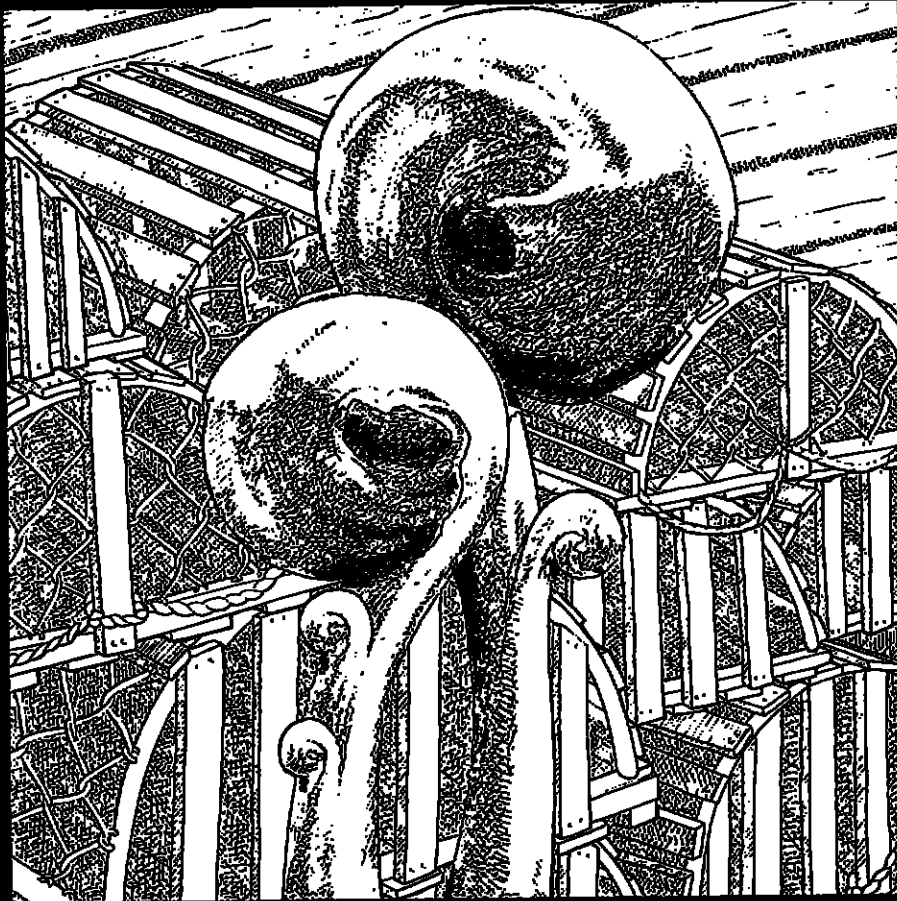


A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

# S IN CANADA

## HEARTS OF THE EAST



Why shoot the teacher: W. D. Valgardson  
laments a generation of illiterates  
Fred Cogswell recalls the New Brunswick  
upbringing of Bliss Carman  
Kent Thompson on John Gardner  
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Volume 10 Number 7

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1981

BOOKS IN CANADA

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*Books in Canada* is published 10 times a year, with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, by the Canadian Review of Books Ltd., 366 Adelaide Street East, Suite 432, Toronto, Ont. M5A 1N4. Telephone: (416) 363-5426. Available to the public free in subscribing book stores, schools, and libraries. Individual subscription rate: \$9.95 a year (\$15 overseas). Back issues available on microfilm from: McLaren Micropublishing, P.O. Box 972, Station F, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2N9. Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index. Member of the CPPA. Member of the Bulk Distribution Audit Division of CCAB. Material is commissioned on the understanding that both parties are bound by the terms of the standard PWAC contract. The editors cannot be held responsible for unsolicited material. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2593. Contents © 1981. Printed by Heritage Press Co. Ltd. ISSN 0045-2564

# THE APPRENTICE'S SORCERER

For 20 years the force behind Fiddlehead Books, Fred Cogswell is indifferent to external judgements about his poets. What he seeks is the human quality

By PHIL MILNER

FRED COGSWELL STOPS in front of a large box that is lying on the second-floor landing of Carleton Hall, on the University of New Brunswick campus in Fredericton. "It's for *The Fiddlehead*," he says, looking at the box dubiously. "The janitor got it this far, but he's getting old." Then Cogswell, who will turn 64 next month, hefts the box onto his left shoulder and continues up the stairs to his third-floor office.

His office is the centre of Cogswell's multi-faceted activities, his writing, teaching, editing, and translating. It looks like a publisher's warehouse — and, in a sense, that's what it is. Cogswell has published 305 Fiddlehead Poetry Books out of this office during the past 20 years, and most of them now seem to be crammed on every shelf, sometimes arranged in rows, sometimes stacked in random piles. Invoices, manuscripts, and letters in the red ballpoint Cogswell invariably uses cover the desk and any other flat surface not already spilling over with books. But it is a creative chaos. Cogswell digs confidently into one riot of print and takes out a copy of *I Walk by the Harbour* (1975) by Norman Levine, UNB's first writer-in-residence. "You might be interested in this one," he says, then thrusts his arm into another pile. "And you might like this, and this," handing me books by Cyril Dabydeen and David Solway. "You might know these," he says, giving me more books by such Maritime writers as Lesley Choyce and Elizabeth Jones. The books continue at an alarming rate; eventually he is simply naming poets: "M. Travis Lane, she's a good poet." Occasionally he shares a biographical fact. "This one has had a hard life." "He teaches here." "This one is all alone." "He's been in prison." He recites this catalogue of information quietly, fondly, more like a collector of rare exotica than a publisher. It is clear that he finds the poets themselves every bit as interesting as their poetry.

After 15 minutes I find myself holding a pile of 73 books that extends up to my chin. Two weeks later I received more in the mail — George Woodcock's *The Mountain Road* and Billi H. King's *Punk Shots* among them. Evaluative criticism is not part of Cogswell's job as an editor. Though he has published early work by Alden Nowlan, Al Purdy, Dorothy Livesay, Elizabeth Brewster, and more recently has kept up his reputation for having one of the best eyes for young talent in the country by bringing out first books by Lillian Welch, Marilyn Bowering, and Harry Thurston, Cogswell is completely indifferent to external judgements about

the merits of his poets. What he seeks is the human quality.

"The first thing I look for in a writer is that I am in the presence of a human being who has human problems, who has attempted to cope with them in a human way, and who has tried to make an honest artifact out of this experience." And the Fiddlehead poets, by and large, have created poems out of their real and imagined worlds in ways that range from painful honesty to some interesting forms of self-justification. Just like real life.

A lot of people seem to agree with Cogswell's approach. Most of the times I've been in the same room as him during the past year it has been to watch somebody thank him or present him with a prize. Last summer, for example, the Wombat Press of Wolfville, N.S., held a reception at Dalhousie University in Halifax. The wine flowed, the crowd milled and laughed. Then someone tapped a cocktail glass with a spoon, and Cogswell was presented with a copy of *Scroll*, a book published by Wombat in 1980 containing a poem each by 50 of the best Fiddlehead poets. Cogswell, wearing a brown suit and tie in a room full of jeans and wide belts, smiled, shook hands all around, and then faded back into the crowd.



Fred Cogswell

FREDERICK WILLIAM COGSWELL was born on Nov. 8, 1917, in East Centreville, N.B. Though his mother was Acadian French and had been born and raised in Quebec, Cogswell spoke only

English at home and today, despite his reputation as a translator, still speaks very little French. When he does speak it he is more comfortable with Parisian; his ear, he says, was corrupted by high-school French teachers who didn't really speak French themselves, and by bad university professors who taught French as a literary language. Fiddlehead has published three volumes of Cogswell's translations: *100 Poems of Modern Quebec* (1970), *A Second Hundred Poems of Modern Quebec* (1971), and *Confrontation* (1973). Harvest House of Montreal has brought out a fourth, *The Poetry of Modern Quebec* (1976), and has announced plans for a fifth, *The Complete Poems of Emile Nelligan*. Cogswell also translated Robert Henderson's *Testament of Cresseid* from the Scottish. He attributes his success as a translator less to his French background than to the fact that he, too, is a poet: "You can't translate poetry unless you are a poet," he says, "because you've got to produce, in your own language, a poem that is the equivalent of what you have read. You've been given many things to start with — the idea, the development of the idea,

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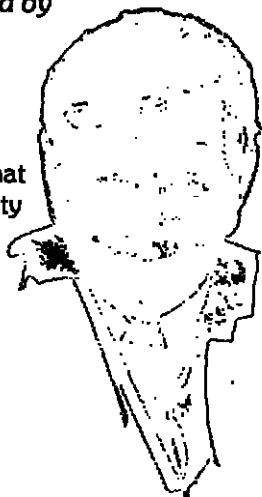
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**VOICES IN TIME**

the form, the images, and to some degree the kind of ambience or atmosphere. In other words, two thirds of your poem has been written for you." It is that crucial, remaining one third that Cogswell brings to his translations.

He has written seven volumes of poetry, beginning with *The Stunted Strong* published in 1954. Peter Thomas, a colleague at UNB who has replaced Cogswell as editor of Fiddlehead Books, put together a selected Cogswell that was published by Fiddlehead in 1974. It includes only those poems Thomas felt to be Cogswell's best. Cogswell himself brought out *A Long Apprenticeship*, which contains all of Cogswell's published poems, some unpublished or uncollected ones, and a few of the translations. Published last year, it can be seen as Cogswell's reply to Thomas: a poet's life is not just a sequence of high points, but a whole, the highs and the lows, the fiery poems and the quiet reveries. Cogswell's philosophy, like his poetry, is nothing if not eclectic. The collected poems therefore includes the early work of a young man of energy and quiet ambition, fumbling his way to becoming a poet — parodies, epigrams, formal sonnets in the somewhat conceited manner of the 17th-century poets he admired, and Spoon-Riverish poems with a Maritime lilt. The middle of the book is a series of sour insights by a poet who has discovered the shortcomings of the people and the world he inhabits. The last third contains more mellow, freer-verse poems that reveal Cogswell's self-knowledge and his generous acceptance of limitations of all kinds. All through the book, however, the aim is experience, not technical brilliancy — although the latter is often a concomitant of the former, as in this last poem:

*for an artist  
it is better  
to be a well-placed  
candle  
than a blazing sun  
to illuminate  
without distortion  
the empty spaces  
between and around  
what is normally seen*

The metaphor may be somewhat over-extended, but Cogswell's point comes through all the better: Life, not art, is the point of poetry. And life consists of trivialities as much as, if not more than, grand passions. "When I write my own books of poems," he explains, "I attempt to have in each book poems of different kinds and different levels of intensity. Because one writes poetry at different times and different levels of intensity. There are times when you would rather hear 'Frankie and Albert' than *Paradise Lost*."

We now are in Cogswell's neat bungalow on Reid Street. The contrast between his home and his cluttered office is startling. The house is immaculate, filled with tastefully selected furniture ranging from antiques to 1950s heavy. We are sitting at the dining-room table, and over Cogswell's shoulder I keep noticing two antique clocks, both of which have stopped. Cogswell's wife Margaret, whom he married in England during the war, works in the other rooms as we talk — above the sounds of beds being pushed around, doors opening and closing, a vacuum cleaner whirring off and on. She keeps carefully out of Cogswell's intellectual life, showing no interest in poetry or books or teaching.

Though he is approaching retirement age, Cogswell has no intention of leaving the university. Wouldn't retirement from teaching give him more time for poetry?

Cogswell shrugs. "If I had less to do, I'd do less," he says, lighting his pipe. "I usually write poems when I'm busy and ought to be doing something else." Cogswell also writes poems on the run, tucking away a line here and a phrase there like a squirrel. When Robert Gibbs, present poetry editor of *The Fiddlehead*, asked Cogswell for some poems for a special 35th anniversary issue last year, Cogswell said he didn't have any unpublished

ones, but he would try to write some. Two days later Cogswell showed up with two poems. Gibbs looked them over, suggested a few changes, and Cogswell took out his red ballpoint and revised them on the spot.

COGSWELL HAS BEEN moving in Maritime and Canadian literary circles for 35 years. He was editor of *The Fiddlehead* from 1952 to 1967 and, with a few years overlapping, has been publishing Fiddlehead Poetry Books for the past 20 years. There is no direct connection between the magazine and the publishing house — *The Fiddlehead* is under the editorial direction of the UNB English department, while Fiddlehead Poetry Books are published by Cogswell himself, though the university seems to be taking over that responsibility as well). During this time, while teaching everything from French-Canadian literature to British medieval poetry, and while directing more than 30 master's and doctoral theses, Cogswell has nurtured and brought to maturity some of the best poets to appear in the Maritime and other provinces. One of these is Greg Cook, now director of the Nova Scotia Writer's Federation. In the early 1960s Cook was an unknown undergraduate trying to get some poems accepted by *The Fiddlehead*. Cogswell published a few, rejected a few: "He only published the best of the poems I sent to him," Cook recalls. "And he sent the rest back quickly. On most occasions he made notes on the poems he liked almost well enough to publish. Of all the editors I was working with in those days, Cogswell was the most influential. When he finally accepted a poem from me, I knew it was a good poem."

Nancy Bauer, editor of New Brunswick Chapbooks, is another Cogswell discovery, and like Cook she respects Cogswell's integrity and patience. He would look at a poem for a few minutes, she says, and then discuss it with her without looking at it again. "You know he'd read it," she adds, "because he was talking about it intelligently."

Cogswell himself wants to be remembered as a poet first. His

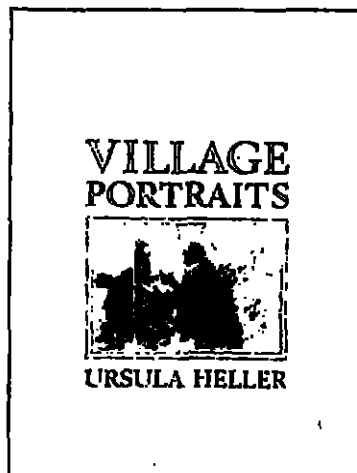
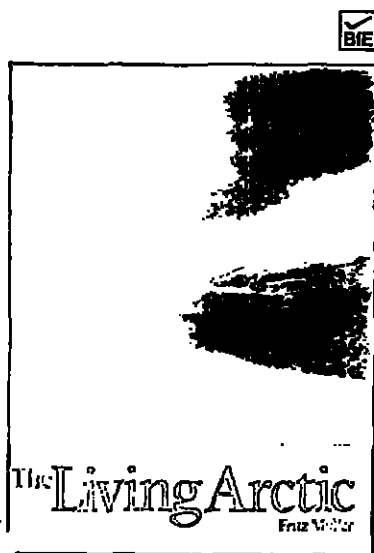
work as an editor and publisher, he feels, is work he does for himself alone. "The most relaxing thing for me," he says, "is writing invoices and packaging up books."

"I think Fred is too modest," Cook responds. "It is easy to say that someone else would have published Alden Nowlan or Al Purdy if Fred hadn't. But I wonder who would have published them for another 10 years?"

But it isn't only modesty that makes Cogswell adopt such an eclectic and apparently uncritical stance. It is more a realistic sense of the value of his work; and of the level of maturity found in most Canadian poetry. "I'd love to catch some great poets, and I'd love to publish some great poetry," he says, "but I haven't seen very many great poets, or very much in the way of great poetry in Canada." In the absence of greatness, Cogswell feels, the only feasible response is an all-encompassing eclecticism, a kind of fertilizing process that some day may make great poetry possible: "The greater variety of modes of expression that are possible, the more likelihood there is of a greater number of people finding things they can do well. If you limit poetry to one particular form, you are very often forcing people to do something they will never become very good at. Therefore I prefer what we might call eclecticism." In the absence of great poetry, in other words, Cogswell contents himself with real people who have real problems and who deal with them in real ways. Once you have that, real poetry should follow naturally.

At this point the vacuum cleaner in the next room is shut off, and Margaret joins us in the dining room. The Cogswells' daughter, who lives in British Columbia, is seriously ill, and Fred and Margaret are flying out to visit her. (Cogswell spent a year teaching in B.C. a few years ago, in order to be near her.) Fred's pipe has gone out, and he sets it down on the table. There is an air of permanence about him, of solidity and consistency that has shown over the past 20 years both in his own poetry and in the Fiddlehead books he has edited. Friends of his, such as Kent Thompson, find

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him "very perplexing," curiously difficult to get to know well, with a dozen layers and personas lurking beneath that placid exterior. Thompson even compares him to Robert Frost, whose true personality lay buried deep beneath the various public masks that every poet learns to put on early in his career.

If people smile indulgently at Fiddlehead books — with their typos, their pages occasionally printed upside down, their hand-drawn covers and out-of-focus snapshots — that's their business. "When you run them off by hand," Cogswell explains mildly,

"and you staple them together and sort them out yourself, the amount of work involved in a 100- or 200-page book is stupendous." Cogswell receives and reads more than 350 manuscripts a year, from which he selects 20 for publication. And if people are beginning to applaud Cogswell's stupendous energy, and to recognize that perhaps he does know the path that leads to genius, then that, says Cogswell, is also their business. He accepts both applause and condescension with equal tranquillity. Then he goes about his business. □

#### FEATURE REVIEW

## Humble Bliss

Bliss Carman's letters call to mind  
the strict New Brunswick code of conduct  
by which he was reared

By FRED COGSWELL

*Letters of Bliss Carman*, edited by H. Pearson Gundy, McGill-Queen's University Press, 379 pages, \$35.00 cloth (ISBN 0 7735 0364 1).

IT IS REPORTED that the Jesuit order once boasted: "Give us a child until he is seven and you can have him after that." Whether or not this is true, what Bliss Carman's letters in H. Pearson Gundy's selection prove to my satisfaction is that, whatever the changes, necessities, and vagaries of a life that took him physically over most of this continent and intellectually from orthodox Anglicanism through Emersonian transcendentalism and unitarianism to cosmic consciousness and the radiant lectures at Ojai of Krishnamurti, Bliss Carman never wavered from the basic assumptions of the New Brunswick society in which he was reared. In a paper presented to the Royal Society of Canada five years ago, I described these assumptions as follows:

These are an acceptance that though life may be difficult, it is essentially worthwhile and a complete avoidance of what I once called "that ultimate modernity / An intellectual despair" . . . . Together with this innate faith in the value of life are two other basic assumptions: one is of the natural decency of the human being, the other is of the goodness and beauty of nature.

