening to for his wry humour and experimentation with verse forms; and *Names of Thunder*, while not a startlingly original book, is the next best thing to it. When he eventually hits his stride, then will be lightning as well as thunder.

R. G. Everson has been around for a long time, and he's as much a part of the Canadian poetry scene as maple trees in autumn. An inveterate traveller and raconteur, Everson makes poems out of everything. *Carnival* is his latest collection, and he's at it again, writing about a damselfly, his family tree, Oshawa weeds, a rainbow trout, gulls, and so forth. Many of the poems in *Carnival* are somewhat prosy, but the rich imagery is always consistent: a crocus "pushes up its periscope" in the spring; a nighthawk falls out of a New-

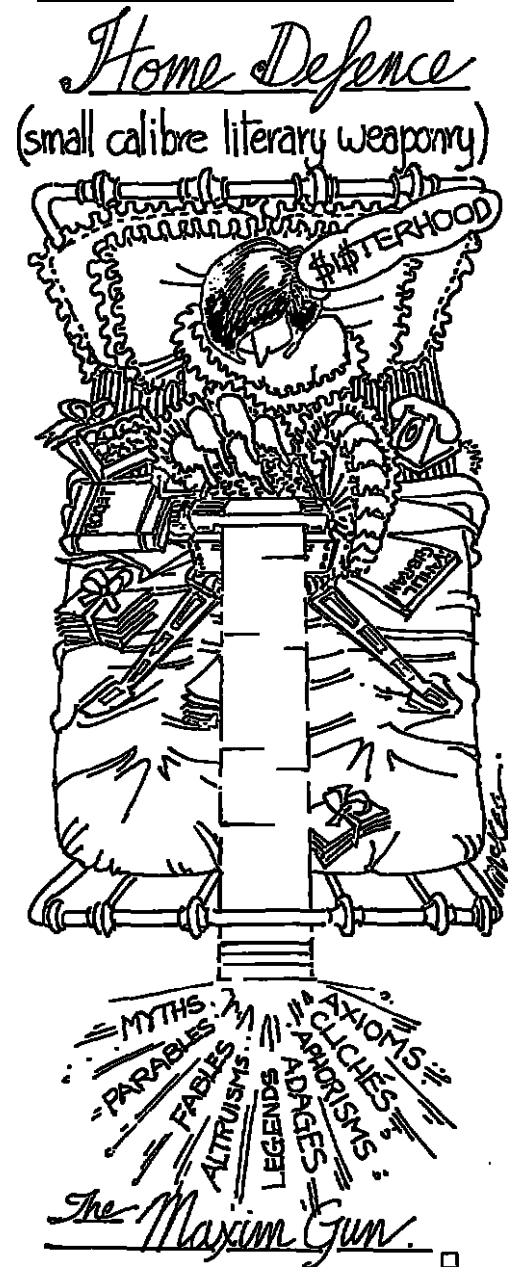
foundland sky, its "brakes screaming."

On the whole, Everson's book is a bit uneven. It contains too many random observations that resemble unfinished paintings. If Everson had concentrated some of his energy on revision, *Carnival* would have been an exciting sequence instead of a collage. □

Once more into the breeches

When **Lovers Are Friends**, by Merle Shain, McClelland & Stewart, 106 pages, \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 8134 0).

By JON MCKEE



To feel is not to finish

Moon Without Light, by Len Gasparini, York Publishing, 93.95 paper (ISBN 0 920424 09 0).

The Journey Back and Other Poems, by Christopher Levenson, Sesame Press, paper unpriced (ISBN 0 9205 80 00 9).

Rehearsal for Dancers, by Craig Powell, Turnstone Press, paper unpriced (ISBN 0 88801 012 5).

Tree of August, by Mary Di Michele, Three Tree Press, \$3.95 paper (ISBN 88823 003 6).

By DAVID MACFARLANE

"AN ARTIST," said Robert Motherwell, is someone who has an abnormal sensitivity to a medium." It is a simple definition, no less true for its simplicity, and not quite so obvious as one might think. Consider Irving Layton's preface to Len Gasparini's *Moon Without Light*. "You have," Layton writes to the author, "a feeling for people and the situations they find themselves in, and you're not embarrassed by a display of their emotions or your own." The implication is that a poet must have a sensitivity to more than poetry. That life is the first concern. Yet it remains true that the most awesome subject, or, for that matter, the most unwavering eye, has never guaranteed a good poem: only the writing does that. And if a poem is never merely constructed, neither is it ever simply felt into existence. Gasparini, for all the honesty of his sentiments, is unable to make quite as much as he feels.

The best poems, "Elegy," "After the Divorce," "Funeral," are self-possessed and direct. The worst, "Marijuana Poem" and "Florida," are reminiscent of the Beats, though they lack the crazy wit that sustains a Corso or Ferlinghetti. There are lines with the clever ring of aphorism — "a poet is the suicide who decides not to" — but which, on reflection, ring hollow and false. What, if anything, would John Berryman or Anne Sexton or Sylvia Plath make of so cavalier and facile an attitude? Some of the verse in this collection — "The spring air is alive/with your scent, your inviolable essence/of woman" — should never have been allowed beyond the first draft.

Christopher Levenson, on the other hand, seems a good example of Motherwell's definition. *The Journey Back* is, I suspect, the work of someone whose thoughts unfold not for but through the writing of poetry. One word placed next to another invents an idea, a vision: "beyond the splintered barn/woodsmoke is assumed/into the wind-still, birdless/onset of winter." There is

something wonderful here, something comparable in quality to the work of D. G. Jones. And if Levenson is not as consistently fine as Jones (there are mistakes, empty images, the occasional overly conclusive final line), the best poems — "The Journey Back," "The Diviner," "In My Father's House," "Summer Friends," are ones that know, in a straightforward way, what poetry is all about.

There are similarities between *The Journey Back* and Craig Powell's *Rehearsal for Dancers*. There is the same paternal love and concern for children, the same clear vision of a new country, memories of the old. But it is Powell's sparse, sometimes choppy style and rigorous discipline that set these poems apart from Levenson's. Not as accessible, they are certainly sadder and more private. The beauty of such poems as "Habitations," "The Water Carrier," "The Silence in Which my Friends Die" is more frightening. Take, for example, these lines from "After Midnight": "snow/falls lii sailors/off the edge of the world/I need to hear/your body in its sleep." The desperation is sometimes overwhelming.

Mary Di Michele seems more interested in poems than in poetry. The act of writing is not a prominent symbol in *Tree of August* as it is in Gasparini, Levenson, and Powell. Her persona is more woman than poet and although her art is less ambitious than Powell's or Levenson's, it can come closer to a recognizable bone. "First Mamma's voice from the kitchen/hot and heavy, /like the steaming cauldron." There is only the slimmest line between Di Michele's successes and her failures. A poem like "Amour Propre" is engaging enough, but somehow the language does not support any real importance. Poems like "By the Road" and "Born in August," however, work through a medium and render it very much Di Michele's own. □

Bulgar versions of spring thaw

Remember Mc Well, by Andrei Germanov, translated from the Bulgarian by John Robert Colombo and Nikola Roussanoff, Hounslow Press, 80 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88882 321 1).

Depths: Conversations with the Sea, by Dora Gabe, translated from the Bulgarian by John Robert Colombo and Niiola Ratsanoff, Hounslow Press, 64 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88882 035 6).

