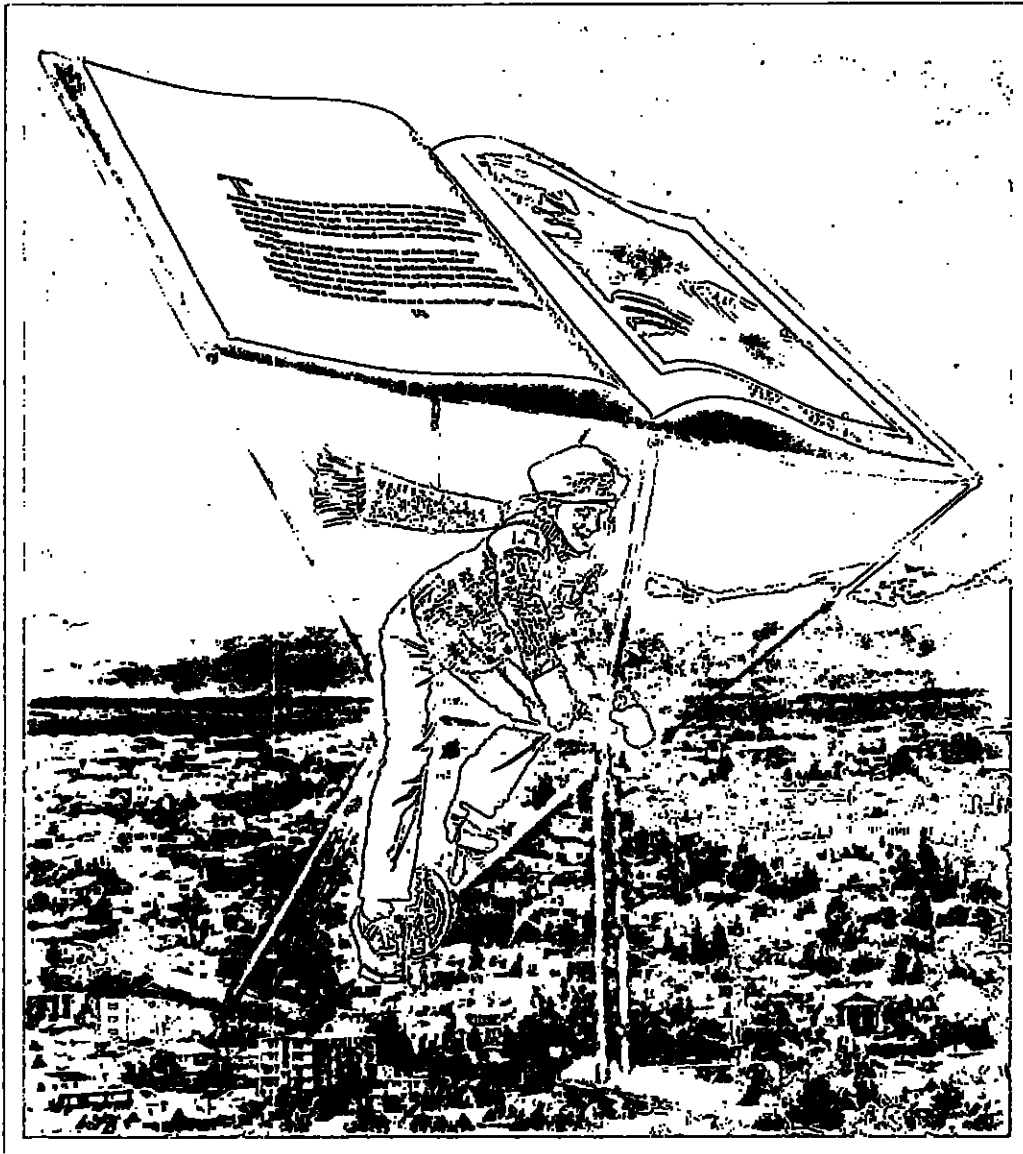


# BOOKS

## SMALL WONDERS



The season's children's books  
Jack MacLeod on Christina McCall-Newman's  
portrait of the Liberal Party

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Volume 11 Number 10

DECEMBER 1982

# People and Places

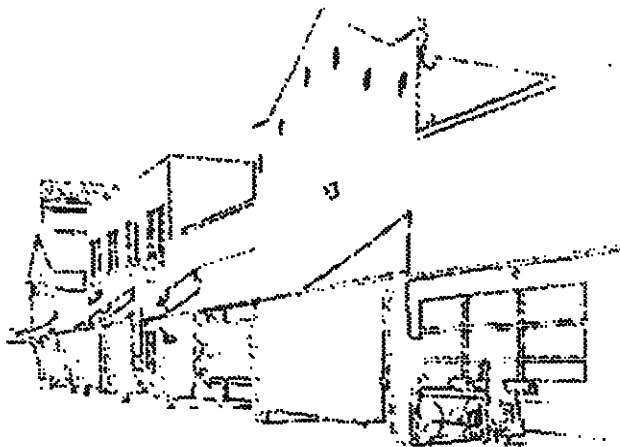
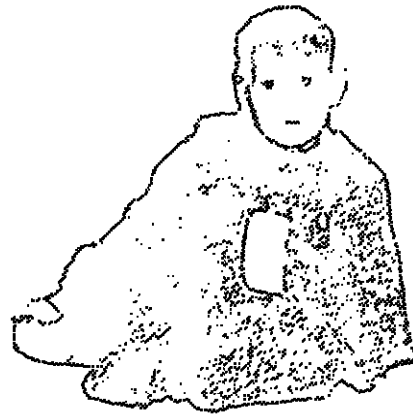


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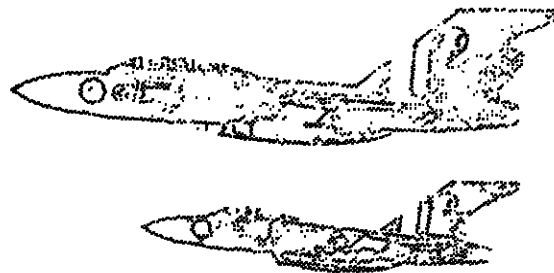
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# The prize: three Ionesque hours at Paris's oldest literary café

## Lunch at Le Procope

UPON MY RETURN from New York I received a phone call from the president of the Association of French Speaking Authors (ADELF), inviting me to appear on the panel of the Prix de l'Europe, a brand new prize awarded to a work of literary or historic merit written in French by an author whose mother tongue was not that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and whose country of origin was outside the francophone community. Another panel member, I learned, would be Eugène Ionesco.

There were 19 books entered in the contest, ranging from fiction to essays history, and a multilingual anthology of poetry spanning three millennia. Among the titles were *Memoirs of an Astronaut*; *Al Brown*, a biography of the famous Panamanian boxer by the Spanish writer Eduardo Arroyo; *The Lilacs Bloom in Warsaw*, a saga encompassing three generations of Poles from the Second World War to the birth of Solidarnosc in 1980, by Canadian writer Alice Parizeau; *The Linguistic Policies in the Camerouns Under German, British, and French Colonial Rule*; *Feminism and the School of Saint-Simon*; and *The Dutch on the Coast of Guinea*. There was also a philosophical essay by Kenneth White, a novel by Jorge Semprun, (the screen-writer of *Z*, *The Confession*, and other works filmed by Costa-Gavras), and two heart-gripping war accounts taking place in Hungary. There were also several collections of short stories.

The deliberation was to take place at Le Procope, Paris's oldest literary restaurant, situated in the rue de l'ancienne Comédie near the Place de l'Odéon, in the Latin Quarter. I knew that the Prix Goncourt had been decided within its walls, for it is no secret that France's major fiction award is prearranged and that the contest is sponsored by three Parisian publishers — inevitably the same — so that one would assume it is a publisher's contest rather than an author's. Robert Cornevin, president of ADELFF, had assured me that the balloting for our prize would be secret, and that I wouldn't be submitted to pressures of any kind.

I arrived at Le Procope half an hour

early. "You are the first of the party," said the tightly clad waiter, leading me through a succession of low-ceilinged rooms whose walls were hung with yellowed photographs and posters of the Belle Epoque. The tables were set, but as yet unoccupied. I was left in an oblong, pastel-coloured room on the first floor, which looked out on a small, cobbled yard with a slate-roofed house and a plane-tree, the scenery of a Norman hamlet.

Shortly after noon I decided to have another look at the premises. In a corner I found a framed engraving of the original building, with a legend in Old French. Le Procope had been opened by a young Sicilian from Palermo named Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli, in 1684. He specialized in a new, tropical beverage called coffee, and also served *cassattas* and other ice creams for which his homeland was so famous. From his café Procopio, or Procope as he became known, could watch people play the *jeu de paume* (tennis) or the *jeu de boules* (bowling). In 1689 the Comédie Française came to replace the tennis grounds, bringing with it a new and more affluent clientèle, and Procope's café soon became Paris's observatory of intellectual life. Over a hot chocolate or a glass of punch, such luminaries as Diderot, Voltaire, Rousseau, Robespierre, Danton, and Marat took part in heated debates. Benjamin Franklin, much later, was also one of its faithful patrons.

During the 19th century cafés mushroomed all over the city, and the Comédie Française moved to the Right Bank not far from the Louvre and the Palais Royal. As a consequence the literary aura of the Procope faded, and its successive owners transformed the capital's most prestigious rendezvous into a cheap eatery. To the delight of many Parisians, however, Le Procope was refurbished and the café has regained some of its old charm. Literary and less prosaic intrigues once more fill its pastel-hued rooms on all three levels.

As I stood contemplating the plaque, Eugène Ionesco entered the room. For some reason I had expected him to be potbellied, but he was a diminutive, grey-haired man, neatly clad and with a twinkling eye. He immediately ordered a

gin-and- tonic and offered one to me.

"An orange juice, please," I said. "I might otherwise go to sleep during the luncheon, instead of deliberating."

"That would be very wise," he said dryly. "Tell me," he went on, almost confidentially, "what's this new prize about? I attend so many panels. . . . And between one landing in Los Angeles and another in Tokyo, I refuse to open a book. I've only read a few of these — how many books are there?"

We were sitting, facing each other. While he sipped his drink his eyelids drooped; I noticed how Oriental the slits made him appear. With his eyes still closed he lifted his empty glass and said in a monotone: "They come up with so many new prizes nowadays. How about another gin-and- tonic?"

I beckoned the waiter.

"Prix de l'Europe, Prix de l'Europe," said Ionesco. "What does Europe have to do with it? It should be called Prix du Cosmos."

Upon which the president of ADELFF appeared, accompanied by three panel members. Ionesco rose and etched a smile as the president made the introductions. Ten minutes later, with the exception of one Yves de Daruvar of Hungary, who couldn't be present and had cast a vote by correspondence, the panel was complete.

The luncheon opened in a friendly, intimate atmosphere. Composing the jury were Attilio Gaudio, an Italian journalist who knew Africa well and was a member of the Paris Institute of Anthropology; Jan Vladislav, a Czech writer-translator of the 77 Group, recently exiled; Hélène Ahrweiler, a vivacious, handsome Greek woman who is a professor at the Sorbonne; Maurice Zinoviev, a tall White Russian attached to the Service of the Prime Minister; and our dean, Jean Brzekowski, a kindly Polish intellectual whose legs were partly paralyzed. Among the French members were Robert Cornevin, our president; Jean Desmeures, a representative of the Ministry of Education and Co-operation; and, of course, Ionesco, an institution unto himself. Then there was me, now feeling somewhat more relaxed.

The president took upon himself the bulk of the responsibilities. Initiator of the prizes, he was the panel moderator

and had also organized the luncheon, selecting the menu personally — an indefatigable servant of the Arts in every sense. After the main course he invited each of us to voice our impressions of the competing works.

Ionesco didn't beat about the bush: his favourite book, he said, was a novel recounting the experiences of a young UN diplomat. "As I told you before, between Los Angeles and the Caribbean I while away the time observing the firmament and trying to catch a snooze. I'm afraid some of these people had to be sacrificed."

I was asked to give Ionesco a précis of the books he hadn't read. When I mentioned the names of two famous authors he leapt up, called one a "perfect imbecile" and accused the other of being a TV dandy whose major pastime was to stand in the limelight. "*Basta*," he shouted, "they've had enough publicity, especially the dandy."

"He may be a dandy, *maitre*," said the Greek professor, "but he does combine brains and good looks. Personally I find him terribly attractive."

"But where on earth is my wife?" replied Ionesco.

"She's expecting you, *maitre*," I said. "After the deliberations."

Ionesco got up and demanded a telephone. The waiter indicated one to him. The playwright picked up the receiver, left it off its hook, and returned to his seat. "*Voilà!*" he exclaimed.

We proceeded with the balloting. The president passed around the lists and told us to choose at least five works, rating them in order of preference.

"I won't mark the others," Ionesco declared. "I've already made my decision."

"It would be preferable, *maitre*," the president said, "if only to select the runners-up. But of course, you do as you wish."

The folded lists travelled back to the president, who passed them to the Greek professor for the disclosure of the results. *The Lilacs Bloom in Warsaw* got four first ratings and three seconds, winning by a large majority. I beamed, for that had been my initial choice. Jorge Semprun's *L'Algarabie* and Jacques Roth's novel, *Yovel*, were tied for second place. A discussion ensued.

"Where are we?" asked Ionesco, turning to the Greek lady.

"Perhaps in Los Angeles, *maitre*," she said evenly.

"Strange," he retorted, "there's a smell of Paris around here."

The president gave us some biographical information concerning Alice Parizeau, who had been born in Poland and who now lives in Quebec. Her maiden name was Poznanska.

"She was born in Ireland," Ionesco stated.

The president looked at him aghast for a fraction of a second. "In Cracow, *maitre*," he corrected.

"Not only is she partly Irish," pursued the playwright "but she's loaded and owns property in Spain."

We encountered some problems deciding on the second prize. Since both Semprun's novel and *Yovel* had received the same number of votes, the question arose as to whether we should even consider a writer who had already garnered several international awards. We finally reached a compromise, nominating both books for the second place. Quality, we felt, ought to prevail, wherever it came from.

"Even in the absurd," said Ionesco, "structure is essential. Now, won't someone tell me where my wife is?"

We had raspberries for dessert and crowned the luncheon with Cointreau.

— ALBERT RUSSO

## Words/works

THE QUESTION OF language itself, its power, its fragility, its "mothertongue" containing of all potential, dominated the first annual conference of the Manitoba Writers' Guild, held recently in Winnipeg. The conference — called "Words/Works: The Gift of Writing" — resisted the usual communal bitching about grants and markets. "We're important," Calgary playwright Sharon Pollock told the writers who had assembled in the auditorium of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, and her energy of concentration, her uncompromising talent, set the tone for the three-day gathering. "We are visionaries," she said, "and vision is the power of seeing into life and making something of what is seen. The danger lies in false gods, mammon, equivocation, geniality, clubbiness, conformity . . . all of which convert service to serenity. . . . A truly living literature is at one with the public welfare without being at the public disposal."

One of the guests most likely to agree was Manitoba's culture minister and a former electrician, Eugene Kostyra. In a city where high culture has long carried the day (the word "royal" is more exciting than "ballet" to a considerable part of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's audience), the working artists are finally talking optimism and co-operation.

New from TUNDRA

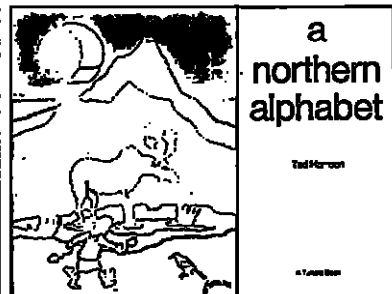
## CHILDREN'S BOOKS AS WORKS OF ART



### CHESTER'S BARN

by Lindee Climo

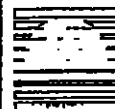
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Kostyra bids fair to become a model of the ideal culture minister in this country, with his populist impulse to skip the folderol and go to where the action is: writers writing, painters painting, actors acting, dancers dancing. For Kostyra, everyone is audience, the artists should be set free to work, artists and audience should join together in celebration.

After the welcoming talks, Joy Kogawa spoke of literature and roots and, like Pollock, she conveyed a sense of artistic integrity that is without qualification. Hardly visible behind the tall podium, she hushed her audience into silence with her sense of the value of all human experience, painful and pleasant alike, her ability to forgive in the face of the world's (and particularly Canada's) plentiful gift of pain.

It was the poets, Ed Dyck of Saskatoon and Daphne Marlatt of Vancouver (currently writer-in-residence at the University of Manitoba), who gave most passionate expression to the conference's concern with language. Marlatt insisted that, "like the mother's body, language is larger than us and carries us along with it. If we are poets we spend our lives discovering not what we have to say but what the language says through us." Or again: "Writing is listening to the language talk to itself." Dyck, poet and editor of *Grain*, spoke of "the desperate desire of language to refer." He confessed to the self-referential maleness of language, against Marlatt's sense of the erotics, the all-embracingness of language.

The celebration part of the conference began early. I went with Dyck, Marlatt, John Marshall, editor of *Island*, and Luc Jutra of the Canada Council on a long and circuitous walk toward lunch. My abiding sense of misdirection took us past Old Market Square, past the artists' studios in the warehouse district of Old Winnipeg, to the Royal Albert Arms. Against a background of jazz, against the poets themselves, I tried to speak reasonably and calmly in defense of story. We had already heard novelist Carol Shields and Geoff Hancock, editor of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, eloquently making the case for fiction. I tried to reiterate. "Meaning," I was told by Marshall while he signalled for another litre of wine, "is sensual."

Later, while Ed Carson, associate publisher of General Publishing, was talking of the journey from manuscript to book and book store, a group of writers met over Chinese food in Sandra Birdsell's living room. Designating themselves the Western Council of the Writers' Guilds of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, and the Federation of B.C. Writers, they tried to find more to agree on than their splendid name.

David Watmough of B.C. was all for some Canada-Council-bashing, mostly on the grounds of the Council's failure to fund readings for non-fiction writers. Ted Blodgett of Alberta and the Saskatchewan contingent led by novelist Byrna Barclay were more inclined to set up still another Prairie co-operative, something like the Wheat Pool or the CCF. "Meaning," I explained to the assembled writers, opening another bottle of Birdsell's white wine, "is sensual."

It was hardly more than a year ago that a couple of dozen writers met around and under a tent in Victor Enns's farmyard, just outside the village of Aubigny on the Red River, and decided to form a guild. Since then 150 writers have joined, poet Patrick Friesen has emerged as an astute president who dares to take on Winnipeg's august *Free Press*, with its iron determination to review the memoirs of every Second-World-War general who ever sets pen to paper or hires a ghost, poets Kate Bitney and Andris Taskans have worked from their living room to organize the guild and to publish their *Manitoba Writers News*, projects committee chairperson Shirley Kitchen has involved the whole province in her bibliophily, and

organizer Smaro Kamboureli has orchestrated a conference that is now the envy of every one of the associated organizations of the Western Council of the Writers' Guilds of . . . of . . . of . . .

Such accomplishments called for a bang-up party. On the first night of the conference the audience saw the Manitoba première of the National Film Board production, *Jack Hodgins' Island*. On Saturday night the celebration was decidedly Prairie-style. Something only less than a mob gathered in artist Bill Lobchuk's loft on Frances Street. The food was strictly Mennonite, with farmer's sausage, dill pickles, schnetki, rollkuchen, and plumi moos in harvest abundance. The very non-Mennonite booze was paid for by donation, and many a hearty westerner exercised his or her free-enterprised right to drink *freely*, giving complex interpretation, when necessary, to that word.