If two further traits so innate that I had omitted them — a becoming modesty with respect to one's own achievements and a stoic refusal to indulge in complaint and self-pity — are added to the above list, Bliss Carman emerges in these letters as the writer whose personality adheres most

closely to the New Brunswick code of conduct still practised during my own boyhood.

The letters are to persons with a wide range of relationship to the author — male and female friends, publishing and business associates, bibliophiles, fellow writers — and present an equally wide range of topics — family and business affairs, news of a personal nature, views on morals, writing, politics, religion, and the meaning of life. There is no malicious gossip, no prurience, no self-righteousness, no indelicacy. What are noteworthy in the writer are the joy he can extract from little things, the gratitude he has for the privilege of an existence blessed with friendship, love, and a humble place in the sacred vocation of poetry. It is evident, too, that to indulge that vocation he made great material sacrifices. It was not until the 1920s, when the opportunities arose to embark on lucrative yearly reading tours of Canada and the United States, that Carman became free from immediate debt and an uncertain financial future.

The best of Carman as a man is embodied in his letters to his many woman friends. There one finds a blend of playful imagination, genuine affection, freedom from jealousy, tact, and firmness that is inimitable. Carman, it is true, speaks mockingly of his being for long years "under Jane government," but it is quite evident from his correspondence that he knew what most men never learn: how to keep a woman happy and at the same time go on his own way.

To those interested in Carman's opinions of his own poetry, his letters to H. C. Lee — who did a doctoral dissertation on him at

Rennes — Odell Shephard, and Rufus Hatheway are most revealing. Carman regarded poetry as a distillation of human wisdom. As such it ought to deal with eternal things. To him these were Nature and the vital demands of the human condition as variations on the great theme of beauty, which he found to be their invariable intrinsic element. It was the poet's privilege to express or suggest the wonder underlying these things and hence to combat the forces of a growing materialism that levelled all existence to prosaic routine. His own poems, it seemed to him, had been too diffuse and lacking in clarity when written in the exuberance of youth. Later, he strove for greater clarity but was to find the muse recalcitrant. Any doubts concerning the wisdom of his own course of life came when he considered the disparity of his poems on the one hand with the richness, wonder, and complexity of existence on the other.

H. Pearson Gundy's editing of these letters with respect to arrangement and notation is altogether admirable. The introduction is excellent. There are in addition two valuable appendices giving the source, scope, and nature of Carman's entire correspondence. At the same time, however, *Letters of Bliss Carman* is apt to be of much more use to the general reader and the undergraduate than it is to the Canadian scholar. It is apt to whet the latter's appetite for more Carman letters without providing the means of satisfying it.

Gundy is not to blame for this difficulty. Originally, out of the vast Carman correspondence, he selected twice as many letters. Financial considerations compelled his publishers to refuse to publish a work of such

dimensions. The result is a compromise that is a sad commentary upon the state of the publishing industry in Canada and the niggardly government funding upon which Canadian scholarly work must depend. Gundy has been forced to edit Carman's letters using methods similar to those by which a film editor produces a film. He has, I think, done a fine job, but another editor could conceivably, by a somewhat different selection, produce a different but equally convincing version of Carman's personality.

Unfortunately, until some time in the future when computer developments may come to the rescue, serious Carman scholars must still continue to visit the numerous and scattered libraries listed in the appendices. Another chance at another source book in Canadian literary history by an individual uniquely equipped to produce it has been irretrievably missed. □

## REVIEW

# Tatters in the web

By DOUG WATLING

**Visions from the Edge: An Anthology of Atlantic Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy**, edited by John Bell and Lesley Choyce, Pottersfield Press (RR 2, Porter's Lake, N.S. B0J 2S0), 215 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 919001 04 1).

ATLANTIC CANADA HAS never been fertile ground for fantasy and science fiction. However, the arrival seven years ago of Hugo and Nebula awards-winner Spider Robinson has awakened a dormant scene, and *Visions from the Edge*, a collection that spans almost a century, is an attempt to put into perspective East Coast contributions to the two genres.

Of the 20 authors represented, 11 were born in the region; the others boast various terms of residency and a hodgepodge of backgrounds and influences. Predictably, fewer than half of the stories are hard-core science fiction and 10 predate 1940, imparting a staid character to the book. Don't open this volume expecting narrative twists and experimental points of view.

The best story in the book is Robinson's "It's a Sunny Day," which is heavy on caricature and sentimentality but follows absolutely Theodore Sturgeon's dictum: "A good science fiction story is a story with a human problem, and a human solution,

which would not have happened at all without its science content." Unlike other, technology-riddled tales in the book, "It's a Sunny Day" views science only as the cause of a problem; after that, the characters confront the dilemma and sort it out. There's even some dry wit to humanize the situation.

Humour, in the guise of satire, is of course a true component of fantasy — as Orwell and Huxley have shown. On a less exalted level, Francis Blake Crofton uses an unreliable narrator to spoof such classic settings as Poe's maelstrom (in "Hairbreadth Escapes of Major Mendax"), and the farcical finale to Crofton's "Finding the Magnetic Pole" provides the only genuine laugh in the collection.

Humour, though, is a rare commodity in *Visions from the Edge*. Douglas Angus's "About Time to Go South" squeezes a few ironies from a visit to a deserted dentist's office, but the majority of the stories are earnest and predictable. A particularly disastrous effort, Hugh MacLennan's "Remembrance Day, 2010," is so solemn and didactic that it's virtually unreadable.

One of the more successful stories is Thomas Raddall's "The Amulet," which uses an indigenous source of mysticism — the Micmacs — to suggest the trans-

migration of souls, a subject that distresses a young cleric who has succumbed to the storyteller's spell. Raddall's story fits rather uneasily under the umbrella term "fantasy," as do Desmond Pacey's "The Ghost of Reddeman Lane" and Lucy Maud Montgomery's "House Party at Smoky Island," both of which might more properly be called ghost stories. The editors decry the overuse of labels in their introduction, but fantasy should at least flirt with unreality. For that reason, I find Sir Charles G. D. Roberts's "The Stone Dog" closer to true fantasy simply because its setting remains unidentifiable and elusive.

At the risk of sounding overly negative, I should mention that over one-quarter of *Visions from the Edge* is taken up by H. Percy Blanchard's "After the Cataclysm," a turn-of-the-century Utopian novelette that almost sabotages the entire collection. This "find," ignored since its publication in 1909, contains some of the most turgid prose I have ever read. The narrator, a young man thrust by a freak accident from 1901 into 1934, at one point explains the influence of his new-found culture: "Yes, I think I can testify to this same sweet compulsion, the mental and moral uplift of my true inward spirit." Inclusion of this story is a major tactical error.

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This would be a tighter, more accessible book if it were scaled down. There *are* worthy fictions in it, but the quality is spotty. A few minor pieces (Jean Marie Chard's "Space Greens," for example) are enjoyable because their aims are modest and because they toy with the etiquette of the form — a story like "Space Greens" is close in spirit to a good pulp tale. Readers looking for an undiscovered Dunsany or P. K. Dick will have to lower their expectations, but Spider Robinson, at least, sets a standard against which future efforts from the region should be judged. □

### REVIEW

## Going down the road

By DAWNE SMITH

**The Nova Scotia Traveller: A Maritimer's Guide to His Home Province**, by William B. Hamilton, Macmillan, 248 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7715 9578 6).

NOT MANY PARTS of Canada have been as subject to stereotyping as Nova Scotia. To those from "away" the province presents a persistent image of misty, lighthouse-infested shoreline settled by craggy individuals clinging to the rockface. The richness and variety of the land and its people — from Scots Presbyterian to Acadian Catholic — is often lost amid tranquil scenes of Peggy's Cove and the smell of boiled lobster. William B. Hamilton's historical travel book should go some way toward dispelling the myth: his objective, "to encourage the reader to explore in person the interplay of the land, the people, and the sea," provides all the elements of a fine travel book.

Hamilton sets out by cautioning the serious traveller to avoid the fast lanes of major highways in favour of less orthodox routes. He begins by approaching the province by sea, appropriately enough in Yarmouth, following Samuel de Champlain's first visit in 1604. Hamilton then takes us along the Bay of Fundy and through the Annapolis Valley, from the expulsion of the Acadians through the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists, and his minute investigation of large and small communities, of mill sites and military forts, will add centuries to any traveller's appreciation of the province. The inter-

weave of geography, history, and even religion is a constant theme. Heading north we enter the town of Pictou (pronounced "Picto," please), overlooking the Northumberland Strait, which separates the province from P.E.I. Here the good ship *Hector*, carrying more than 200 Presbyterian Scots, landed in the fall of 1773. The Gaelic influence is still apparent in the architecture: Hamilton advises a walking tour of Pictou beginning at Sherbrooke Cottage, once the home of Thomas McCulloch, author of *The Stepsure Letters* and founder of Pictou Academy in 1816.

Moving north into Cape Breton, or Isle Royale as it was called by the original French settlers, Hamilton's eloquent praise is often excessive. Five chapters are devoted to the island, one each to the approach, the Cabot Trail, something called the "Ceilidh Countryside," the Fortress of Louisbourg, and the industrial wasteland of "Sydney and Environs." Something of the fierce and illogical pride of the island is captured in two quotations, one from Alexander Graham Bell: "I have seen the Canadian and American Rockies, the Andes and Alps, and the Highlands of Scotland, but for simple beauty, Cape Breton out- rivals them all"; and a second, better one from a true Cape Bretoner, Ray Smith: "North America is a large island to the west of the continent of Cape Breton."

The trip back is across the Canso Causeway south to Halifax, along the eastern shore, then west through Bluenose country — Lunenburg, Mahone Bay (which has "a charm and character all its own"), Liverpool, and finally up the Fundy shore again to his original point of entry, Yarmouth. Hamilton's purpose throughout this long trek has been to impart some of the complexity and beauty of the province, and in this he succeeds. In many ways the rhythms of the people and the landscape, the interweave of land, people, and sea, are captured and held — perhaps because much of it hasn't changed since the days of the *Hector* and of Louisbourg. Nova Scotians still feel isolated and neglected, both inferior and superior at the same time, and their life seems timeless and sometimes pointless. Perhaps Hamilton's book emphasizes the extent to which the past is more interesting than the present — a sense no true travel book ought to impart.

There are travel books and there is travel literature — and from the outset with Hamilton we know we are not in Lawrence Durrell's Greece, Robert Graves's Majorca, or Brendan Behan's Ireland. We're not even in Harold Horwood's Newfoundland or Max Braithwaite's Ontario. Hamilton's prose style dips too often into the travel brochure, and his feeling for the people and the land is often as stereotyped as the one he professes to be combating. This is a good book to keep on the dashboard rather than in the library. □



# Intimations of morality

John Gardner's short stories, meditations on art and life, succeed as theories but fail as fiction

By KENT THOMPSON

*The Art of Living and Other Stories*, by John Gardner, Knopf (Random House), illustrated, 310 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 394 51674 5).

ARNOLD DELLER is a practitioner of the most ephemeral of the arts. He is a cook. But because he is an artist, he knows that an artistic response is fitting when his son is killed in Vietnam. Art is love, he says. And because that son had written to him about the joys of eating an ancient Chinese dish called Imperial Dog, Arnold believes that he must prepare that meal in honour of his dead son.

However, there are certain problems in the preparation of Imperial Dog at the restaurant at which Arnold is employed in upper New York state. First, he must have a black dog — and it must be killed one minute before it is cooked. Finnegan, the leader of a motorcycle gang aptly named The Scavengers, is persuaded to search out and obtain the required dog. The gang balks at stealing a child's pet, but they finally secure the dog by breaking into a pet store.

Arnold kills the dog and lops off its head. "The dog's head looked up . . . with the tongue hanging out through the big, still teeth, and expression of absolute disbelief." The dog is cooked.

The second problem Arnold must face is the rule established by the owner of the restaurants: Arnold can cook anything he wants, but somebody must buy and eat it. Again the members of the motorcycle gang are pressed into service. They are charged \$1.50 a plate — for children's portions. Finnegan notes that "The dog was terrific . . . once you talked your stomach past the idea."

That's a brief summary of the title story in John Gardner's *The Art of Living and Other Stories*. It is probably the strongest story in the collection, if only because of its central image. But its point is clear: art is first of all an act of love — Arnold cooks the meal as a tribute to his dead son. It is also a continuation and extension of an ancient tradition. By preparing and serving the meal Arnold has put himself in touch with his son and all the ancient Asian traditions epitomized by the meal. And by serving it to a new

audience, Arnold is enlarging the art. As Finnegan reports: "We were the diners . . . sent as distinguished representatives of all who couldn't make it this evening, the dead and the unborn." And finally, Arnold fulfils the commercial demands of art as well as his identity as an artist. No one is an artist until someone else defines him as such by buying his art. When The Scavengers pay \$1.50 a plate they are confirming Arnold's status.

With one exception, every story in the collection is equally concerned with the various relationships between art and life.

The first story, "Nimram," deals with art as a solace and an answer to mortality. On a stormy flight from Los Angeles to Chicago a famous symphony conductor is seated next to a girl dying of an incurable illness. The fatherly musician soothes her terror in the face of death. In the second story, "Redemption," a young man who has accidentally killed his younger brother in a farming mishap finds meaning in life by pursuing the difficulties of art. He takes up the French horn and is challenged by the example of his teacher — a man who has

also suffered greatly and who has nonetheless become a great horn player. He tells the boy he will never be as good.

Another story, "Stillness," deals with a woman who, with her scholar-husband, finds herself in a city where she once worked as a musician for a dance company. The city has changed; she has only her memories of the dance. But memory is like the still moments in a dance: it is the stillness that defines the motion. That's what art does to life.

In yet another story an old man who loves music — simply because he loved his late wife, who was a pianist — must confront an avant-garde composer who feels that he must destroy all conventional music in order to create something new. Their misunderstanding is complete: their opposing views of art cannot be reconciled. Gardner is clearly on the side of the old man.

Another figure, in "The Library Horror," is haunted by the fictional characters he finds in the library. They are more real to him than his own family. It's a risk of art — as Dr. Faustus might attest, chasing after the beautiful Helen of Troy. Yet another fellow (in "Come Back") is a Welshman who finds himself in upper New York state, bereft of his art — his singing voice has gone — and cut off from his Welsh musical heritage. He kills himself. The moral is clear.

Two other stories, the longest and the shortest in the collection, are more akin to fairy-tales. In "Trumpeter" we get a dog's-eye view of a society organized according to artistic fashion: the odd kingdom is oddly like our own society. And in "Vlemk the Box-Painter," we see the development of the relationship between the artist and society as the drunken box-painter, a mere craftsman, becomes an artist because he loves the princess — and creates a portrait of the princess that reveals more about her than she cares to know. In her response we see how history, society, and art change one another.

In fact, the only story in the collection that does not deal quite openly with art is "The Joy of the Just," which is an examination of the sin of pride in the person of a feisty old lady.



From *Margaree: Photographs of Cape Breton*, by George C. Thomas

## The tedium is the message

By BARRY DICKIE

Shreiber, by Abraham Boyarsky, General Publishing, 270 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7736 0089 2).

IT'S SURPRISING that a book about a Jew whose family was slaughtered by Nazis and whose reason for living is to kill a man would leave the reader feeling gentle and peaceful, pleasantly bored, mildly impressed, slightly disappointed, a bit confused, uncertain of what to say, yet confident that the right words will eventually avail themselves.

In the meantime, I must indulge in some character defamation. Shreiber, the aforementioned Jew, is such a boring man it makes me wonder if God was under the influence of Valium when He handed out the personality traits. I could be wrong, of course. Maybe Shreiber is actually an *intense* sort of man, living as he does in a Polish town still stinking of war, his precious wife and two beloved sons crucified on the ugly swastika, his mind blown by the horror of it all, his body reduced to a senseless holster for his pistol which is itching to knock off the guy whom he mistakenly believes betrayed his only brother to the Nazis.

It's a helluva life, all right, and Shreiber goes to great pains to keep it that way, refusing the comfort of his friends, scoffing at his rabbi's words of wisdom, denying himself the chance to begin again in Israel, shunning the love offered by his Gentile housekeeper, locking himself in the past, and generally carrying on like a serious actor determined to win the leading role in a movie about a Jew who lost his family to the Nazis. Shreiber might indeed be an intense sort of man, but getting to know him is about as intense an experience as strolling through the catatonia ward of a mental institute.

Fortunately, Shreiber is not strong enough a character to drag the entire novel down to his dreary level. He is, in fact, the weakest character in the book, even though he is the protagonist. Because he is so devoid of charm or wit or tenderness or any other human quality, he serves as an excellent foil for his more personable co-characters. Zasha, for example, comes across as a special kind of woman simply because she is able to love such a boring and self-centred man. She understands much

These are stories that are written to be discussed. And as such, they are perhaps to serve as a corrective to Gardner's *On Moral Fiction* — the book-length essay on art and society published in 1978. In that essay Gardner was very perceptive about the creation of art, less so about the intentions of art, and least of all about its function in society. He was in fact sometimes malicious and devious in his arguments. However, he was passionately clear about his feelings. He is an old-fashioned idealist who believes that art should provide models for right human conduct. But by the time he had shoved all the art he admired into the categories of his ideals, the categories had become so all-inclusive that he had become inconclusive.

But because Gardner is first of all a fiction writer and not an essayist, it should not be surprising that his stories are more coherent than his abstract prose. In fact it seems to me that most of these stories contradict entirely one of the chief demands he made for fiction in *On Moral Fiction*, where he wrote: "moral art holds up models of decent behavior . . . characters . . . whose basic goodness and struggle against confusion, error, and evil . . . give firm intellectual and emotional support to our own struggle."