By ANDREA GALLAGHER

ANDREI GERMANOV was born in 1932 in Yavorova, a village in Eastern Bulgaria. He has published more than 30 books, most of them poetry, in the last 20 years, and is the

editor-in-chief of *Plamak (Flame)*, the monthly publication of the Bulgarian Writers' Union. Dora Gabe is a 90-year-old poet — "the most beloved of Bulgaria's living writers." Collections of poetry by both have been translated into English by Nikla Roussanoff, a Bulgarian educated in Canada, and by John Robert Colombo, jack of the Canadian publishing trade. (Colombo and Roussanoff have recently published three other books of Bulgarian literature in English translation: *Under the Eaves of a Forgotten Village*, a collection of contemporary poetry; *The Balkan Range*, an anthology of writing spanning 13 centuries; and *The Left-Handed One: Poems of Lyubomir Levchev*.)

Germanov's collection, *Remember Me Well*, contains a preface and postface that give the historical background to Bulgarian literature and describe the current movement of which Germanov is a part: "The April Generation of young writers who were influenced by the Plenary Session of the Bulgarian Communist Party, April 1956, when the 'thaw' followed the death of Stalin." Before the April Plenum, Bulgarian writers were subject to strict censorship ("Add one stanza to this poem about a tractor, etc., or it will never be published") and to such stylistic controls as not being allowed to write in free verse. The fate of Bulgarian defector Georgi Markov indicates that the "thaw" may have been only partial. Markov was one of Bulgaria's important writers before his defection in 1969. He died slowly of poisoning in London in September of this year, claiming he was being "silenced" for attacking the political inner circle in Bulgaria through his BBC broadcasts.

Germanov is silent on the political climate of writing today, preferring to dwell on the history of oppression of the Bulgars and the recent "liberation from Fascism" and to let his poetry speak for itself. "The rest... is in the poems." He describes his poetry as "meek appearing, with powerful internal depth charges." Running through his poems are the related themes of guilt, betrayal, compromise, temptation, bribery, original sin, entrapment, the fear of death, fear of the chaotic primitive forces in man, and the transience, vanity and insignificance of life.

History, social and political climate, physical environment, and language itself, these things taken together provide a context for the poetry of any given country or culture. Poetry in translation must stand independent of its context, and having lost also its cadence and linguistic subtlety, it must depend on its intellectual content, and especially on its images. Germanov's poems lend themselves to translation because they operate through images — images that are all the more striking and eloquent in that they must communicate by implication what dare not be said in words. Thus, under my Western eyes, "Dialectic of the Fingers" reads as criticism of the totalitarian state:

*A crushing unity of five.
Four ever united,
Four always straight-forward,
and one —
opposing them.*

*Four mighty powerful ones!
And powerless!*

*They can't even grasp a knife,
or the handle of an axe,
unless the fifth
is not opposing them.*

And his image of Canada would have made Lester Pearson smile: "A green country on whose flag there is ... an outstretched maple-leaf like hand."

The 25 short poems in Dora Gabe's *Depths: Conversations with the Sea* appear in the original Bulgarian alongside their English translations. They are not as successful, in English at least; I suspect that they depend for their effect much more on rhythmical construction and sound than on image.

In these lyric poems written in old age, Gabe contemplates the meaning of life and impending death, still searching for answers to the "overwhelming question." She makes the sea a counterpart for her inner dialogue, but the sea answers only with its gravelly obligato of waves washing on the shore. She projects onto the sea her hopes and fears of the "unknown country"; sometimes it is a source of regeneration:

*... return me back to the world
newly born for life
and beginning to yearn.*

At other times it is the waiting enemy, death, and she rages against the dying of the light:

*I know all the cunning
of my enemy.
Like a marble column
I stand wrought
upon your shore.*

Ultimately she makes peace with the sea, and so, perhaps, with herself:

*Are not we, both of us,
in the same world's measurement
before eternity?
Give me your hand.* □

A long, long way from Val Marie

The *Suicide Battalion*, by James L. McWilliams and R. James Steel, Hurtig Publishers, 226 pages, \$11.50 cloth (ISBN 0 88830 152 9).

By HEATHER ROBERTSON

THERE ARE THREE kinds of war stories. There's the official version written by HQ staff in which men are statistics, death is a forbidden word, and even the most ghastly

debacle is described as a mighty victory. There are reminiscences by veterans sitting around the Legion pub, tales, some true, some not, of whores and booze-ups and crazy escapades and buddies who never came back. Then there are the autobiographies of the survivors and the letters and diaries written by men on the firing line who tell with painful fidelity what war is like for those who fight it. Each kind of story offers such a different perspective that it's hard to believe they are all describing the same event.

The Suicide Battalion is a bit of each, but it's mostly the gruesome I-was-there, blood-and-guts version, a carefully constructed, engrossing account of the 46th Canadian Infantry Battalion's experience in the First World War built on the recollections of the few who survived and documents left by those who didn't. It's a worm's eye view, seen from filthy trenches through a haze of mud, slime, smoke, tears and blood. This close focus carries a powerful emotional wallop—a man's head is blown off and his brains spattered over the men around him — but the book won't make much sense unless you have a working knowledge of the terrain and major campaigns of the war and a grasp of strategy (what there was of it). *The Suicide Battalion* did not win the war singlehandedly; for all its bravery it was a minuscule and highly expendable cog in the vast Allied war machine (of the 5,374 men who served with

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the battalion, 4,917 were casualties). In their concentration on the 46th, McWilliams and Steel virtually ignore the existence of the Canadian Corps, not to mention the British and French.

They do tell a superb story of a very gutsy bunch of men. Combining exhaustive research with the men's own voices, they give on almost moment-by-moment account of the 46th's experience from the time it was mobilized in 1914 until the end of the war in 1918. It is all there — the lice and rats and garbage, the exhaustion and tedium, the fear, the exhilaration, the endless, absurd nightmare from which death was an almost welcome release. Best of all, McWilliams and Steel have captured the soldiers' personalities: "Dismal" Dawson, the commanding officer; fat Jock Rankin scratching his ass on parade; Stevenson, the sergeant who shook like a leaf before a battle. Saskatchewan men, most of them, farm kids and homesteaders, tough, scrappy, irreverent, nobody's fools, least of all the army's. They were mowed down like a field of harvest wheat. The one question the book does not answer, or even ask, is why. □

Coming in on a ring and a prayer

The War Brides, by Joyce Hibbert, PMA Books, 160 pages. \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88778 185 3).

By ELEANOR WACHTEL

WHERE WILL IT end, these outpourings of personal reminiscences so assiduously solicited by Barry Broadfoot, Studs Terkel, and now Joyce Hibbert? The printed documentary, a collage of recollections, has become the pop history of mday. If you want to know what happened, go out and talk to survivors, and then print. The macrobiotic approach: totally unprocessed.

Certainly Hibbert's subject has appeal and significance enough to merit the label "neglected." Just after the Second World War, some 48,000 women, mostly from Britain, came to Canada as wives of Canadian servicemen. Their impact was considerable given Canada's relatively small population and the fact that they were all around the same age. Hibbert got in touch with 60 of these war "brides" (at least one brought her four children with her, which elicited the remark that she must have married her soldier the day he set foot in England), and has catalogued their memories under *The War, Meeting Their Man, Leaving Home, First Impressions of Canada, Settling In, and Homesickness*.

These women found themselves caught in a Pincers of disapproval. The British felt they'd betrayed their compatriots by going off with colonials while their men were away fighting. Canadian women accused them of stealing *their men* by hanging around the barracks all the time until they just had to marry them. In fact, most of the brides were actively engaged in the war effort as WRENS or in the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) and were not simply frequenting dance halls for the exotic candy bars that our soldiers stocked in abundance.