CBC pundit Robert Enright, over his third nightcap, a handful of schnetki (Mennonite bannock?), and an armful of Turnstone poetry books, pronounced: "The paranoia is over. The hiding is over. This city is for writing in."

— ROBERT KROETSCH

## ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

How can students be made 'computer-literate' by a system that for the past 30 years has been unable to make them 'English-literate'?

By BOB BLACKBURN

ONE OF THE interesting coincidences of this age is that the computer explosion burst upon us at a time when the quality of general literacy was going downhill at a rate Steve Podborski would envy. You can win a lot of free drinks these days by betting that you can find, in one page of a newspaper or in five minutes of a newscast, an error in syntax or diction — not a trivial error, but one that forces the reader or listener to pause and ask himself if the writer actually meant what he wrote or was trying to say something quite different.

When even experienced and well-paid professional communicators have difficulty saying what they mean, what hope is there of people in general communicating at a level above grunts and shrugs?

And here we are in the computer age.

We are being told more and more often that survival in the work place will soon depend on one's having some ability to communicate with computers. If you talk nicely to a computer, it will do anything within its rather staggering power to oblige you. But the one expression it always turns a deaf ear to is the standard cop-out of the careless or inept communicator: "Oh, well, you know what I meant."

The computer's response to that is, in effect: "No, I *don't* know what you meant, and, furthermore, I'm not going to pay a damn' bit of attention to you until you *do* say what you mean." That may seem a harsh response, and if we started talking that way to our friends and relations, we'd probably become a race of hermits, but, by God, it works. You might try it out on the next sales-

man or political candidate that comes to your door.

Now, this subject is of considerable immediate interest to me, because I am writing this column on a spanking new computer that I acquired only a week ago. This is the first actual writing I've done with it. It took me that week to learn how to speak to it with sufficient precision to enlist its full cooperation in what I am trying to do. When I speak to it in a woolly way, it says "ERROR" and prints a code describing the type of error. Well, the code I've been seeing most often is *SN*, which stands for *syntax*, and I'm sure you can imagine how humiliating it is to try to write a column about language with a machine that keeps telling you your syntax is lousy. It is, of course, speaking of the syntax of its own language, not mine, but I can't help wishing it were equally sharp in spotting blunders in English syntax.

Anyway, it quickly and forcefully teaches one the futility of addressing it in imprecise terms, and it would be quite wonderful if it could teach English as effectively as it teaches BASIC or COBOL or whatever. It is highly unlikely that the next generation of graduates of our school system is going to be able to speak English precisely, since the youngsters are being taught by a generation of schoolteachers that was not taught to speak English precisely. So it goes. How, then, if these kids cannot communicate with the rest of the world, will they talk to computers?

The apparent answer pops up practically every day in newspaper and magazine features and on TV shows. I've just watched a documentary that says that grade school children of today are becoming "computer-literate," and what I want to know is how they can be made "computer-literate" by a system that for the past 30 or so years has been unable to make most of its pupils "English-literate." One reason, I imagine (although this is not meant to let bad teachers off the hook), is that the children are not hampered in the learning of computer talk, the way they are in learning English, by the corrupting influence of irresponsible and ignorant mass-media writers and broadcasters who are either unwilling or unable to use the language well.

There's a municipal election impending here as I write this, and I was just now called to the door to receive a pamphlet from the school trustee seeking re-election. It contained very little text, so it only took me a few seconds to spot three errors. One was merely a dropped apostrophe. But another was a dangling modifier that left it up to me to figure out whether she was saying that the school board should be properly managed

ed or that the school facilities should be properly managed. I think she meant the latter, but she *said* the former. The third slip was a plural pronoun with no visible antecedent, leaving me wondering who "they" were.

That one bore some looking into. The phrase was: "... providing every student with the opportunity to receive a sound basic education and the skills necessary for *them* to cope competently in a changing world." Let's be charitable and assume that this was not an ignorant error, but rather the clumsy result of a well-meant effort to avoid offending either sex by using either the correct pronoun *him* or the inaccurate alternative, *her*, or the awkward *him or her*. This ugly abuse of the plural pronoun with the singular antecedent has become epidemic in the last 10 years or so, and particularly since 1975. The reasons for it are admirable, but the fact is that it is not necessary to write badly to avoid giving offence. There is always a way to get around the problem, and in this case all the candidate had to do was

write "all students" instead of "every student."

Another school trustee seeking re-election tendered a pamphlet that proclaims his support for "a School Board that is above petty party politics *that* will serve educational rather than political needs." Had he but put an *and* in the place of that *that*, it would not have seemed *quite* as ludicrous when, four lines down, he wrote that he supported "establishing realistic priorities and then getting down to business, such as development of English language skills . . . ." I would expect someone who wants my vote for the office of school trustee, and who boasts of a "strong commitment to basic education," to know enough and care enough to avoid such lapses. Those who aspire to that particular office, it seems to me, should be rather more careful about language than are candidates for positions that have little to do with education, although it would be encouraging if *all* candidates were able to describe their platforms in clear English. □

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# SMALL WONDERS

The season's children's titles in review, from a Grimm tale retold to the politics of urban renewal

By *MARY AINSLIE SMITH*

IF QUANTITY IS any criterion, this has been a bumper year for Canadian children's books. The season's selection offers a wide range of titles, from familiar authors — Robert Munsch, Eric Wilson, Gordon Korman, and Monica Hughes, among others — to some promising works by writers and illustrators new to children's literature. As for quality, in the listings below (arranged roughly in order by age group, from youngest to oldest) our children's-book columnist, Mary Ainslie Smith, surveys the season's best:

*Red Is Best*, by Kathy Stinson, illustrated by Robin Baird Lewis, Annick, 32 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper. As the little girl in this story builds her argument for the colour red — red stockings can jump higher, red mittens make better snowballs, red pyjamas keep away monsters — adults can merely bow to the irrefutability of her logic. This is a great deal of fun to read with preschoolers.

*The Little Boy Who Cried Himself to Sea*, written and illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes, Kids Can Press, 32 pages, \$3.95 paper. In this story, the little boy's tears of rebellion at the idea of a nap flood his bedroom and carry him out the window, down the river to the sea, where he has adventures that are reminiscent in a gentle way of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. This story, like Sendak's, ends with a return to the security of home.

*Ruthie's Big Tree*, written and illustrated by Shirley Day, Annick, 32 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper. When Ruthie's mean neighbour decides to cut down her favourite tree, a wonderful old willow on his vacant lot, Ruthie and her friends organize a children's protest. They are able to fend off the men with the chain saws until their tree is saved.

*Murmel, Murmel, Murmel*, by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Michael Martchenko, Annick, 32 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper. Five-year-old Robin discovers a baby complete with diapers and soother in a hole in her sandbox. Robin searches for someone who needs a baby and the baby says, "Murmel, murmel, murmel." What else do contented babies say?

*What's the Word? Cherchez le mot and Let's Eat!/Allons manger!* by Lesley Fairfield, Kids Can Press, each 32 pages, \$3.95 paper. These are bilingual picture books to help children

identify common words in their second language. But educational purposes aside, the delightful disorder inhabited by the children in Fairfield's illustrations make these books worth getting just for the fun in them.

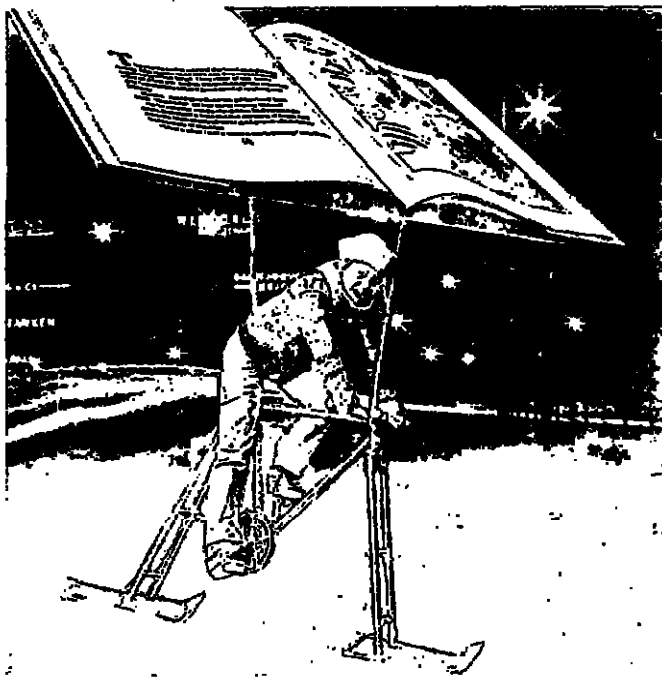
*The Story of Phillip*, by Elizabeth Kouhi, illustrated by Helga Miller, Queenston House, 24 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper. Philip is mentally handicapped, and this story touches on his frustrations as his friends and siblings grow and change faster than he can. But mainly the story emphasizes positive things — what Philip can learn, what he can do and how his

family appreciates his gentleness and ability to love.

*The Big Bang: The Creation of the Universe*, by Lydia Bailey, illustrated by Nancie Walker, Annick, 32 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper. With a clear text and colourful, dramatic illustrations this book, intended for children from six to 10, explains the beginnings of the universe, the Milky Way, our solar system, and our planet up to the point where life was about to appear.

*Rosalyn Rabbit*, by Elizabeth Crocker, illustrated by William C. Tobin, Nimbus, 48 pages, \$4.95 paper. In three separate adventures, Rosalyn, a rabbit from the forest, benefits from her friendship with a little girl from the city. With plenty of illustrations and a controlled vocabulary, this book makes pleasant reading for beginners.

*A Northern Alphabet*, by Ted Harrison, Tundra, 32 pages, \$9.95 cloth. Alphabet books with Canadian content are becoming almost monotonously common, but this one has a special twist. It is specifically for children living north of the 60th parallel and the 26 illustrations by artist Ted Harrison all depict aspects of northern life. However, their vivid colours and detail will make these pictures attractive to children everywhere. Each picture is also a puzzle. For each letter of the alphabet, the text names some of the objects beginning with that letter in the accompanying illustration, but the reader must then search for other objects. For example, in the entry for M, the text reads, "Mary runs by a moose munching in the muskeg." Observant children will also see a moon, a mountain, a magpie, mittens, and mukluks in the picture. The entry for Z, always a test of an alphabet book: "In zero weather Zach makes a zigzag path to the zinc mine." Not bad.



ILLUSTRATIONS, INCLUDING COVER, BY JOSS MACLENNAN



**AEC 123: The Canadian Alphabet and Counting Book**, by Vlasta van Kampen, Hurtig, 48 pages, \$5.95 cloth. As readers work their way through this alphabet book, they are presented with the story of various animals holding a party to celebrate Canada. For example: "A is for the amazing albatross balancing the apple on his head in the antlers of the alphabet animal, who is asking all of the animals to a very special party." This is too gimmicky to work, although Van Kampen's illustrations are, as always, striking and imaginative. Her entry for Z, a picture of sleeping animals tired out from their party: "Z is for the Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Z-Zs."

**I'm Only Afraid of the Dark (at Night!)** by Patti Stren, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 38 pages, \$12.95 cloth. Harold Tribune, an owl who lives in the Arctic Circle, is afraid of the dark. Nothing to worry about during the summer when it's light 24 hours a day, but obviously a problem as the winter months approach. With the help of his friends, Harold tries to face and overcome his problem. Much of the fun of Stren's books comes from trying to keep the text in sync with the comments in balloons made by the characters in her illustrations.

**The Fisherman and his Wife**, retold and illustrated by Jenni Lunn, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 46 pages, \$11.95 cloth. This is the familiar Grimm story: a fisherman catches a magic fish and then releases him. As a reward he reappears when the fisherman summons him to grant his wishes and those of his greedy, ambitious wife. But the Nova Scotia setting and the fishing village dialect give this retelling a delightfully funny relevance and flavour. When the fisherman first tells his wife about the fish, she screams at him, "Yer gizzard for garties and yer chins for chowdy! Plumbin' was the thing to ask for." The fisherman relays her request to the fish and when he returns home his house is full of plumbing "... doing all the things that plumbing does best ... leaking, seeping, dripping, sweating. ... The fisherman didn't much like going to bed with a bucket on his chest to catch the drips, but his wife was so happy he didn't say a word."

**Mollie Whuppie and the Giant**, retold and illustrated by Robin Muller, North Winds Press (Scholastic), 44 pages, \$9.95 cloth. The folktale has all the ingredients of a wonderfully appealing story: abandoned children, including Mollie, much braver and more resourceful than her older sisters; a truly evil giant, with a hideous family and special magic possessions; a beautiful palace that can only be reached at great risk; and three severe tests of Mollie's courage before the happy ending can be achieved. The language is rich and full of ritual repetitions and the illustrations have all the details just right — the giant's monstrous home and family, the richness of the court in the shining palace and the terrifying gorge that lies between.

**Chester's Barn**, by Lindee Climo, Tundra, 32 pages, \$12.95 cloth. This excellent book follows Chester, the farmer, on his round of chores as he feeds and cares for his barnful of animals on a winter afternoon in Prince Edward Island. Climo's paintings lovingly dwell on each individual among the barn's many occupants. Among her portraits are the Crooky Horn Cow, Gabriel the ram, Licorice the old trotter, and Snorey and Windrow, two barn cats. This is an ideal barn, clean, warm, comfortable, full of healthy, gentle animals. But Climo shows that she also understands the practical aspects of farming. Chester must sell some of his animals for food and these he doesn't name or make pets of. We learn how to keep a sow from accidentally lying on her piglets, how to lure frisky ponies back to the barn after an outing in the winter sun, and how to trick a ewe into adopting an orphan lamb. This book is beautifully designed and makes a pleasant experience for adults and children to share.

**On the Edge of the Eastern Ocean**, by Pam Hall, GLC, 48 pages, \$12.95 cloth. This is another beautifully designed book with a large, clear typeface and full-colour illustrations. Artist Pam Hall's pictures of sea birds are very attractive. Especially

appealing are those of the little puffin, the hero of her story. But the story itself, telling how the puffin learned wisdom and how to avoid the man-made dangers facing sea birds, is unnecessarily long and repetitious. Attempts to use language investing the story with the qualities of a legend only make it formless and vague.

**Enwhisteektwa**, by Jeannette C. Armstrong, Okanagan Indian Curriculum Project, 44 pages, \$5.95 paper. This is a fictional account of a year in the life of a little Okanagan Indian girl in 1859-60. It tells of the seasonal activities of her family, and includes her first view of white men — people with "hairy faces and pink skin" — a terrifying sight. The purpose of the Okanagan Indian Curriculum Project is to create social studies materials based on the history and culture of native children. This is their first book also aimed at the children's book trade.

**The Kids Food Cookbook**, by Shannon Ferrier and Tamara Shuttleworth, Lorimer, 64 pages, \$7.95 paper. Children love take-out food. This book shows how these foods can be made at home and taste even better. There are 48 metric recipes for treats that would normally come from hamburger stands or international fast-food outlets or ice cream parlours. But take warning. This book may be for children but it is not an easy cookbook. It is not easy to make felafel or egg rolls or chocolate glazed donuts. Absolute requirements are a great deal of patience on the part of the cooks and the adult supervisors and an electric deep fryer. If your family is short on patience or does not own a deep fryer, do not break all ties with your favourite fast-food dealer.

**Riot of Riddles**, by Edith Fowke, illustrated by Lesley Fairfield, Scholastic, 63 pages, \$1.95 paper. If your home contains indefatigable riddle-askers, you may require patience to deal



## Queen's University Fellowships in the Humanities

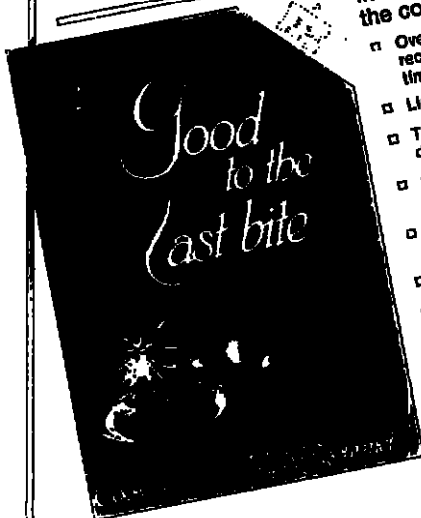
From funding generously provided by the Webster Foundation, Queen's University announces the establishment of two fellowships in the Humanities to begin 1 September, 1983. The purpose of the Fellowship is to support younger scholars engaged in humanistic studies that demonstrate originality and imagination, a breadth of perspective and a concern to situate 'specialized' enquiry within a larger intellectual context. While some applicants will have completed or be about to complete doctoral studies, the University also encourages applications from candidates of outstanding merit who lack a Ph.D. and from those whose intellectual background is unconventional. The Fellowships are tenable for two years and carry a stipend for the first year of \$25,000. An expense allowance of \$2,000 will also be payable. Fellows will be expected to reside in the Kingston area. Inquiries and applications should be addressed to:

Office of the Dean  
Faculty of Arts and Science, Queen's University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 3N6

Each applicant should submit a curriculum vitae and an essay, not exceeding 1,000 words, outlining his or her objectives in seeking this Fellowship. Three referees should be asked to send supporting letters directly to the same address. The deadline for applications is 31 January, 1983.

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## Murder On Location

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with this book as well. On what side of the house do maple trees grow in Manitoba? (The outside, of course.) As well as riddles, this book contains scrambled words, crossword puzzles, rhyming and logic games to entertain children in the grades-three-to-five range.

*Dr. Zed's Dazzling Book of Science Activities*, by Gordon Penrose, illustrated by Linda Bucholtz-Ross, Greedy de Pencier, 48 pages, \$5.95 paper. Dr. Zed, *Owl* magazine's cartoon scientist, is a popular figure, and this is his second book of entertaining, science-based projects to do at home. Included are instructions for a hummingbird feeder, an instant insect catcher, and a mini-volcano. We've tried that one. It's fun, and so is the Great Zoom Balloon Race.

*The Wilds of Whip-poor-will Farm*, by Janet Foster, illustrated by Olena Kassian, Greedy de Pencier, 112 pages, \$7.95 paper. Naturalist Janet Foster describes her adventures with an amazing variety of wild animals that share an old farm in rural Ontario with her and her husband, John. Following the cycle of their first year on the farm, Foster describes the activities of food-gathering, shelter-making, and family-rearing among these, her new friends. Interesting as the animal stories are, even more remarkable is the Fosters' patience with the mice that over-run their basement, the porcupine that chews their tractor tires, and the groundhogs that dig up their pastures. It probably helps to be a naturalist.

*The Case of the Downhill Theft*, by George Swede, illustrated by Paul Kantorek, Three Trees Press, 56 pages, \$10.50 cloth, \$4.50 paper. This is the fourth in a series of adventures of Inspector Holmes of the Halifax Police Force, and his pets Sherlock the bloodhound and Watson the cat. This time they are on holidays in the Blue Mountain ski resort country of Ontario and they all work together to help the RCMP (why not the Ontario Provincial Police?), solve a robbery case.

*Death Over Montreal*, by Geoffrey Bilson, Kids Can Press, 106 pages, \$3.95 paper. When young Jamie Douglas and his parents emigrated from Scotland to Canada in the 19th century, they encountered not the prosperity and grand opportunities they had hoped for, but rather thievery, filth, and worst of all, cholera. In this, the fifth book in the Kids Can history series for children from approximately nine to 13, readers are provided with a good picture of conditions facing immigrants in those times and a dramatic idea of what Montreal was like in all the panic and horror of the cholera epidemics. Missing from this book is the epilogue that placed the other titles in this series in their historical context. The story stands on its own, but I think the book would have been a more effective learning instrument had an epilogue been included.