In *The Art of Living and Other Stories* he has done something quite different. He has not presented exemplary characters. Instead, he has written stories from which we might draw moral truths. Therefore, although the stories are often instructive, they do not necessarily illustrate good moral character. Quite the opposite. We must see that the ostensibly good old lady, admirably crusty in character, in "The Joy of the Just," is actually guilty of the sin of pride. And if we are to emulate his characters, how far should we go? Arnold Deller, cook, might show the way to metaphysical connections with the dead by means of art: but if you or I should serve up cooked dog we would surely be arrested; if we served up pot roast of cocker spaniel, we would surely be lynched.

I am not being entirely facetious. The story "Nimram" suggests that art is an answer to the fear of death. Perhaps — but not entirely. The image of the musician and the dying girl on the airplane brought to my mind the very similar image in the farcical film *Airplane*. There the joy of musical performance is such that the passengers delight in it, ignoring the little girl — whose life-support system is disconnected — and they sing blithely on while she croaks. There's a harsh moral truth there, and an apt criticism of Gardner's point.

Many of his stories in fact invite comparisons, and few of them are flattering to Gardner. For example, the old lady of "The Joy of the Just" immediately invokes Flannery O'Connor's masterpiece, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," and next to it Gardner's story seems thin and contrived —

the more so when one realizes that the characters seem to be drawn from *Li'l Abner* and/or *The Beverly Hillbillies*. And perhaps the narrator of Arnold Deller's story is in fact The Fonz, from *Happy Days*. Certainly he is not a biker of the kind we recognize on the streets or in the courts. And Gardner's use of flat popular stereotypes — the absent-minded professor in "The Music Lover," or the bookworm in "The Library Horror" — is almost certainly deliberate.

Although in *On Moral Fiction* Gardner is very hard on writers who use thin characters to promulgate or examine ideas, he is much more generous when he finds something very similar in medieval literature. "The doctrine is stock, and the actions of ladies, gentlemen, and beasts are merely devices for communicating doctrine in a pleasing way." And clearly in these stories he wants to communicate a certain doctrine about art. Not surprisingly, he seems to do this best in the quasi-ancient fairy-tales of "Trumpe-ter" and "Vlemk the Box-Painter." He is clearly much happier with the metaphoric truths of the fairy-tale form than he is with the factual observations to which he must restrict himself in the stories of the present.

In fact it seems to me that there is a crippling contradiction at the heart of Gardner's most recent writing. On the one hand he believes in writing that illustrates or exemplifies doctrines of right conduct. On the other hand he believes that fiction is an exploration of the imagination and the intuition. In *On Moral Fiction* he wrote: "Moral fiction communicates meanings discovered by the process of the fiction's creation. . . . [but]. . . the writer must never cheat. . . . The writer's sole authority is his imagination. . . . the discoveries of great 'epiphanies' in great fiction are not planned in advance; they evolve." Yet each of the stories in *The Art of Living* seems scrupulously planned to prove or illustrate a particular theory about art and life.

It is perhaps this contradiction between intention and belief that makes Gardner's stories succeed as theories and fail as art. Because although it is possible to have works of art about art — examples from Keats, Browning, Yeats, and Joyce Cary spring to mind — Gardner's stories do not achieve what they set out to illustrate.

They are, in the end, illustrations of ideas. Their consequent value is therefore not in what they are, but in what they lead us to talk about. They seem to be written for professors and students, and indeed, if one were looking for a text with which to teach a course entitled "Art and Society," one could look a lot farther and do much worse than to choose Gardner's *The Art of Living and Other Stories*. But if one wanted, like Arnold Deller, to set a work of art before an audience to continue the tradition and enlarge their taste — a real feast of beast, as it were — one would be wise to choose *Grendel* — by John Gardner. □

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better than I do what poor Shreiber is going through, and the goodness of her Gentile heart burns brightly at the expense of the suffering Jew. Similarly, Shreiber's stubborn obsession with death and revenge helps accentuate the saintly tolerance of his spiritual mentor — Zalmen — a man whose holy vision and imaginative parables are far more exciting, intriguing, and meaningful than are Shreiber's pot-boiled schemes to be a winner in the eye-for-an-eye game.

If we can forget for a moment that Shreiber is a bore and that Boyarsky has dressed up his novel in one of those silly costumes called a "plot," he still has

written a worthwhile story — not because it has a happy ending or because it celebrates the enduring faith of the Jews, or even because it dramatizes the power struggle in post-war Poland, but rather for aesthetic reasons: he describes things very clearly and simply, especially nature, snow, trees, and the sky, how they look and how it feels to look at them. One of Shreiber's redeeming qualities is that he spends a lot of time outdoors where his boring mind must compete with God's.

Boyarsky also has a talent for creating a mood quickly and accurately. Sometimes the mood is a touch too dramatic — causing

the reader to remember that he is reading a suspense novel and not a story about real people — but usually restraint prevails. For some reason, the most memorable scenes are those involving little or no action and having little or no bearing on the plot: a Jewish beggar trying to decide how to retrieve a coin he has dropped under the feet of people in solemn prayer; a boy sitting on a swing for the first time; a letter written by an uneducated housekeeper telling her master that she is in love with him — scenes that are honest, powerful, and plentiful enough to convince me that I should end this review on a positive note and say no more. □

#### FEATURE REVIEW

## True North

June Callwood's popular history of Canada is nationalist in intent but American in form

By PETER SYPNOWICH

*Portrait of Canada*, by June Callwood, Doubleday, 378 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 05746 6.)

JOURNALISTS, LIKE other Canadians, have stopped taking their cues from the United States, and whether as cause or effect their competence and confidence have grown to the point where some of them have turned to a new pursuit: Canadian history. The latest in this progression, the ghost writer who gave us, with Barbara Walters, *How to Talk With Practically Anybody About Practically Anything*, has produced an up-to-date history of Canada that begins with the Vikings and ends with Joan Sutton.

Despite its title, *Portrait of Canada* is not a study of contemporary Canada. Its treatment of recent events, quoting the leading journalists of the day, does not rise much above *The Canadian Annual Review*. As a popular history its merit lies in its presentation of a large amount of information about Canada's past, often marked by insight, and its deployment of the outstanding historical ideas of the times: the Imperial defence of French Canadian culture, the land grab behind the American Revolution, the British sellout of Canadian interests, the importance of the state of Canadian society. A significant omission is Donald Creighton's idea of the Canadian commercial empire created by the St. Lawrence; we are told that commerce in

Canada flows north and south, like the rivers, although in fact only a few Canadian rivers flow into or out of the United States, and in historical terms only one is significant, the Red. Donald Creighton's tory outlook, however, has no place in this liberal work.

*Portrait of Canada* is progressive, federalist and, in accordance with the official line, nationalist. It cites such American assaults on Canadian autonomy as the purchase of Imperial Oil by a New Jersey millionaire in the 1890s, John L. Lewis's refusal to send strike pay to starving strikers at the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company in 1923, and the appearance of the Stars and Stripes on DEW line outposts in the 1950s. In defence of federalism it eschews the word Confederation on grounds that the term refers to independent states; it complains that the Privy Council in its interpretation of the British North America Act consistently eroded the power of the federal government; it argues that the assignment of matters of "private or local nature" to the provinces "was intended to cover matters of little importance on the national scene." It bemoans the War Measures Act and similar infringements on Canadian civil liberties; it draws attention to the achievements of women, from Mary Brant to Madeleine Parent; and it notes the youth of such heroes as Etienne Brulé (18), Mrs. Simcoe (25), and Sam Steele (24).

Like all good journalists, the author relies on telling detail. Sometimes the detail seems excessive, as when we are told that in 1614 Champlain deflowered his 13-year-old wife as a Christmas present to himself and that Abraham Martin, on whose farm was fought the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, was in later life sent to prison for seducing a child.

... Marie Guyart, known in the Ursuline order she founded as Marie de l'Incarnation, ... was accompanied to Quebec by a close friend, Madame de Chauvigny de la Peltrie. Both were widows who had disliked marriage intensely ... She suffered without complaint the desertion of her friend, Mme. de la Peltrie, who left her for Jeanne Mance, founder of the hospital on the island of Montreal ... Jeanne Mance tended hideously hacked Hurons, Algonkians and French, while Maittonneuve went to France to plead for help from a noblewoman, a friend of Mlle. Mance. He returned with a hundred soldiers and Marguerite Bourgeoys, a nun who founded the Congregation de Notre Dame de Montreal and became deeply attached to Jeanne Mance.

You won't find that in *Dominion of the North*.

Nor will you find, in the standard histories, such words as *vandalized*, *authored*, and *enthused*. The journalese in *Portrait of Canada* extends to non-speak expressions like "second-most strike-torn" and "mas-

sive level of neglect," to titular extravagances like "Canadian diplomat and later Prime Minister Lester B. (Mike) Pearson" and "infamous American Indian fighter John J. Healy." This is a book, count on it, where people are *feisty* and when *tragedy struck* it was *accepted philosophically*. One begins to long for Donald Creighton.

Being a journalist, the author gets things wrong. The given name of R. B. Bennett was Richard, not Robert. It is Gerard, not Gerald, Pelletier, and Suffield, not Sheffield, Alta. Joseph Brant's Mohawks settled the Grand River, not the Thames. The *Komugata Maru* did not sail non-stop from India. Burrard Inlet is not a delta.

In form, *Portrait of Canada* is American. The Canadian word *railway* is preferred to *railroad*, but U.S. spellings are employed, (*whiskey, defense, theater*) and capitalization follows the American view: *President, Congress* and *Constitution* are up, *prime minister, parliament* and *confederation* are down. It is irritating to see Mordecai Richler referred to as "Canadian novelist Mordecai Richler" and then to find, a few pages later, a reference to "a Bernard Malamud novel" (followed immediately by "Canadian novelist and poet Margaret Atwood").

Perhaps the author is to be forgiven these lapses, and indeed some of the errors. *Portrait of Canada* was published in New York and presumably edited there. It was badly edited. Commas are misplaced; French Canadian is hyphenated. We are given *disinterest* for lack of interest, *cohort* for colleague and *endorsement* for endorsement. We find, on page 150, "A young lawyer from Kingston, John A. MacDonald" and, three pages later, "One was a Scottish lawyer from Kingston, John A. MacDonald."

It is not easy, in a culture permeated by American media, to portray Canada as it has been and as it might be. This is why, one supposes, *Portrait of Canada* at times is uncertain or conventional in its national assertion. Sometimes Canadian assets are ignored, as in the statement that Canada is afloat in American sport (what about hockey, soccer, and basketball?). Sometimes Canadian deficiencies are celebrated, as when Mackenzie King is saluted for his contribution to American labour relations (what he proposed, on retainer from John D. Rockefeller, was the company union). John Diefenbaker's contribution to Canadian nationalism goes unnoticed, while Lester Pearson (always popular with journalists, as he was with the Kennedys) is described ingenuously as "a folksy, good-hearted prime minister addicted to the Dodgers" (his acceptance of American nuclear warheads is recounted with no mention of his written promise to the contrary). The Vietnam War is presented in terms of the influx of American draft dodgers; there is no mention of the profound effect of the war on

Canada's sense of being different from the United States. We get yet another recitation of the spurious theory of the American melting pot, along with the obligatory comparison to Canadian multiculturalism, but there is no examination of the limitations of multiculturalism as a national policy. The forces of regionalism, though lamented, are not examined in terms of a failure of federal purpose. These matters await historians. □

## REVIEW

# Alberta crude

By ANNE COLLINS

*Jazzy*, by Margaret Doerkson, General Publishing, 248 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7736 0090 6).

WELL, LET'S summarize Chapter One. *Jazzy*, otherwise known as Leah Miriam Naomi Liard, a 16-year-old hankerer after the fast life stuck on a farm in the Peace River district of Alberta in the care of strict religious parents, shoves her contraband lipstick up the spine of her Bible, puts on her too-tight jeans, and climbs out of her window to avoid spending Sunday afternoon with the preacher her parents want her to marry. She sneaks off to The Hermit's, an abandoned homestead with a nice wide stretch of river running through it, where she likes to sunbathe nude. While walking through the woods to get there *Jazzy* reminisces about the two events that have darkened her young life. The first was a plague on rabbits so severe that for one whole season *Jazzy* kept stumbling over the cute little corpses. It was her first evidence that God is cruel, threatened her faith, and cast suspicion on her God-loving parents.

The second is more gruesome. The summer she was 10 she was riding bareback on a runaway horse, and oh what horses do to hymens. *Jazzy* gets done in aces. She somehow manages to fall off the horse with her legs wide open and is skewered up the middle by a hidden tree branch. Her mother, being terribly repressed, doesn't take the bloody child to be mended because it is *that* part and she probably deserved it. So *Jazzy* grows up kind of funny inside, see, it hurts. It would have been better for all of us had it been her head she had fallen on and the results fatal.

Here I want to apologize to both Margaret

Doerkson and the judges of Alberta Culture's Fifth Search-for-a-New-Novelist Competition who saw fit to award *Jazzy* first prize. I don't much like writing flip and rather nasty reviews. But *Jazzy* manages to bring out all the worst qualities in a book reviewer. It is clumsily allegorical. Allegory should be elegant and many-levelled, sought by a reviewer like precious metal. Here it is telegraphed from mountain-tops. While sunbathing *Jazzy* is encountered by a tall and handsome type who turns out to be a geologist for an American oil company named Keith Karling (the man, not the company — it's lucky he wasn't called Derrick). He, of course, seduces *Jazzy* — who on account of her wound doesn't even enjoy it — and then leaves her flat when he discovers that her accident has left her sterile. Cry the beloved country . . . the rape of Alberta is a continuing heavy-handed theme.

Tossed out by her parents, *Jazzy* heads for the big cities of Edmonton and Calgary, where she quickly turns into a girl who can't say no (damaged goods, right?). But she insists on talking about God to everybody, even her most casual seducer — those rabbits really got to her. Along with the little retarded child she ends up babysitting for another American oil man, Karling's alcoholic boss Barry Storm. Why is God so cruel? Why suffer the little innocents? What is the meaning of life? She discovers, more or less, that "everything was part of everything else. . . . The bodies of the rabbits made the grass grow better; it would work with other animals and plants too." Even garden-variety religion shouldn't be laid on with a trowel and expect to survive the natural-born skepticism of a reviewer.

The one place Doerkson is cryptic is in character development; she seems to know her characters very well but doesn't manage to tell us about them. Keith Karling disappears after the seduction and doesn't reappear until the ending, even though he makes a bad marriage and ends up with custody of twin babies. The con man who takes *Jazzy* to the city in his bright red car sleeps with her, tells her that life is a continuum, and disappears out of the book (did he get caught? what was his con?). A brother who is apparently *Jazzy's* soul-mate comes in for one or two scenes only to introduce *Jazzy* to a part-Cree folksinging *femme fatale* whose role in the book is to inspire a sudden song-writing talent in *Jazzy* and offer to take her to Whitehorse as part of a duo she would call Starshadow and Redwing. Even *Jazzy's* parents are never seen again after they disown her, though we hear they've sold the family farm to the oil men. Too many narrative threads are left untied for a reader to feel safe hanging on to the rope.

To give her credit Doerkson doesn't feed us the traditional happy ending, complete with *Jazzy's* cruel true love, the chastened

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Karling, and his ready-made twins. But, considering the allegory, the ending is predictable. Having been through the crucible of city life and death, Jazzy heads back, a country girl at heart, to her safe little bit of Alberta heaven, The Hermit's, where she swam and dreamed as a child. Only to find the literal rape and pillage of Alberta by the American oil companies, the family farm covered with a trailer camp, the river desecrated, a hang-out for horny teenagers, scummy and with used condoms floating in it. Yes, condoms ... after all, the oil company doesn't want to get Alberta pregnant. Lucky that Jazzy met that folksinger. She sure doesn't have any place else to go. □

REVIEW

As others  
see us

By JIM CHRISTY

*Yankees in Canada*, edited by James Doyle, ECW Press, 231 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 920802 28 1).

NO MATTER HOW careful an editor has been to wed writers with subject, no matter how finely each elucidates the theme or evokes that subject, some reviewer will knock him for his selections, for his obvious stupidity in leaving out so and so and in not addressing the very important matter of such and such. That the charges are often groundless is irrelevant. It is almost a compulsion, one that needs to be studied thoroughly, and for which at least a \$20,000 grant is in order. Perhaps there is an unwritten law that no book can be enjoyed without reservation. As far as this book and this reviewer are concerned, however, the reverse of the law must be in operation. The title is misleading, the theme murky, the geographical representation lopsided, and I disagree with nearly every one of the editor's intrusions; yet—here's the disclaimer—the book has its moments, about three of them.

The travellers whose impressions of Canada are recorded here are not all Yankees. Doyle seems to regard every American as being a "Yankee" despite the distinction made by one of his authors, Richard Henry Dana. This is not a border squabble or quibble. One could overlook, I suppose, Pennsylvanians and New Jerseyites being called Yankees, but there, at the tag end of

the book, is stuck a truncated piece by that son of the middle border, Hamlin Garland. *Yankees in Canada*, then, is neither a fair selection of writings by Yankees who travelled to Canada, nor does it provide an idea of how writers representative of the United States saw this country. All but 25 of the 224 pages of text concern the East, primarily Quebec. The result is page after page of predictable response to the Citadel, the Plains of Abraham, pious priests, hardy peasants, and dark-eyed farm girls. It is stultifying reading relieved only by the particular prejudice of a writer like Thoreau, who cared for nothing in Canada but the poetry of place names and who wrote that "the English government has been remarkably liberal to its Catholic subjects" and, in fact, "their government is too good for them." It is not until the half-way point that one escapes Ontario and Quebec with Frederick Swartwout Cozzens. His account of a trip to Acadia is the first to convey the sense of a journey of discovery. Cozzens, on horseback, finds former Negro slaves living in hovels in the forests of Evangeline.

None of the contributors seem to have met any of the Canadian people save for Charles Haight Farnham, who took a walking trip across Cape Breton Island. The rest tended to dislike those they only observed, except for Walt Whitman, eyeing healthy rowers and robust harvest workers near Sarnia. Farnham stayed in the homes of Gaelic-speaking fishermen and farmers, noting the details of their daily existence. One must read three-quarters of the book to come upon a sense of the texture of people's lives.