There does seem to have been an epidemic of love at first sight and remarkably compacted courtships, no doubt precipitated by the charged atmosphere of the war. There was little time to look before you leapt. What resulted were brides who were generally more educated, "cultured" and, not surprisingly, more urban than their husbands. This was the largest, but far from the first hypogamous influx into Canada. So by the time we get to the First Impressions section, we're hardly astonished that these women find Canada huge and dreary, with lots of food but little in the way of civilized comforts. They're greeted with ambivalence, both as brave little warriors and lazy curiosities. And they aren't allowed to complain. In the letter of "welcome" from the Governor General's wife, they were told: "When asked how you like Canada and the Canadians, always say you like everything. Never criticize your new country or fellow countrymen, for you are now one of them."

Some were shocked to discover they had married men who were half-Indian or half-black; few were given realistic indications of what their homes would be like. The surprise is how small a number returned to England, although this wasn't necessarily the easier alternative. Canada paid their fare one way, and there seems to have been considerable reluctance to admit defeat me family that was opposed from the tint.

They made do in conditions we've since forgotten: "Naturally we didn't have running water, and I had to use ingenuity to conserve consumption. One method was to bury all soiled diapers in a hole, then just before wash day dig them up, scrape them with a special knife and wash them. In retrospect those were happy times."

A major shortcoming of these amateur-authored books is the clichéd redundancy, here especially conspicuous in describing the tearful, fearful departures from England, with tugs at heartstrings and wistful fathers on lonely railway platforms. These women may have been brave, adventurous, or foolhardy, but none of that makes them good writers. Yet the fault is more Hibbert's than the brides': Because she opted for quantity, these presentations seem fixed at a first-interview level, the packaged ordering of lives (as in, "Then I got married and moved to . . . then my first son was born end. . ."), rather than the accumulation of detail that evokes a more intimate picture.

The best thing about *The War Brides* is

the introduction by Mavis Gallant who, as a reporter for the Montreal *Standard* in 1944, travelled with a batch of brides from Halifax to Montreal. Her insights into the myths and sentimentality regarding the war and Canada's relationship to a motherland, as well as the peculiar circumstances of the emigrant, are a delight. She assumes authorial responsibility, offering the reader access to a mind not just a tape recorder. □

Static on the official line

The Cultural Connection, by Bernard Ostry, McClelland & Stewart, 240 pages, \$1.95 paper (ISBN 0 77106900 6).

By S.M. CREAN

THIS BOOK RAISES a lot of questions not the least of which is why Bernard Ostry wrote it the way he did. In the main, it consists of useful historical background on the evolution of cultural policy by the federal government and the Province of Quebec. Ostry, the former secretary-general of the National Museums of Canada — and said to be one of Ottawa's most influential mandarins — provides some new information concerning the backroom political manoeuvring behind the creation of the Massey-Lévesque Commission and the Canada Council. I suspect, though, that most readers of *The Cultural Connection* will find in it little of substance that is revealing about culture or government policy in Canada, and definitely none of the inside dope about what befell various cultural initiatives by the secretaries of state over the years.

One thing uppermost in Ostry's mind is Quebec, to which he devotes the better part of two chapters. He both praises Quebec's tradition of making culture a mainstay of government policy and buries the separatists (or as he refers to them, "my intellectual enemies in the camps of separatist or totalitarian ideologies in Quebec and the communist world") in innuendo. And furthermore, Quebec has simply been duplicating cultural institutions already extant in Ottawa.

On the other hand, Ostry confesses that efforts to generate a correspondingly comprehensive federal policy within the Ottawa bureaucracy, including three different schemes of his own, have gone precisely nowhere. Parliament and the cabinet are unlikely to do anything about that unless pressed to by a show of public opinion. The solution (and this is the main recommendation of Ostry's essay) is a "people's" royal commission: a public debate initiated and organized by the "voluntary sector" that will take over the job of policy formulation. As he conceives it, "A body or

co-operating bodies similar to the Canadian Conference of the Arts — one democratically run, representative of many groups of artists and art professionals, genuinely pluralistic in terms of language and ethnicity in its structure, fairly reflective of the major regions—could begin to plan a series of national meetings across the country, open to all citizens, and sponsored and funded by federal, provincial, corporate and individual backers.”

What Ostry really means by the voluntary sector would seem to be the politico-cultural equivalent of the so-called private sector. Set, strictly speaking, the only volunteers in Canada's cultural scene, apart from the amateurs, are to be found on the boards and committees that control museums, symphony orchestras, art galleries, and the like. When it comes to the fine art of bureaucratic imprecision, Ostry is certainly no amateur.

In these times of regional disaffection and anti-centralism, it is especially disappointing to find one of Ottawa's few cultural champions still trapped within the federalist perspective, displaying the familiar obsessions and myopias. For in *The Cultural Connection* there is only trackless wilderness beyond Ottawa and Quebec. Ostry meticulously ignores the regionally based, grassroots national movement in English-speaking Canada. In a text littered with references to organizations and administrators, heavy with quotations from cultural gurus abroad and in UNESCO, Ostry manages to avoid even mentioning so much as one of the artist-producer trade associations or unions, or any of the individuals at the forefront of the cultural-policy debate these past 10 years. He neither refutes nor subsumes their contribution to support his argument for the pre-eminence of culture, warning off any who might have ideas above their station with the caveat: “Vigilance will be needed to ensure that artists and writers are not seduced by political pressures.”

For the rest, there are the usual pieties about art being an ever-present consolation in time of trouble, and cultural development being the means of “giving a society the ability to create its own life and environment:

Which brings us to the next question. If Ostry's purpose is to stimulate public debate, why does he bury his message in all that lard? Why does he divide his purpose with his annoying penchant for obscure insinuation? What are we to make, for example, of Ostry's epitaph for J.P. L'Allier's Green Paper on Cultural Policy? “In the years I had known him, he [L'Allier] was always successful in combining his broad intelligence with his narrow ambitions.” Score one for Ostry, but what does it say about L'Allier's policy?

With such a title, *The Cultural Connection* sounds as if it might be some kind of exposé. And it is. The idea of a people's commission has been floating around the cultural community for some time. It appears to be a natural line of attack on the problems of cabinet intransigence, bureau-

cratic incompetence, and public ignorance. But this time the old story that the federal government has failed to appreciate the role of culture in our national life comes from one chiefly involved in the Failure. Ostry says the government will not lead, demonstrates that he has been unable to lead, smears the cultural leaders of Quebec and ignores everyone else. Who in the name of UNESCO does he expect to ride to the rescue? Voluntary vigilantes?

The spectacle of a senior civil servant (Ostry is currently deputy minister of the Department of Communications) publicly uncovering his flanks (to put it euphemistically) is extraordinary, but a beached whale on a flatcar would probably draw a bigger crowd. And so much for having the ear of the Prime Minister. □

No matrix on the bed

The Heritage of Upper Canadian Furniture, by Howard Pain, Van Nostrand Reinhold, illustrated, 548 pages, 149.95 cloth (ISBN 0 442 29829 3).

By ROGER HALL

IT WAS SYDNEY SMITH WHO observed that there was “no furniture so charming as books.” I wonder what he would think of books about furniture. This one, a lavish, massive, costly volume, is trumpeted as being the definitive word on the inheritance, style, and substance of Upper Canada's most enduring artifacts. It falls short of this encomium, however. That is not to say the book is a Failure, but rather that it possesses certain weaknesses typical of its kind.

Howard Pain begins his work with an historical sketch of the development of Upper Canada with special focus on immigration patterns in the late-18th and the 19th century. He then analyzes the stylistic background of Upper Canadian furniture, and isolates and portrays the major influences. He uncovers four principal furniture “traditions”: Anglo-American, German, Polish, and French Canadian. The book concludes with a useful chapter on imports and how the collector or observer can distinguish them from indigenous products.