*The War With Mr. Wizzle*, by Gordon Korman, Scholastic, 224 pages, \$2.25 paper. This is the fourth book about the adventures of Bruno and Boots, students at what by now must be Canada's most famous boys' school, Macdonald Hall. This time they meet and conquer the computer intended to make their beloved school more modern and efficient, while the girls across the road confront their new assistant headmistress, a martinet who wants to turn Miss Scrimmage's Finishing School for Young Ladies into something resembling a military basic training camp.

*Beautiful Dreamer*, by Allen Morgan, Kids Can Press, 107 pages, \$3.95 paper. Motherless Katie, the youngest in her family, longs to prove to the others, especially to her father, that she is old enough to carry her share of responsibility. All the members of her family make a weekly contribution from their earnings to the family cookie jar and that's where Katie feels the greatest inadequacy. It is hard for a 12-year-old to earn money like an adult. Katie tries to set up a business, she takes chances on lotteries, and once even shoplifts in desperate and often funny attempts to gain recognition. Morgan has done a good job of portraying Katie, a likable but far from

perfect girl, and the concerns and anxieties of her early adolescence.

*Miss P. and Me*, by Florence McNeil, Clarke Irwin, 124 pages, \$12.95 cloth. Jane, the 13-year-old heroine of this story, also feels inadequate. Although her mother is a dance instructor, she herself is completely uncoordinated. Attempting the impossible, she bluffs her way into a dancing role in her school play. The results are disastrous but mark steps on Jane's way to accepting her own special abilities.

*Danger on the River*, by J. Robert Janes, Clarke Irwin, 151 pages, \$12.95 cloth. Five children help a somewhat inept pollution inspector track down, confront, and foil a desperate gang of truckers who are dumping dangerous chemicals into the river near their favourite hideout. The story is far-fetched, fast-moving, and entertaining to read.

*Disneyland Hostage*, by Eric Wilson, Clarke Irwin, 119 pages, \$12.95 cloth. Wilson has become a master at the fast-paced adventure story for young readers. This time Wilson's usual hero, Tom Austen, is replaced by Liz Austen, his sister. Liz shares Tom's nose for trouble, his amazing daring and ingenuity, and his terrible sense of humour. A typical Austen joke: "Do you eat chicken with your fingers? How sick. Most people just eat the chicken." The setting is California, where Liz is on a vacation from Winnipeg — the movie lots and Disneyland, site of hostage-taking central to the plot. Researching the book must have been fun.

*Johnny Eagleclaw*, by Cliff Faulknor, LeBel, 103 pages, \$8.95 cloth. A young Indian boy living in southern Alberta struggles to become a successful rodeo rider. After years of hard work he achieves recognition by winning the saddle bronc class at the Calgary Stampede. This is a sensitive portrayal of Johnny's fight against discrimination and his determination to

gain success in the often frightening world away from the security of the reserve. It also offers some interesting insights into life on the rodeo circuit.

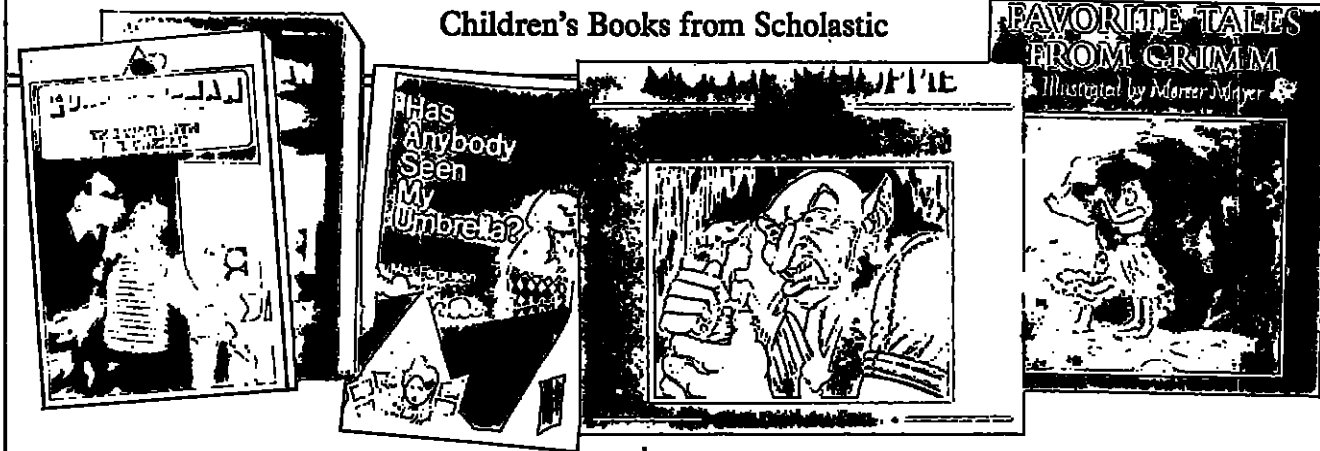
*Beckoning Lights*, by Monica Hughes, LeBel, 79 pages, \$8.95 cloth. Julia and her twin brother Jack are telepathic, an ability that they try to keep secret from others. But when they accompany their geologist father and two of his students on a field trip into the Rockies and encounter an unidentified flying object, their gift of telepathy becomes critical for the survival of a whole planet. Hughes pays attention to the details of her craft as a science-fiction writer. We find out how the space craft looks, how the aliens support themselves in our atmosphere, how their ship is powered. But she never allows these details to overpower her sense of what makes a good book. The logic of plot and character development is carefully worked out and surely presented. Hughes tells a good story well.

*A Hill for Looking*, by Martha Brooks, illustrated by Beverly Dancho and A. L. Paine, Queenston House, 196 pages, \$14.95 cloth, \$7.95 paper. This is a biographical story of a young girl's growing up in the 1950s in the Manitoba Sanatorium, a hospital for the treatment of TB, where her father was medical director and her mother a nurse. Because of the extended stay of most of the patients, the permanence of the staff and the isolated nature of the institution, Martha has a sort of extended family and a closeness to the processes of healing and of dying that are part of that world.

*Salut, Gadou!* by Malcolm Reid, Lorimer, 96 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper. In contemporary Quebec City, a group of kids struggle to save their clubhouse from being torn down by a big developer anxious to build more highrises. The kids come up with some pretty ingenious forms of protest until they gain many supporters. Even the young rebel, Gadou, who is sure he

# GIFTS TO LAST

Children's Books from Scholastic



Gordon Korman's latest sidesplitting story for ages 8-12 is *The War with Mr. Wizzle*, \$2.25, also available in a handsome boxed set, \$9.00... Max Ferguson enters the children's book field with *Has Anybody Seen My Umbrella?*, a hilarious twist on the Cinderella story, \$2.95... *Mollie Whuppie*

*& the Giant* is a brilliantly illustrated folktale by Toronto author-illustrator Robin Muller, \$9.95 cloth... and Mercer Mayer's most recent lavishly illustrated book is *Favorite Tales from Grimm*, a collection of 20 best-loved tales, \$18.95 cloth.

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doesn't want to become involved in any such cause, is won over mostly by the charms of Geneviève, a charming and experienced little champion of causes who has been taking part in protests ever since her parents took her along to help demonstrate for better day care.

*The Baitchopper*, by Silver Donald Cameron, illustrated by Alan Daniel, Lorimer, 112 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper. The fishermen in a village in Nova Scotia are trying to form a union to bargain with the owners of the big plants that buy their fish and own the boats. The young teenaged boys whose fathers are on strike find that they are drawn into all the action — the tension, the frustration, and the strong feelings of

solidarity. Books about young people's reaction to strikes are becoming common themes in Canadian children's literature. Last year, for example, there was *Goodbye Sarah*, by Geoffrey Bilson, about the Winnipeg General Strike, and *One Proud Summer*, by Claire Mackay and Marsha Hewitt, about a textile workers' strike in Quebec. These two books had strong merits, but also had a didactic overtone that Cameron's book happily lacks. His heroes' adventures are always entertaining, sometimes amusing, and yet his readers are still aware of the seriousness of what the adults in the book are fighting for. This is a good adventure story with the "message" very properly subtle. □

## FEATURE REVIEW

# The Big Red Machine

As Christina McCall-Newman's new study shows, in its zeal to win, the Liberal Party turns young turks into old turkeys

By JACK MacLEOD

*Grits: An Intimate Portrait of the Liberal Party*, by Christina McCall-Newman, Macmillan, 479 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 95).

THE CENTRAL TOPIC of Canadian politics in this century has always been the Liberal Party. It is the sprawling giant, the dominant fact of our public life. But writing about the Liberals is as difficult as trying to slam a revolving door. The party is so big and forbidding a subject, spinning away as you approach, that only a few scholars dared grapple with it until recently. Reg Whitaker studied the Grits of the King-St. Laurent era in a brilliant microscopic tome, focusing on organization and financing, titled *The Government Party: 1930-1958*, and Joseph Wearing took a useful if myopic look at the 1958-to-1980 period in *The L Shaped Party*. Now we have the long awaited work by McCall-Newman, a bold attempt to sort things out. Can she compete with the academics, or even outstrip them?

Yes. She has pulled it off. She presents "an intimate portrait" of the Liberals from 1957 to 1979 in a volume that is certain to be read and quoted and discussed for years. It's a formidable achievement, one helluva book.

As readers of her magazine work know, McCall-Newman is a gifted journalist. Here she proves much more. Her prose is graceful, sly, incisive. She has

the savvy of Dalton Camp, the command of facts of Whitaker, and a delicate stiletto that makes Fotheringham's broadsword look cumbersome. If, like her erstwhile husband Peter Newman, she wears headphones while writing (which seems improbable), she must be listening to the sinuous rhythms of Benny Goodman or the subtle cadences of Vivaldi, not the insistent blare of Stan Kenton.

In fact, *Grits* is an even better book than the two pre-publication excerpts in *Saturday Night* would lead you to believe. Skillfully, cumulatively, McCall-Newman interweaves the stories of Pearson and Trudeau, Pitfield and Lalonde, Coumts and Davey (as well as Turner the Dauphin) into a dramatic web, illustrating the remarkable network of egos and egregiousness that make the Grits what they are. The book crackles with gossip, gamesmanship, and backroom tales of how power is wielded in the surprisingly petty big-leagues of Canadian politics. All of the principals are starkly drawn, chutzpah, warts, hairy nostrils and all. Like Flaubert or Richard B. Wright, the author lifts the commonplace of eccentricities and foibles to memorable portraits, but portraits within a broad mural.

It's disturbing to note how few of her subjects are ordinary elected MPs. Her focus is on the mandarins, manipulators, or top executives. And she's

right. Parliament under Trudeau has become an institution of trifling consequence. Power is highly concentrated in the pollsters and selected confidantes of the PM; only the inner cadre matters. Not just MPs but also most of the cabinet ministers are conspicuous by their absence from the centre ring of the circus. Keith Davey, Jim Coumts, and Michael Pitfield each get a chapter, and quite rightly. But consider: although we still call our system a "democracy," who ever elected Davey or Coumts or Pitfield?

Fundamental issues are at stake here. Because *Grits* is about raw power, the substance of the book is more important than the admirable style. McCall-Newman has dug hard and deep to unearth neglected facts. She has tapped innumerable scholarly sources, interviewed almost everyone who matters in Canadian politics in conversations that go back beyond 1968, and pulled together a discerning, synoptic account of the how and why of Liberal hegemony. *Grits* is tough as well as titillating. McCall-Newman is perceptive about that overlooked institution, the Senate, for example, a body that has stood firm to protect financial privilege, not least by thwarting tax reform. She is lucid in her analyses of complex organizations and interrelationships.

Her examination of the primary importance of the Quebec bastion to Grit dominance is particularly effective.

The party is shown as deriving its leadership and bedrock seats from French Canada and its Anglophone hopes from Toronto — which may be its principal problems. The Hogtown Grits, since Keith Davey took charge of the electoral apparatus in 1961, have never understood the West. Sir John A. always insisted that a party must be national and inclusive if it is to govern, but the view from Westmount or from Yonge and Bloor does not extend to Calgary, which is why the Liberals have tended recently to become a merely regional Central Canadian party pretending to be national. Much of the story of Trudeau Liberalism is the decline of its acceptance of regionalism, its excessive preoccupation with matters of language and constitution, its attempt to impose a narrow central strategy on an unwilling but expanding periphery. It's odd to think that if Quebec were to separate, Canada might revert to a two-party system: Conservatives versus the NDP.

It's also curious to reflect that in 1963, before he entered federal politics, Pierre Trudeau, writing in *Cité Libre*, called Quebec MPs "little more than a herd of trained donkeys" kept in line by a stable-master. At that time he described Liberals as "men . . . who tremble with

anticipation because they have seen the rouged face of power." Similarly, Davey entered the fray as a youthful idealist in 1957 largely because he wanted the Liberals to champion "progressive" legislation and to reform their cynical patronage machine. Thus do the hot young turks of one era become the cool Establishment turkeys of the next. But the institutional power of the Grit *cosa nostra* rolls implacably on, veering now to the left, now to the right, yet never losing sight of a single overriding cause: winning.

That is probably why the last chapter of the book is the weakest or least compelling. It deals with what Liberals are most unaccustomed to: decline and defeat.

Through the first five of her six chapters, McCall-Newman delineates a story of vaunting triumph. It's a tale of "only rarely interrupted power . . . the smoothest patronage system this side of Suez. . . ." Most of the book traces the details of what Dalton Camp (in *Gentlemen, Players and Politicians*, 1970) recounted as the reasons for his leaving the Big Red Machine after the 1948 convention that bestowed the laurel wreath on St. Laurent. "The Liberal Party was . . . a corporate dynasty. . . . No delegate felt

himself pushed or driven, but gently directed by some benevolent guidance system, deflected in the mists of his confusion from the possibility of harmful collision with more powerful purpose and authority. What one had come to marvel at most in Canadian Liberalism was its efficiency, its splendid imperturbability, the infallibility of both its fortune and its genius."

It is, of course, still fashionable to think of the Grits in these deferential tones. They are so damnably clever and resilient, these Liberals. As we watch the forlorn figure of Joe, the clerk from High River, stumble through Broadview-Greenwood and other minefields toward the probable Waterloo of leadership review in January, we tend to think how awesomely disciplined and successful are the inheritors of the Laurier-King tradition. After all, they have wallowed in power for 60 of the past 82 years, 40 of the past 47 years. Isn't it folly to oppose them? Morton Shulman, echoing Camp, recently repeated the conventional wisdom of Grit invincibility, commenting that "the Liberals may be villains, but at least they are efficient villains." And so we are lulled into believing that there is "no alternative" to what Whitaker called

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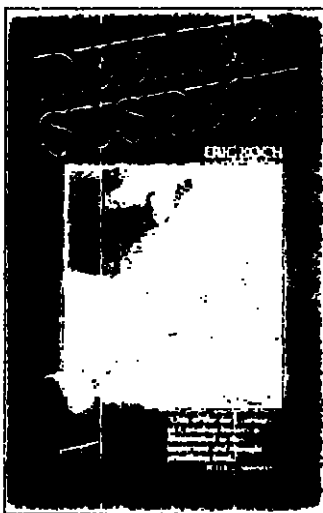
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### DEEMED SUSPECT

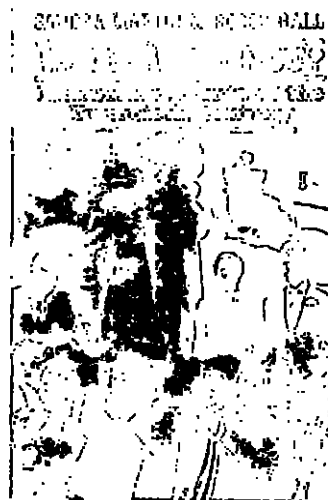
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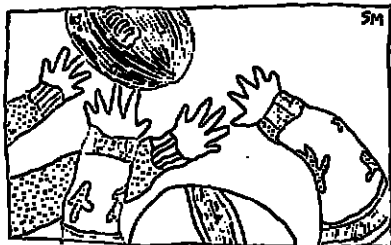
"the Government Party."

Infallible? *Efficient?* Ye gods! How easily we are brainwashed. In her final chapter McCall-Newman writes of "The Politics of Desperation" leading up to the Liberal flop in 1979. The election of that year ousted those swell folks who told you of "the end of separatism" who "wrestled inflation to the ground" in 1974, who somersaulted on wage and price controls in 1975, who gave us "cheap" gas and oil in 1980, who sold out women's rights and native rights (while further alienating Quebec) in ramming through the constitutional patriation of 1982. Terrific.

But aren't they clever? Aren't they cunning? Oh, sure. These are the cerebral giants who gave us the anti-bilingual Jack Horner as a cabinet minister from Alberta with a turned coat, who couldn't elect Pierre Juneau in Hochelaga, who magnanimously offered Senator Hazen Argue as the cabinet minister from Saskatchewan, who parachuted Jim Coumts from the PMO into Spadina and ignominy, who chose U of T President Dr. John Evans as prime-ministerial timber in Rosedale before David Crombie knocked him off with insouciant ease.

Golly-gosh, Toto, we may not be in Kansas any more. Personally, I'm from Missouri, and so is McCall-Newman. By these standards of Liberal efficiency and invincibility, I could be heavyweight champion of Canada . . . if enough people believed in the Big Myth, or if my only opponent was Tiny Tim.

Although she does not entirely rear back and let fly at her Grit targets, McCall-Newman snaps a lot of telling darts at the Liberal sitting ducks. To read her is to re-think a great many of our most familiar assumptions. She goads, she prods, she exposes, and she requires of the reader a searching reappraisal of received political orthodoxy. She jolts us back to the 17th-century dictum of Oxenstiern: "Behold, my son,



with what little wisdom the world is governed." The Liberals may have committed the most cardinal sin of politics. They may have become a joke.

Read her and laugh. Read her and weep. But read her. She's a treat, and with one impressive work she claims a place among our most accomplished writers. □

## REVIEW

# Capital gains

By I.M. OWEN

**The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins 1935-1957**, by J.L. Granatstein. Oxford, 349 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540387 8).

**The Presidents and the Prime Ministers: Washington and Ottawa Face to Face, the Myth of Bilateral Bilss, 1867-1982**, by Lawrence Martin. Doubleday, 318 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 17891 2).

TO PRESENT THE history of any subject through the careers of some of the principal actors may give a less complete picture than a formal history, but it's likely to contribute new insights, and almost certain to make the subject more accessible to the non-specialist reader. Here are two examples in the field of Canadian government and external relations, one by a professional historian and one by a journalist.

J.L. Granatstein's *The Ottawa Men* shows higher civil servants at work, especially in the period specified in his subtitle, 1935-57; but he includes a useful chapter on the state of the federal civil service before that time, and concludes with a meditation on the reasons why things are no longer, and never will be, as they were in the period of the men we have come to think of as "the mandarins."