There is no excuse for the lack of material about the West. The notion that not much has been written by Americans about the Canadian West is nonsense. Charles Dudley Warner, Mark Twain's sometime collaborator, noted in 1888 that six through trains a week left Montreal for the new town of Vancouver. The effect of all this is to perpetuate an Eastern perspective of the country.

This book may have been a tough trip, but as with every trip there is some reward other than getting home. I discovered the most interesting writers were those who are little known, like Farnham, and that whenever Doyle disparaged someone's literary talent he was sure to prove interesting. The work of Joseph Sansom, for instance, is "of virtually no literary distinction." And yet, "... and slept though it was midsummer under I know not how many blankets in a bed close hung with worsted curtains, in flaming red!"

Warner's piece is said to resemble "an encyclopedia article" but it is as refreshing as the first glimpse of the Selkirks after a lifetime of Lowertown. He leaves behind a weird, surrealistic sketch of the area around a Winnipeg haunted by the spectre of the Manitoba Penitentiary; orders up a display

of buffalo by phone, and sees East Londoners — "the barbarians of civilization" — living on the plains near colonies of Icelanders. Then Warner heads west to the

thriving Saskatchewan town of Moosejay.

Those moments, alas, are not enough to redeem the voyage. Perhaps the editor as well as the reviewer suffers from a compul-

sion. If so, it seems to be an irresistible impulse to maintain the tired old myth: that Canada has always been a dreadfully dull place to live and to visit. □

## FEATURE REVIEW

# Novel-gazing

'If the job of a novel is to reflect upon its own manufacture, then Italo Calvino has indeed written a very important book'

By MATT COHEN

If on a *Winter's Night a Traveller*, by Italo Calvino, translated from the Italian by William Weaver, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 260 pages, \$13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919630 45 6).

The novel as a form no longer carries conviction. Experimentation, not aimed at the real difficulties, has corrupted response; and there is great confusion in the minds of readers and writers about the purpose of the novel. The novelist, like the painter, no longer recognizes his interpretive function; he seeks to go beyond it; and his audience diminishes. And so the world we inhabit, which is always new, goes by unexamined . . . and there is no one to awaken the sense of true wonder.

— V. S. Naipaul

THERE ARE SOME novels so engaging that they not only illuminate a new area of the imagination and make the time spent reading a rare and wonderful occasion, but also transform, through the writer's voice and vision, the world that the reader already knows. Although details of plot and character in such novels may recede with time, the experience of reading them does not; some sort of collision has taken place and its sensation cannot be forgotten.

If on a *Winter's Night a Traveller* is not such a novel. As the time from first reading expands, the novel shrinks and reduces itself until the literary devices on which it depends are all that remain. The novel begins with a chapter written in that knowing and impersonal style which is the mark of best-selling detective novels. The chapter is also littered with references to the writer, to publishing, etc., but one assumes that these references are self-conscious remarks to ease the writer over the embarrassment of presenting what will surely be a conventional novel of suspense, and to make the reader aware that the writer is an artist as well as a tradesman. But as the second

chapter begins it becomes clear that it is drawn from a different manuscript from the first. The third chapter comes from yet another manuscript, and so forth with the rest of the book — each chapter taking up, beginning, or meditating upon a different novel.

If each of these chapters were a riveting experience, then reading the book would be a bit like taking an unexpectedly disjointed roller coaster ride — and in anticipation of this success Calvino makes his two main characters be readers, a man and woman nicely matched for romantic interest. Naturally these trusting readers are dismayed to find their book constantly slipping away from them, and their dedicated search for the original manuscript, along with the author's compassion for their plight, forms a major theme of the novel.

So, as it turns out, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* is a detective novel after all — but what it seeks is itself. In the course of this search there are a great many remarks on what might or might not happen with this novel, as well as novels in general, and a great deal of philosophizing about the state of writing and publishing. If the job of a novel is to reflect upon its own manufacture, then Calvino has indeed written a very important book.

But there are other conceptions of the novel's task. The quotation at the beginning of this review is from V. S. Naipaul's appreciative essay on Joseph Conrad. Naipaul has also written about Borges — a writer to whom, at least in terms of aesthetic, Calvino can be compared. In his essay Naipaul says that the great flaw in Borges's writing is that he has not described Argentina, but has invented a 'Borgesian Argentina' that justifies his own past and, it is implied, his own turning away from reality.

The invention of false targets seems to be the main, and the most amusing, pre-occupation of Calvino's novel. The publishing industry he lampoons seems, from his description, to be a hilarious jumble of well-meaning fools with glasses. The alternative is presumably Calvino's own work, which has usually been, like the present volume, fantasist and surrealist.

But when John Leonard of the *New York Times* first compares Calvino to Borges, and then calls him Italy's greatest living writer, the sceptic might wonder what happened to such writers as Alberto Moravia and Elsa Morante, who are not only structurally inventive and great stylists, but whose novels breathe with life as well as art. Their novels are not simply about themselves, but make room for a society that is complex and anarchic, people who experience not only sweet dreams but war, hunger, and even love.

Calvino seems to be saying that such novels — novels that are naturalistic in impulse and satisfy the reader's desire for narrative coherence (the readers in his novel certainly complain of its lack) — are simply a formula form of entertainment designed to make money. Thus one character in his novel is a famous international novelist who lives in various villas composing his newest best-seller while publishers and agents hungrily await; another is a mysterious being who may live in South America producing *all* novels and plots.

If Calvino's novel were engaging at each step — if we were persuaded at each of his changes from one manuscript to the next, one theory of the novel to the next — then he would have at least succeeded in the *tour de force* of having formed an imaginative world out of what are basically intellectual questions. But, unfortunately, some chapters are interesting while others seem

merely forced by his own formula. I found myself starting to argue with Calvino: does a clever attack on good books justify a bad book? Because by normal standards, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* is not a success. The characters are unreal; the narrative progression is dynamited from the start; the emotions are mocked; the actual story line that emerges is uneven in its attraction.

On the other hand, the writing itself is superb, and Calvino has certainly raised important questions about the novel and its future. Many readers will find that Calvino makes — though perhaps it could have been better and more briefly done in an essay — a very strong case for the death of the conventional novel, caused by greedy publishers and lowbrow readers, and in the course of that statement he affirms many ideas about avant-garde art, post-modern and magic-realist writing that will have like-minded critics cheering. And yet, even his most ardent supporters must admit that if this novel is the living result, there might be a few problems to be ironed out.

In the meantime it is interesting to note that Lester & Orpen Dennys have opened their international fiction series with a novel whose subject is the question of what a novel should be. It's hard to believe that this book, if written by an American, would have been published at all (although it is being published in the United States). If

written by a Canadian it probably would have been denounced as another example of irresponsible Canada Council-sponsored nationalistic bunk.

As it is, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* will count as one of Calvino's minor works. Readers will find in it a superb prose style, a lot of interesting questions, and the potential for several good novels. □

#### REVIEW

## Witness for the persecution

By **MARIA HORVATH**

*When Evils Were Most Free*, by George Gabori, translated from the Hungarian by Eric Johnson with George Faludy, Deneau Publishers, 290 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88879 054 6).

THE POET Czeslaw Milosz has observed that

those "who are alive receive a mandate from those who are silent forever." George Gabori, a survivor of both the Gulag and the Holocaust, has accepted that mandate. His memoir, *When Evils Were Most Free*, gives eloquent testimony to the memory of the millions of victims silenced forever by the twin lunacies of our century, communism and fascism.

The son of a Jewish wine merchant, Gabori was born in Budapest in 1924. His father and grandfather instilled in him a lesson he learned well: everyone must be treated with justice. At 17, he joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party because he was attracted by its history as the only political force to fight for equality before the law in Hungary. For three years, he participated in the party's activities against the country's fascist regime, which had aligned itself with Hitler.

The Gestapo deported him to Dachau in 1944. An ironic error probably saved his life: mistaken for a Communist, he was forced to wear the red triangle of the political prisoner instead of the yellow one identifying a Jew.

Liberation by the Allies in 1945 released him from hell but also revealed a world that had forgotten all too quickly most of the lessons of the war. Already, a "certain dreamy vagueness crept into German eyes at the very mention of the word 'Nazi,' a

## Public Policy can be Debated.

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polite lack of comprehension."

Returning home, he saw to his horror that the Communists, protected by the Red Army, which had driven the Nazis out of Hungary, were slowly taking over all important government functions and were even embracing their former Nazi foes. The Social Democratic Party, which many Hun-

garians believed to be the "only means to keep the Communists away from absolute power," had naively entered into a contract with the Stalinists. The party's leaders reasoned that it was better to have the Communists as allies than to risk them as enemies.

But, as Faust learned long ago, one

always loses when making a deal with the Devil. Three years later, the Communists took over completely, held show trials, executed dissidents including Social Democrats, closed down the press, and instituted the structures of a totalitarian regime.

Thus, six short years after his arrest by the Gestapo, Gabori was imprisoned by the

## Juan Butler, 1942-1981

A FRIEND OF MINE once told me, "Juan Butler is the most psychotic man I ever met." I didn't know Juan Butler, but I read his books and feel as though I do know him, at least a part of his mind and his heart. I admired him as a writer because he was so honest. Three months ago, at the age of 37, he died in a Toronto psychiatric hospital. He hanged himself.

Each of his three novels is about a writer searching for dignity in a vulgar world. The writer of his first novel (*Cabbagetown Diary*, 1969) is a young bartender who lives with his girlfriend in a slummy Toronto rooming house. His best friend is an acid head who proposes a violent takeover of City Hall. Though the writer admires his friend's spunk and shares his disgust with the squalor and stupidity around him, he knows that politics is a waste of time. He's a nihilist. Well, almost: he *does* love his girlfriend, sort of. "Let's put it this way: I don't mind having her around, and that's quite an improvement over the other chicks I've shackled with." The only dignity he finds is in writing an honest diary. When his girlfriend becomes pregnant he calmly dumps her, which suggests that he, too, is heading in a dangerous direction.

My favourite of Butler's novels is his second one (*The Garbageman*, 1972). Again the narrator is a writer, a very intelligent one who has travelled in Europe and read much on the subject of anarchy. A very sick and tormented writer, one who is obviously insane. Not just alienated from society or, like his brother, mixed up on LSD, but really and truly out of his mind. He doesn't need drugs to look in a bathroom mirror and hallucinate: "My teeth rot and dribble out of my jaws. They clatter on the linoleum floor below my feet. Like a handful of marbles. My skull shatters, crumbles, turns to powder."

It's a very scary and beautiful book, one of the most eloquent ever written in Canada about the horrors of madness. The writer is alone, unloved, full of hatred. He loathes himself, craves intimacy, yet would kill anyone who dared

be intimate with him. Like the homosexual Marine he picks up in a Barcelona bar: they go to a lonely alley where the writer blows the Marine's head off. "It reminds me of a freshly decapitated egg with the yolk oozing out of it." He is not so gentle with the sweet and innocent girl he takes for a "picnic" in the Bois de Boulogne. It's an ugly, ugly scene, but poetic, too, powerful and somehow dignified. Her death is a sacrifice to the dignity of art. The more horrible the writer's vision, the more inspired is his language. And why does he do it? What does he want? "I want to see what it will be like after the Bomb has fallen. I want to see burnt skin and bleeding eye-sockets and children lobotomized by fall-out. I want to see a holocaust, something that will make my experience seem trivial, mediocre in comparison. I want to see this hateful petty nauseous world destroy itself. . . ."

Juan Butler came to Canada from England when he was six years old and dropped out of school after Grade 10. He spoke three languages and might, if he hadn't been a writer, have become a professor of art or history. His personal experience with madness, his refined intellect, and his low-life street knowledge all come together rather bizarrely in his final work (*Canadian Healing Oil*, 1974), a book so different it's hard to believe it was written only two years after *The Garbageman*. A transformation had occurred.

The writer is now a fighter, one who rights things, like a missionary or martyr. Like Jean Brébeuf. In fact, he *is* Jean Brébeuf. Their initials, J.B., are the same. Likewise, he is St. John the Baptist, patron saint of Quebec and Puerto Rico, whose capital city is San Juan. John is a form of Juan, Butler's first name, so he is also plain John, a clerk in a Toronto bookstore that is frequented by such notable customers as Frankenstein, Dostoevski and St. Matthew.

Obviously, the writer has embarked on a trip into timeless consciousness. His madness is more adventurous and more spiritual than that of *The*

*Garbageman*. A magical light has crashed through the hate-ridden walls of psychosis and given him a new identity, a new sense of destiny. He is in love! Her name is Miss Pat. She is a black woman. She is a Chinese woman. She's an Indian princess, too, and she is Joan of Arc.

Again, the world is vulgar and the writer is searching for dignity. In love, he finds it everywhere: in the behaviour of cockroaches and vipers, in the texture of apples and oranges, and in the cruelty and tenderness of human relationships. For once, the writer feels no bitterness. When the world presents itself as an ugly thing, without dignity, he bestows dignity upon it by describing it with more patience and care than in his previous novels. If things sometimes get confusing, this time there is a God and He knows what is going on. Being a writer is no big deal. His existence is just a part of a bigger story, one that is recorded in the Scriptures, and in history and literature. The people he meets, though slovenly and undignified, are also historical personages, immortal and very special, like himself; St. John is the apostle whom Christ loved the most. Even if he has his worrisome moments, he knows that Miss Pat will guide him, with dignity, to his final destiny.

Where he is headed is rather obvious and rather sad. They often ride through the streets of Quebec and the islands of the Caribbean in an elegant funeral hearse. Back through the bloodshed of history and the domination of people over people, back to his real self, the gentle martyr who must die in the name of Christ. He has to cheat a little to get there, employ an elephant with a strong trunk to fling him from St. Kitt's to the Canadian forest, but he makes it.

Back to his real self, the gentle martyr tied to a stake. Burning like Jean Brébeuf, waiting for Joan of Arc. Burning while she sprinkles him with holy water until, finally, he is free, absolved, and the writer may conduct his final descent. With dignity: "Down, down I sink into the cool refreshing earth until all is dark, all is light."

— BARRY DICKIE

# Precious little

By JOHN CRUICKSHANK

The Measure, by Patrick Lane, Black Moss Press, 59 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88753 064 4).

THE TITLE POEM of Patrick Lane's latest collection should quickly find its way into the anthologies, not because it is the best of the 25 poems brought together in this volume, but because it is the most striking. "The Measure" depicts a dead dog in a field being watched over by a magpie; it is a small, almost perfect song in a minor key. The metaphor is precise and compelling, drawing the reader into a slightly claustrophobic but richly furnished poetic world. And, like much of the best anthology poetry — though not always the best verse — "The Measure" feels authorless and timeless. Here are the final three lines:

*Stark as charred bone  
a magpie stuns his tongue against the wind  
and the wind steals the rattle of his cry.*

Such words as "bone" and "stark," and such images as wind whipping away sound, seem to suspend the poem in time and place, giving it a universal quality.

In fact, I'd advise readers to make their way through the title poem before grappling with Lane's rather bathetic screed for himself on the back cover: "I sometimes think I was born old," he writes. "If that is true then these poems are a way of return to an innocence I never knew." Unfortunately, this triumph of grammar and logic intrudes into some of Lane's poems. A poet's reflections on life and community are often valuable — perhaps when recounted in memoirs or magazine articles — but when in poems they force the reader to stop in mid-stanza to ask why he is being subjected to this or that opinion, the coherence of the reading experience suffers.

Many of the poems are of the "Most Unforgettable Character I Have Known" variety, which now seems so much in vogue. They are entertaining, cleanly written, and though at times they are little more than loosely punctuated short stories, they are at least free of the preciousness that creeps into some of Lane's lyrical work. □



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Hungarian secret police in the concentration camp at Recsk for "crimes he intended to commit." There was no trial. His torturers used the same methods as the Nazis, shouted the same anti-Semitic slurs, pronounced the same trumped-up charges, and inflicted the same physical abuse. His "blood turned to ice" as he recognized one of his interrogators — a man who had been, during the war, a Gestapo informer.

But there were some important differences in this second bout of horror. Under the Nazis, most of the prisoners wanted desperately to live; at Recsk, however, the inmates suffered a "will-sapping despair mixed with a hatred that frequently gave way to indifference and then death." He tried to tell himself that the Nazi death camp had been worse, but it was no use: "Death was closer there, but we had known the war was nearly over and the Americans would soon arrive."

After Stalin's death in 1953, a liberalization of sorts took place in the country, and Gabori was released. Then, on Oct. 23, 1956, Hungarians courageously demonstrated against the Communist regime. Their cause was hopeless, and within a week the Russians rounded up tens of thousands of civilians to be shipped to camps in Siberia. Gabori escaped to Austria.

His is a powerful tale, all the more remarkable because Gabori was able to remain the man his father and grandfather taught him to be. The book is a tribute to those who helped him survive, the men "whose erudition was wholly at the service of mankind, not ideology." Three were especially important: the priest at Dachau who encouraged him to remain steadfast in the faith of his father; the old Jewish industrialist, also at Dachau, who taught him that "justice is a sort of passion for dealing decently with people"; and the respected Hungarian poet George Faludy who, every night for three years at Recsk, gave lectures, recited poetry, and reminded his fellow prisoners of the humanist tradition.

Gabori recounts his story simply, sometimes with an ironic wit, but never with bitterness, pretension, or self-consciousness. The writing reflects a lyrical touch; Faludy helped with the translation.

Gabori has no patience for those who, while enjoying the blessings of a liberal democracy, flirt with totalitarian ideologies. There comes a time "when we have to judge theories for what they turn out to be in practice," he writes. Democracy is not perfect but "there are two Germanies. One is democratic and filled with problems and injustice. The other is Marxist and filled with problems and injustice. Given the choice of living in either as an ordinary citizen, there aren't ten men in this country who would choose East Germany. That, my friend, is the long and short of it." □

# YEARS OF THE DISABLED

A generation of students has been crippled  
by a fascination with technology  
and the demands of special interest groups

By W. D. VALGARDSON

EVERY YEAR THEY come to me. Dozens of them. All crippled. All damaged. All wanting what is impossible. I deal in disappointment. I deal in sorrow. I deal in despair. I tell them I can do nothing for them. The blind will not see. The lame will not walk. There are no miracles.