The difficulty is that the book does not give the impression of being an integrated whole. The chief offence is that the historical element is badly grafted on to the main discussion. It is difficult to write cultural history. The study demands a penetrating examination and mastery of a multiplicity of factors—politics, economics, psychology, anthropology, religion, among others. It is a realm for the dedicated professional and the measure of his or her success generally comes only after a lifetime of study. The “definitive” work on Upper Canadian fur-

niture is part of Upper Canada's cultural history, and Upper Canada has not yet found a Jacob Burckhardt or a Jacques Barzun.

Pain's historical sketch provides the merest chronological frame into which he can fix his observations about furniture. We learn nothing about the interplay of politics and style, or economics and construction materials, or technology and mass-production. For example, the impact of the railroad and the demise of local service centres explain a great deal about regional craftsmanship and the persistence of certain styles. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada* is not a definitive work either, nor does it pretend to be, but it comes a lot closer to understanding the interplay of cultural forms than this book does.

What Pain does well is to catalogue the rich output of Upper Canada's craftsmen. There are 1,450 photographs in this book, and 250 are in excellent colour. Pain's descriptions of the individual pieces are insightful, brief, and frequently witty. His overview of the linkage between the vernacular and its formal European or American model is simple and straightforward. But the context, the milieu, remains a mystery. That is a great pity, since Upper Canada left little literature, not much art, and scarcely any music. This book offered an opportunity to consider indigenous cultural expression in the province and, frankly, I expected a lot more from it. Maybe I should have followed another of Sydney Smith's dictums: “Never mad a book before reviewing it; it prejudices a man so.” □

Claiming our undivided attention

The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind, by Julian Jaynes, U of T Press, 468 pages, \$15 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2306 1).

By RICHARD LUBBOCK

HALF-WAY THROUGH the grosseries of the movie *National Lampoon's Animal House* there is a sequence that directly presents the gist of Professor Julian Jaynes's scholarly bombshell, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*: during a ham-titled debauch at Delta House, virgins Pinto and Clorette drunkenly stumble upstairs bent on entering into what *Private Eye* would call a leg-over situation. At the crucial moment, however, Clorette emits a breathy sigh and passes into unconsciousness, and as the slumbering Clorette zizzes on the bed a red-draped

demon materializes on her swain's right shoulder. "Go on. FGCK her!" advises the demon in Pinto's ear. "Fuck her BRAINS out! You KNOW she wants it!" At once a white-robed spirit of purity appears at the other ear and admonishes, "For shame! Lawrence, I'm surprised at you! If you lay ONE FINGER on that poor, sweet, HELPLESS girl, I'll make you despise yourself forever." After a moment's hesitation the well-meaning Pinto pulls a coverlet over the seductive form of the sleeping nymphet.

"I'm PROUD of you, Lawrence," beams his better self.

"You HOMO!" sneers the demon.

According to Jaynes, during the time when human beings had bicameral minds (until about 1000 BC) all decisions in situations of uncertainty were taken in this manner. People heard inner voices which they thought of as those of gods, advising them what to do. All humans then lived in Animal House until they were ejected from thm Eden. Jaynes believes that these voices really came from the brain's right cerebral hemisphere, which sent instructions compactly coded into language across the bridging corpus callosum and anterior commissures of the brain.

Writing, Jaynes continues, was the cultural invention that adjourned both houses of the bicameral mind, silenced the gods, ejected us all from Eden, and activated the metaphors of consciousness with its analogue "space." analogue "I." narratization and the tormenting process of individual conscience. This happened about 3000 BC. Before this, says Jaynes, "people did not introspect in the way you and I do." Instead they underwent hallucinatory experiences like those of puzzled, tipsy pinto. To defend his thesis Jaynes subjoenas Homer's *Iliad*, and compares the biblical utterances of Amos (circa 760 BC), who declares, "There are the words of the Lord..." with those of the Speaker of Ecclesiastes (circa 200 BC), who says subjectively, "I, the Speaker, ruled as king over Israel..." personally narrating his megillah in the modern way.

The 1976 publication of *The Origin of Consciousness* was enigmatically delayed in Canada for two years, until its adoption by the University of Toronto Press in 1978. In the meantime it was raising a hubbub in the rarified atmosphere of cognitive psychology, with responses that ranged from instant dismissal to the belief that the event ranked in importance with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Jaynes himself points out, "There is so much I have not discussed in the book." For one thing, there is the chance that anthropologists might discover a p&tine bicameral primitive in some Shangri-la, but Jaynes doubts it. What with wars, missionaries, and government paternalism, "in the middle of the jungles you can find people with transistor radios running around," he says. It is almost certainly too late for such a direct test of the hypothesis.

But we still have our voice-ridden

schizophrenics, our psychic mediums and the hypnagogic voices that murmur at the margins of our sleep; and so Jaynes's hypothesis remains falsifiable and therefore reassuringly scientific. We must wait patiently to see what we shall hear.0

Old syrup and frozen greens

The Boy in Buckskins, by Iris Allan, Western Producer Prairie Books, illustrated, 160 pages, 8.95 paper (ISBN 0 919306 53 5).

The Emperor of Peace River, by Eugenie Louise Myles, Western Producer Prairie Books, illustrated, 302 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 919306 52 7).

Livingstone of the Arctic, by Dudley Copland, Canadian Century Publishers, illustrated. 183 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 920738 00 1).

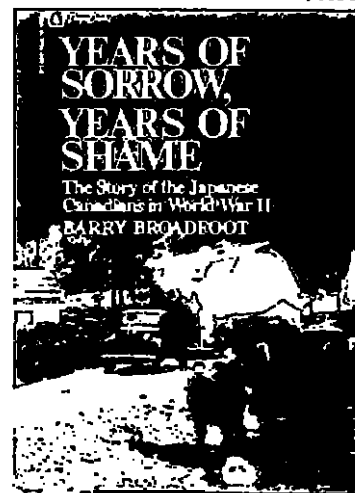
By ERLING FRIS-BAASTAD

WITHIN THE LIFETIME of an elderly person Canada's Northwest and Far North have ceased being the exclusive domain of the Eskimo, Indians, missionaries, traders, and a very few settlers and have come of age with fully equipped hospitals, jet airports, disco joints and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Thanks to the miracle of satellite communication. *King of Kensington* pierces the walls of ice-encrusted, government-issue prefabs once a week to bore natives and whites alike. More has changed, though, than the availability of services and the number of residents; had the early settlers of the Arctic and Northwest all adopted the "me first" attitudes and specialization we're so prone to in the late 1970s it is unlikely this country would ever have been settled. These three books are portraits of people who were masters of many trades and truly dedicated to the welfare of those with whom they shared the frontier.

The Boy in Buckskins is a story of the youth of the Methodist missionary John McDougall, who worked among the Indians of Alberta during the second half of the 19th century. Like many of his profession, he found himself called upon to function as doctor, teacher, hunter, trapper, and guide. He earned the respect of his congregation by standing up for the rights of natives in the face of callous and incompetent church and government officials.

Nothing on the book's cover, except perhaps the title, warns you that this is a children's book. It was originally published in 1959, when children could still read such syrupy black-and-white treatments of pod guys and bad guys without laughing all the way to the medicine cabinet. In deference to

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ANANSI

the author's good intentions and as a salute to 1959, which I seem to remember as a more hopeful year, I'll say no more.