Granatstein selects (arbitrarily, he admits) 19 of the civil servants of the time as his mandarins, and gives fairly detailed biographies of 14 of them. They range in age from O. D. Skelton (1878-1941) to R. B. Bryce (born 1910). In the context of the times, it's not surprising that they were all male, and not very surprising that all but one (Louis Rasminsky) were gentiles. What's shocking is that there were no French Canadians in the group. There was no conscious hostility in this, no deliberate policy of exclusion. Skelton in external affairs and Clifford Clark in finance, Queen's University Presbyterians both, did their recruiting from among the people they knew, and they didn't happen to know any French Canadians. Hence government business was conducted almost entirely in English, even when there was a French-speaking prime

minister. This blindness would be costly to the country in the long run.

It was about the middle of the war that Canadians, accustomed to thinking of all their institutions as second-rate at best, woke up to find that the management of their economy was regarded by their allies as the best in the world; and toward the end of the war, about the time of the San Francisco Conference, it became apparent that our infant diplomatic corps was held in equally high regard. It was a heady experience; those days are gone, but the smugness lingers on.

*The Ottawa Men* is in a sense a pendant to Granatstein's biography of Norman Robertson, *A Man of Influence*, published last year; but it's a pendant of unusual weight. It even adds significantly to his previous account of Robertson, with an incident that presumably hadn't come to light until he had finished the earlier book. In late December, 1941, Free French forces seized Saint-Pierre and Miquelon from the Vichy authorities. Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, was for some reason furious at this, quite wrongly suspected the Canadians of being behind it, and made the outrageous demand that we should clear "the so-called Free French" off the islands. So much was known already; what's new is that, early in December, Robertson had been pressing Mackenzie King almost feverishly to send a corvette to Saint-Pierre, seize control of its communications, and depose the Vichy officials if there was any resistance: bizarre behaviour that materially alters the established picture of Robertson as the most prudent and cautious of functionaries.

In Lawrence Martin's book we move from civil servants to politicians, and range through a much longer period, from 1867 to 1982. Martin, the former Washington correspondent of the *Globe and Mail*, has dug well and come up with a lot of nuggets. While his book can't compare with Granatstein's as a work of historical insight, and isn't notable for a profound understanding of the political process, it will be permanently valuable as a sourcebook of anecdotes, mostly significant and often vastly entertaining. From various sources he has put together the most vivid account I've read of the famous incident at Camp David when Lyndon Johnson picked Pearson up by his shirt-collar. ("You pissed on my rug!") This might be regarded as the end of the "special relationship"; or, alternatively, as a triumphant confirmation of it — what other country's leader could have been treated so informally, even by Lyndon Johnson?

The early prime ministers, from 1867 to 1911, were faced with two obstacles:

the fact that their external relations were ultimately controlled from Westminster, and the more formidable fact that all the presidents of the time, from Grant to Taft, believed in Manifest Destiny and the annexation of Canada sooner or later. (Grant wanted it sooner — before the election of 1872, in fact.)

In the next period, from 1911 to 1932, the presidents were almost completely indifferent to Canada — all except Warren Harding, who paid dearly for his interest: during the first presidential visit ever made to Canada he became fatally ill on a Vancouver golf course.

The real "special relationship" began in 1935 when King, almost immediately after his return to office, made his first visit to Franklin Roosevelt and began a genuine friendship. Not only was Roosevelt the only person in the world who addressed King as "Mackenzie," he

must have been almost the only one who actually enjoyed his company and sought it out — an inexplicable personal accident whose beneficial effects on events might be taken as the final refutation of the Tolstoyan theory of history.

The fourth period was ushered in by the personality clashes of Kennedy and Diefenbaker, Johnson and Pearson. Trudeau and Nixon were another matter. They were bound to dislike each other. But — perhaps because the one thing they had in common was very high intelligence — they worked well together. Indeed (and this is new to me) Nixon's remarkable Ottawa speech in 1972, in which he said it was time for both countries to recognize that they were different and didn't have to go always in the same direction, was partly written by Trudeau's foreign-policy adviser, Ivan Head.

J.L. Granatstein has a pure and often elegant English prose style. Lawrence Martin, in a word, hasn't. Not only does he commit most of the routine solecisms with which political journalists are steadily eroding the language into a featureless plain — "perception" for "opinion," "may" for "might," the conjunctive "like" — but he has weirdnesses of his own that suggest that he has been taking private tuition from our most inventive stylist, Conrad Black. He never quite reaches the heights attained by that master, but he shows promise when he says that Theodore Roosevelt, "the most prolific man to occupy the Oval Office, . . . bore no indigenous malice to Canada," or writes, "Amazement and indignation accosted the news of the Clark remarks." As Andrew Aguecheek said, "Is *that* the meaning of accost?" □

#### FEATURE REVIEW

## Men in love

There is a wide gap between what  
The *Body Politic* actually has published and  
the evils its critics accuse it of

By RICK ARCHBOLD

**Flaunting It: A Decade of Gay Journalism from The Body Politic**, edited by Ed Jackson and Stan Persky, New Star Books/Pink Triangle Press, illustrated, 312 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 919888 31 3).

I REMEMBER WHEN Gerald Hannon's now-famous article "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" first appeared in *The Body Politic*. I didn't read it at the time — didn't, in fact, read the magazine at all in those days — but I was all too aware of the article's existence and of its, to me, shocking subject: homosexual relationships between boys and men, or pedophilia. Unhesitatingly I condemned it. This was just one more example of those radical gays giving my kind a bad name. My kind? The nice, normal gay man leading a quiet and unassuming private life. Why couldn't the *The Body Politic* just shut up and stop attracting all this negative attention?

Since then, I've become much more relaxed and open about my sexuality.

And this past July I climbed the five flights of stairs to *The Body Politic's* offices in downtown Toronto to offer my help in editing the magazine. I had finally come to the perception that, to echo the words of Ed Jackson, "the personal is political. Sexual politics matter." In a sense, reading *Flaunting It!*, which collects what the editors feel is the best writing to appear in the magazine during its first 10 years, has been like taking a tour through a past I didn't actually experience but now claim as my own.

*The Body Politic* bills itself as "a magazine for gay liberation." As *Flaunting It!* demonstrates, this has meant constantly jousting against authority and convention, both as expressed by the various power structures in society and as internalized in the psyches of gay men and women. It has involved a constant questioning of the assumptions on which these received notions are based. Since the first issue in November, 1971, the magazine has also been a source of

images and information available nowhere else. According to regular contributor Jane Rule, "I have been better and more thoughtfully informed about what it means to be a homosexual in this culture by *The Body Politic* than by any other paper, offered information the straight press refuses to publish. . . . I am kept informed about our scholars, artists, politicians, as well as our victims, and fighters. Most of the people I know who don't read *The Body Politic* regularly are dangerously ignorant about what is actually going on either here or abroad."

Over the years this proud combativeness inevitably provoked reaction. The catalyst was Hannon's article about pedophilia. When it was published in November, 1978, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" outraged even many of the magazines' loyal subscribers. Nearly four years later, after two trials and two acquittals on the same charge — "use of the mails for the purpose of transmitting anything that is indecent, immoral, or



scurrilous" — the office of Ontario attorney-general Roy McMurtry has again appealed a judge's decision. Even the stately *Globe and Mail* expressed editorial outrage at this blatant misuse of the legal system to persecute a single publication. As the editors of the book point out, the charge marked a turning point: "The magazine has been transformed from a small tabloid, operating virtually unnoticed in the marginal world of a dying counter-culture, into a minor institution and the major political voice of a visible and acknowledged gay community."

Appropriately, a section of *Flaunting It!* (just under 20 of nearly 300 pages) is devoted to "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" and the responses it engendered within the gay community. It makes some of the most fascinating reading in the book and would alone make its publication worthwhile. But there are many other reasons.

The editors have chosen 60 articles by 35 writers and, on the whole, have done a remarkably good job of organizing them in a meaningful way. Readers unfamiliar with the history of gay liberation (me included) are given sufficient background to develop a sense of context. But more important the individual articles have been arranged so that as

you read the book from beginning to end it accumulates force and coherence.

The material has been divided into five major sections or "chapters." The first three of these are shaped around broad themes and worked particularly well for me, especially chapter three, "The Making of the Image of the Modern Homosexual." Here you will find "Homosexuals and the Third Reich" by James Steakley, the first account in English of the Nazi persecution and murder of gay people. Steakley writes with a detachment that sets off the horrors recounted by his most chilling sources, survivors of the concentration camps: "Then they put him under a cold shower. It was a frosty winter evening, and he stood outside the barracks all through that long, bitterly cold night. . . . Then he was tied to a post under a cold shower, and so on. He died toward evening."

This is followed by Andrew Hodges's "Towards 1984," which picks up beautifully on the totalitarian theme of Steakley's piece: "all those features of the State which Orwell presented in imagination as the most deeply appalling were none other than those which, in 1949, were being experienced in reality by homosexual people in Anglo-America." Hodges goes on to develop a thoughtful, carefully argued examination of the relationship between language and oppression: "For [gay people], the ordinary language of sexuality is something that must be fought for."

The five articles that follow explore from various perspectives the inherent tyrannies and possibilities of language. In one of them Michael Riordon confronts, with considerable humour, the words homosexuals and others use to talk about gay people: "A man asked me if I would mind terribly if he 'sodomized' me. Imagine. That's a very rich word, purple with implications of crime, sin and hellish perversion. I declined, it sounded to me a very dangerous undertaking." In another, Val Edwards gives a glimpse of the way words work for lesbian, feminist comedienne Robin Tyler: "Of course you may have noticed I'm wearing a tuxedo. . . . On Liza Minnelli it's called cute, on me it's called drag." As a group these seven pieces enrich our understanding of language and oppression and the relation between the two.

Many things impressed or moved me in *Flaunting It!*: Michael Lynch writing about gay fathers, or Tim McCaskell's first-hand report on gay liberation in modern Basque Spain. But certain voices do emerge from the polyphony. Gerald Hannon, consistently the best and most emotionally challenging writer

in the book, ever willing to take risks:

It struck me sharply and keenly that afternoon that we were arguing about *holding hands* — that two people who loved each other very deeply, who had been in a relationship for almost two years, were arguing not about frenching on the subway or blow jobs in the park, but about a caress so casual as to be invisible among heterosexuals.

Michael Riordon, whose wicked humour alternates with white-hot intensity:

For the first time in my life perhaps, I felt a sense of community, I felt I had allies, and because of it I felt dangerously strong and potentially cruel.

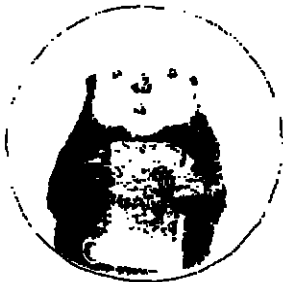
Jane Rule, the voice of calm reason:

If we accepted sexual behaviour between children and adults, we would be far more able to protect our children from abuse and exploitation than we are now. They would be free to tell us, as they can about all kinds of other experiences, what is happening to them and to have our sympathy and support instead of our mute and mistrustful terror.

The book's weaknesses are the weaknesses of *The Body Politic* itself. There are too few voices of women, as the editors freely admit. In fact they devote a subsection of chapter four ("Advice on consent and Other Unfinished Business") to the perennial problem in the gay movement of getting men and women to agree on common goals and then work together. The quality and accessibility of the writing vary greatly (though on the whole are amazingly high for a publication that can't pay its contributors). The writers too often fall back on the sometimes easy jargon of gay liberation until words like "patriarchy" and "heterosexism" occasionally lose their meanings, but the surprise is they don't do it more often. And there is definitely not enough of the kind of investigative reportage that requires resources like time and money. Too few writers have gone out into the field to see what they could turn up. (The exceptions to this are outstanding — for example, Chris Bearchall's anatomy of the CBC-TV documentary "Sharing the Secret" or Ed Jackson's edited account of the magazine's coverage of George Hislop and John Sewell's defeat in the 1980 Toronto civic election.) There is also more humour than I expected (though not enough), notably the cartoons of Paul Aboud and Gary Ostrom.

Well, now that I've taken the tour, what do I think? For one thing I'm impressed with the eloquence I encountered — and the passion. The book made me think, it made me feel, and more than once it made me squirm uncomfortably in my chair. For another, I agree with Ed Jackson when he says in the introduction, "the

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discrepancy between what *The Body Politic* has actually done or written and what the ignorant, the fearful and cynical accuse [it] of doing is so wide that it becomes a significant phenomenon in itself. "to me the significance lies in what it reveals about our immaturity as a culture. We are still too unsure of the house we've built to suffer gladly those who rummage around in the foundations and discover more than a few shaky footings. That *The Body Politic* has survived, that *Flaunting It!* can be published at all, suggests there is hope nonetheless. □

## REVIEW

# Oscar and the grouches

By JOHN HOFSESS

*Oscar Wilde in Canada: An Apostle for the Arts*, by Kevin O'Brien, Personal Library, 207 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920510 63 9).

WHEN ASKED BY a friend during his university days what was his ambition in life, Oscar Wilde replied: "God knows . . . I'll be a poet, a writer, a dramatist. Somehow or other, I'll be famous, and if not famous, I'll be notorious."

Wilde is one of the first modern artists to understand the uses of publicity. Or as he put it: "Success is a science. If you have the conditions, you get the result." His North American lecture tour in 1882 was born of necessity — he was 26, the author of a slim collection of poems and a play, *Vera, or the Nihilists*, that no one wanted to produce. A lecture tour (bringing aesthetic enlightenment to the colonies) offered some badly needed income and would also lay the groundwork for future success.

Wilde's tour was sponsored by Richard D'Oyly Carte, an equal opportunity exploiter, who, a year earlier, had sponsored the American tour of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, which heavily satirized a pretentious bumpkin called Reginald Bunthorne, modelled on Wilde. It wasn't easy, in the days before radio and TV, to make one's name a household word, but Wilde was deter-

mined to try. The tour lasted 10 months and took Wilde to more than 100 cities and towns. He travelled as far south as Louisiana and Texas, west to California, Utah, and Colorado, and north to Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes. Some of his lectures were well paid — he received \$1,000 in New York and Chicago — but most were not; he got \$100 for a lecture in Moncton, and on several occasions, as at Wesleyan Ladies' College in Hamilton, he appeared without fee. By year's end, however, he fully expected to achieve his goal of being widely regarded as a controversial figure by a considerable portion of North American society.

Kevin O'Brien's *Oscar Wilde in Canada* is a detailed account of Wilde's stops in such cities as Ottawa (where he was snubbed by the Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne, but dined with John A. Macdonald); Toronto (where his carriage was chased by street lads shouting "Oscar, Oscar is running Wilde!"), Montreal (where he received editorial support from the *Star*, commending him for his "crusade against bad taste . . . and false art").

O'Brien's record of this journey is as plainly written as its title. Fortunately, Wilde is present on every page to provide sharp insights and wit. On a rainy day in Kingston, before a small crowd, Wilde quotes American lecturer Wendell Phillips that "any man could speak well to a crowd, but it required a mighty effort to thrill empty benches." The full texts of his two of lectures, "The Decorative Arts," and "The House Beautiful," are here published for the first time.

Ultimately what makes *Oscar Wilde in Canada* a valuable book is not so much what it reveals about Wilde as what it reveals about Canadian society a century ago. Many of the journalists quoted are openly hostile, decrying his mode of dress, belittling his lectures, or charging him with plagiarizing Ruskin for his ideas, as if they had taken it upon themselves to protect rugged, frontier values and practices from the barbs and criticisms ("industry without art is simply barbarism") of a corpulent and sensual buffoon. The enmity generated between Wilde and the Canadian press endured for years after the tour. After Wilde's death in 1900, the *Belleville Daily Intelligencer* told its readers: "He was convicted of a nameless crime, and all those who had known him tried to blot his memory from their minds forever."

*Oscar Wilde in Canada* is the story of a man who helped make some Canadians more sophisticated at a crucial time in the development of our cultural history. □

## REVIEW

# Foil to the Chief

By ANN D. CROSBY

*The Other Mrs. Diefenbaker; A Biography of Edna May Brewer*, by Simma Holt, Doubleday, 378 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 17089 0).

WHEN EDNA MAY BROWER died at the age of 51, her husband, John Diefenbaker, promised her that they would lie together in death. To facilitate this promise, Edna May was buried four feet deeper than normal in the Diefenbaker family plot in Saskatoon, thus leaving room for her husband to be buried above her in due course.

John Diefenbaker was then in his mid-50s, healthy and well on his way to becoming Canada's 13th prime minister. His promise to be buried with Edna was a promise made by a grieving man in the prime of life to his dying wife, a woman he had loved and relied upon for 22 years of marriage. In retrospect, it was a promise to be understandably broken since he went on to marry again and to live happily for 23 years with his second wife, Olive. Just before Olive's death, the couple made similar plans and purchased a joint plot in Ottawa.

The problem is not that John Diefenbaker chose to be buried with his second wife. The problem is that he chose, apparently, to forget his first wife altogether. *The Other Mrs. Diefenbaker* is Simma Holt's attempt to reconstruct Edna May's life, giving her the credit she deserves in Diefenbaker's political success, taking her from the realm of "... the unsung heroines of the West — women who, like Edna, worked beside their husbands to build this country, and now lie forgotten in prairie graves."

Edna May Brewer gave up teaching school in 1929 when she married John Diefenbaker, a lawyer with political ambitions. She was bright, vivacious, and outgoing, a perfect foil for the aloof and shy man who was determined to become prime minister. Since the couple remained childless, Edna's talents and energy were focused on her husband's career, a chore she assumed with enthusiasm in the early years of their marriage but later with private bitterness.

That she was well liked and an asset to her husband's career goes without ques-

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tion. Everyone Holt interviewed for the book attested to these qualities, but perhaps the most eloquent attestations to Edna's character are to be found in what her friends would *not* say. Edna's secrets were kept, thereby revealing a love and respect for a woman who must surely have deserved it.

Indiscretions and anger born of subservience are noted but never detailed, and here perhaps is the one weakness of the book. Not that we want details — we don't really need them — but we do want less of the martyr and more of the woman. To be fair, Holt did not have much material to draw upon, since letters had been destroyed, and memories are fallible. However, Holt herself glosses over the actions that do not fit the image of the woman she wishes to portray, when in fact those actions give plausibility rather than detract from it.

Holt does become outraged at Edna's treatment in her later years, but here the blame does not seem to lie so heavily on Diefenbaker's shoulders as the book would like us to believe. In spite of being outwardly vivacious Edna was a private person as far as her feelings and frustrations were concerned, even to the point of keeping the news of her fatal illness from her husband so that he could enjoy a trip to Australia and a holiday in Hawaii. How then could Diefenbaker be expected to understand the depth of depression that saw her admitted to a psychiatric hospital in the mid-1940s? Once she was admitted, the attending physicians recommended shock therapy, and Diefenbaker, against his wife's wishes, signed for it.

The tragedy here is born of hindsight. At that time Diefenbaker did not understand the nature of his wife's illness, and so trusted the doctor's recommendations — recommendations that growing medical knowledge and increased awareness of women's lives in general have since proven wrong.

The real tragedy, as Holt so rightly reveals, is that Edna was so completely forgotten after her death. It is another case, Holt writes of "... women who are abandoned by their men when no longer needed."

In 1954, the year after he married Olive, Diefenbaker had all mention of his first wife removed from *The Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, and it was not until 1964 that her name reappeared. In his own 900 pages of memoirs, Edna is mentioned in only seven paragraphs in the first volume. It was said that he could not have been prime minister without her help, and yet it was as though all she did for him became all he did for himself once she died. Edna's family was not even invited to Diefenbaker's funeral.

From this point of view the book is interesting and well worth reading, and in case anyone should suspect that Holt's feminism may have clouded her objectivity, take note that there is another Mrs. Diefenbaker, John's mother, whose portrayal in the book adequately counters that apprehension.