Eagerly, they say, "I want to be a writer. I have these poems and stories burning inside me. I want to share them with the world." It's like listening to paraplegics insisting that they want to be long-distance runners. They brandish reports that prove they're not crippled. As and Bs in every English class they've taken. Yet they cannot write a compound-complex sentence, nor a complex sentence, nor a compound sentence. God help us, two out of three times they can't write a *simple* sentence and get it right.

In 1977, when I wrote an article called "Free the Teacher," I received more than 300 letters in reply, nearly all from teachers who were desperately trying to see that their students learned to read and write. Most of what they said is summed up by this excerpt from a letter written by a high-school teacher with 20 years experience:

For the past four years a younger crop of teachers have invaded our premises and have relaxed their teaching of basics in Math and especially in English. What a mess they have created. The children that I had come to me in September had no work habits. Play all day was their motto. No basic sentence structure had been taught them. For four months, I've been teaching simple sentences. They, poor pupils, find me very hard. They are forever writing, rewriting and recopying.

There are hundreds of conscientious, competent English teachers out there, somewhere, in the wilderness of the educational system but, more and more, they are like the remnants of a defeated army, isolated, vulnerable, ineffective. Some have given up, but could and would teach effectively if given the necessary support. Others have dropped out of teaching or will drop out over the next few years. If given educational leadership that promised a chance to teach effectively, they might return. The result of the defeat of those forces within the educational system that believed literacy is a primary goal has not been just the demoralization of a whole generation of teachers but the production of a generation of Canadians who are seriously undereducated.

An individual's inability to write is easy to see. The inability to read can more easily be covered up. The one, however, is closely

tied to the other. Close to 20 years of teaching both writing and reading in Canada and the United States has convinced me that one's reading ability sets the upper limit on how well one writes. It seems obvious that no one can write better than he can read. That is why it is absolute nonsense to say that students do not need to learn to read well because audio computers will soon be reading for them and speaking the words out loud.

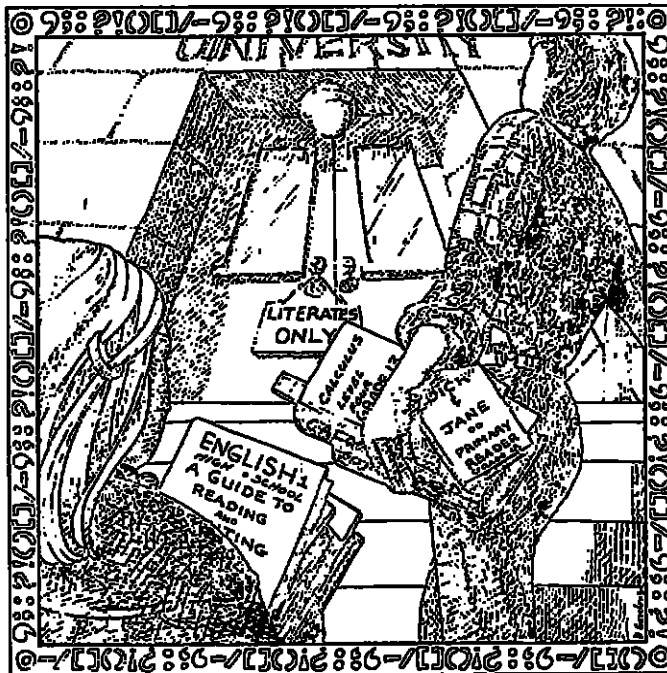
How well can students read? My experience says very poorly indeed. Each September, I ask the students enrolled in my Structure of Fiction class to take 10 short stories, read them over the weekend, and return with a statement of the organizing principle

for each story. If that organizing principle is a theme, I want it written out in one sentence. In a class of 20, no more than one can do the exercise with any real competence. Perhaps four can read well enough to get half the exercise right. The rest read so badly that they often cannot even accurately relate the plot. Remember, this is not public school. This is university. These students are supposedly the best and the brightest. Those students from the lower sections of their graduating class must be functional illiterates.

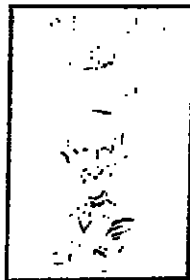
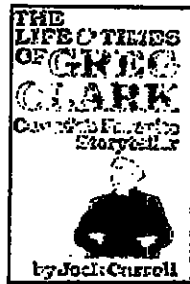
Part of the problem comes from their having been taught an attitude that I can only describe as anti-literate. Many of the least competent students defend their inability to read a piece of prose and explain what they have read by saying that a story means anything anyone wants it to

mean. Such a statement denies that words have meaning. It denies that syntax has meaning, that dramatic structure has meaning. And yet I hear it frequently, sometimes even from teachers.

Students who come to me as literacy cripples are crippled precisely because they do not know their punctuation, syntax, or vocabulary. Yet when I have insisted to them and to their teachers that to be free one must know the rules of the comma, semi-colon, colon; that one must know how to write simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences; that one must know the various dramatic structures and their effects, I have been accused of being anti-creative and inhumane. It is as though, in the same way that the Asian flu rises through mutation in some far distant place, a theory has grown up that knowledge and creativity are antithetical. It is true that knowing all the rules of grammar never made a successful writer out of someone who has no talent, but it is equally true that knowledge never kept anyone from being



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successful. The choice is not between having a lot of knowledge and skill or being creative. It is a matter of having a lot of knowledge and skill *and* being creative.

Those teachers who understand that freedom and independence come only through mastery of skills and knowledge and that the school, in a democratic society, must have as its first priority the teaching of those skills that will allow an individual to spend a lifetime teaching himself, are embattled for a host of reasons.

One is that the schools have lost direction. As ethical and social values have shifted and brought about social conflict, the schools have been under increasing pressure to meet the needs of special interest groups instead of the needs of students. Fundamentalist groups have succeeded in denying the multi-ethnic, multi-religious character of our present-day schools and have forced upon the system "value education" and pop-psychology; politicians concerned about unemployment have tried to force schools to become holding areas whose primary function is to keep students off the job market; sports enthusiasts, concerned over Canada's poor showing in international competitions, have attempted to create a higher priority for sports. Afraid of being charged with not being flexible and innovative, unsure of what their function should be in a world where traditional values are under attack, schools have tried to meet far too many demands.

If every subject were ranked according to its ability to help a student become more independent, the skills of English (reading and writing) stand first. Mathematics comes a close second. Even Math, however, except at the simplest levels, depends upon the ability to read. The more complex the material, the more important the ability to read becomes. The more complex the material to be transferred to another person, the more important the ability to write clearly and concisely.

This truth is so obvious that it would not seem to need to be stated. Yet, because of the special interest groups that would rearrange priorities to suit their needs and desires, plus a fascination with technology among departments and faculties of education, it is a point that must both be stated and defended.

Every few years there has been a new panacea that is supposed to solve all the problems of educating large numbers of people of diverse abilities and interests. School cupboards are stocked with bits and pieces of such technology, which in the long run has often done no more than to divert funds from the purchase of essential supplies. Television is a prime example of the failure of this technology. Years ago the public was told, in a great rash of publicity, that it was no longer important for people to learn to read. After all, we now had this marvelous piece of equipment that was going to show us, in pictures and with spoken words, what we needed to know. What a wonderful education this technology has brought us. What depth, what breadth — to teach us about our culture we get *The Gong Show*; to provide us with models of intellectual attainment, *Hollywood Squares*; to demonstrate the intricate processes of the law, *Starsky and Hutch*. To keep us informed of current world events and complex social problems we have the news hour, 60 minutes of filmed violence, often manufactured by the presence of the camera.

Television was supposed to provide flexibility, yet is far more rigid than the most dogmatic teacher. It cannot, because of technological rigidity and the expense of production and maintenance, meet individual needs in ways that a teacher does hundreds of times each day. Technology, by its very nature, denies the complexity of the learner.

A third problem is the denial by some members of the educational establishment that learning is sequential. That is, they deny that in skills-learning certain tasks must be mastered before others are learned. They deny that words must be understood before a sentence can be understood; that sentences must be understood before a paragraph; that paragraphs must be understood before an essay or story. During the seven years that I have taught university students from across Canada, I have had to deal with individuals who, although they had graduated with high grades from public

school, have lacked basic knowledge and skills. Their vocabularies were miniscule. Their understanding of the derivation of words (which might have helped them increase their vocabularies) has been non-existent. Although they had entered grade levels that required the ability to construct complex essays, to read and analyze complex writing by others, they still did not have the skills that would have given them at least some chance of success.

If department of education officials accepted the fact that in basic-skill subjects (as opposed to knowledge subjects) learning is sequential, then they would have to define those skills and prescribe their being learned before a student could advance to more complex work. That, at the moment, would mean a large number of students would not advance. They would have to repeat the work, which in turn would be an admission that something is seriously wrong, that changes in teaching must occur. It would be very uncomfortable for the politicians, who would have to answer to the taxpayer for so little return on such large expense. It would also be uncomfortable for the departments and faculties of education, for it would call into question their entire approach to education. It would be uncomfortable for principals and teachers. But at least if the disease were recognized and admitted, something might be done about it.

What needs to be done? First of all, we must recognize that the school's function is to assist the student in developing skills that will allow him to be as independent as possible throughout his lifetime. That means budgets should be increased or redistributed so that reading and writing receive more resources. No one learns except by practice: we recognize that in everything from figure skating to football. Although reading and writing are more abstract

skills, the same is true for them.

Second, students must have the right to classes small enough to allow teachers to assign and analyze at least one piece of writing from each student every week. The teacher must also have time to grade the work and return it in five days. There must be time for the teacher to go over the corrected work with the students so they do not keep making the same errors over and over again. The same sort of priority with regard to funding and time must be given to the teaching of reading for *the entire 12 or 13 years of school*.

Such revamping of priorities and budget will not be justified, however, unless the resources are effectively used, which means that every teacher of writing and reading must be qualified. No more Physical Education or Mathematics majors being assigned to teaching English. The easiest way to put a stop to the cynical assignment of unqualified teachers to teach English is to license teachers for specific subjects. Also, as a requirement for those licences, all teachers should be tested in the area of their expertise. If it turns out that teaching skills are not deficient in any widespread way, then the results will force an examination of other aspects of the educational system.

And finally, external evaluation of student work must be undertaken on a regular basis. Only this will free the conscientious teacher from community and administrative pressure to cover up any lack of learning. This may mean a return to province-wide exams.

All these modest proposals will have their costs. However, after seeing the results of an unstructured system, a situation that has sacrificed objectivity for subjectivity, I'd be willing to accept both the costs and the risks. □

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**The Police Function in Canada**, edited by W. T.

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**Beginnings**, edited by John Moss, *Canadian Novel Series, Volume 2*, NC Press, 192 pages, \$8.95 paper. Senior-college. The first volume in Moss's series, *Here and Now*, was an anthology of critical essays on significant contemporary Canadian writers. This volume contains valuable reference material about earlier writers: Frances Brooke, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, John Richardson, Susanna Moodie, James De Mille, Sara Jeanette Duncan, and Stephen Leacock.

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**Openings, Stages, and Passages: Literature of Newfoundland and Labrador**, edited by Eric Norman *et al.*, Breakwater, 154, 157, and 165 pages, each \$4.95 paper. Intermediate. Three volumes of verse, fiction, and non-fiction designed to dramatize the way of life of early Newfoundlanders, the environment in which they now live, their values, and their community spirit.

**Replay: A Canadian College Reader**, edited by

Michael Park and Jack David, Methuen, 246 pages, \$9.95 paper. College. A glitzy attempt to equate undergraduate essay-writing with magazine journalism, the techniques of which often differ considerably. The bulk of the book is an anthology of magazine pieces from such sources as *Weekend* and *Saturday Night* on topics ranging from alcoholism to automobile engines.

**Early September: An Anthology of Short Stories**, edited by James A. MacNeill, Nelson Canada, 208 pages, \$4.95 paper, \$5.95 teachers' edition. Senior. An international collection of 25 stories from practitioners as varied as Doris Lessing and the late Greg Clark.

**New Worlds**, edited by John Metcalf, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 169 pages, \$7.24 paper. Senior. Fourteen Canadian stories, from the ubiquitous Morley Callaghan ("A Cap for Steve") and Sinclair Ross ("One's a Heifer") to such less-often anthologized writers as W. P. Kinsella and Merna Summers.

**Introduction to Literature: British, American, Canadian**, edited by Gillian Thomas *et al.*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 434 pages, \$14.25 paper. College. A survey of essays, poetry, and fiction from Jonathan Swift to Alistair MacLeod by way of sources as diverse as Chidwick Tichborne and Donald Barthelme.

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**An Hour Upon the Stage**, edited by Laird Orr, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 144 pages, \$6.94 paper. Senior. Seven one-act plays, ranging from work by Shaw and Chekhov to James Tallman of Kelowna, B.C., and Julie Bovasso of New York, N.Y., whose *Schubert's Last Serenade* has been lauded somewhat for high school use.

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**Writing Prose: Techniques and Purposes**, edited by Thomas S. Kane *et al.*, Oxford, 633 pages, \$11.50 paper. College. The recently

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**Insight 1 and 2**, by Kenneth J. Weber and Michael H. Tudor, Methuen, 224 and 232 pages, each \$8.95 paper. Intermediate. The lively materials, language games, and puzzles in these two volumes provide an imaginative approach to teaching English at the high-school level.

**Writing Power 1 and 2**, by Gillian Bartlett, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 242 and 272 pages, \$8.41 and \$9.42 cloth. Intermediate. A tightly organized and traditional approach to teaching grammar and composition.

**Telling the World 1, 2, and 3**, edited by Doreen Lechelt *et al.*, Oxford, 272, 336, and 356 pages, \$10.50, \$11.50, and \$12.25 cloth. Intermediate. A rather busy approach to teaching writing by example (fragments from novels, newspapers, and the like) followed up by related student activities. Each volume also has a grammar and usage section.

**Writing for Results**, by Marlene Scardamalia *et al.*, OISE Press, 167 pages, \$10.50 paper. Junior-intermediate. Contains 60 writing activities, some more original than others, such as writing a story with a partner, having a proofreading competition, and giving directions to a robot. The book includes planned procedures for using the activities from grades 4 to 12.

**ABCs of Creative Writing**, by David W. Booth and Stanley Skinner, Globe/Modern Curriculum Press, 154 pages, \$6.95 paper. Intermediate-senior. Another "writing program" designed to help the student "develop as a writer." For some reason the examples in this book are arranged alphabetically by kind, with at least one entry for all 26 letters: adventure, blurb, children's literature right through to x-word, yarns, and zodiac.

**Good Words, Well Spoken**, by Esmé Cramp-ton, The Norman Press, 179 pages, \$11.00 paper. Senior-college. A handbook of speech, discussing the pathology of sound production and providing instruction in all varieties of voice use from formal speech-making to job interviews and social chat.

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**Abridged Economics**, by Patricia M. Procnier and Eileen V. Bowden, Gage.

**Canada's Lost Plays, Vol. III: Developing the Mosaic**, edited by Anton Wagner, *Canadian Theatre Review Publications*.

**Canada's Playwrights: A Biographical Guide**, edited by Don Rubin and Alison Cranmer-Byng, *Canadian Theatre Review Publications*.

**The Canadian Dictionary for Schools**, Collier Macmillan. Donald Smith *et le* *Canadian Paëifique*, by Keith Wilson, translated by Réjeanne Bissonnette, Book Society of Canada.

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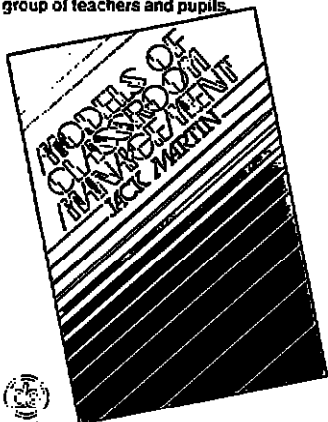
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## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

One woman's toothy affair in Toronto and an Indian girl's quest for sainthood in sardonic small-town Montana

By DOUGLAS HILL

Love Bites, by Freda Garmaise (Musson, 205 pages, \$14.95 cloth), is, like Atwood's *Edible Woman* and Plath's *Bell Jar*, centred upon a woman whose emotional life regularly expresses itself through her relations with food. Unlike those two books, this one neither seeks nor finds any great depth of meaning or insight. It's an entertainment, a bit of spiced-up (MSG) situation comedy about the trendy Toronto media folk.

Sheba (originally Sheila) Williams, who tells her own story, is a TV news reporter with a tendency to overeating and overweight. Her husband has left her; her career is stalled if not worse. She is introduced to and falls for a nutty Jewish caterer, Teddy Nudelman. Their affair — ups and downs and outcome — and its effect on Sheba's discovery of her needs is all there is to the plot, but it has some good and wise moments.

The novel seldom offers a paragraph longer than one sentence, which is fine since what Garmaise is after is the kind of humour that comes in one-line packages, with plenty of brand-names attached. She's often witty, in a pleasantly bubbly way, and her dialogue can be quick and crisp. On the whole, however, the book's not as fresh as it ought to be; a reader begins to sense exhaustion in the author's efforts to crack jokes and stay upbeat.

*Love Bites* would like to be described, as tart and frothy, I imagine — a lemony triumph of literary *cuisine minceur*. To me it tasted a bit flat. I had no particular desire to linger over it, and have no desire at all to repeat the experience.

James Polk, in *The Passion of Loreen Bright Weasel* (Thomas Allen, 188 pages, \$12.95 cloth), applies considerable humor-

ous invention and sardonic wit to a stylish, studied effort that, I have to conclude, loses itself in its own hollowness.