The same Saskatchewan publisher has reissued *The Empress of Peace River*, which recounts the adventures of Julie and Sheridan Lawrence, pioneers in the Peace River country of Alberta. The book could have been called *The Empress of Peace River*, since it details the life of Julia Lawrence more thoroughly than that of her husband. It is, however, a well-researched and engrossing story of the settlement of the Peace River Valley. By today's standards, Julia Lawrence was superhuman. She raised her 15 children through famines, floods, blizzards, smallpox, influenza, and a variety of other diseases whose names I'm privileged not to recognize. She was simultaneously a trader, a school teacher, a doctor, a housekeeper, and a ranch foreman, and one suspects that if it hadn't been for her, the Peace River would have been settled much later, with more ill-will and difficulty.

Several physicians had travelled into Canada's Arctic before Leslie Livingstone arrived there, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who served on the Scottish whaling ship, *Hope*. Dr. Livingstone, however, was the first physician to take up permanent residence among the Eskimo and make saving their lives his life's work. *Livingstone of the Arctic* is more than just an excellent biography of a thoroughly unselfish doctor; it's an important history of the Canadian government's involvement in its own northernmost regions. In 1922, Leslie Livingstone's first voyage into the Arctic as a ship's surgeon aboard the Canadian Expedition Ship *Arctic* coincided with Ottawa's first efforts to assert its sovereignty in the North. Among the passengers on the *Arctic* were members of the RCMP who had the "enviable task of establishing isolated posts on the Arctic islands. Had such a move been made a few years later, several other countries would be ruling land that is "the part of the Northwest Territories.

Free traders and whalers had been exploiting the North long before Livingstone arrived there. In most instances their influence was baleful. Their conduct demoralized Eskimos and they brought with them viruses to which the Eskimo had no immunity. By the time Dr. Livingstone arrived on Baffin Island, the natives were long overdue for treatment and for an education that would help them withstand the effects of encroaching white civilization.

Livingstone, also, undertook many dif-

ferent occupations. His pet project was the creation of a vegetable and dairy farm in Aklavik, on the north end of the Mackenzie River. It is one of the many recurring tragedies of Canadian history that Livingstone "was forced to cope not only with weather and isolation but also with bureaucracy. He was rarely given much financial help in his efforts and often spent his own funds on projects that were for the public good. Safe and warm behind their desks to the southeast, clerks with no Arctic experience, lots of ambition, and little foresight refused to understand what the doctor was trying to accomplish.

In many parts of the Far North rich soil

first impressions

by Sandra Martin

Give a caged bird a *roman à clef* for a perch and she'll sing like a hurt canary

NOT LONG AGO Judy La Marsh reminded a reporter that her political autobiography, *Memoirs of a Bird in a Gilded Cage* (M & S, 1969) had been denounced as fiction and she predicted that her forthcoming first novel would be taken for gospel by many of the same pundits. It's easy to see why, for a *A Very Political Lady* (M & S, 207 pages, \$12.95) is a classic *roman à clef* about contemporary Canadian politics.

Even before the novel was published last month, the *cognoscenti* were linking former Solicitor-General Francis Fox to Hume Frazier, the dashing La Marsh character who is forced to resign publicly from the cabinet because he has forged "signature in helping a married woman obtain an abortion". But Francis Fox receives merely a glancing blow compared to the heavy punishment meted out to Prime Minister Jean Jacques Charles, a diabolical figure who has few redeeming features emotionally, morally, or politically. Charles is an arrogant intellectual from Quebec very much like our own PM, Pierre Elliot Trudeau (whom La Marsh, within range of television microphones, once called "that bastard"). By the time La Marsh is through with Charles, he has lost his beloved wife Evangeline (an Acadia singer whom he virtually murdered because of his ignorant and selfish commandments), he has suffered a humiliating defeat at the polls, and worse, he has been drummed out of the party leadership. La Marsh shows little mercy for her old political enemies.

No matter how fascinating it is to identify the personalities in a *roman à clef* ("in every novel is filled with real people; it's simply that we don't recognize them most of the time), it is far more interesting to analyze the role the author has chosen for herself. For example, in *Two Women* Doris Anderson was clearly delivering a message to Maclean-Hunter executives, the men who hadn't noticed her ambition and ability all those years they were letting her edit a

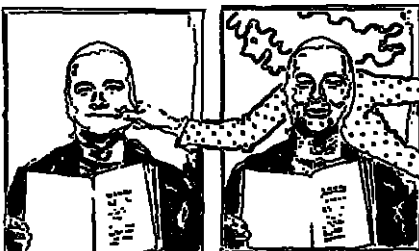
and long summer days produce crops of fat vegetables, but northern agriculture remains in its infancy. High prices and low quality of imported foods remain a burden and even a health problem for northern residents. Few have rallied behind the pioneering agricultural efforts of Leslie Livingstone. One of the typical ironies of Livingstone's life was his failure to receive the Polar Medal, a royal tribute given to people who have undertaken significant exploration and service in the Arctic. In 1954 a change in the wording of red tape required that recipients be members of a team. Dr. Livingstone had travelled and worked alone too often. □

women's magazine. Similarly Sylvia Fraser in *A Casual Affair* was purging herself of all the bitterness and anger she felt at the end of a soured love affair. In the realm of advocacy fiction Richard Rohmer has conveyed in best-selling if poor fiction the political ideas few listened to when he propounded them in speeches and essays. And recently Donald Creighton wrote a novel, *Takeover*, in which his protagonist espoused the anti-American conservative traditions Creighton has been preaching in history texts for more than 40 years. These people (with the exceptions of Fraser and Creighton) are not writers; their novels add nothing to our body of literature, for their characters never become more than shadows of their real-life models and the worlds that are created can never exist independently of contemporary events. They are fantasies, psychological experiments motivated by revenge or frustration or even a touch of megalomania. La Marsh's book is no exception. Her characters are sandpaper thin, her plot wooden, and her prose limps lamely along. Imagine writing sentences like these:

Andrew and Kathleen sought out the ballroom. There, they glided onto the floor as if they had been dancing together for years.

What La Marsh does well is to capture the atmosphere and describe the mechanics of government at work: the House, the cabinet, the behind-the-scenes maneuvering. She was then, of course.

Judy La Marsh is, of course, *A Very Political Lady*. Her name is Kathleen Marshall (an unobvious anagram for La Marsh), Canadian Minister of Justice and MP for Niagara. She is tall — nearly six feet — with plain regular features and long black hair streaked with grey that she wears braided in fat ropes and coiled over each ear. Marshall is a commanding and elegant figure, a woman who can turn heads when she enters a ballroom. More important she is



an astute, experienced politician, admired and respected on both sides of the House. It's our Judy, all right, but with her faults minimized and her assets exaggerated.

Marshal runs afoul of the Prime Minister when she successfully steers an abortion bill through the house. Charles fires her and, defeated but not humiliated, Marshal retires from political life, marries a newspaper publisher named Andrew Wickstrom, and opens a law office in Toronto. Wickstrom, a widower with three grown children, is handsome, urbane, wealthy, understanding, passionate, intelligent — King Charm- ing incarnate. He soothes like a miracle unguent and Kate happily adjusts to her new life until the day the Liberal Party brass arrive *en masse* to offer Kate the Prime Ministership. It appears even they can no longer stomach the elusive and egomaniacal Jean Jacques Charles. They plan to call a leadership convention and want Kate to run as their candidate. Naturally Kate consults the wondrous Andrew and after many family discussions she agrees to be nomi-

nated. It's a hard campaign, but Kate fights cleanly against her major rivals, Hume Frazier and Jean Jacques Charles. And as the book ends she is vindicated: Jean Jacques Charles is crushed and Kate Marshal becomes Prime Minister. Now if only life were that sweet...