Diefenbaker's second wife, Olive, received the public recognition that Edna never had. The Chief spoke about her often with love and respect, giving her credit for his success when it was deserved. However, when he died, Olive's body was removed from the Ottawa plot the couple had bought together and flown to Saskatoon to be re-buried beside her husband, who had changed his mind about his final resting place. Olive's family was not consulted about the disinterment.

Edna May Brower may not have been given credit for her part in the life of John Diefenbaker, but at least she was allowed to rest in peace. □

## REVIEW

# Stranger than fiction

By GARY DRAPER

*Running in the Family*, by Michael Ondaatje, McClelland & Stewart, 207 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6884 0).

EACH NEW BOOK by Michael Ondaatje seems wholly different from those that preceded it, and wholly the same. This latest is a family reminiscence (Ondaatje calls it "not a history but a portrait or 'gesture'"). Part documentary, part fantasy, it records his return to his native Sri Lanka. A far cry, I thought when I began it, from a cycle of poems about *Billy the Kid*, or a prose poem on the New Orleans jazz scene and cornetist Buddy Bolden. Not so far a cry, it turns out.

But how does it seem different? First, it has the flavour of autobiography. Of course the narrative "I" is always present in Ondaatje's work. The little kid in the cowboy clothes at the end of *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* is the author. And the narrator of *Coming Through Slaughter* enters the work at various points with a similar kind of

identification: "When [Buddy Bolden] went mad he was the same age as I am now." But in *Running in the Family* the identification appears to be more direct. The characters in this book are the author's real family: his father, Mervyn, his grandmother, Lalla, and the rest. Autobiography, in other words, is not simply a motif here, but a part of the narrative surface as well.

Different but the same, for the characters keep outgrowing the confines of fact. Thus the narrator (who is usually "I" but sometimes "he") and the author may not be any more or less strictly interchangeable than elsewhere in Ondaatje's work. In Sri Lanka, he says, "a well-told lie is worth a thousand facts." Like Alice Munro, Ondaatje takes what look like very personal risks in his fiction. It is always hard to know where the line is drawn. Maybe that's part of the point. Ondaatje is continually slipping through the net of categories: documentary slides into fantasy, prose into poetry, and history, personal and otherwise, into myth.

There is, I think, a good deal more comedy here than in previous books. That's one kind of difference. But the similarity to the other works is this: that the comedy is seldom more than a step away from darkness. Ondaatje tosses the coin of remembrance into the air, and its two sides — laughter and tears — alternately catch the light as it falls. He quotes one of his sisters:

... The sections you sent me made me very sad, remembering him [their father] and all those times. Of course I was always the serious one among us, with no sense of humour. I showed what you had written to someone and they laughed and said what a wonderful childhood we must have had, and I said it was a nightmare.

This passage illustrates the way in which factual edges are blurred. It appears as one of 11 numbered fragments by different, unnamed speakers, in a section called "Dialogues." What is also apparent here is the way that Ondaatje undercuts the distinction between the book as process and as artifact. The "sections" are sections of the book: the reader is thus reminded of the act of writing. That happens from time to time throughout this work, as it does throughout Ondaatje's writings. At the end of the first half-page of this book the narrator says, "Half a page — and the morning is already ancient." The reader is being made aware of the multiplicity of things going on here, of the complex nature of the relation between the author and the reader.

Photography is an important metaphor throughout Ondaatje's work. *Billy the Kid* opens with an empty, four-

inch square, and under it the words, "I send you a photograph of Billy . . ." And in *Coming Through Slaughter*: "There is only one photograph that exists of Bolden and his band. This is what you see." *Running in the Family* includes some wonderfully evocative pictures that are more than simply illustrations of the text. Like the prose, they have the surface of documentary but the presence of magic. One in particular is central to the narrator's journey: "My aunt pulls out the album and there is the photograph I have been waiting for all my life." The story that precedes the discovery of this snapshot is partly about the way the camera can be made to lie.

In some ways, in fact, *Running in the Family* is like a box of snapshots and tapes. From the frozen, still images, and the fragmentary stories told in familiar voices, emerges a complex and many-sided family portrait. There are some outstanding individual shots here, of Lalla and of Mervyn especially, but the whole pyramid of family is revealed by the time the box has been emptied.

What else is familiar? There are thematic echoes, and repeated images: as elsewhere, dipsomania plays an important part in this book. There is Ondaatje's astonishing sensitivity to language, the perfectly timed shifts of tense, the transformation of sound into meaning.

*Asia.* The name was a gasp from a dying mouth. An ancient word that had to be whispered, would never be used as a battle cry. The word sprawled.

Like a gymnast, Michael Ondaatje does difficult things with such grace that they look easy. □

## REVIEW

# Lives of the poets

By JOHN OUGHTON

**West Window: The Selected Poetry of George Bowering**, by George Bowering, General Publishing, 144 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7736 1103 7).

I TOOK George Bowering out to my favourite Chinese restaurant in Toronto; it seemed an appropriate place for a poet who chooses for an epigraph "Men who love wisdom should acquaint themselves

with a great many particulars" from Heraclitus. Unusually quiet for a poet offered a free meal, he was dressed in the cool grey jacket of his selected poems. The west window opens onto the east eventually, I thought; chopsticks allow you to eat with greater particularity than forks, constructing a sequence of mushroom, chili pepper, tofu, beef... the real, not the metaphorical.

I began this with the image of poetry-as-man since it is a figure of speech Bowering himself is fond of: in one extract from *Curious*, reprinted in the present volume, he imagines David McFadden's poetry becoming its own man and leaving to find a job and start a family. Although Bowering largely follows the example of his early influences — William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson, and other Black Mountain poets — in replacing metaphor with detail, something about the image of a poem as a separate, living organism fascinates him. Perhaps in his concentration on particularities and process he shares the urge of that quintessential modern man, Dr. Frankenstein, to use his art to make, as it were, new life out of old parts.

Some of the parts of his poetic corpus re-animated in *West Window* retain greater vitality than others. Instead of selecting his greatest hits from the many volumes of poetry he has published, Bowering has chosen to keep the integrity of the longer poems (a form he helped promote as editor of the now-defunct *Imago*) by reprinting series from a few collections, rounded out with a handful of pieces that have not before appeared in book form.

The McFadden portrait mentioned above is one of the 48 prose-poems taken from *Curious*, first published in 1973. Each page-long piece concerns a poet: an influence on Bowering, a contemporary on his side in the poetry wars (Frank Davey, Daphne Marlatt) or the other (Stephen Spender, Irving Layton).

Written in a chatty style that leans heavily on repetition of key words and ampersands, these curiosities don't wear very well today. One danger in writing about other poets is that the product is largely of interest only to the subject and a few other writers. The man on the street could care less about where Spender kept his handkerchief or what kind of beer Raymond Souster prefers. Another is that what poets reveal of themselves in their work *should* be of greater interest than someone else's perceptions of them. This is particularly evident in Bowering's shot at Robert Duncan, which hinges on Bowering's wife having noticed that Duncan's profile is that of a falcon. That's great, but Duncan's own poem "My Mother

Would Be a Falconess" ("and I the falcon at her wrist") is a much more memorable effort. Useful perhaps to academics as an index of Bowering's views of other writers, the snapshots from *Curious* echo Gertrude Stein as much as they do the many different subjects they represent.

The next section, "At War with the U.S." is a better test of Bowering's talents. Here, the progress of the war in Vietnam (1973 version) is observed along with the first difficulties of Bowering's daughter at school and his musings about writing. The opening statement: "There comes a time/when we must/take measures" reflects both the Black Mountain preoccupation with finding a new "measure" in poetry (one organic to the poet rather than an imposed, formal metre) and Bowering's determination to make political statements in his work. Alternately nostalgic, angry, pensive, and obscure, the open-ended series includes a fine ode to then-president Nixon, inviting him to relax, toss his tie into the paper shredder, and go for a swim with the Black Panthers. Too bad Tricky Dick never read it when he needed it.

The section titled "Allophanes" is the most modernist (read difficult) selection. Puns, literary allusions, slang, and handy observations like "The world's meaning is exactly/fol de rol de rolly O" trip over each other's tongues. From this salad each reader takes what he can. There are rewards in the series: unexpected resonances, and some slangy backhands at cultural nets. But it ain't meant to be easy, the poet informs us: "(Shit, shore up the fragments/for yourself, dont expect/a fullness here, I'm only/one pair or ears)."

In *Curious*, he defines literature as "telling a story as it happens." To make "Allophanes" come alive, the reader has to help it happen, to participate and play with it... to become an answer to the questions left hanging.

The final series, Uncle Louis, is a history in couplets of growing up in B.C. when Louis St. Laurent was PM. It's amusing, a personal history like a group of doodles on the cover of a grade nine textbook on The Modern Era. The couplets are undercut by extensive glosses (in the spirit of Nabokov's *Pale Fire*) which alternately sneer and correct. Supplying a ready-made sarcastic review, the notes point out that had Al Purdy taken on one cabinet meeting Bowering recounts, he "would have had Mr. Pickersgill peeing in the rose bush after the investiture banquet."

Also included in the back of the book are four straightforward prose accounts of Bowering's early jobs (including one photographing the holes made by RCAF

gunners in a target piece of cloth); a joke that alternates the titles of Canadian poetry books with the phrase "Between the Sheets," casting new lust onto them; and a short piece that is his twist on "A rose is a rose...." Titled "Against description," it reduces from a sentence to a single image, from the thought of picking blackberries to, simply, "Black/berries." This poem encapsulates the "enigma" of Bowering referred to in Sheila Watson's preface. Avowing to present the particular, without dislocating it by metaphor or description, he yet seems to write increasingly about language itself, about the gap between the berries and their verbal tags. *West Window* shows a poet still in process, still looking for the questions there are no rational answers for — exploring the space that poetry fills. □

## REVIEW

# Songs of Zion

By ROBIN MATHEWS

*Beyond Sambation: Selected Essays and Editorials 1928-1955*, by A.M. Klein, edited by M.W. Steinberg and Usher Caplan, University of Toronto Press, 541 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0-8020-5566-4).

A.M. KLEIN, the first and still the major Jewish-Canadian poet, reveals himself in much of his occasional prose as a sensitive and tragically idealistic artist and man of ideas. Author of a single, brilliant novel, *The Second Scroll* (1951), and of enough first-rate poetry to assure him a place among the best poets of the century, Klein was also a lawyer, a sometimes teacher, a public relations man for the Bronfmans, and an editor of Jewish periodicals for more than 25 years before being afflicted with a nervous breakdown in the early 1950s. He subsequently withdrew from public attention, gave up all the activities that had attracted his most intense interest, and died quietly in his sleep in 1972.

*Beyond Sambation* is a carefully wrought, scholarly selection from the essays and editorials he produced in his newspaper years between 1928 and 1955. M.W. Steinberg and Usher Caplan have

tried to represent faithfully Klein's best journalistic work as well as the attractive character that lies behind the tireless editorialist, the ardent commentator upon public affairs, the advocate and then the supporter of the State of Israel. If there is a problem with the more than 500 pages of material, it is that the editors have chosen to select out Klein's literary comment and criticism and to reserve them for a separate volume. To anyone familiar with *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle* during Klein's years, the literary materials have a special interest in themselves. But they also provide a balance and a variety of tone and subject in the original that are not present in this gathering.

*Beyond Sambation*, however, has a very real interest of its own. For those who lived through the years covered, memories, moods, and attitudes are evoked that may be all but forgotten. For those to whom the years are only history, the note of urgency often sounded, Klein's frequent sense of frustration and anger, and the clear revelation his statements give (however confident his tone) that he *didn't know* what was coming, provide a sharp sense of history in the making.

Klein was a Zionist from the first, literate and stylistically characteristic piece in the volume until the last. His consideration of Zionist history, his celebration of its great figures, and his expressed intention to inform both the believer and the infidel alike make *Beyond Sambation* a book full of information about the growth of Israel and of Jewish institutions and life in Canada. But the materials included suffer from their single-mindedness and ardency. The opponents of a Zionist State are all dismissed, usually as nincompoops; the heroes of the Zionist idea are all presented as mythical figures.

Whether Klein is right in his judgements is not my concern here. But his attitude helps to explain the book's tone and what I've called Klein's tragic idealism. He was superbly sensitive, slightly elitist, morally upright, and fundamentally unwilling to face the complexities of a horrible century. He believed moral reason should dictate action, and he was pretty sure he knew what was morally reasonable. When moral and reasonable choices were not followed, and, indeed, when the cruellest irrationalities and the most stupendous barbarities were pursued in the world, Klein expressed anger, anguish, and incomprehension. His exasperation, unsupported by complex analysis, sometimes exasperates.

When he records with alarm, for instance, the outright pardoning or early release of Nazi war criminals, one shares

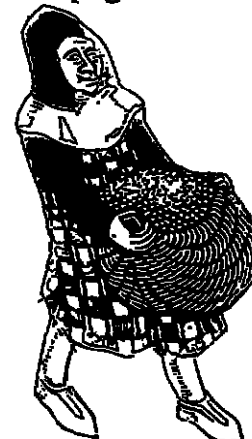
his outrage. But one would be more deeply moved and troubled if Klein made a careful analysis of East-West manipulations, if he explored the implications of a balance that was being sought against the same Communists he himself expressed unwavering dislike for and suspicion of, and if he admitted the argument current that another Versailles could not be permitted to happen. But he sees in the compromises only an inhuman unconcern for the violated and oppressed.

By the same token he wanted Zionism to be all things sweet and pure, culturally enriching and moral. The "Zionist ideal," he wrote, is "an ideal whose entire strength lies in its moral claims . . ." When the dirty palaver and the brutish actions associated with the conduct of nations under duress appeared in pre-Israeli life, Klein was shocked. He couldn't match the action with argument deft enough to provide a constituency of support, and so prevent the action. (Maybe that's why the electors of his own constituency rejected him as a candidate for federal office in 1949 — he could feel more strongly than he could reason.)

When in 1947 two British soldiers were captured, held, and murdered by the Irgun terrorist supporters of an

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Israeli State after they themselves had declared the soldiers "innocent," Klein was uncomprehending. His reactions were quite unrealistic and he even suggested that agents-provocateurs had infiltrated the Irgun in order to make trouble for the Jews. Of the Irgunites he wrote that they "sit in their hideouts . . . planning a future more hideous still." Asking what could be the motivation of such brutality, Klein attacks one of the Irgun leaders: "The answer is that Menachem Begin considers himself above the inhibitions of his silly forefathers. He is a realpolitiker; he mouths military palaver. He is wise in his own conceit." But none of those comments describes much of an anomaly among political leaders. Klein quite simply refused to admit realpolitik. "The tactics of Irgun," he goes on, "constitute a conspiracy against Jewry."

Plainly, Klein lived in a continual tension between the moral basis of his demands upon the world and the actual behaviour he saw on the smallest and largest stages of action. In his best creative work the tension he felt provides a rich dynamism. In his best journalism it provides insight and cutting irony. But it often suggests too great a distance between the real and the ideal that Klein insistently demands, and so he sometimes seems naive, uncomprehending, and even petulant. □

## REVIEW

# Lists and incantations

By L. KING-EDWARDS

*Flying Deeper Into the Century*, by Pier Giorgio di Cicco, McClelland & Stewart, 96 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 2713 3).

*Tarts and Muggers*, by Susan Musgrave, McClelland & Stewart, 137 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 6660 0)

THERE IS A recent best-seller called *The Book of Lists* that is serendipity to the trivia buff. Pier Giorgio di Cicco's book of poetry could easily have been derived from it. Listing as a poetic device has been in use for thousands of years, one need only read Homer or the master, Kit Smart on his cat Geoffrey, but when it

alternates with repeated phrases and sentimental nostalgic squirming it does not make for very good poetry. The cover of *Flying Deeper Into the Century* is indicative of its contents: tacky collage.

I have occasionally read fairly good lyrics by di Cicco, but there are few in this book that would warrant even a second glance. The best are "Estrangement" and "The Light Is So Preposterous." For the most part the book is made up of railings against this plastic and doomed decade with Al Haig and women's liberation vying for the limelight. Unfortunately these tirades of reiterated phrases have the urgency of an after-dinner burp.

"The end of the century is a bedspread up to the eyes. I want to make ends meet," goes the title poem. Trying to sound tough, di Cicco becomes bogged down in words like "vomit" and "puke." Trying to write of love he sticks with love and lovely. Many times this reader fears for di Cicco's vocabulary as it seems to depend on repetition of cliché after cliché. There is the occasional attempt to rise above the abyss of woe-saying:

*And the earth goes on about its debt of bones, lovely in one more angle of the old sunlight.*

But these rare images appear only to be obliterated by more trivia, redundancy, and a maudlin search for love. One looks for insights into our human predicament, and instead is confronted with a 30-year-old whining for his lost youth in the '60s. It would be refreshing to know that the self-loathing and disgust presented in the poems was genuine.

There is a hackneyed story that has been made into a number of movies: it's about a person who had one triumph early in life and has remained frozen at that age, retelling the story of the triumph at every cocktail party on into his dotage. This is the plot of di Cicco's poetry, and like that end-run or fantastic trip to the Taj Mahal, everyone has heard it a thousand times too many.

*Tarts and Muggers*, by Susan Musgrave, while sharing some of the devices of di Cicco's poetry — in particular the repeated phrase or line — is a poetry written out of a different inclination. Where di Cicco thrives on the mundane, Musgrave strives after arcane and mysterious poems. In "The Pact" her persona states:

*I am the forest;  
my deep scent reels  
against the dark.  
I unfold  
like darkness  
and you are lost in me.*

The question that must be asked when

reading these poems is, "Are these truly poems of a woman possessed by darkness and loss, or are they made by an artful woman trading on a convention?" Individually many of the poems seem convincing, but read together they become less so. Although the persona of the poems takes on the character of the dark, the instinctive, the venging female fury, I am not among those who feel that "a prophetess is in our midst." (I am more concerned that there be a poet in our midst.) Incantation can become powerful in the voice of the believer, but after all Musgrave is just a young woman, a poet who enjoys indulging herself in playing now the Whore of Babylon and now the innocent victim. The poems do not convince one that they are by a woman who is either a forest or a witch. There are some good poems and some striking images, such as:

*trailing a vague  
hand, floating  
for the shark's sake.*

or

*The pit at midnight  
crusty with snow  
like a day-old bread pudding.*

But if closely examined, much of the writing seems confused and inconclusive: "...boots/astounded with sting..." are hard to imagine, and worse we get phrases that abound in the poetry of forsaken love:

*He comes out of  
nowhere, invisible as  
loss.*

In many cases good editing could have eliminated these defects, but good editing does not seem to be at hand. One is never sure whether the contradictory nature of a poem where the persona "half-loves" and then "loved too much" is an intentional attempt at surrealism or whether it is just careless writing. Even given the benefit of many doubts, clarity is often sacrificed to portentousness and sound, which may carry the casual reader, but not the discerning one.

It is impossible to read Musgrave without thinking of other poets who have called forth the inanimate and inarticulate world to be on their side. One recalls Theodore Roethke and his divine nonsense. Her hand is not sure enough to dabble in this art.

The better poems of the book tend to be those that are less elliptical and which do not rely on the dark woman persona. They may be more pedestrian in form and in content, yet they are more intense and striking in feeling. One thinks of "The Embalmer's Art," "Coming of Age," and "For Charlie Beaulieu in Yellowknife ...."