It's the story of a young Indian girl in Montana who gets some quite mixed-up ideas about the Catholic faith and the way to sainthood, and gets pregnant as well, during her stay at a Mission school. She moves on to a job as maid for a prominent family in a nearby town, Hebb. Francis ("Sheep") Triumph wants to become the mayor, with a campaign based on his pledge to shut down the whorehouse run by his first wife, Marlyss, whom he still yearns after. His present wife, Winn, spends her time in a haze of Valium and booze, surrounded by bits of atrocious decor ordered in from big-city department stores.

As Loreen stumbles through the world of Hebb, doing good works, her presence induces one bawdy farcical scrape after another. Much of this is funny, some hilarious; some of it's tired. The emphasis is on sexual escapades and sexual disfunction. The book's basically a collection of comic episodes and jokes, often slapstick, held loosely together by a flimsy plot, with threads of pathos, earnestness, and social comment running through it. It all seems to go out of focus about halfway through, as it takes off in several directions at once and loses track of Loreen.

Certainly Loreen has an effect on Hebb. Possibly it could be considered redemptive. Maybe that's the point. I do know that despite — or perhaps because of — Polk's deftness with the sharp edges of his satire, I sensed an air of superciliousness, of snideness, about the book. I'm not searching for spiritual improvement and positive thinking in everything I read. But Polk seems nowhere to have compassion for any of his



characters: they're each and every one the butt of his jokes, and they all appear fools. I say again. *The Passion of Loreen Bright Weasel* is funny. Only for a while, though. My laughter stopped well before the novel did.

**Come From Away**, by Joseph Green (Oberon, 200 pages, \$15.95 cloth and \$7.95 paper), is an unusual novel, and not wholly successful, but it offers some pleasant rewards. It tells the story of Paulie Russell, a teenager in a Maritimes fishing village, and of the events that fill the summer of his coming of age. The setting is an island (I'd guess off New Brunswick, though the pseudonymous author has left it unspecified) and the time seems to be around 1950.

There's an intricate plot, having to do with electoral politics, adultery, and the machinations of the community fish-plant's management, but the primary interests here are variously local colour, fishing lore, and the trials of adolescence. The island and its ways are rendered with care and affection.

The natives — of whom there's a crowd, many of them with nicknames like Ashley the Gannet, Wall Street, and Pee Pee — are rustic but sharp and quite worldly; they speak an idiom, filled with expletives ("by the Jesus," "American Christ," "scented crotch") that expresses a tightly knit traditional society but doesn't, strange to say, limit them to folksiness.

Paulie is a solid fictional character. His anxieties — about self-esteem, sex, his father's casual drinking, his own future away from the island — are believable, and Green is capable of humour, poignance, and insight. The story is fairly conventional, but it quietly touches some important truths.

The problem with *Come From Away*, for me, is that the several elements that make it up don't seem to be fully amalgamated into a novel that has its mind made up where it's going. The parts don't cohere. It's easy to see what Green is doing, and he's a sure writer most of the time, but it's harder to be certain about what he hoped ultimately to accomplish or where he felt the centre of his book might lie. □

*Bluenose* began a reign of Atlantic fishing fleets that lasted until the end of the 1930s and the advent of motorized boats.

McLaren tells the tale of the great Canadian schooner in a simple, straightforward manner. More than 50 black-and-white and eight colour photographs make this a handsome volume. McLaren's mix of technical data and anecdote make it an absorbing portrait of a ship and an era. One of the best stories in the book occurred during the 1921 race, when the *Bluenose* was up against the *Elsie*. It tells something of the spirit of the men who sailed and raced the North Atlantic:

The first race was won by the *Bluenose*. She had gained the advantage during the first leg and kept it through to the end. Unfortunately, the *Elsie* lost her foretopmast during the latter part of the race, losing the use of her foretopsail and jibtopsail. Captain Walters, in the interests of keeping the race "fair and square," doused his own foretopsail. . . .

The demise of the *Bluenose* came in 1946, when she struck a reef off Haiti and was wrecked beyond repair. Canadians let one of their finest accomplishments meet destruction in some Caribbean backwater without so much as a whisper of protest. *Bluenose II*, a replica of the original in most respects, saw first light in 1963 as a promotion for Oland Breweries' Schooner Beer. Ten years later she was sold to the Nova Scotia government for one dollar, and ever since she has been sailing the waters of Canada and U.S. as a goodwill ambassador. She draws large crowds of viewers wherever she goes.

Margaree (Harbour Lights Press, unpaginated, \$30.00 cloth and \$15.00 paper), by George C. Thomas, is a "visual tribute in praise of a once prevalent way of life." The Margaree River winds along the north side of Cape Breton Island in a valley whose lifestyle harks back to a simpler age. Thomas has lived in Margaree Harbour since 1971 when he left Boston and MIT, where he was associate professor of photography. This collection of 48 black-and-

#### A THOUSAND WORDS

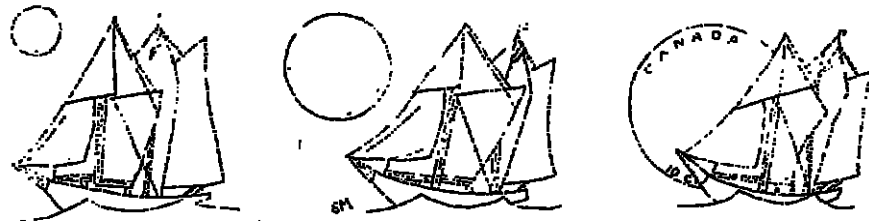
The view to the east: wooden ships and glorious sunsets portrayed with honesty and warmth

By CHRISTOPHER HUME

IF THE WORLD should end tonight at 9 o'clock it'd happen 30 minutes later in Newfoundland. That's how other Canadians regard the Atlantic provinces — always a bit slower, a bit behind. They live on as precariously as ever, yet remain strangely permanent. But judging from some books published recently, Canadians have been taking a fresh look toward the Atlantic coast. Obviously, they like what they see.

R. Keith McLaren's *Bluenose* and *Bluenose II* (Hounslow Press, unpaginated, \$14.95 cloth) is an excellent example. *Bluenose*, the ship on our dime, is the most renowned boat built in this country. She was launched on March 26, 1921, in Lunenburg, N.S., designed and constructed in the hope that she would bring the International Fisherman's trophy back to Canada. Open to fishing schooners from Canada and the United States, the race was sponsored by William G. Dennis, a Halifax newspaperman. It had been conceived as "a race between men who made their living upon the sea" and was billed as a "race for

real sailors." Eliminations were held in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and Halifax. The first race got underway in October, 1920, and was attended by thousands of people from both countries. When the spray finally settled, the American vessel



*Esperanto* had won. Nova Scotians were in a state of shock.

By the time the second trophy race began a year later, the *Bluenose* had put in her required season of fishing and was ready for battle. Her opponent was American schooner *Elsie*. Under the command of Captain Angus Walters — "a driver from gun to gun" — she made quick work of the *Elsie*. Nova Scotians were ecstatic; the

white prints, taken between 1971 and 1979, is the author's record of his adopted home. None of the photographs has a caption; Thomas has wisely decided to let the pictures say all. They speak to us eloquently and directly about the rugged folk of Margaree. It's an urban fantasy come true: the blacksmith hammers away down the road, housewives cook delicious dinners on their wood-burning stoves, and horse-

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drawn carts amble past the front door. Thomas charts this rural haven with honesty and warmth. The yearning only grows.

Although more elaborate in many ways, *Outport: Reflections from the Newfoundland Coast* (Addison-Wesley, 155 pages, \$19.95 cloth) cannot quite match Thomas's volume. Candace Cochrane's photographs are proficient and insightful. She is an artist without doubt, but still doesn't get all she can from her subject. If George Thomas's pictures capture the universal, Cochrane's are detailed renderings of the local. The stories and comments that appear throughout the book have been ably edited by Roger Page. They add an important dimension to *Outport*. Says one puzzled Newfoundlander: "It seems like everyone that comes here likes this place and likes the people. There's a reason somewhere. Probably we don't see it, not as quick as you'd see it, or some other stranger."

The Colour of New Brunswick (Hounslow Press, unpaginated, \$16.95 cloth) by Stuart Trueman and photographer Bill Brooks, offers a more standard look at another eastern province. These are pictures any tourist with a camera would be proud to take home. Stunning vistas, quaint rural scenes, and glorious sunsets abound. The text by Trueman — "New Brunswick's most vocal son" — is short and informative.

Oxford's Regional Portrait series also casts a glance at New Brunswick. *The Saint John River Valley* (unpaginated, \$15.95 cloth), by photographers Wayne Barrett and Anne MacKay with an introduction by George MacBeath, is a virtuoso display of landscape photography. Every book in the Oxford series has been as good. Perhaps this new breed of coffee-table toppers — price-efficient compacts — represents the wave of the future. □

## ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Sir Winston and the hated hyphen,  
further founders and flounders, and a  
dash of debilitated desperadoes

By BOB BLACKBURN

H.L. ROBINSON of Toronto has written to accuse me of using no fewer than four infelicities in one recent column. I'll not argue about three of them. "Gotten" was a careless error, and the misuse of "while" for "although," although widespread, should be shunned. "End up" is acceptable, evidently, to the CBC, but not to Mr. Robinson or, on reflection, to me.

However, I must defend my reference to my having been "dumped on" for misusing a word. Mr. Robinson is correct in saying that "dump" requires a direct object — in its formal sense. In slang, "dump" is an intransitive verb, meaning "defecate," and, I suggest, is a damn sight more felicitous than the more common dysphemism. (Did I hear you say, "No such word," Mr. Robinson? Now there is.)

Such amiable scolding is welcome here, but I must adjure readers to tolerate my fondness for colloquialism, which I'll no sooner abjure than I'll stop hiding behind "I'll" when I don't know whether to say shall or will.

The *shall-will* dilemma is, of course, easily resolved, but it is a distinction doomed by its own clumsiness. "I shall die," says the accident victim. "I will die," says the would-be suicide. But what of the

pair of them? Shall they die, or will they die? Consider a murder-suicide situation: If *shall* expresses inevitability in the first person and determination in the second and third, and *will* expresses determination in the first and inevitability in the second and third, what will the participants say to one another? "I will die and you will die," cries one. "No, no," says the other. "You shall die and I shall die." Actually, he shall die and she will die, or vice versa, depending on who has the gun.

If you will, you may fret about this vanishing distinction; I'll continue to sidestep it. I think it's more worthy of concern that there are writers who cannot distinguish between abjure and adjure.

A FLOUNDER is a fish and a founder is someone who starts something. The two are seldom taken one for the other, but some writers confuse the verbs. To founder is to run aground. To flounder is to flail about awkwardly. Thus, a flounder may founder and then flounder. A founder may, perhaps in delivering the commencement address at the college that bears his name, flounder while he gropes awkwardly for words. He may even founder on the shoals of his inept rhetoric. Despite their etymological kin-

ship, the two verbs are usefully different in meaning.

It isn't difficult to understand how such pairs as *flounder* and *founder*, *flout* and *flumm*, or *career* and *carcen* are confused, but I wonder about the likes of *cogent* and *germane*. I suppose it's because both are applied to *argument*, but a cogent argument is a convincing one and a germane one is to the point, and let's not let that happen again.

ON THE SUBJECT of commas, Raymond Peringer of Toronto writes that what's wrong with them is that they curve the wrong way, cupping, as it were, the reader's eye, thus impeding the flow. Printing them backward, he suggests, would make them less disruptive but still able to serve their purpose.

That may be a good idea, but it does not seem likely to be accepted overnight. Meanwhile, why not give some thought to the lowly dash? Its use is decried by some purists, but it is a useful tool. Although it is defined as a stronger stop than the comma, the eye slides easily along it, and it is certainly less disruptive than the round bracket when used to enclose parenthetical material. In a sentence full of commas performing other functions, it is sometimes unfair to make them serve also as symbols of parenthesis, and — presuming you do not

wish to use as arresting a sign as the round bracket — the dash serves admirably (save in cases in which a further stop is required immediately after you close your brackets).

Since the colon has fallen into disuse as a stop, it has acquired, as Fowler puts it, a special function: that of delivering the goods that have been invoiced in the preceding words, and its old function as a stop is served well by the dash.

Shorten a dash by half and you have one of the language's greatest trouble-makers — the hyphen. A dissertation on its use and misuse could go on for pages. The most concise advice is to avoid it whenever possible. Sir Winston Churchill, who did not care for the hyphen, suggested that "you may run (words) together or leave them apart, except when nature revolts." I brought the hyphen into this discussion only because I wish to point out to certain newspaper writers and editors that a nine-year-old boy is *not* nine-years-old, he is nine years old. If that seems obvious to you, it nevertheless is obviously not obvious to some of the people at the *Toronto Sun* and *Canadian Press*, to name two offenders.

THE LINE OF the month was delivered by a TV newscaster who informed us that, in Belfast, "two more hunger strikers are fighting for their lives." □

## THE BROWSER

Threshing time: Jean Pierre Lefebvre,  
Crad Kilodney, Saint Don,  
Jesus, and the politics of *Grain*

By MORRIS WOLFE

IT'S SURPRISING that among the endless supply of self-help books that fill our book stores these days so few deal with parenting — an area of our lives in which many of us really could use some help. (I was thinking that again the other day as I observed a four- or five-year-old terrorist and his mother on a bus.) I was delighted, therefore, to find among my *Books in Canada* goodies *They Will If We Let Them*, by M. B. Wansbrough (144 pages, \$4.95 paper, Image Publishing, 752 King Street East, Hamilton L8M 1A5). Wansbrough, headmaster of Hillfield-Strathallan College, a private school in Hamilton, has produced a sensible, mostly jargon-free little book about parenting — and schools — that deserves wide distribution. (It's too bad that this book wasn't more attractively produced — with an attractive cover and without all the

silly, intrusive cartoons.) Wansbrough confesses that he's "not a doctor of anything. To be honest," he writes, "I find the scholasticism of modern educational theory rather dreary." If he could teach parents only one thing, he says, it would be that they should read bedtime stories to their children beginning when the children can barely talk. Bedtime reading, he believes, is more likely to help a child academically — and otherwise — than almost anything else the parent could do.

ANNE HARDY'S *Where To Eat in Canada 1981-82* (Oberon Press, 294 pages, \$8.95 paper) is hot off the press. No one who enjoys eating and who travels much in Canada should be without it. I've been using Hardy's book as a guide for years now and have rarely been disappointed. Most of

the 500 entries are rewritten from one edition to another and restaurants are regularly dropped or added. Buying Hardy's book not only means eating well but also helping the best literary house in the country underwrite its unprofitable titles.

Jean Pierre Lefebvre, by Peter Harcourt (178 pages, \$7.95 paper, CFI, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa K1P 5E7) is the sixth in the Canadian Film Institute's series of books on



aspects of Canadian cinema. The irony, of course, is that although Lefebvre has made 16 feature films — he's now working on his 17th — his work is virtually unknown in English Canada. And yet here we have a study of his *oeuvre* — in English. Only in Canada. That's not to say this isn't an important and useful work. For one thing, I now know Lefebvre's response to those of us who were terribly disappointed by the ending to his lovely film *Les dernières fiançailles*. (An old man and woman — the central figures in the film — are simply whisked away by angels.) In a lengthy interview with Harcourt, Lefebvre says he wants people to remember at the end of his films that what they've seen is a *film*, not reality. "You can show anything you like in a film, so why not angels? All of film-making involves cheating with reality." Now that we have the book, maybe we could get to see some more of Lefebvre's films.

Notable Nova Scotians, by Lester B. Sellick (Lancelot Press, 104 pages), is a collection of nine articles about prominent men the author, a former teacher, has known. Unfortunately, the book isn't particularly well written and it's self-serving — one ends up learning much more about the author than about his subjects. If one is to judge by Sellick, the most important thing about Watson Kirkconnell was his anti-communism. And here he is on Saint Don (Messer): "He interpreted everything for the best. . . . He could be right or wrong in his opinion, but he was too clear-headed to be unjust; he was as simple as he was

forcible, and as brief as he was decisive. He knew the weakness of human reason as well as its strength, its province and its limits."

\* \* \*

CRAD KILODNEY. Even the name makes you smile. Kilodney has become a familiar sight in downtown Toronto as he stands on street corners (wearing a sign that says WORLD FAMOUS WRITER, or whatever) and sells autographed copies of his latest book. I own *World Under Anesthesia*, and *Gainfully Employed in Limbo*, but somehow missed out on *Mental Cases*, and *Lightning Struck My Dick*. Now we have *Human Secrets* (34 pages, \$2.00 paper, Box 281, Station S, Toronto M5M 4L7) with Kilodney's familiar cast of funny, poignant characters. A janitor, for example, who "will always remember that day in grade eight when he got 100% on a math test and the teacher praised him in front of the whole class." Or the man who follows the progress of the world by reading only the supermarket ads in the paper — "the passing of solstices and equinoxes being represented by gigantic quantities of melons and asparagus." "Who," he asks, "is as brave as I, and will admit his life has seemed empty and meaningless for days, perhaps weeks?" Kilodney's well worth reading.

\* \* \*

MY FAVOURITE 'little mag' these days is *Grain*, a quarterly published by the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild (Box 1885 Saskatoon S7K 3S2). I've especially enjoyed a dispute about the nature of prairie poetry that has raged in its pages for most a year. Last November, Mark Abley took to task the editor of a prairie poetry issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* for suggesting that poetry that celebrates irony, paradox, and ambiguity — poetry that is essentially European — "could never be written in the Prairies." Abley commented



that "If poets are to be confined to the language and images of the prairies, if they are forbidden to find bridges to other cultures, other landscapes, other periods of history, their work will eventually dry up. Poetry springs from an inner life, not just from the alleys of Moose Jaw or Swift Current..." The next issue of *Grain* (February, 1981) carried a letter in reply to Abley from David Arnason. "From the start," wrote Arnason, "I want to make it

clear that I do not hold with the common notion that Mark Abley is the most pompous and pretentious critic now writing in Canada. . . . Granted, he is pompous and pretentious, but one has simply to glance over the pages of any critical journal in the country to see that he has serious competition."