AS A JOURNALIST, Kathleen Govier is best known for a series of articles on relationships she wrote for *Toronto Life* a couple of years ago. She has pursued this theme in her first novel *Random Descent* (Macmillan, 256 pages, \$12.95). The protagonist is Jennifer Beecham, a rootless, disaffected young woman, determined to mine her female ancestors for a sense of identity and direction. She does, through five generations of occasionally interesting and adventurous pioneers and immigrants. But it's all so futile. We know from the beginning that Ms. Beecham can only find solutions in the present, not the past. Unfortunately she doesn't learn this basic *muh* until the end of the book. □

on the racks

by Paul Stuewe

War is horrible but at least it doesn't come crawling out of the woodwork

I FIRST READ Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (Penguin, 52.25) in hardcover two years ago and at the time, perhaps because I had just finished Ford Madox Ford's "Parade's End" novels, it seemed an overly melodramatic and unconvincing rendering of the First World War experience. A rereading suggests this was something of a rush to judgement, because I can now see that the book is structured in a complex, interesting manner that makes excellent use of period detail, and certainly reflects the author's absorption in his chosen historical milieu.

Considered as a novel of character and incident, however, *The Wars* still seems burdened with consistently unbelievable dialogue and irritatingly pretentious treatments of even the most mundane events, all of which tends to lessen the impact of an undeniably tension-filled climax. Put another way, the manner in which the events of *The Wars* are narrated kept jolting me out of their well-prepared backgrounds, and I found myself unable to achieve that suspension of disbelief that would have allowed me to accept the book as an imaginative whole. Although *The Wars* has its points in terms of capturing the flavor of an historical epoch, I don't think that it succeeds in making good fiction out of some promising raw material.

Otherwise, it's very slim pickings indeed in the paperback department this month, with Ben Dunkelman's autobiography *Dual Allegiance* (Signet, \$2.25) being the best of a rather motley lot of "n-fiction. Dunkelman served with distinction in both the Canadian and Israeli armies, and his ac-

count of the lighting attending the creation of Israel is as exciting as it is first-band; unfortunately, the story of the remainder of his life usually merits only the second of these adjectives. Even less engrossing is Molly Douglas's *Love in the Dog House* (PaperJacks, \$1.95), another of the "young couple makes good on the land" books proliferating of late, which to be fair does tell its simple story with some charm and economy. And for those craving stronger meat, Sandy Fawkes's *Killing Time* (PaperJacks, \$2.25) finds a sexy British journalist picking up an American mass murderer and living to tell about it. And tell and tell and tell. This one's strictly for dedicated voyeurs.

There's been something of a shortage of Canadian-made schlock fiction lately, explained by one of my fellow reviewers as owing to the fact that all our schlock writers are either attempting "serious" novels, writing their autobiography in blank verse, or working on the screenplay of a film based on the Demeter case. Whatever the reasons, we surely need more books such as Richard Lewis's *Spiders* (PaperJacks, \$1.95): a lonely country house, the unsuspecting new owners, and the meanest passel of spiders this side of Hades add up to some frightfully enjoyable entertainment. Lewis has the mechanics of the genre down pat, and he weaves a web of gradually increasing terror that had me twitching with tactile hallucinations at the finish. Then, as I put the book down and reached for the bed lamp, I noticed several columns of small black dots ascending the legs of my nighttable. ... □

Letters to the Editor

ONCE THERE WERE GIANTS

Sir:

Your inventory of CanLit ("Balancing the Books," January) is most welcome and long overdue, but it might more properly have been issued as a Department of Agriculture poultry bulletin, for what a wretched flock of tired turkeys, half-cooked geese and lame ducks you've had to rate!

I was obstinate about it. At first there had to be another *Two Solitudes*, a new Mariposa, an exquisite laser like Judith Robinson.

Somebody somewhere had to be erecting a Valjean and Javert, a Willy Loman, a Scarlett O'Hara, an Ulysses, a Karenina, a Micawber, a Richard III or their equivalent of such eminence that they would be sea and recognized around the world. Hell, we haven't had one character that could be seen from downtown on the outskirts of Toronto on the clearest day!

Poetry, no better. Navel engagements with all the impact, clarity and appearance of an unfinished game of Scrabble. I will arise and go now from them for keeps.

Plays. Reruns of the classics, imitation imitations of American kinks and bang-bang-you-killed-my-brothers; nothing even approaching the charging magnificence of *Equus*. Louis Riel

Linda Goodman's

LOVE SIGNS

ARIE

VALENTINES

From the author of the best-selling *Linda Goodman's Sun Signs* comes this complete astrological guide to every relationship under the sun.

Find out about yourself — and your loves.

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& Co. until even Riel himself would wish he'd never been born.

A CanLit worthy of the name should be familiar in some forms from Nanaimo to Newfoundland, as Kipling was throughout England, Burns throughout Scotland, Moore throughout Ireland, Goethe throughout Germany, Tolstol . . . What little we've had died in the Second World War or succumbed to government force-feeding since. In return we get sting of tiny firecrackers popping off.

It is a far better place I have gone to, back into history and biography, where the glory of a Countess of Salisbury still gleams: on the scaffold, at age 67, she told the axeman, "If you want my head you must come and get it." He did — with seven blows of the axe. She stood for three of them, Plantagenet to the end. Or Montrose, with 600 of his Grahams, battering the Duke of Argyll and his Campbells plus the other Lords of the Covenant at will throughout a Highland winter.

They just don't make them like that no more in fact or fiction in Canada today.

H. W. Somerville
Toronto

REBUTTAL. REBUTTED

Sir: Timothy Findley's response ("Better Dead Than Read? An Opposing View," December) to my article on the Huron County book-burners is in many respects an eloquent and well-argued statement of a position I myself support, but it seems to me that it also tends toward several objectionable extremes of the anti-censorship stance.

Findley's attempt to make a significant ogre out of Renaissance International falls flat on the

evidence he himself provides. If "Renaissance was established with a budget of \$100,000," it can hardly be much more of a threat than groups with comparable financial underpinnings — the collective membership of the Writers' Union, say. If Renaissance's membership and subscription fees are tax-deductible, one could possibly fill an entire issue of *Books in Canada* with a list of organizations enjoying similar status — and again include the Writers' Union. The observations that Renaissance "hires large end expensive arenas" and engages in "posters end media advertising" will not astound anyone who has the slightest experience of the ways of the world; Findley would have a scoop only if they did not engage in such normal pressure-group activities. Timothy Findley's objections to the existence of Renaissance International are cogent enough, but his attempts to attribute vast powers to it smacks of witch-hunting rather than rational assessment.

Findley's righteous wrath at Elmer Umbach's "young people get venereal disease because they practise free love the way Margaret Laurence and such writers advocate" leads him to overlook the important issues raised, however obtusely, in such statements: namely, do books influence people, and if so, how? Findley's failure to consider the question of writers' responsibilities and readers' reactions leaves him quite unable to comprehend why some by no means abnormal people find themselves tempted to proscribe certain books for certain readers. His rage also leads him to an interesting parody of Elmer Umbach when he writes that "... the only kind of 'free love' advocated by Margaret Laurence is compassion. And that is not an opinion. That is a fact" (italics added).

Here Findley's desire to defend Laurence has

led him into precisely the sort of dogmatic rigidity he condemns so severely in the Huron County book-banners.

And I must object, finally, to Findley's assertion that "it is an artist's privilege to see what others cannot see." If I have to choose between treating artists as an elite segment of the human race and treating them as dirty-minded corruptors of innocence, I'll opt for the latter; however extremely expressed, it has more relevance to my experience of writers. But seriously, is it possible for anyone other than Findley to continue to believe in this sort of mystical elevation of "The Artist"? If so, I'm giving up literature and taking up anything with a coherent relationship to reality. But I don't believe that anyone really does believe such things, anymore than I believe that alarmist misrepresentation, dogmatic thinking, and blatant elitism are acceptable in the defence of a good cause. I'd like to believe that Timothy Findley knows this too, and that his ire has abated to the point where he is no longer in danger of being taken for the mirror image of a Huron County book-banner.