In all, these poems, selected and new,

are largely selected from her earlier books. There is but a handful of new ones. If you possess her earlier works and are not a Musgrave fanatic, it's hardly worth running out to your local book store to buy a copy. *Tarts and Muggers* is not about either, so don't let the title tantalize. □

REVIEW

## The play's the thing

By DAVID STAFFORD

The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957, Volume 2, by John Holmes, University of Toronto Press, 443 pages, \$37.50 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 5541 9).

AS WE ALL know, the more things change the more they stay the same. Who was it,

for example, who said this:

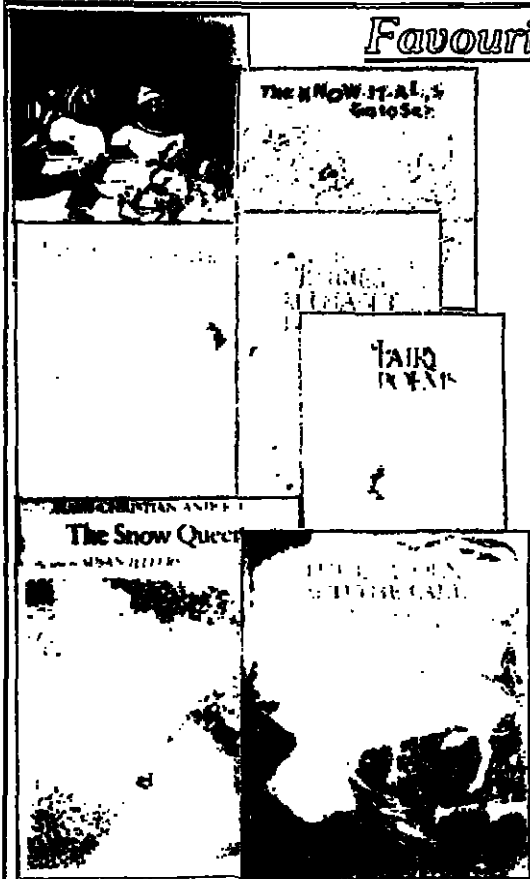
While it is fantastic to assert that the people of the United States or their leaders wish to dominate the world, or to start a preventive war, it would be dishonest to ignore both the existence of influences in the United States which work towards some United States domination of the lives of alien people, and also an attitude which might result in dangerously noisy and provocative methods in the task of stemming the flow of Soviet influence . . . [Thus] the confidence and support of other nations in the intentions of the United States may be weakened to the extent where the broad aims of U.S. policy would be gravely undermined . . .

No, not some exasperated European diplomat surveying the current debris of American foreign policy as Ronald Reagan's presidency approaches its mid-term. Rather, reflective and sober Canadian diplomats in the Washington Embassy reporting on trends in American policy in 1947. The Canadian Ambassador who endorsed and forwarded the analysis to Ottawa was Hume Wrong, already described in the preceding volume as a supreme realist. For this and other gems of wisdom he belongs to the central cast of characters in John Holmes's pantheon of diplomatic heroes.

This second volume (the first appeared some three years ago) presents Canada's foreign policy in the 1943-1957 period as a successful game played for high stakes by a group of admirable and able men. Written by an insider for insiders, it's replete with those metaphors of the mandarin that set them apart as a breed on their own. "Being a middle power," Holmes tells us — and much of this volume describes in thorough detail how Canada learned this important role — "was hard work, but it was also good sport." Leading the play for most of this period was Lester Pearson, whom Holmes frequently describes as a quarterback, and whose personal Super Bowl came at Suez when he successfully promoted the idea of a United Nations emergency force. "Pearson's footwork," Holmes tells us, "had been dazzling. Quarterback, tight rope walker, he became also a brilliant choreographer, scenarist, or stage manager." Holmes's enthusiasm is such that he tells us at one point that Pearson "had the mental as well as the physical power of an athlete." This, surely, must be a mistake.

What there can be no mistake about is Holmes's close familiarity with the game and his loyalty to the winning team. He was an officer in the Department of

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External Affairs from 1943 to 1960, and for much of the period was an assistant undersecretary of state with special responsibility for the United Nations. He thus speaks with knowledge and authority, but with the self-confessed bias, too, of a serving diplomat. Neither definitive history nor pure memoir, it assumes much prior familiarity with the outline of Canadian foreign policy. It is not for those who reject the notion that much can be learned from the distant clash of memoranda. Diplomacy is a recondite game, and it takes a skilful pen to engage the interest of spectators for its full length.

"Being an ally," Holmes says, "is a condition with which Canadians do not come easily to terms. A country which for too long associated with and measured itself against two great powers placed inordinate value on its independence." His book may be seen as an extended elaboration of the point, which was exemplified in the behaviour and beliefs of both dissidents and conformists. The former — whose existence is marginally alluded to — wanted Canada to have no part of NATO and argued that independence could be preserved only within neutrality. The others disagreed. Like Holmes, their colleague, they thought that "NATO was a good club to belong to," but that within it and other international organizations Canada should demonstrate its independence from Britain and the United States by fashioning a distinctive role.

This was not always a comfortable position to take, and it has often been argued that it was discredited when Canadian representatives first opposed U.S. tactics, then voted for them in order to support a common western front. Canada at times groped painfully to find an acceptable role in the new institutions of the post-war world, and there is much of interest here for students of uncertainty. What eventually emerged was Canada's self-defined role as a middle power, which reached its heyday under Pearson in the 1950s.

How did this happen? "Being the kind of country it was," Holmes says, "ideologically towards the middle of the road and geographically on the periphery of contested areas, Canada turned into a middle power by doing what came naturally." But very little in human behaviour — and diplomacy is, in part at least, human — comes naturally. As Holmes points out, the shift in Canadian foreign policy after the war was substantial. What was natural in the 1930s was not therefore natural in the 1940s, but precisely why this was so remains unclear. So, indeed, does the meaning of it all. "The middle power

game . . . was essentially a game of putting together winning coalitions." But winning for what? The restrictions of the basic metaphor obscure an answer. Games, after all, exist just to be played, and have no ends beyond themselves.

"The diplomacy and the policies of

Canada in the decade after the war," Holmes concludes, "were designed for masters at the game." Let us be truly Canadian and even the score by changing from an American to a British sporting metaphor. This is Test Match cricket seen from the members' pavilion. □

## INTERVIEW

### Robertson Davies on the world of the occult: 'The real superstition is thinking that you can reject things unexamined'

By **TERENCE M. GREEN**

ROBERTSON DAVIES was born in 1913 in Thamesville, Ont., and educated at Upper Canada College, Queen's University, and Balliol College, Oxford. A former actor, magazine editor, and newspaper publisher, he is the author of some 30 books, the most recent of which, *High Spirits* (Penguin), reiterates an interest in the occult that permeates such novels as *The Rebel Angels* (1981) and his Deptford Trilogy, *Fifth Business* (1970), *The Manticore* (1972), and *World of Wonders* (1975). In 1963 Davies became the first master of the University of Toronto's Massey College. Now retired, he retains the title of "master emeritus," and still keeps an office at the college, where he was interviewed by Terence M. Green:

**Books in Canada:** *In your novel The Rebel Angels, a character says "never hope to find wisdom at the high colleges alone — consult old women, Gypsies, wanderers, and all manner of peasant folk, and learn from them, for these have more knowledge about such things than all the high colleges." Is this advice that you personally would offer?*

Robertson Davies: The character is quoting Paracelsus. And yes, it is advice I would offer. Paracelsus was one of the very great astrologers; he was a very, very wise man. He was a Swiss. He hadn't much use for the high colleges, because one by one virtually all of them in Switzerland and Germany threw him out, because he was a nuisance. He was a physician, and he said "stop talking to me about Aristotle." Aristotle hadn't looked inside the human body. He asked for a corpse, to rip it up, to look inside it, to show them what it seems to do. They thought this was horrifying. Dissection of human bodies was utterly

unheard of. Aristotle had said that the body worked in a certain way, and that was it. He kept saying you won't believe what's in front of your faces — you just believe authority, and I'm trying to tell you what you can yourself observe. And he was a very great man.

**BIG:** *I hadn't planned on going into this, but your mention of astrology leads me to it. You've mentioned elsewhere that your own birthdate is August 28, the birthdate of St. Augustine, Tolstoy, and Goethe. Do you think there's anything to all this?*

Davies: I like to tease scientists about it because they're so convinced there's nothing in it. But they're just exactly the same kind of people, who, if they'd lived 300 years ago, would have been astrologers, and they'd have been hog-wild for astrology. They're people who believe in authority; they believe in the fashionable knowledge. Now, astrology is an attempt to project upon the stars a kind of intuitive knowledge of what may relate to somebody's life. Astrology as you get it in the newspaper is, of course, pretty rubbishy stuff. But there have been very interesting astrological predictions, which have a substantial amount of truth to them. The question is: how did they come about?

I think quite obviously they did not come about by reading the stars; they came about by intuitions. Reading the stars is a way of making intuition take some kind of form in your head. I do not profess to be a believer in astrology; but I don't jeer at it either. Because, you know, a good many years ago, I was hounded by a friend of mine in New York to visit a specific astrologer. I went, in a calm state of mind. He read my chart very carefully and said that within a year I would alter my occupa-



tion, I would work in a place where I would look out over water, and that I would be very much among young people. And within a year, I'd been asked to come to this university and to set this college going, and to work in a study which at that time was in the quadrangle looking out over the pool. That does not make me a friend of every tea-cup reader. But it makes me feel that it's unwise to brush it aside too noisily.

**BIC:** G.K. Chesterton said, "Coincidences are spiritual puns." To what degree is it coincidence, to what degree is it something else?

**Davies:** When I was just a lad I was visiting my father in Wales, and I went to a church fete. There was an old Welsh woman who was reading fortunes from teacups in a tent, and I went in and had a shilling's worth of fortune, and she told me all kinds of interesting things. I remember she said that I was going to have such a happy time next Christmas that I'd wish it was now. Sure enough, Christmas came along, and I had an extremely happy time. She said you're going to come under the influence of a man who will affect your life very profoundly; and within the year I met a very notable psychiatrist, Dr. R.D. Gillespie. He was killed in the war; he was head of psychiatric services in Great Britain. He did influence my life profoundly, because he told me some very extraordinary things, and he was a very strong and influential character in a positive way. You can't brush aside these old Gypsies and old teacup women and astrologers.

**BIC:** What you're saying is that the world is just too incomprehensible to think that you can comprehend it.

**Davies:** I know. The real superstition is thinking that you can reject things unexamined.

**BIC:** You mentioned that you recently saw the film *Ghost Story*.

**Davies:** I think it is exceedingly well



*Robertson Davies*

done. It is about a past action that returns to haunt some living men, and they are totally in its grip. It was very well performed. I think people wanted to believe in it, they want to believe these things. You see, we live in an age where religion is very much suppressed, and what used to find a sort of home in religion and religious teaching now is in the psychology of most people just wobbling around loose, looking for something to attach itself to, and it attaches itself to the supernatural. What is happening now is what happened a couple of thousand years ago when the religious beliefs of the Romans were running into the ground; they no longer had very great faith in the rather peculiar religion they had at one time made their own. And the history of Rome, two or three hundred years before the birth of Christ, is one of ghosts and apparitions and spooks and bugaboos of every possible

kind. They were always having spooks and horrors and trying to come to terms with the fact that they had no channel for their feelings about the supernatural. Their religion had failed them, just as ours has, rather, lost its strong driving power.

**BIC:** You have said that many people who reject God have a sneaking acceptance of the supernatural, and the Freudian revolution offers them little comfort.

**Davies:** The trouble with the Freudian attitude toward the world is that it is essentially a deeply pessimistic one. You know Freud's statement that he could not cure people of neurosis, he could only enable them to exchange their neurosis for ordinary unhappiness. Well, that's a big deal, isn't it? He offers no possibility of change, happiness, of a meliorative world — nothing of that sort — it is all downhill, all reductive. And I don't think that everything related to mankind does run downhill.

**BIC:** From what I know of your background, you've found a much more satisfactory reflection of life in the psychology and teachings of Carl Jung.

**Davies:** Yes. Because it allows for hope and change and development in a positive manner. It offers a much greater scope for mankind to live some of the time happily, a great deal of the time with satisfaction to himself and other people.

**BIC:** You've quoted Ibsen in *The Manticore and other places*:

To live is to battle with trolls  
In the vaults of heart and brain  
To write: that is to sit  
In judgement over one's self.

*Who or what are the trolls?*

**Davies:** Oh, they're complexes and archetypes and all the things that well up from the unconscious when you're try-

## COMING UP IN FUTURE ISSUES OF BOOKS IN CANADA

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ing to write, and that have to be conquered and countered, and made for a moment to yield up some secret. They're part of the inner life.

**EC:** *What have you meant by the phrase "the writer's conscience"?*

**Davie:** It is the commitment to his work and to his art, which must come before everything else. And he must not yield to the very great temptation to write solely what is cheaply popular. He wants, of course, to have people hear him; but he won't do anything to have people hear him, and he won't write propaganda. He won't write to push a moral system, or to whoop it up for a particular nation or something of that sort.

**EC:** *Let me suggest a quote that isn't yours: "The best literature has a deep and intense moral concern." Is that something you would agree with too?*

**Davie:** Yes. But when I say a moral concern, I don't mean the advocacy of a particular kind of morality, but a deep concern with certain basic things. What you do bears consequences you are somehow or other going to have to face, or else, by not facing them, you will involve yourself in very painful consequences, even if it is only a sort of half-lived life, a kind of stupid, know-nothing life. □

Can romantic fiction solve 'the drama of human interaction' by asserting that 'there was no such thing as the right or wrong choice'?

By DOUGLAS HILL

*The Ivory Swing*, by Janette Turner Hospital (McClelland & Stewart, 252 pages, \$16.95 cloth), offers a romantic adventure of promising complexity mired in a sludge of overblown prose and emotional cliché. There's intelligence and feeling here, plenty of exciting events, an exotic, detailed setting, but the florid, lifeless dialogue and characterization steal the show.

David, a professorial type with wildly predictable hangups, takes a sabbatical in South India, accompanied by his wife Juliet and their two children. The novel is primarily Juliet's story, and told largely from her point of view. Against a murky backdrop of local customs and national politics, the family's safety is threatened and the marriage endangered. The plot is complicated, and if

unconvincing, holds a reader's attention fairly well.

Hospital does well with cross-cultural misunderstandings, both superficial and deadly. And she can create mood — the sensuous oppressiveness of a land "where things which existed in the mind had more substance than the blurred mirage of the external world." But she tends to gush, and there's far too much gluey writing, too many lines like, "she smiled, and felt her body rising from the ashes of its rigid outrage like a phoenix, turning soft and moist and eager."

*The Ivory Swing* has some powerful scenes, much romantic titillation, one bit of explicit sex. It's expertly researched and not uninteresting, but I can't take with utter seriousness a story that insists on solving what the

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publishers refer to as the "drama of human interaction" with insights like, "over the years she had come to realize there was no such thing as the right or wrong choice. Only a road taken and a road not taken."

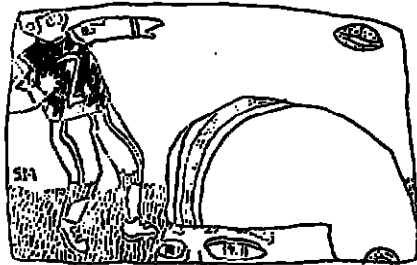
**The Pit:** *Retribution*, by Angus Brown (Williams-Wallace International, 102 pages, \$5.95 paper), is a gritty, but simplistic little revenge-thriller played out against the northern Ontario bush. It reads as if written for Charles Bronson and the gang; moral subtlety isn't this novel's strong suit.

I'm not sure what is. The prose style is workmanlike, but Brown's habit of chopping his already terse sentences into little fragments soon becomes irritating. "All the beatings, the kidnapping, the rottenness of them. The murders of four innocent people. I used to think we lived in a democracy. Where things could be done through committees and votes." Dialogue (of which that was a sample) doesn't sound right, and the characters are skimpy, unrealized cartoon characters acting out assigned roles. And the plot has too many improbabilities, small and large.

It concerns the former members of a radical populist political-action group that was set up to agitate for personal and community rights (against biggies like the provincial government, logging companies, Hydro, the OPP) and then harassed into disbanding by these powerful opponents. Three of the group's leaders have died in a rigged car crash; when another is tortured to death by the cops the four survivors work out a plan for vengeance.

And that's it. To say anything else would be to reveal either the novel's plot or more of its inadequacies. There just isn't much here to work with.

ON THE JACKET of another M&S pulp, we're told that Jocelyn Cobb (*Belmullet*, 328 pages, \$18.95 cloth) "demonstrates a refined literary style and mastery of the



romantic genre." And that "her pastoral setting is vividly detailed and her characters wonderfully defined." Here we go again, think I.

Later, this report: With less of the ambition and none of the pretensions of

*The Ivory Swing*, *Belmullet* manages a solid, respectable competence. True, it's romantic — virtue and pluck are rewarded, endings are inevitable if not positively happy — and it doesn't go far beyond those advertised details of setting and definitions of character. But Cobb seems to have a knack for the family-saga plot and can write unobtrusive dialogue.

The novel is set in northern Ontario (rural this time) in the Depression. The narrator, a young girl named Maudie McFarlane, is abandoned by her estranged parents to the care of her aunt and uncle, who've undertaken dairy farming on a large but precarious scale after emigrating from Ireland in 1916. Maudie's new family, the Polking-

thornes, includes five children; the plot is chiefly the story of their trials and affections, and Maudie's, as they muddle through childhood and adolescence, genteel poverty, and sudden wealth, towards the War and their various fates.

There are some dark undercurrents here — sexual assaults, an apparent murder — but except for the effects on Maudie of her parents' irresponsibility, Cobb doesn't choose to plumb them. Instead she's made sure of her certitudes, said a few encouraging things about the heart quite adequately, and produced a satisfactory chunk of reading. Satisfactory if you like your prologues thus: "It's a crossroads for me. Is this what I want out of my life?" □

## RECORDS

### A child's Christmas on records: from the sensuous rhythms of Dylan Thomas to a sour, querulous Scrooge

By KEITH GAREBIAN

FOR YOUNGSTERS who are weary of the usual romper-room tales and songs, the season's recordings offer a small treasure of delights. (All the records mentioned here are \$10.98, and are also available in cassettes for \$11.98).

Carol Channing makes a delightfully funny Mathilde Mouse, hungry for food and song, in Coleman Jacoby's *Mathilde Mouse and the Story of Silent Night* (Caedmon TC 1681). Although most of the recording is a protracted build-up for the "Silent Night" hymn beautifully sung by the St. Pancras Boys' Choir, conducted by Andrew J. McArdle, it has diverting incidents with Mathilde and the tale of seven-year-old Hans, whose insufferably quavering voice miraculously turns into a magical boy-soprano just in time for Christmas.

Miss Channing's Betty Boop voice, mated with a hoarse bassoon, is also surprisingly adept at handling Phyllis McGinley's rhyming verse in *The Year Without a Santa Claus and Other Stories for Christmas* (Caedmon TC 1303). Although Caedmon forgets that today's children are the TV generation, hooked on minute-long commercials, the recording has its genuine rewards for the eager and patient. Especially good are the stories of how Mrs. Santa Claus saved Christmas, and the Gingerbread Boy

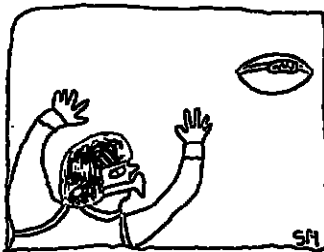
who is outwitted by a sly fox.