I could barely wait for the May issue of *Grain* (which arrived just before the postal strike.) I wasn't disappointed. Enter Anne Szumigalski. She'd read Arnason's letter several times, she wrote, but had found "nothing about his ideas on prairie poetry, nothing even about his opinion of Mr. Abley's opinion of Mr. Cooley's opinion of

prairie poetry." What was clear to her, she said, was that "Mr. Arnason does not care for Mr. Abley's work and finds his style pompous." As for herself, she continued, "I would like to state that I am very much in agreement with Mark Abley. For me there is no such thing as 'prairie poetry' . . . . The prairie is big, but poetry is bigger. There is room for all kinds of work here, even 'poetry celebrating irony, paradox, ambiguity'." The May issue of *Grain* also contains a short story by Gloria Sawai: "The Day I Sat With Jesus on the Sun Deck and a Wind Came Up and Blew My Kimono Open and He Saw My Breasts". It's as delightful as its title. □

## ON/OFF/SET

David McFadden charts the Great Lakes:  
among the American pigeons, a  
Canadian dove who dreams of being a cat

By DAVID MACFARLANE

BY VIRTUE OF some extremely disorganized reading habits, I found myself following David McFadden's almost remarkable *A Trip Around Lake Erie* (Coach House, 139 pages, \$6.50 paper) and *A Trip Around Lake Huron* (Coach House, 131 pages, \$6.50 paper) at the same time that I was *In Patagonia* with Bruce Chatwin. Readers who share so haphazard an approach to literature — those of us who like to keep our bookshelves quite out of alphabetical order — will perhaps recognize here some of the joys of a-book-in-the-living-room, a-book-in-the-bathroom, a-book-in-the-bedroom reading. Sometimes, through a process of serendipity, one stumbles into a clearing, and from the point of view of one book makes unexpected observations of another.

*In Patagonia* (1977) is a masterpiece of travel writing. Chatwin writes clearly and intelligently of the strange places and people he encounters on his journey through southern South America, and his curiosity partakes of a venerable literary tradition — the travel journal. Authors who practise the art of good travel writing — Chatwin's only comparable peer is Jan Morris — use a simple technique: the sensitivity and curiosity of one civilization coming to bear on the unfamiliarity of another. "The blue-faced inhabitants of this apparently childless town glared at strangers unkindly," writes Chatwin in a chapter entitled, 'A Town at the End of the World.' "The men worked in a crab-cannery or in the navy yards, kept busy

by a niggling cold war with Chile. The last house before the barracks was the brothel. Skull white cabbages grew in the garden. A woman with a rouged face was emptying her rubbish as I passed." An eye for detail, lucid prose, a sense of history, and appropriate wonder at the differences between home and away, this is the baggage of the travelling writer.

McFadden enters the genre strangely. "I vowed to paint a life-size map of each of the Great Lakes with the flaming brush of my crocus-coloured Volkswagen van." Hardly the stuff of Stanley's search for Livingstone. McFadden's home base is Hamilton, Ont., and he and his family are never more than a few days from Upper James Street. Still, his books — part journal, part novel, part diary — come close to establishing themselves as something of importance to Canadian writing.

I worked as a copy boy in the old King Street offices of the *Hamilton Spectator* when McFadden was employed there as a reporter. He was, so far as I could tell, a bit of a mystery even then. He seemed to appear and disappear unpredictably, spending what I considered to be an enviable amount of time in the *Spec's* news car. He had a cheerful, mischievous kind of presence, but there was also something secretive about him, something elusive. It is a quality that remains apparent in his writing. *The Poet's Progress*, *A Knight in Dried Plums*, and *The Great Canadian Sonnet* have enhanced his career as a poet while, at the

same time, puzzling a good many readers. It is difficult at times to know how intentional is McFadden's wit, how innocent his naivety, how casual his informality, and how unassuming his design. It is difficult, for instance, to know what led him to write his *Trips*. He's a difficult writer to get a handle on, and one senses that he enjoys that aspect of himself as much as anything.

Both *A Trip Around Lake Erie* and *A Trip Around Lake Huron* are curiosities certainly, but they also have qualities that make them something more. McFadden takes on the ordinariness of a family motor-camping trip — most of which takes place on the American side of the lakes in question — and unapologetically tells us about it. The result is quite unique, and here and there one is reminded of the sly clarity of Heinrich Böll: "We stopped at a K-Mart in Monroe, Michigan. Joan wanted to get some camping supplies. The place was crowded with Americans. I kept wondering if people could tell we were foreigners." The irony is immediately obvious — a Canadian in the States, a writer in suburbia, is not the usual stuff of travel writing. This is not Bruce Chatwin in a town at the end of the world. But McFadden's sense of that irony maintains the distance required between artist and model. After an ordeal with an American customs officer,

I went to pull away and stalled the van. Then we jerked away through the rain puddles out onto the streets of Detroit. "What a bitch!" said Joan. "We should report her. Did you get her badge number? She didn't have to be that nasty."

"I wonder why they always ask about oranges," I said.

Home and away are not very far apart for McFadden, but he is often funny and perceptive enough to keep them distinct.

There is, however, a great deal that is wrong with the *Trips*, and the fact that there is a great deal that is right makes McFadden's lapses all the more unfortunate. Things start to go awry whenever McFadden loses confidence in his wit and observations, and feels compelled to tell us that really, in case we hadn't noticed, he is a stranger in a strange land, a Chatwin in Patagonia. His references to writing, poetry, Canadian literature, and his own career are obtrusive and clumsy. They are included in order to let us know that he's really not your regular Volkswagen camper, but that job has already been done in more interesting and subtler ways. And things literary are not the only subjects McFadden misuses. He can pin an American personality down with the skill of Nabokov, and then descend to the most self-righteous and redundant anti-Americanisms. The books lose their peculiar edge when McFadden ceases to be a dove among pigeons and pretends to be a cat.

If any blame can be cast in failings of this kind, it would seem that McFadden was

ill-served by his editors. If a more ruthless pencil had forced McFadden to clarify his intentions, if someone had forced him to defend himself page by page, or had only said, "You don't need this. You've already said that," these two books would have

been remarkable, and their comparison to a book as excellent as *In Patagonia* would not be eccentric. As it is, *A Trip Around Lake Erie* and *A Trip Around Lake Huron* are only the precursors of the very good book I hope McFadden will someday write. □

## INTERVIEW

Hugh MacLennan on the novelist as  
Cassandra: 'I had never thought of myself  
in that particular vein'

By WAYNE GRADY

VOICES IN TIME is only Hugh MacLennan's seventh novel — his first since *Return of the Sphinx*, which he considered his best book to date, was so severely received by critics in 1967. And yet his books seem to have been always with us, and his stature as one of Canada's most important novelists is unquestioned. His novels have been called prophetic, a quality he himself attributes to acute political and social analysis made possible by a thorough understanding of history. The success of *Voices in Time* and the recent publication of Elspeth Cameron's critical biography, *A Writer's Life*, have combined to make MacLennan better known, perhaps, than he has ever been



before. He is quite happy about this. When Wayne Grady spoke with him recently, while he was in Toronto promoting the paperback edition of *Voices in Time*, he was relaxed and anecdotal, talking freely about his childhood in Cape Breton and his present fears for the future of Quebec, his adopted province:

**Books in Canada:** *Canada seems determined to develop into a network of regions rather than into one unified nation state, and I know you have declared yourself against regionalism —*

**MacLennan:** No, I'm not against it at all. Canada is so vast, and its ethnic groups are so localized, I think regionalism is perfectly healthy. I have located books only in places I knew — parts of *The Precipice* in New York, where I lived for a while, this last one in Germany. I remember after I wrote *Two Solitudes* I was at a loss for a subject, and Blair Fraser suggested I go into Ontario. So I did, but I set part of *The Precipice* in New York. The New York reviewers thought it was perfectly authentic to New York; in Ontario they thought it was *not* authentic to New York. Nevertheless, I think regionalism is healthy. Inevitably, with the kind of background I've had, I'm really trying to find a place to live. I grew up feeling myself a Nova Scotian. To an absurd degree, Nova Scotians at that time thought they'd been shortchanged by the rest of the country. I didn't get a Rhodes Scholarship from Nova Scotia. I got that from Canada at large. But at Oxford I was the varsity tennis secretary in my last year — I arranged the matches and got out the programs — and I had been put down in previous years as "Canada and Oriel." This time I put myself down as "Nova Scotia and Oriel." Canada is regional. I'd been all over Europe and the United States before I'd ever set foot in New Brunswick.

**BiC:** *Do you see the regions ever getting together to make one voice?*

**MacLennan:** On certain occasions. They certainly did the time we were nearly beaten by the Russians in hockey. I think there's a very strong feeling that way. I don't believe at all in the separatist movement in Alberta — I think that's been talked up by the American employees of the oil companies. B.C. *might* go; that's the way of the

never-never land. But I think there is a strong feeling for a certain kind of community here, just because it is so loose. It's hard to impose the American concept of *e pluribus unum* on such a vast region — even they had a civil war. And in addition to that the reason it's so violent now is that it's been repressed for so long. A southerner once said to me in California that three-quarters of the best NCOs in the army were southerners, and then he said, "Why don't you-all up there in your country join up with our section, and in 10 years we could take it."

**BiC:** *There are certain literary affinities between Canada and the American South. I know Alice Munro has acknowledged her debt to writers like Eudora Welty.*

**MacLennan:** I think that's true. Alice once told me that she can't go back to her home town, to Wingham, any more.

**BiC:** *You don't have that problem in Glace Bay, do you?*

**MacLennan:** Oh God, no. They never objected to that [*Each Man's Son*]. It still goes on, but it was worse then. It's extraordinary what education will do among the Celtic people. The worst brawler in Glace Bay in my youth was a terrible man called Mick Casey. That man lived to fight and drink. His grandson is now one of the most distinguished medical men in tropical medicine in the world. How, I don't know.

**BiC:** *Do you find that being Canadian allows you to be more objective, as a historian and as a novelist, about world events and processes?*

**MacLennan:** I think that's perfectly true. Any country that makes a religion of itself becomes very difficult. The Romans did it. The Greeks never did. The Americans have done it: how anybody with a sense of humour could invent something called an Un-American Activities Committee is something that baffles me. It was started by the Moral Majority people, and was soon taken over by racketeers like McCarthy. Canada hasn't done that. Maybe Quebec is getting pretty near to it with these language police they've got now, but I think that will pass because there's no need of it, as far as our identity is concerned. Quebec has created a very powerful, active, and confident middle class, and they've done it very quickly, since Duplessis died and Pope John came in. They had, simultaneously, an industrial revolution, a commercial revolution, an educational revolution, and a sexual revolution. And somehow or other they held together.

**BiC:** *Is Lévesque better for Quebec than Claude Ryan would have been?*

**MacLennan:** No. I don't think Lévesque is intellectually honest. Ryan is. Ryan lost the election because he mishandled it, and also because I think he reminded too many people of a priest. They've had enough of priests. But I do think that just after Lévesque got in the rest of the country, particularly Ontario, which is in many ways

Quebec's Siamese twin, finally woke up to what it might lose, and at the same time he woke up a lot of French Canadians to what they might lose.

**BiC:** *So in a sense Lévesque achieved the opposite of what he intended.*

**MacLennan:** Yes. He certainly wanted to balkanize the country, but he knew when to yield.

**BiC:** *I believe you had to leave your home in North Hatley during the October Crisis in 1970.*

**MacLennan:** I did leave, yes, shortly after the kidnapping. I was with my wife in the car one day, and if I wasn't a target for another kidnapping I don't know what was. There were two cars blocking the road, and they had a list of names and they were pointing at me. A truck came along just then, and the two cars moved off to let it by, and I got through ahead of it. It was Thanksgiving weekend, and there was a lot of traffic. They came following right after us until I saw another big truck up ahead, got in front of that, gunned the car, then turned off the highway. They didn't know where I'd gone, and they both took off in the other direction. I happen to know that at that time there were foreign agents operating in Quebec, some of them probably Gaullists who had left Algeria after the Independence. At any rate, that was a really bad time, and there's no point in pretending it wasn't.

**BiC:** *Is it over?*

**MacLennan:** Well, the terrorism is over, but many of the groups are still around. What really frightens me are the number of break-ins now. My cottage in North Hatley was broken into — they didn't get anything because they fled when somebody came up to rake the leaves.

**BiC:** *And there are 10 bank robberies a day in Montreal.*

**MacLennan:** Oh, the world's champion. It's absolutely appalling. And these guys are trigger-happy, very often; they just cut loose. One of them, very near where I live, turned to somebody who had just entered the bank and said, in English, "Who do you think you are, interrupting a hold-up?" and killed the man. There was a whole week when I couldn't bank my cheque — every time I went, the police were there.

**BiC:** *Many of your books seem to have been written by Cassandra; they seem to be warnings that events are heading in a certain catastrophic direction, and unless we wake up history will repeat itself.*

**MacLennan:** They weren't intended to be. When I was reading Greek mythology in my youth I thought the most unfortunate person was Cassandra. But I hadn't thought of myself in that particular vein.

**BiC:** *Well, Barometer Rising seems to me to be a warning to Canada that it was time to join the 20th century, that we were struck in the Victorian era.*

**MacLennan:** Well, that's certainly what

we were. Growing up in Halifax during the First World War, in retrospect, was unbelievable. The propaganda for the war — every scribbler we had in school had pictures of British soldiers, Huns being crushed by tanks. Every morning we'd have to sing "We'll Never Let the Old Flag Fall." Half of Halifax was owned by the British army and navy — the army garrison didn't move out until 1967. My father used to say the only good it ever did for Halifax was that the upper classes spoke more agreeable English than they otherwise would have done.

**BiC:** *Do you think of yourself as a Nova Scotian or as a Cape Bretoner?*

**MacLennan:** I think of myself as a Canadian. I couldn't get a job in Nova Scotia. I got one in Montreal at \$1,000 a year. Lower Canada College, but at least it was a job. No, but I love the Cape Breton countryside; it's a beautiful island if you keep out of the mines.

**BiC:** *I sometimes compare the Cape Breton atmosphere with the atmosphere in Newfoundland. They're very similar, except that the former seems tragic and the latter seems comic.*

**MacLennan:** I think there's a lot in that. In Newfoundland they're English and Irish.

**BiC:** *And in Cape Breton the Scots are dour Calvinists.*

**MacLennan:** Not when they're drunk, they're not. When I reviewed Ken Galbraith's book *The Scotch* for the *Times* I said the only things the Scots he grew up with had in common with the Scots I grew up with was that they were like litmus paper, they took on the colour of their environment, and when they were drunk they both got into fights. The same can be said of the Irish, but the Irish like it. And they're better at it.

## LETTERS

# Droppings from Layton

Sir:

Reviewing my book, *A Red Carpet for the Sun*, Louis Dudek introduced a trick that has been picked up by other dishonest Canucky reviewers. From a collection of 210 poems, which included such much-anthologized masterpieces as "The Swimmer," "The Birth of Tragedy," "Cain," "The Bull Calf," "The Cold Green Element," "Song for Naomi," "I Would For Your Sake Be

Gentle," he selected a minor piece to belabour the book and myself. Dishonest? Of course. Stupid? Of course. Canucky? Well, yes and no.

Robert Fulford, reviewing *For My Brother Jesus*, did the same thing. Fixing his glass eye and journalistic mind on an unimportant quatrain that in no way suggested the thematic richness of the book, he ignored poems like "Parque De Montjuich," "For My Brother Jesus," "Survivor," "The Plaka," "Of the Man Who Sits in the Garden," "For My Distant Woman," and "Adam." I gave him a memorable dressing down for that, but his sort of dishonesty is not rooted out by an irate letter to the *Toronto Star*. I'm afraid it's endemic with a certain section of the Canadian literary establishment.

Now along comes a Ms. Tecca Crosby to show that she too can turn a Dudek-Fulford trick. Her comments on some of the poems in *Europe and Other Bad News* (May) have all the aromatic freshness of a newly dropped horsebun, so I'll just walk gingerly around them and pretend they never happened. In time she might feel the same way about her droppings. But in the name of all that's holy how can anyone reviewing that collection make no reference to the following poems: "The Consummation," "The Annunciation," "Anarch," "Hells," "Being There," "For Else Lasker-Schuler," "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," "Herzl," "Reingemacht." Battle-scarred as I am and hardened by many forays against the Canucky shmuckism that has flourished in this country since its earliest beginnings, I must admit I'm shaken and still find it incredible.

Well, there will always be assholes on which the sun never shines. From 1940 till 1960 I waged war against anti-eroticism, gentility, and philistinism. Everybody now agrees my poems and letters liberated Canadian writing. But no one would have thought so from the reviews that my books unflinchingly received. After 1960 I selected different targets. I don't really expect to be kissed on both cheeks for stepping on inflamed Wasp bunions or reminding Xians of their responsibility in the murders of six million Jews. The reviews my books have been getting since 1960 exhibit the same kind of drivelling and snivelling that my earliest ones did. There are no surprises here. Canucky shmuckism is a hardy weed and will resist every effort made to uproot it. However, no self-respecting poet can ever stop trying.

I'm deeply grateful to Ms. Tecca Crosby. She fuelled the emotion for the following poem. In my forthcoming biography she may even rate a footnote.

Ah, Nuts

*Furtively  
with many sudden stops  
the squirrel outside my window  
advances on tree and can.*

*The creature wants his breakfast.*

*He never looks at me  
to whine:  
"What's a Canadian?"*

*He never yaps:  
"The world's a hospital  
and we're all sick.  
Lower your voice, Layton."*

*He never intones:  
"I'm a shifty haired rat  
who must keep clean  
and please everyone."  
No one has heard him pray for sunshine  
or more nuts.*

*Dear Bushytail  
I know you're hungry  
and have many fears  
but a pert gallantry  
shows in every leap you make.*

*Now stop a moment and tell me,  
"Watcha doin' in this country?"*  
Irving Layton  
Niagara-on-the-Lake

Sir:

Please convey my thanks and congratulations to Tecca Crosby on her perceptive review in your May issue. Not since the episode of the emperor's new clothes has so much pretension been so perfectly pricked. In passing I have a suggestion for the self-proclaimed Great Love Poet — a topic worthy of his talent — the Love Canal.