Paul Stuewe
Toronto

Sir: Timothy Findley's reply (December) to "Better Dead Than Read" struck me as a little less than amusing.

Paul Stuewe's earlier article did have some of the problems pointed to by Mr. Findley. However, Mr. Findley seems incapable of maintaining any objective approach to what had been written and immediately sets up a "hell-fire and brimstone fundamentalist preacher" as the centre of his attack. If this isn't cant, then I can't understand what cant is.

The tragedy of Mr. Findley's rebuttal is the tragedy of so many debates on censorship. On the one side are those who build up an enemy of leering cynics out to create a society of lowest common denominators. On the other side are these like Mr. Findley who can't believe that anyone other than a wild-eyed fundamentalist preacher could or should be concerned about controlling the content of written works.

Paul Stuewe's approach was refreshing. He did talk to people. His sample may have been small, but it was a "people" sample. Mr. Findley's rebuttal was the old process of building a stereotype that everybody hates, and then adding to that hate. And because we all seem to love the cliché and the stereotype, I'm sure most of us will admire Mr. Findley for his clever response.

Jim Burk
Regina

Sir: Re "Better Dead Than Read? An Opposing View" (December) by Timothy Findley: there is one assertion in there which I just can't let go unquestioned. "Once banned in schools books will always be read without respect for their true qualities." There are few notions with which I could be in greater disagreement. When I was in high school (1960-65) it was just about inconceivable that any book containing "dii words" or touching on sex as the subject matter, could be part of the school curriculum. The result was that it was just such books that I turned to



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(and I can't imagine that I was alone in this) in seeking out real literature, real writing — gut literature, if you wish. Writing that really meant something. It was years after I got out of school before I could approach most of what had been studied in school as literature, and not as Approved Scripture, Sunday School Syrup, etc. It may be there are teachers of literature who can present it to a class without turning it into an object of nausea, but they are not too common.

Mr. Findley may be right in everything else he says, but he's dead wrong on that one so far as I'm concerned. (In which case maybe it doesn't matter too much if it's not on the school curriculum.)

Clark A. Parsons
Toronto

Sir:
I thought Paul Stuewe did a fine, sensitive job in his piece "Better Dead Than Read." He showed the book banners as people, and also determined the reason for their behaviour — they genuinely feel threatened by trends in society.

Timothy Findley's "opposing view" reflected nothing but his own uncertainties and insecurities. He complains that the books under attack have something in common — "concern for people and compassion for the human condition." Set he shows little sensitivity to the views of others, and little concern for their hopes, fears and values. Nor does he spare a thought for the students who are central to this whole discussion. Implicit in the discussions of book banning is the central theme — that Canadian students exist simply to read the products of the CanLit industry.

In the debate on book-banning in Nova Scotia, it turned out that no one was exactly sure how books were selected for the schools.

Surely the answer to the problems of book censorship is not to stir up more batted and fear. I've always admired Jim Foley, and the way he turned things upside down, and started to develop book programs run for and by students. If we involved students more in discussions about books, rather than making them victims of the CanLit industry and of the book-banners, FE might just get some sense into the discussions, and provide some direction to the Canadian publishing industry.

Indeed, if we ever really made an honest attempt to find out what students liked to read, both Mr. Findley and Rev. Campbell might be surprised!

Jim Lotz
Halifax

Sir:
Although I question Timothy Findley's definition of censorship, his article in December's *Books in Canada* offends me only in its closing paragraphs where he feels compelled to express such sentiments as, "It is the artist's privilege to see what others cannot see."

For me, this statement is representative of the élitist attitude prevalent today in the arts in Canada. A far more truthful (though equally simplistic) statement of the artist's ability would be that the true artist is able to show through his art what others see but cannot express.

At a time when a million Canadians are officially unemployed and so many artists aspire to a pseudo Marxism while lining up for their Canada Council dole, I feel it is important to put art in its social context. The artist is no shaman; his perceptions are valuable only if they are successful in eradicating sham.

Rebecca Cohn
Vancouver

CROW'S WRONG ROOST

Sir:
Imagine my shock on opening the January issue of *Books in Canada* to read in Pier Giorgio Di Cicco's "on/off/set" column that Lorna Uher's Crow's *Black Joy* is listed as having been published by Thisledown Press, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco is certainly correct in praising Glen Sorestad's press, but this is going a bit far. *Crow's Black Joy* is published by NeWest Press of 11441-84 St., Edmonton. I can assure you that NeWest Press is clearly marked on the title page with its logo of a howling wolf inside a buffalo. NeWest Press is a literary press under the direction of an editorial board which includes novelists Rudy Wiebe and Henry Kreisel and poet Douglas Barbour and its focus is Western Canadian writing.

It may interest your readers to know that *Crow's Black Joy* is available in both a paper edition at \$5.95 and a cloth edition at \$10.95.

George Melnyk
Publisher, NeWest Press
Edmonton

EPITHET MISATTRIBUTED

Sir:
Your reviewer of Robert Gibbs' collection of short stories, I've *Always Felt Sorry* for *Declmals* (November) says that "niggers" is "Gibbs' word."

It is *not* Gibbs' word. It is the word of a character in one of Gibbs' stories. I think you'll agree that this is an important distinction.

Alden Nowlan
Fredericton

CRITICAL OVERKILL?

Sir:
Ravine already read Catherine McVicar's *The Grass Beyond the Door*, I was a little taken aback by Syvalya Elchen's vitriolic review (December). Surely she used an elephant gun on defects that only called for a flyswatter?

I did indeed find the story somewhat overstuffed with incidents and poetic descriptions, but they indicated to me a fertile mind rather than "tinkerbell escapism."

Taken as a whole, the book was quite evocative and charming, reminding me of my own little-girl adventures where imagination could transform anything from a well-loved pet to the backyard into something magical and mysterious. "Smarmy wonderfulness" is a totally unfair pronouncement to make.

I realize of course that I am not a professional book reviewer, but it does seem right to point out that not every reader agrees with the professionals.

Mrs. W. K. Finlay
Guelph, Ont.

CanWit No. 40

No-Name Adventure X73: Fast-paced, well-researched period eco-drama about endangered species featuring demented mariner who overcomes physical handicap with crude prosthesis and ranges seven seas hunting down problem leviathan.

OUR OLD FRIENDS at McClarkan & New-spider, publishers of the 1975 worst seller *Resurfacing in Sarnia* by Joyce Castor, now have come up with a trendy merchandising project that they hope will put them back in the black. Inspired by Loblaw's president David Nichol, who has hailed the 1980s as "the generic decade," M & N

plan to reissue best sellers and classics as untitled, anonymous mass-market paperbacks selling for 29 cents each. The No-Name lines of thrillers, romances, adventures, non-fiction, plays, and poetry will come in plain grey wrappers bearing only brief plot summaries (see above) aimed at a with-it 1980s audience. We'll pay \$25 for the grabbiest No-Name summary of any well-known book (maximum 75 words) and \$25 goes to Gordon Black of Toronto for this idea. Address: CanWit No. 40 *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. The deadline is March 1.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 38

CONTESTANTS WERE invited to contribute poems to *Chaff*, the very occasional literary/trade periodical published out of Harrow, Man., and concerned with the interaction between literature and farm machinery. The winner is CanWit veteran Mary Lile Benham of Winnipeg, who receives \$25 for this mechanical eclogue:

As every schoolboy learns at mother's knee
Farm themes are rife in story and in song.
The plowman wends his weary way o'er lea
To his Deere hearts and gentle people strong.
"I do not see," the Caterpillar said
To Allis who was trying to be profound
Why International cannot So ahead
Now Massey's in the cold cold ground.