The classic Christmas story, apart from the Nativity, is, of course, *A Christmas Carol*, but the latest, abridged version (Caedmon TC 1965) is not the best. Tom Conti's thin, slightly hoarse voice is good for Scrooge's flinty misanthrope, but not for the other characters who often fall disappointingly flat or seem incongruous. (The Ghost of Christmas Present sounds, for example, like a pontifical headmaster.) There isn't enough variety and colour here to compare with the version by Sir Ralph Richardson, Paul Scofield, and cast, under the direction of Howard Sackler (Caedmon TC 1135). Scofield reads the narrative with a voice that is totally different from the slow, parched sound of his *Lear*, or the elastic eloquence of his Thomas More. He also plays Marley's Ghost in a misty croak, and his modulation, colour, and tempo are perfect. As Scrooge, Richardson squeezes his voice to sound narrow, sour, querulous, and cynical, just the right sort of uncongeniality for the old, grumpy miser. But when Scrooge is converted into a charitable Christian, Richardson's voice becomes buoyantly cheerful. Dickens's melodramatic, sentimental fable is undiminished in its capacity to entertain and moralize.

For children who have more romantic sensibilities, there are stories of *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, read by Claire Bloom to the accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's music. The *Nutcracker* story (Caedmon TC 1524), adapted by Janet Schulman mainly from E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Nutcracker and the King of Mice*, runs the gamut from warm, tender sentimentality, through dark terror and gaudy heroism, to a romantic fantasia. The story is not used as an excuse for ballet music. There are long patches of narrative without any music at all, and elsewhere the music is cut off after a mere bar or two. Yet this is not to say that the orchestration is minimal. The various segments of Marie's long dream have their virtuoso musical passages, such as the slow Oriental dance, the frenzied Cossack number, and the floating waltz of the flowers. The ending, when the young heroine is made Queen of the Land of Toys, instructs us in the uses of fantasy, where "all sorts of wonderful things happen to those who open their eyes and hearts to them."

Equally enchanting, but in a different key, is the *Story of Swan Lake* (Caedmon TC 1673), with its antecedents in the *Arabian Nights* and other Oriental

legends. The story of Prince Siegfried, his mother, the Swan-Princess Odette, and an evil sorcerer is condensed to one-third of its original length, but the text never overwhelms the music, played by L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande under the direction of Ernst Ansermet.



In a much more minor key are Jean de Brunhoff's *Babar* stories (Caedmon TC 1488) and Michael Bond's *Paddington* tales (Caedmon TC 1621). The *Babar* tales, which find human characteristics in elephants and other animals, are given Gallic charm by Louis Jourdan. Someone should make a psychoanalytic study of the reasons for turning animals into humans. I know someone already has explained why bears are important to our psyches, but I really must caution Michael Bond that his *Paddington* bear is not half so effective when read in the author's Berkshire, runaway-locomotive

style as he is on paper. If a story can't be read well to children, it shouldn't be read at all.

Teens who want rescue from their catatonic peers, hypnotized by Pac-Man, should turn to the captivating stories from Lord Dunsany's *Book of Wonders* (Caedmon TC 1963), read by Vincent Price. Lord Dunsany was a writer, poet, playwright, lecturer, soldier, sportsman, country squire, and traveller, and his four tales on this recording are versions of tall tales, fantasy-adventure, and sophisticated entertainments. "The Club Secretary" is a whimsical yarn about a visit to a club for immortal poets, where even waiters and hall-porters are such personages as Alexander Pope. A complete change of fantasy occurs in "The Hoard of the Gibbelins," a heroic adventure about a knight's quest for treasure in a land terrorized by a dragon. "Chu-Bu and Sheemish" is a clever parable of schisms and idols, and the pantheon of rival deities is solemnized and mocked with expertly sly satire. The lightest piece is, perhaps, "Making Fine Weather," where comedy breaks out with wry mishaps. The narrator's gentle skepticism mocks the myth of scientific power, and seals the impression of Lord Dunsany as

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# I'm Only Afraid of the Dark (at Night!!)

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an urbane writer of leisurely wit and invention.

Rather more pretentious is Frank Herbert Reads His God Emperor of Dune (Caedmon TC 1694). Although he strives for a quasi-biblical rhetoric that is rife with poetic metaphor, Herbert's many banal passages and aphorisms sound like a weird cross-breeding of Gibran, Confucius, and Erich Segal. I am not, I confess, a devotee of science fiction, primarily because I have never found a text of impressively high literary quality, and nothing in Herbert induces me to change my mind. These excerpts from his story are a bizarre compendium of ecology, theology, anthropology, and geography, filled with jargon and pseudo-profundities about "the psyche of the re-grown flesh," time running out for any finite observer (a tautology for all seasons!), and short-term decisions that don't work in the long term. What can be said of a character whose idea of prescient power is to metamorphose into a giant sandworm? This recording is purely for addicts.

Bright teenagers might, however, try Survival Ship and the Shrine of Temptation (Caedmon TC 1593), read by Judith Merrill, one of the first women writers of science fiction. The first story is too obviously contrived for suspense and a surprise feminist ending, but it has a gloss. "The Shrine of Temptation" is written as an anthropological report, but it has such charm and spiritual mystery that its sophistication, which might otherwise deter teenagers, is a high varnish for a tale about cultural assumptions and a miraculous shrine at the outpost of a planetary civilization.

Precocious teens can have Dylan Thomas Reading "A Child's Christmas in Wales" and Five Poems (Caedmon TC 1002), as long as they are sensitive to poetic language that curls around memory. Thomas sings prose like none but the greatest actors or preachers ever can. Hardly a sentence goes by without some sensuous image or hypnotic metaphor, and the texture, rhythm, and emotion of his boyhood recollections are a golden, honeyed reminiscence. As he recalls "those years around the sea-turned corner" when December was "as white as Lapland" and where he wanted to snowball the cats who wisely never appeared, his sharp pictorial details create a memory-film of boyhood idylls, mirth, mischief, glee, and prayer. His scenes of Mr. Prothero smacking at a fire with a slipper, as if conducting an orchestra, or of snow falling "like a pure and grandfather moss," or of Aunt Hannah singing in a snowbound backyard like a drunken thrush, or of the close and endless night, are magical and liberating.

On side two Thomas recites "Fern Hill," "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night," "In the White Giant's Thigh," "Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait," and "Ceremony After a Fire

Raid" — all stirring treats for adults. His heavily alliterative, assonantal verse rings like pebbles in the holy stream of human creativity. I must be honest: buy this recording for yourself. □

## ART BOOKS

Round two: more heavyweight titles,  
from A.Y. Jackson's Arctic to a waspish  
look into the State's bedrooms

By GARY MICHAEL DAULT

THE TROUBLE WITH gift books is their overweening will to celebration. When formal and emotional extravagance is the armature on which a book is wound, it is difficult to keep it from settling into that long anticlimax that is bathos.

The Beginning of Vision: The Drawings of Lawren Harris (Douglas & McIntyre, \$60.00) struggles mightily against this celebrational undertow. Its intelligent text by Robert Fulford and Joan Murray, however, is unable finally to stave off the big-book-collapse that is the inevitable end of any attempt to enshrine Harris's not-very-exciting drawings in a port-a-museum as big as the Ritz. Harris is absorbing to critics because of his patrician beginnings as a Massey (and eventually Massey-Harris) heir and subsequent underwriter of many of the financial needs of the Group of Seven he did so much to establish. He is absorbing, also, because of his life-long wrestle with theosophy, a pseudo-discipline that always seems to suggest dangerously murky thinking on the part of its adherents and, in Harris's case, seemed especially inappropriate, somehow, for a man imbued with the heavy no-nonsense values of an Ontario-hardened Victorian Industrialism. What is more, Harris's gradual progress from painting Toronto houses to his obsessive pursuit of the ultimate meaning of mountains, and his journey beyond that to the airy realms of pure visual form, is not only a provocative demonstration of theosophy at work; it is also an especially poignant charting of the loneliness of the long-distance abstractionist making his way through a culture that steadfastly regarded any deviation from realism as errant nonsense. Now all this would be more compelling if only Harris had been a more exciting draftsman.

The trouble, as Fulford and Murray know, is that once you get beyond the

mountains, you get to a Harris who is suddenly little more than an aesthetic curiosity. Which is no way to build your book to a climax. The authors are honest enough to point all this out: "When he surrendered his subject matter . . ." they tell us, "he lost his ability to sway us." But by then they are working toward what ought to be an apotheosis — an apotheosis, at least, devoutly to be wished. There is finally no place to go but to describe Harris's intellectual and stylistic isolation and, apparently, to give the book over to the fluttering commonplaces of witnesses like B.C. painter Gordon Smith, who has contributed this little filigree of insight: "He was such a mystical, marvelous man. He was a philosopher and a poet, an extraordinary man. He had a tremendous presence. His wife too was absolutely marvelous." It is distressing to see the Fulford-Murray team actually reduced to the patient recording of this kind of blather at the high point of what purports to be a serious study.

But of course there you have the problem. No doubt the idea for the big book came first. Then the marshalling of all these alarmingly ordinary sketches. Then the need to dress up the package with Fulford-Murray *ex machina* of a text, all bristling with earnestness and authority. And it doesn't work. The book is formally attractive enough. Good-looking, actually. But that is surely not reason enough to bother. Yes, Harris was an interesting, if rather aloof and unknowable man. Yes, Fulford and Murray know what makes him interesting. And they know at what point he fails, and why. They should have written an article about him and let it go at that.

A.Y. Jackson was a slightly more invigorating draftsman than Harris (just slightly more, not much more). His

drawings tended to be more frenetic than Harris's, more hectic and immediate and lacerated with notes and scrawled reminders about colour and mood. There is a new suite of them available in *A.Y. Jackson: The Arctic 1927* (Penumbra Press, \$26.00), a handsome slipcased presentation of the drawings and two diaries from a seven-week trip Jackson made with his friend Dr. F.G. Banting through the Eastern Arctic. Published as a celebration of A.Y.'s centenary, this new portfolio of drawings has all of the delicate rightness of scale, the typographical beauty, the formal modesty that *The Beginning of Vision* lacks. It also has a mercifully brief introduction by Naomi Jackson Groves. A.Y.'s diaries by themselves lack something I suppose one could call buoyancy — but he wasn't, after all, a writer.

Hugh Dempsey's *History in Their Blood: The Indian Portraits of Nicholas de Grandmaison* (Douglas & McIntyre, \$40.00) is one of the most irritating books of the year, maybe of the decade. Nicky de Grandmaison was born in 1892 into a noble French family in Czarist Russia. His flight from the Bolsheviks led him finally, in 1923, to Canada, where he settled down to become — of all things — the indefatigable painter (in

oil pastels) of the Indians of Saskatchewan and Alberta. A hopeless romantic of a rather balmy kind, de Grandmaison idealized his native subjects in ways that are both alarming and funny, fancying his Indian friends to be the noble survivors of plains wars waged before they were born and improving their heavy features with cosmetically cleft chins, alpine cheekbones, and haughty disaffiliated jawlines, so that they look the way cartoonist Fred Harman used to draw Red Ryder and Little Beaver. De Grandmaison was after "pure" Indian faces and, by god, he was going to get them. Hugh Dempsey assures us that De Grandmaison's paintings were "so faithful" that at the sight of a departed relative, an Indian woman might be heard to exclaim "*Ki-ai-yowwww*. . . it's just like him." On the other hand, "sometimes an Indian might gaze for a long time at a picture of someone who was supposed to be his or her grandfather or uncle. Finally the person would nod hesitantly and say, 'Ah, it's him all right, but he looks kinda different. He's a lot handsomer than I remember him.'" I'll say. Where are the Stephen Leacock Awards when we need them? De Grandmaison died in 1978 and was buried as Enuks-sapop (Little Plume) in a Blackfoot ceremony on

the Peigan Reserve in Alberta. The Bank of Montreal promptly bought up the artist's collection of inexplicably hoarded paintings, and this is it. Ah, well.

Another irritating and funny book is Maureen McTeer's *Residences: Homes of Canada's Leaders* (Prentice-Hall, \$24.95). Pierre Berton points out in his Heritage-fuelled introduction that "apart from Maryon Pearson, Pierre and Margaret Trudeau, and her own husband, Ms McTeer is the only living Canadian to have occupied all three Prime Ministerial residences" (24 Sussex Drive, Harrington Lake, and Stornoway).

Nevertheless, McTeer's little potted history and anthropology of life at the political top remains unsatisfactory either as a study of interior design or as an engaging look at the mighty at home. Full of grimy snapshots and lifeless anecdotes, *Residences* rises to the level of entertainment and enlightenment only when it gets waspy between the lines. There is a wonderful caption to a photo of a room at Sussex Drive: "Once used as a private bedroom of the Prime Minister's spouse, this room is now a den, here decorated for use by Prime Minister Clark." And how about this for deft:

Across the hall from the master

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bedroom is what has become popularly known as Margaret Trudeau's "freedom room," modernized in an attempt to create a quiet corner where she could relax. Originally used by the St. Laurents as a room where family and friends could meet for an evening of cards, it served as a *working room* for both Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Diefenbaker. The latter spent every morning there answering by hand as many as fifty letters.

(The italics are mine.)

But that sort of thing is the funny exception to the book's rule. The rule is unrelieved tedium and witless gurgle:

One of the funniest evenings I have ever experienced was the direct result of this heating problem. One evening after dinner, two close friends and I went upstairs to relax and listen to records. Within five minutes of turning on the space heaters and the lights two fuses blew. We replaced them and, having turned off the space heaters, turned on the stereo. Two more fuses blew. Joking about not paying hydro bills, we replaced these fuses as well, then sat wrapped in mohair blankets, listening to music from the excellent stereo by candlelight. Fortunately, our friends have a marvellous sense of humour.

What a fun bunch.

William Bernstein's and Ruth Cawker's *Contemporary Canadian Architecture: The Mainstream and Beyond* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, \$25.00) is a welcome relief from all this silliness and pretentiousness. A sensible if not mercurial examination of major Canadian architectural projects from Expo through the National Gallery competition of 1976-77 on to ambitious refigurings of our country's major cities (The Eaton Centre in Toronto, Vancouver's Robson Square, Halifax's Promenade, etc.), *Contemporary Canadian Architecture* is a satisfying detailed exploration of the ways in which our architects and planners have succeeded (or failed) in making our cities work better while maintaining a sometimes vivid sense of architectural history and honest human usefulness. The authors' discussion of Montreal architect Melvin Charney's structural war with Jean Drapeau during the Montreal Olympics (Corridart) is one of the clearest this absorbing bit of architectural history has ever received, and their analysis of the Barton Myers/Jack Diamond Innis College building at the University of Toronto is a model of elegant, concise architectural discourse.

Freeman Patterson's *Photography of Natural Things* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, \$26.95 hardcover, \$15.95 paper) is a sort of inadvertent autobiography of taste for this Maritime photographer. His constant rapture ("a sense of open space frees one's spirit") is tiring to me, but apparently helpful or

inspiring to his many fans. The book is a how-to manual prettied up with splendour in the grass and all that. Not for the squeamish.

*British Columbia, This Favoured Land* by Liz Bryan (Douglas & McIntyre, \$35.00) has photographs in colour (good colour, too) by a clutch of Canada's nature photographers, and watercolours by wildlife artist Jack Grundle. The text is plodding. The book production itself, above average.

*Canadian Songbirds and Their Ways* (Tundra, \$39.95) by Trudy and Jim Rising, with bird paintings by Kathryn DeVos-Miller, is a more charming and useful book than the story-book packaging would lead one to expect. Beginning sensibly with a discussion of why birds

are able to fly in the first place, the authors take the reader on a heady and downright encyclopedic tour through the entire world of Canadian birds, a tour that is so infectious that if you're not a bird-fancier by the end of it (or indeed by a chapter into it), you have an unquickenable spirit indeed. A very nice job. So also is Mary Ferguson's and Richard M. Saunders' *Canadian Wildflowers Through the Seasons* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, \$29.95). Though not as rigorous or detailed as the bird book, this handsome collection of colour photographs nevertheless provides an adequate amount of information for the rural delectation of any reader who is not a botanist. A good book to keep in the car. □

## COOKBOOKS

Thousands of delicious ways to celebrate the season, from carioca flans to tofu — that Great White Schmoos of contemporary cuisinery

By DuBARRY CAMPAU

THE VARIETY OF cookbooks that pile up on my desk continues to amaze and sometimes appal me. If we Canadians are really this much into food, it's surprising we can take any interest at all in making love, politics, and hockey. We must be putting *belles-lettres* on hold while we read about ethnic menus, salt free diets, what to do with left-overs, how to develop a baby's taste buds, and tofu as a life force.

In and among the rather far-out volumes, however, some rather splendid ones do come along — fun to read, good to look at, and practical to use. One of the recent best is the *Hadassah WIZO Cookbook* (Hurtig, \$24.95 cloth), put out by the Edmonton chapter of that organization. The recipes are marvellously flavourful, and their aromas all but waft out from the stunning coloured illustrations. There's an international zest about it all that makes you want to pull out every pot and pan in the house and get cracking on a chicken with 40 cloves of garlic, amoretto pie, and broccoli cheese crêpes.

Another delight is *Encore* by Betty Jane Wylie (McClelland & Stewart, \$12.95 paper). If you keep this handy you'll have the emptiest fridge in town. She can think of something sensible to do with every left-over you've ever

thought you were saddled with for the season. Almost any kind of once-cooked beef can be merrily disguised in her *Tourtière Anglaise* or beef rolls, and she has a lot of ideas for using stale bread other than feeding it to the birds. It's written with engaging humour and in a casual manner that makes it all seem easy.

I'm totally beguiled by James Barber's culinary comic books. His latest, *Flash in the Pan* (Douglas & McIntyre, \$6.95 paper), is packed with good, quick, novel ideas. Where else would I have found a Parsee method for mild-curry with the meat of your choice? Or duck with spicy red cabbage? Barber is especially helpful for the inexperienced cook — he all but holds your hand while you put a dish together — and the results will delight a gourmet.

*The Wine and Food of Europe*, by Marc and Kim Millon (Webb & Bower/Methuen, \$19.95 cloth) is a well-illustrated survey of the gustatory and bibulous highlights of France, central Europe, Italy, Iberia, and the Balkans. It gives the untravelled reader a fairly comprehensive idea of what he may expect in the countries of his perhaps projected tour and recaptures, for the experienced tourist, some remembered pleasures. The emphasis is more on wine



than food, and this is useful because many wines are more readily exportable than the food that usually accompanies them in their own neighbourhoods.

**Food 101**, by Cathy Smith (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, \$7.95 paper), is aimed at students or any young untried cooks living on their own. Its emphasis is on meals that are cheap and easy to prepare, and it should cut down drastically on the number of take-out pizzas and TV dinners that are normally sold to this demographic group. Like Barber, Smyth leads the reader gently through the puzzlements of shopping as well as roasting, baking, frying, broiling, and sewing, and she keeps the necessary equipment to a minimum. "This book is designed for students," she says, "since they are notoriously busy, poor and inexperienced in the kitchen"; but to how many others these words can apply.

**Best Desserts Ever**, published magnificently by the great Larousse (Hurtig, \$32.95 cloth), is too beautiful to keep in the kitchen — it's a natural for your coffee table. Thank God I don't have a sweet tooth, for even without it the full-page, full-colour illustrations of a carioca flan, lemon mousse, and strawberry gâteau (it looks more architectural than gustatory) had me seething a bit. What it might do to those of you who drool over Twinkies I don't really like to think.