T. B. Higginson  
Scarborough, Ont.

## SECOND COMING

Sir:

Your article "Children's Books: Seen but Not Heard" by Mary Ainslie Smith (May) is very strange and strangely puzzling. Is it possible your writer does not know Tundra Books, doesn't know for instance that for the past eight years Tundra Books has sold more foreign editions of its children's books than all other Canadian publishers combined? Some 20 foreign editions are in existence, some of these very large indeed; for example, the Norwegian Book Club edition of the Kurelek prairie books was a 70,000 edition and this year the Swedish Government is subsidizing a 100,000 edition (50,000 each of the Kurelek winter and summer books) for school children in that country. Even last year when we published no books because of financial difficulties, we continued to extend foreign sales. At the present time, another 12 foreign editions are being contracted for. The current world economic climate may not be encouraging foreign rights sales for other publishers, but we did very well again this year at Bologna, not only with rights but one sale of actual books to a Japanese wholesaler came to

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\$1,600 net. As for honours abroad, I was the first Canadian to sit on the jury of Illustrators' Exhibit for the Bologna Fair, invited there last January with the Fair paying all expenses.

May Cutler  
President, Tundra Books  
Montreal

*Mary Ainslie Smith replies:* Tundra Books issued a press release in the fall of 1979 stating that Sing Lim's *West Coast Chinese Boy* was "the last Canadian children's book Tundra will be publishing. The cost in overhead and production of doing such a book is beyond anything Tundra can ever undertake again." This was bad news for anyone interested in Canadian children's literature. It is good news that Tundra will be able to publish a new children's title this fall.

**EUREKA!**

Sir:

Far be it for me to ever question anything Robert Kroetsch has written, but I wonder if you could trouble him to explain what he means in his review "No Match for the Devil" (May) when he says Karen Lawrence "sometimes writes out of the Great Tradition of young Canadian women who have discovered, much to their astonishment, that they have vaginas." After all, if this is the newest thing in women's lit., as a young female writer, I'd better get after it and try to discover my vagina just as fast as I can. And, at the same time, do you think he could define what vaginas have to do with writing, and also tell us women why these other women are "astonished" because of their recent anatomical discovery? Could he tell us why this discovery is so recent? And who, exactly, makes up this tradition?

I await his reply with bated breath.

Susan Crawford  
Calgary

**THE GARRISON PLOT**

Sir:

In his essay "Second Wind" in your May issue, George Woodcock neglects to mention that Canadian literature only escaped from the garrison by surrendering the fort.

Kevin McCabe  
Niagara-on-the-Lake

**CRYING WOLFE**

Sir:

A licence to browse is not a licence to distort and misrepresent.

I protest the personal vilification and out-of-context quotations that totally misrepresent my book, *What's Wrong with High School English?*, to your readers

(April). It is the privilege of a reviewer to agree or disagree with an author's thesis, but surely he has a responsibility to read enough of the book to ascertain what that thesis is, and the grounds on which it is based.

My main thesis is stated in the title: senior high school literature courses in Ontario are sexist, unCanadian, and outdated. Literature is seen by ministry of education guidelines as "a subtle and powerful force" in shaping the character of the students who read and study it. Literature courses could be, but are not, giving Canadian students abundant opportunities to discover the richness and range of our Canadian literary roots; these courses could be, but are not, enabling students to read and study many fine contemporary authors, some Canadian. They could be, but are not, presenting numerous and varied models of woman as creator and as main character, giving young women opportunities to identify with people of their own sex and giving young men opportunities to enlarge their understanding of women.

This study was not examining schools; therefore the number eight is not inappropriate, given the facts that the schools were representative and selected independently of the study. My study did examine 42 courses containing a total of 1,769 literary works, a more than adequate statistical sample.

My book asks that English heads and teachers examine their courses from a non-traditional perspective, surely a valuable and potentially enlightening exercise; alternatives to present offerings are proposed. It is a pity that Mr. Wolfe lends the authority of your prestigious publication to maintain an uncritical continuation of the *status quo*.

Priscilla Galloway  
Willowdale, Ont.

Sir:

Morris Wolfe's May article on cultural nationalism quotes a poem said to have been published at one time in the *Canadian Bookman*, "The White Throat" ("Sweet, Sweet, Canada, Canada, Canada, / O patriotic bird, you're home again").

It is remarkably similar to the poem by Theodore Harding Rand (1835-1900) called "The Whitethroat," which begins:

*Shy bird of the silver arrows of song,  
That cleave our Northern air so clear,  
Thy notes prolong, prolong,  
I listen, I hear -  
"I - love - dear - Canada,  
Canada, Canada."*

It seems likely to me that the *Bookman's* anonymous poet was not, as Wolfe suggests, indulging in "patriotic verse" but in a burlesque of that genre and of Mr. Rand, who was some 20 years dead when the *Canadian Bookman* first appeared.

Incidentally, Mark M. Orkin in *Speaking*



*Canadian English* (General Publishing, 1970) says Canadians have 28 different regional names for the white-throated sparrow, depending on how they interpret its song: "Hard times — Canada, Canada, Canada"; "Poor, poor — Kennedy, Kennedy, Kennedy"; "Old Sam (or Old Tom) — Peabody, Peabody, Peabody." My neighbours in Quebec say its message is: "Où es tu — Frédérique, Frédérique?"

Robert Marjoribanks  
Ottawa

*Morris Wolfe replies:* Mr. Marjoribanks is too generous. I think it far more likely that the poet was indulging not in burlesque but in plagiarism.

## THE NEW LOOK

Sir:

The old contents page may look cluttered, but it is actually easier to read than the new one. People cannot get their eyes to travel across such a long, long, long line (for instance, the contributors column in the new contents page).

James Feeley  
Ottawa

## CANWIT NO. 65

WE UNDERSTAND that the newspaper business has been suffering terrible technical problems ever since the reporters began filing their own articles by computer. It appears that the computer has been dropping an average of one letter per line at the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. As a result, both papers have recently published curious best-seller lists that require a bit of interpretation. *Leaven of Alice*, we deduce, must be Robertson Davies's commentary on Lewis Carroll, and Sigmund Freud might be interested in Margaret Atwood's pre-natal experiences in *Life Before Ma*. Then there's Michael Ondaatje's psycho-western, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and Marian Engel's book on aural sex, *Eur*. We'll pay \$25 for the best list of fractured titles and their plausible explanations that we receive before Oct. 1. An additional \$25 goes to M.H.B. Kortsen of London, Ont., for the idea. Address: CanWit No. 65, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4.

## RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 63

A MODEST REQUEST for titles of books jointly written by Canadian authors brought a large number of strange liaisons — some packing four or five writers to one plot. The winner is Martin Zeilg of Winnipeg, for a list that includes:

- *A Whale for the Eating*, by Farley Mowat and Mme. Benoit
- *Voices in Crime*, by Hugh MacLennan and Roger Caron
- *World of Blunders*, by Robertson Davies and John Robert Colombo
- *Why Shoot the Preacher*, by Max Braithwaite and Charles Templeton
- *Arcadian Adventures With the "Fascist Bitch"*, by Stephen Leacock and Barbara Amiel
- *The Black Bloke*, by Farley Mowat and Austin Clarke
- *Sunshine Sketches from a Seaside Town*, by Stephen Leacock and Norman Levine

### Honourable mentions:

- *The Five-Legged, Seven-Toed, One-Armed Juggler*, by Graeme Gibson, Michael Ondaatje, and Irving Layton
- *How to Make Money and Profit from Nonsense Novels*, by Morton Shulman and Stephen Leacock, from an idea by Richard Rohmer
- *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be the Emperor's Virgin*, by Farley Mowat and Sylvia Fraser

— M.H.B. Kortsen, London, Ont.

\*\*\*

- *The Swing in the Tangled Box Garden of Delights*, by Hugh Hood, Paul Duvall, Carol Shields, and Roch Carrier
- *May Your First Love Poems of Irving Layton Be Your Last*, by Gregory Clark and Irving Layton
- *Basic Black Canadians With Pearls*, by Helen Weinzwieg and Headley Tulloch
- *A Long Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, by Fred Cogswell and Mordecai Richler

— Carol Malyon, Willowdale, Ont.

\*\*\*

- *Harriet Murwood, Governess: The Discipline of Power*, by John Glassco and Jeffrey Simpson

— Laurence Sokoloff, Winnipeg

\*\*\*

- *Alligator Balls*, by Dennis Lee and Richard Rohmer

— Bruce K. Filson, Montreal

- *Alligator Pic: No Man's Meat*, by Dennis Lee and Morley Callaghan

— Joan McGrath, Toronto

## 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

*The Temptation of Eileen Hughes*, by Brian Moore, McClelland & Stewart. Moore's universe — Northern Ireland, old-fashioned Catholic sado-masochism, sexual fantasy, and confrontation — continues to unfold in a finely crafted 12th book of fiction.

### NON-FICTION

Hugh MacLennan: *A Writer's Life*, by Elspeth Cameron, University of Toronto Press. The first full-length biography of our presiding literary figure, written by an avowed admirer, who reveals a MacLennan rather stranger and less predictable than a reader of his work might expect.

### POETRY

McAlmon's *Chinese Opera*, by Stephen Scobie, Quadrant Editions. An evocative and imaginative documentary collection organized around the intelligent, wild, and bitterly tired character of Robert McAlmon, a talented but minor figure on the expatriate literary scene in Paris in the '20s.

## Acrostic winners

Lowry knelt on the floor inside the church, praying to some God or other, with six bottles of Bols gin in a brown paper grocery bag on the seat behind him. I thought of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

— Al Purdy, *No Other Country*

BELATED TENTH ANNIVERSARY greetings to the winners of our CanLit Acrostic (May *Books in Canada*), the solution to which is printed above. The contest produced a small flood of entries from across the country, though no correct entries were received from Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, the Yukon, or Northwest Territories. (Sorry, solutions received after publication of this issue will be consi-

dered void.) As a result, we're declaring a special book prize — thanks to the generosity of McClelland & Stewart — to Mrs. S. Rouse of Toronto for submitting the very first solution. Other winners of sets of 10 books each are: Gerry Bartlett, Sackville, N.B.; Homer Noble and Judith Comfort, Liverpool, N.S.; Elizabeth Mitchell, Belleville, Ont.; Joe Rubin, Winnipeg; H. Dählie, Calgary; Paul Denham and Gail Osachoff, Saskatoon; and Phyllis Mason, Vancouver.

The winner of our contest for the best anniversary display in a book store is Mark Pittam of Oxford Bookshops Ltd., London, Ont. □

## 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:

Adventure on the Sunshine Coast, by Merv Campone, NC Press.  
and no one: New Designs for Teaching Mathematics, by John V. Truett, Detsch Enterprises.  
Back to Basics, edited by Norman Mack, Reader's Digest Association.  
Baldwin Handbook, by Sandra Stevenson, Hancock House (1980).  
Barnardo Children in Canada, by Gail H. Corbett, Wood-Land Publishing.  
Basketball Handbook, by John Mills, Hancock House (1979).  
Beyond the Monetists, edited by David Crane, James Lorimer.  
Blood Gift, by Garfield Reeves-Stevens, Virago Press.  
Blues and Madness, by Don Flick, Lancelot Press.  
Bourgeois, Sans-culottes, and Other Frenchmen, edited by Morris Sloman and Agnes M. Smith, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.  
The Brader, by Richard Stark, Seal Books.  
Buccanar, by Dudley Pope, Muvion.  
Building a Print Collection, by Glen Warner, Van Nostrand Reinhold.  
The Business of Typing, by Sheila Culliford and Susan Sutarska, Wiley.  
The Butcher's Tales, by Rikki, Asa Press (1980).  
By Grim Mountain, by Allan Brown, Penumbra Press (1979).  
Canada's Economic Strategy, by James Laver, M & S.  
Canadian Family Law, by Malcolm C. Knoby, General.  
Canadian Sentencing Digest, by R. Paul Nadia-Davis and Clive B. Sproule, Carswell.  
The Canadian Writer's Guide, edited by Betty Ross, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.  
The Canadians, Book II: Bloodbrothers, by Robert E. Wall, Seal.  
Cayuga: In Cushion, by Marion B. Smith, Canadian Federation for the Humanities (P. D. Meany).  
Chartrand des Escorces, by Colette Marcour-Bovivin, Editions-Avallon (1979).  
China Nurse 1932-1939, by Jean Ewen, M & S.  
The Clue of the Dead Duck, by Scott Young, Seal.  
The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 13: Lyrics, edited by J.R. de J. Jackson, Princeton University Press (U.S.).  
Communication Skills for the World of Work, by Elizabeth A. Holmes et al., Wiley.  
Confessions, by Barbara Amiel, Totem.  
Constitution-making, by Edward McWhinney, U of T Press.  
The Contemporary Arts Society's Montreal, 1939-1948, Edmonton Art Gallery (1980).  
Contrasts: Cases and Commentaries (2nd edition), edited by Christine Boyle and David R. Percy, Carswell.  
The Coral Reef, by Alan Emery, Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation.  
Corporate Structure, Finance and Operations, edited by Lazar Sama, Carswell.  
David Smith: The Formative Years, by Karen Wilkin, The Edmonton Art Gallery.  
Descent to the Goddess, by Sylvia Britton Perera, Inner City Books.  
Do or Die, by Eadna Chapman, Fountain Books.  
A Dog Called Houdini, by C. Everett Palmer, Scholastic-TAB.  
Dragon Lady, by Silver Donald Cameron, Seal Books.  
Dragon's Breath, by Frank Smith, PaperJacks.  
Eastern Sure, by Lesley Choyce, Nimbus Press (1980).  
The Elizabethan Trindites, by Robert Bihlmg, Penumbra Press (1980).  
Energy and the Quality of Life, by C.A. Hooker et al., U of T Press.  
L'évolution de la population scolaire du Québec, by Diane Vanasse, Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
The Festivals of Canada, by Arnold Edinborough, Lester & Orpen Denys.  
Field Hockey Handbook, by Jenny John, Hancock House (1980).  
Field Notes: The Collected Poetry of Robert Kroetsch, General.  
First Hand, Last Chance, by R. Chick, Folks Upstairs Press.  
Five Colours of the Universe, by John E. Vollmer, Edmonton Art Gallery (1980).  
The Flowered Box, by Thomas J. Green, PaperJacks.  
Folk Dance Handbook, by Marcia Smider, Hancock House (1980).  
Foreign? Yes, But ..., by Gerard H. Hoffman, Our Canada Publications.  
Francis: le voyage et le rêve, by Murray Boda, translated by Léandre Potier, Editions Anne-Sigier.  
Full Moon, by Eric Rossi, 77 Publishing.  
Get the Job, by Gerald Cosgrave, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.  
Growing Still, by Greg Gatenby, Black Moss Press.  
The Hand of Robin Squires, by Joan Clark, Clarke Irwin, Health and Canadian Society, by David Coburn et al., Fitzhenry & Whiteside.  
Hitting Blind, by Harold Stein and Bernie Slatt, Mussen.  
Hopes? Never!, by Kay Golbeck, G.R. Welch.  
The Horned Owl, by Goswin Maria Cecchi, translated by Konrad Ebenbichler, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.  
How to Fight for What's Right, by John Swaigen, James Lorimer.  
I Want to Go Home!, by Gordon Norman, Scholastic-TAB.  
In Search of Human Origins, by Paul Tisdall, CBC Merchandising.  
In the Name of Nurd, by Andrew Suknaski, The Porcupine's Quill.  
Inside Outward Bound, by Renate Wilson, Douglas & McIntyre.  
Jean Rhys: Woman in Passage, by Helen Nebeker, Eden Press.  
Jonathan Cleaned Up — Then He Heard a Sound, by Robert N. Munsch, illustrated by Michael Martchenko, Annick Press.  
Journey, by Rona Murray, Sono Nis Press.  
The Kid Trade: The Day Care Crisis in Canada, by Laura C. Johnson and Janice Duncan, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.  
The King of Beas, by Brem MacKay, Brick Books.  
The King's Evil, by David Helwig, Oberon.  
Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1860, by H. Clare Pentland, James Lorimer.  
Land I Can Own, by Edna Tyson Parson, published by the author.  
La langue de travail au Québec, by Raymond Brette and Gail Grant, Institute for Research on Public Policy.  
Letter to the West Wind, by Jonathan Welsh, Penumbra Press (1980).  
A Little Bit of Canada, by Carleton Hacker, Hurlig.  
The Little Wine Steward, by Pierre Petel, Bestsellers.  
Lord Alfred's Lover, by Eric Bentley, Personal Library.  
The Mackenzie Yesterday and Beyond, by Alfred P. Aquilina, Hancock House.  
The Making of Shakespeare's Dramatic Poetry, by G.R. Hibbard, U of T Press.  
Medicine in Canadian Society, edited by S.E.D. Short, McGill-Queen's University Press.  
Military Uniforms in Canada 1665-1970, by Jack L. Summers and René Chartrand, illustrated by R.J. Morrison, National Museums of Canada.  
Miracle in the Mirror, by Mark Buntain, G.R. Welch.  
Modern France, by Barnett Singer, Harvest House (1980).  
Motorcycle Touring in Canada, by Kerry Hill and Gloria Pomeroy, published by the authors (1980).  
My Grandmother's Kitchen, by Jéane Benoit, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.  
My Mother the Judge, by Elsie Gregory McGill, PMA Books.  
The Mystery of the Muffled Man, by Max Braithwaite, Seal.  
The Mystery of the Wildcat Well, by Robert Collins, Seal.  
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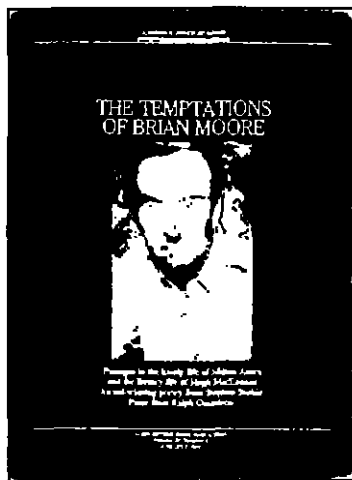
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