Honourable mentions:

Harrowing Song

A useful beneficial weed
that can compete, is what we need.
But if a market could be found
for purple vetch, or even round-leaf mallow,
when the harvest came
we'd find our plight was just the same!
Between the rows of vetch and mallow
vegetables would not lie fallow.
Those rho: once were gender breeds
would choke the life from former weeds.
—Russell Smith, Ottawa

* * *

Ob. rapturous harrow, with teeth so lik
broken popsicle sticks,
At lost, I see thy warranty doth involve no
city slicker tricks.
Sliding through furrow, wrinkled as John
Diefenbaker's brow.
Soon after he sees sign saying "Vote
Trudeau Liberals Now".
A plot of corn, a jug of home-mode brew
and vous,
Is all I need for heaven with an Estevan
view.
Hasten on to plant and seed right quick,
Before the Canadian dollar goes further
down the crick.
—W. Ritchie Benedict, Calgary

* * *

The Bearcat and the Deere

The Steiger Bearcat, with a mob full of
juice
Took to the fields like a Cm cu loose

*She plowed and she planted and went into high gear
For she vowed on her Volvo that within the year
She'd bring to shame Johnny's claim
That "Nothing runs like a Deere!"*

*The Deere dodged Oneway; he came thrashing back
They met in the middle of an International trac-
"Tor" roared Johnny, as he sprayed and threw rocks
"Schul" — teased Stelgy with transmis-knocks*

*But Steigy's gas was running low, and Johnny's rad was all aglow
So Bearcat winnowed up to Deere John
And with Leon and Massey and Ford looking on
They called it a draw — pinned their hopes on Co-ops
And covering their differences all up with trash
Together they set out to rake up more cash.*

—Isabelle George, Arcola, Sask.

CLASSIFIED

Classified rates: \$6 per line (40 characters to the line). Deadline: first of the month for issue dated following month. Address: Books in Canada Classified, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. Phone: (416) 363-5426.

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USED BOOKS — CanLit, Mod. Lit, Poetry, General Scholarly Stock in the Humanities, trade paperbacks, review copies bought. **ALPHABET BOOKSHOP**, 656 Spadina Ave., Toronto, 924-4926, 12-6 daily.

The editors recommend

THE FOLLOWING Canadian books were reviewed in the previous issue of *Books in Canada*. Our recommendations don't necessarily reflect the reviews:

FICTION

Making Arrangements, by Robert Harlow, McClelland & Stewart. Horse racing as a self-contained religious experience, an allegory of the human race, undercut by the knowledge that everything is always fixed.

The Double-Cross Circuit, by Michael Dorland, Lester & Orpen. A stark, staccato international thriller about communications and a multinational corporation so powerful that it transcends all normal legal, business, and political boundaries.

NON-FICTION

Double Exposure, by Alden Nowlan, Brunswick Press. Some trivia and a lot of first-rate, informative journalism by a poetic myth-maker on subjects ranging from Stompin' Tom Connors to Gerald "Gabby" Regan.

POETRY

Two-Headed Poems, by Margaret Atwood, Oxford University Press. Poems of disappointment, both political and personal, in which the two heads are Siamese twins who speak two languages and dream of separation, but also, simply, men and women.

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:

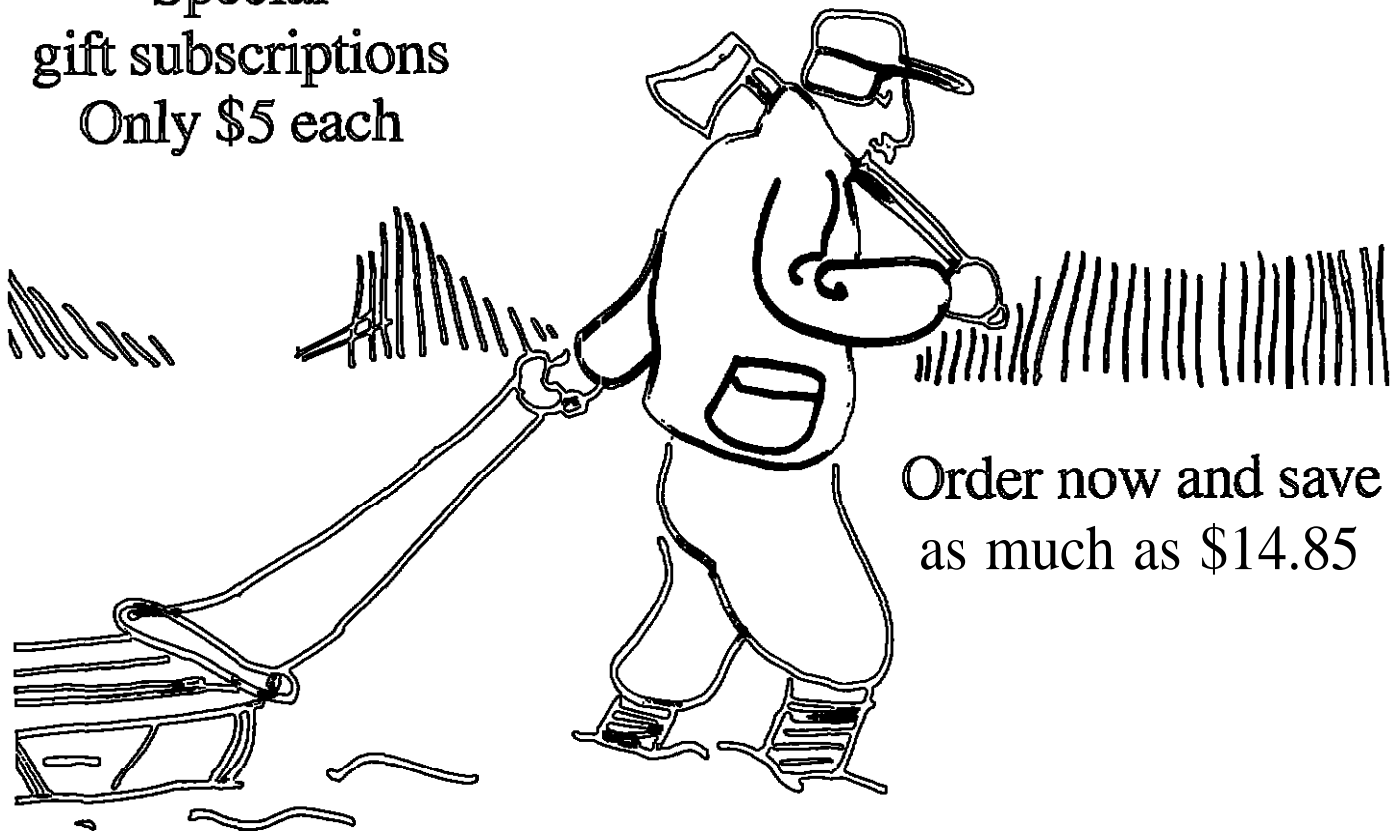
Adrenalin of Weather, by Dorothy Farniloe, York Publishing.
All About Ontario Cupboards, by Elizabeth Ingolfsrud, The House of Grant.
Ben Neptune, by Robert A. Burns, Fiddlehead.
Blacks in Deep Snow, by Colin A. Thomson, J.M. Dent & Sons.
Bloodflower & Other Poems, by Francine Geraci, Vanda Press.
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