Another well-designed and well-illustrated book, but from a vastly different area, is **Georgian Bay Gourmet** (Georgian Bay Gourmet's Publishing Ltd., \$14.95 paper). In this the emphasis is on winter entertaining, and the book includes recipes and menus for parties, holiday meals, and suppers. There is also a special section for children's and teenagers' festivities. Don't miss the gougere with ham and mushrooms — it may sound tricky but it works deliciously and would do for any kind of entertainment. The stracciatella, chicken soup with flakes of egg and cheese, is luscious. However, don't take the directions for drinks too literally — the amounts of liquor are woefully skimpy for anything but a teetotaler's spree.

Admiring the grace and assurance with which she puts together a meal in full view of at least three TV cameras gives me confidence in anything Ruth Fremes tells me to make. Her **What's Cooking, Volume Two** (Methuen, \$9.95 paper), is again taken from the recipes she has used on her television programs and, like them, they will result in dishes that are not overly complicated to prepare, look attractive, and taste authentically of their ingredients. Her seasoning enhances but does not disguise. A good example of this is the simple clamato sauce used with an elegant

and delicate fish soufflé — one of my favourites. Another is her sour cream onion tart — rich and yummy, picked up with a pinch of oregano. She has a keen sense of flavour and you can trust her with any herbs and spices.

The **Better Homes and Gardens** cookbooks have been coming out for more than 50 years and have provided the back bones of most kitchens all over North America. The **BH&G New Cookbook** (Meredith Corporation/General Publishing, \$21.95 cloth), has been re-edited for today's streamlined living, and there is special emphasis on nutrition and economy. There are charts for each section, giving the caloric content and nutritional analysis of each recipe, a tremendous help to anyone trying to keep himself and his family on any kind of diet, especially a well-balanced one. In the back of the book is a section called "Special Helps" which is packed with common sense and uncommon suggestions. The bulk of the recipes are standard family fare, which isn't to say they aren't excellent, and it's perfectly possible to gussy them up to suit your latest whim.

Susan Mendelson exudes *joie de vivre* at the very thought of food, and she is now beckoning children to come and join her in the fun. **Let Me in the Kitchen** is subtitled *A Cookbook for Kids and Other First Timers* (Douglas & McIntyre, \$9.95 paper). The recipes, although there aren't too many of them, are for the kinds of things children really do like to eat. Waffles, for instance. But even if they succumb to the frozen, toaster-cooked kind, here are four delicious and different toppings for them and pancakes too. The melty tuna sandwich should have every school child rushing home at noon to make his own, and there's a dead-on Fettucini Alfredo that he can make for dinner for the whole family. Several salads with interesting dressings might well encourage the young to take an interest in their veggies, and there are cookies and candies enough to distract them from those wildly expensive chocolate bars. This would be a delightful present for any tot old enough to read and light an oven.

The **Abbey Cookbook: Inspired Recipes from the Great Atlanta Restaurant** (Harvard Common Press, \$9.95 paper) is by its chef, Hana Bertram, and he'll have to forgive me if I don't know his great restaurant because I've never been to Atlanta. Nevertheless, if I do get there I will certainly drop in because I do like his style! His sauces alone would fetch me there. For instance, **Velvety White Sauce** made with stock, crème fraîche, shallots, butter, flour, white wine, heavy cream, white pepper, and egg yolks — *Là!* And there's a lobster

sauce that includes more ingredients than my entire Christmas dinner. He suggests that it be used with a stuffed salmon en crouete — and why not? Most of Bertram's recipes would be a magnificent challenge for a competent cook, but those of us who don't feel up to taking it should charter a bus and head for the Abbey.

Now we come to what I call (only to myself) do-gooder cookbooks. Their intent is to improve your diet and your health, not to set you to chuckling with an overdose of cholesterol or salt.

**Cooking with Tofu**, by Christina Clarke (Avon Books, \$4.95 paper), includes so many different things to do with that white stuff I am reminded instantly of the Schmoo, a beast that appeared an eon ago in the *L'il Abner* comic strip. Its flesh was all white meat, it gave milk and laid eggs: if it had had spinach leaves for feathers it would have been a total diet. Well, it seems that that's what tofu is — you can scramble it with eggs, slice and devil it for sandwiches, turn it into tofuburgers or cheese cake, pan fry it and serve it with tartar sauce, and know, all the while, that it is 90 per cent digestible and provides, in one serving, more than a quarter of an adult male's protein needs.

If you're into nothing but veggies, you can find some really good ways to cope with them in **The Best of Jenny's Kitchen** by Jennifer Raymond (Avon Books, \$4.95 paper). She uses a lot of tofu too, but there's none in her tomato soup, which is deliciously seasoned with garlic, basil, and dill. And it is her general attitude toward seasoning that makes most of her recipes excellent ways to prepare the most familiar garden produce.

Apparently we all use more salt than we need — and some of us need even less than that — so **Condiments to the Chef**, by Ida Bruneau (Forbes Publishing, \$9.95 paper), is a sensible book to have on hand, even if you don't use it totally. Her philosophy seems to be that good, pungent seasonings can take the place of salt — and she has proved it to me with her french dressing, herb sauce, and garlic dressing. Her meat and vegetable dishes are almost all interestingly spiced and herbed and should be tangy enough to keep anyone from missing his usual salt over-kill.

The **New Canadian High Energy Diet**, by Sandra Cohen-Rose and Dr. Collin Penfield Rose (Corona Publishers, \$22.50 cloth) is serious and scientific. Its thesis is that high carbohydrate diets are beneficial not only for heart disease patients but for all of us — they'll make us thin and bouncy! However, the book itself requires careful study. It is *not* one of those how-to-look-and-feel-



marvellous-in-48-hours primers — it requires you to pay attention and to alter your lifestyle.

I couldn't finish without including Madame Benoit, the doyenne of Canadian cooks, but this time she leaves me with little to say, alas. *The Convection Oven Cookbook* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, \$16.95 cloth) is something I am not qualified to comment on as I have barely graduated from open-fire cookery. However, for those among you who are really living in today's world, by all means trust Madame Benoit — she always knows best. □

## LETTERS

### The feminist mystique II

Sir:

I would like to reply to Sharon Nelson's hysterical letter in your November issue over Kevin Roberts's article (Field Notes, August-September).

I resent being linked to some amorphous society of alleged warthogs of male chauvinism, or any sexist cabal. I found myself growing a hirsute sward all over my distorted body by the time I finished reading Ms Nelson's hairy letter.

I wish to inform your readers that I have gone on record as supporting a complete investigation of those charges of sexism within the League and in so doing have supported the right of the feminist caucus to exist so that this group can substantiate those hideous charges. I have done this despite the fact that the Writers' Union of Canada has no open feminist caucus, and therefore the League is possibly the first to set a precedent on the issue of feminism in a society of artists.

Ms Nelson's group started the war by mindlessly mailing out an invitation on *League stationery* to our female members to attend a feminist conference last year thus conveniently eliminating the male portion of our organization — and me, as its first vice-president — from attending that conference.

I have verbally hammered a past executive member for making what I believe to be a sexist statement when he introduced one of our members at the *International Poetry Festival in Toronto* last summer. It was not the feminist

caucus that took up her cause but I who raised the issue!

Ms Nelson's comments are repugnant to me as an artist. I will not support *muse apartheid*. There is simply a human muse and some of us are lucky to have that disease.

J. Rosenblatt  
Qualicum Beach, B.C.

Sir:

Kevin Roberts errs in failing to report the final resolution of the League of Canadian Poets' annual meeting: to make the Feminist Caucus a permanent committee of the organization. It is now a standing committee, the Feminist Caucus Committee, and take note: the word "feminist" includes men.

Far worse, however, than Roberts's macho piece is your own cynical disregard for the woman's point of view, which ought to have been written by a woman or a man who attended the workshops. This grave error on your part leads one inevitably to an analysis of *Books in Canada*. The August-September issue reveals flagrant discrimination. Out of eight features, only two are written by women, and only one feature concerns a woman's writing. Out of 11 books reviewed, only four are by women. There appears to be only one woman reviewing here, and she reviews *Pauline*. As for your departments, the only women involved are listed under Paperbacks, Children's Books, and Magazines.

If this isn't the worst put-down of women in Canadian magazines, I'd like to know of any runners-up. It's time you woke up, man.

Dorothy Livesay  
Galiano, B.C.

Sir:

Kevin Roberts's article is a bit mixed in the sense that it sketches around two quite separate issues: a) The League of Canadian Poets has had some recent discussions about feminism; b) there has been a recent decline in Canadian reading attendances and book sales. The article seems to suggest that these two factors may be correlated in some way.

What Roberts doesn't seem to recognize is that b) the current inflation isn't caused by literature, it's a monetary inflation; and a) women's writing is a big general issue right now, larger than regionalism or political labels. Therefore a feminist caucus, open to men and on normal communicative terms with the

executive committee, is a good way to discuss what's happening in women's writing, what issues are affecting women writers, what time lags may exist in women's publishing. All very simple.

None of the League's abilities to organize readings, which it does very well, and none of the League's ability in service publishing, pamphlets, directories, cassette tapes, etc., has been weakened in any way by the development of a feminist caucus. On the contrary, the caucus puts the League more consciously in line with different changes taking place in Canadian and American sociology and literature at the present time.

David Donnell  
President  
League of Canadian Poets  
Toronto

### Malahat lives

Sir:

I wish to correct a statement made in your August-September issue about *The Malahat Review*. Although I am leaving the editorship at the end of the present academic year, the magazine itself will continue publication under a new editor who has yet to be appointed. Until that new editor is appointed, the *Review* is not accepting submissions.

Robin Skelton  
Victoria

### CANWIT NO. 78

"Bewitching" — Susan Musgrave  
"Smack-on" — John Belushi

THOSE MARKETING geniuses at McClarkan & Newspider have been working overtime looking for prominent personalities to contribute frothy dust jacket blurbs for their latest epic. But more and more, we've noticed that the blurbs say as much about the quotees as they do about the books they're endorsing. We'll pay \$25 for the best list of jacket blurbs by famous people, alive or dead, and \$25 goes to novelist W.P. Kinsella of Calgary for the idea. The deadline is January 1. Address: CanWit No. 78, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5Z 3X9.

### Results of CanWit No. 76

RESPONSES to our requests for plot summaries of sequels to books that pick up years after the original have reaffirmed

our belief that the most easily satirized Canadian novel is Marian Engel's *Bear*. The winner is Diane M. Stuart of Vancouver, who passed up such fuzzy thinking, and resumed the story of a Mordecai Richler hero, almost a quarter-century later:

#### Jacob Two-Two II

Jacob Two-Two, chartered accountant, now 10 plus 10 plus 10 years old, suffers the strain of sharing office space with children's dentist, Dr. Hood (Ed) Fang. En route to supervising a corporate merger, Two-Two falls prey to a horde of gap-toothed, bloodthirsty kids. Held captive in Adults' Prison, he is forced to manufacture paint-by-number sets. Rescue is provided by O'Toole and Shapiro, members of Adult Power. (In reality, his siblings — he, a principal with the Winnipeg Ballet; she, a Family Court judge.) Two-Two, dazed and disoriented, emerges from the ordeal clutching a bag containing 10 pounds of firm red tomatoes.

#### Honourable mention:

#### The Edible Woman II

Marian McAlpin, successful owner-president of Kute Kakes Ltd. finds her life crumbling at the onset of middle age. She begins to suffer amnesiac attacks and often finds herself in strange laundromats eating store-bought gingerbread men. When her fourth husband abandons her, Marian, in a feeble

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**OLD AND RARE BOOKS.** Canadiana catalogues. Heritage Books, 3438 6 St. S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2S 2M4.

**OZ IN CANADA, A BIBLIOGRAPHY**, of the Canadian issues of the Oz books and other L. Frank Baum, 1905-1931, by C.J. Hinkle. 1000 copies sewn papercovers @ \$15.00; 26 copies signed, limited, hand-bound @ \$80.00. William Hoffer, ABAC, Suite 104, 570 Granville St., Vancouver, B.C. V6C 1W6 Canada.

attempt to regain her self-esteem and lose some weight (she tips the scales at 275 lbs) makes an appointment with a vegetarian psychologist. He turns out to be Duncan, Marian's only true love. They successfully iron out Marian's insecurities and get married. The wedding was lovely: the bride wore white, and there was no wedding cake.

— Mari Carmen Hopf, Montreal

### 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

*Perpetual Motion*, by Graeme Gibson, McClelland & Stewart. Gibson's dramatization of the 19th century's preoccupation with science and reason — in this case, an Ontario farmer-inventor's obsessive attempts to impose his will over nature — is a seamless blend of research and fiction, and also his finest work.

#### NON-FICTION

*In Court*, by Jack Batten, Macmillan. Case studies in the careers of 10 criminal lawyers, with plenty of emphasis on anecdote, by a reformed lawyer and unabashed fan of the profession.

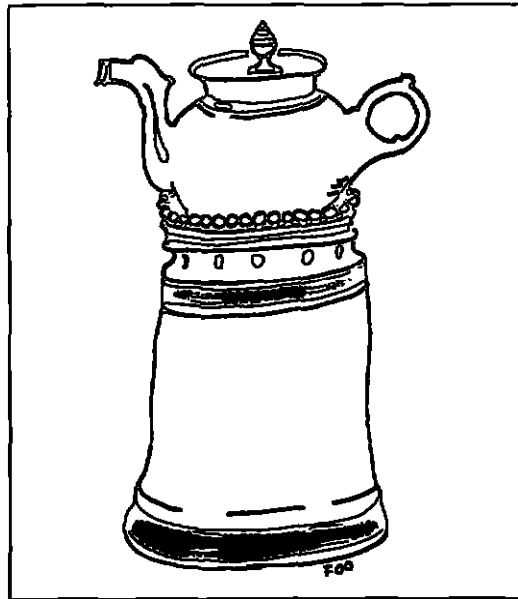
#### BOOKS RECEIVED

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:

*An Account of a Voyage to the North West of America in 1785 & 1786*, by Alexander Walker, edited by Robln Fisher and J.M. Burnsted, Douglas & McIntyre.  
*The Acquisitors*, by Peter C. Newman, Seal Books.  
*Among Other Howls in the Storm*, by Norm Sifton, Pulp Press.  
*The Angel of the Tar Sands and Other Stories*, by Rudy Wiebe, M & S.  
*The Arab-Israeli Wars*, by Chaim Herzog, Methuen.  
*Battle for the West*, by Daniel Francis, Hurtig.  
*Beeping Lights*, by Monica Hughes, J.M. LeBel Enterprises.  
*Bernstein*, by Paul Robinson, Lester & Orpen Dennys.  
*The Best of Grant MacEwan*, edited by R.H. Macdonald, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
*Breastfeeding Twlas, Triplets, and Quadruplets*, edited by Donald M. Keith et al., The Center for Study of Multiple Birth (U.S.).  
*British Columbia: This Favoured Land*, by Liz Bryan, Douglas & McIntyre.  
*Canada and the Reagan Challenge*, by Stephen Clarkson, James Lorimer.  
*The Canadian Book Review Annual 1986*, edited by Dean Tudor et al., Simon & Pierre.  
*Canadian Freelance Writers*, by Brian R. Harrison, Department of Communications, Government of Canada.  
*Canadian Wildflowers Through the Seasons*, by Mary Ferguson and Richard M. Saunders, Van Nostrand Reinhold.  
*The City and Radical Social Change*, edited by Dimitrios Roussopoulos, Black Rose Books.  
*Courtepalatine d'une grand-mère*, by Laurette Bouchard, editions Asticou.  
*The Cow's Tail: A Diary*, by Heather Davidson, illustrated by Jean Edmonds Hancock, Nova Scarcity Enterprises.  
*The Dalhousie Journals, Volume 3 (1825-1828)*, edited by Marjory Whitelaw, Oberon.

*David Ingram's Investment Guide*, by David Ingram, Hancock House.  
*A Deaf Artist's Trail*, by Forrest C. Nickerson, published by the author.  
*Denison's Ice Road*, by Edith Iglauer, Douglas & McIntyre.  
*Discovering Your Scottish Roots*, by Alwyn James, Clarke Irwin.  
*Divorced Parenting: How to Make It Work*, by Sol Goldstein, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.  
*Dramatic W.O. Mitchell*, Macmillan.  
*Earth-Light: Selected Poetry of Gwendolyn MacEwan*, General Publishing.  
*82: Best Canadian Stories*, edited by John Metcalf and Leon Rooke, Oberon.  
*English*, by H.O. Barrett, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.  
*Environmental Aesthetics*, edited by Barry Sadler and Allen Carlson, Department of Geography, University of Victoria, B.C.  
*The Establishment Man: A Portrait of Power*, by Peter C. Newman, M & S.  
*Every Inch a Lear*, by Maurice Good, Sono Nis Press.  
*Everybody Dreams*, by Mario Carola, Carota Creations.  
*Expeditions of Honour*, edited by Ronald Rompkey, Associated University Presses.  
*Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination*, by Jennifer Waeltli-Walters, Eden Press.  
*A Fiddler's Choice: Memoirs 1938 to 1930*, by Harry Adaskin, November House.  
*Friends, Hosers and Countrymen*, by Isaac Bickerstaff, Lester & Orpen Dennys.  
*The Game of Our Lives (Revised)*, by Peter Gzowski, M & S.  
*Georgia: An Arctic Diary*, by Georgia, Hurtig.  
*Great Golf Stories*, edited by Robert Trent Jones, Hurtig.  
*Heaven and Hell in the NHL*, by Punch Imlach, M & S.  
*Hold High Your Heads*, by A.H. de Trensaudan, translated by Elizabeth Maguire, Pennamun Publications.  
*I Don't Want To Know Anyone Too Well*, by Norman Levine, Deaneu.  
*The Informer: Confessions of an Ex-Terrorist*, by Carole de Vault with William Johnson, Fleet Books.  
*The Innocent Traveller*, by Ethel Wilson, M & S.  
*The Kool*, by Tim Wynne-Jones, M & S.  
*The Ladies of Lyndon*, by Margaret Kennedy, Virago (Lester & Orpen Dennys).  
*Living and Working with Schizophrenia*, by M.V. Soeman et al., U of T Press.  
*Lofli Mansouri: An Operatic Life*, by Lofli Mansouri with Aviva Layton, Mosaic Press/Stoddart Publishing.  
*Malice in Blanderland*, by Allan Fotheringham, Key Porter Books.  
*The Manuscripts of Pauline Archange*, by Marie-Claire Blais, M & S.  
*Mary Olivier: A Life*, by May Sinclair, Virago (Lester & Orpen Dennys).  
*More Losers*, by Ben Wicks, M & S.  
*Murder in the Yukon*, by M.J. Malcolm, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
*Needle to the North*, by Arthur C. Twomey, edited by William C. James, Oberon.  
*New Beginnings: A Social History of Canada, Volume 2*, by James H. Marsh and Daniel Francis, M & S.  
*The One-Room School in Canada*, by Jean Cochrane, Fitzhenry & Whiteside (1981).  
*Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings*, by Mary E. MacLachlan, Dalhousie Art Gallery.  
*paroles d'Acadie et d'après*, by Guy Jean, editions Asticou.  
*Photography of Natural Things*, by Freeman Patterson, Van Nostrand Reinhold.  
*Principles of Public Finance*, by D.A.L. Auld and F.C. Miller, Methuen.  
*Prisons in Canada*, by Luc Gosselin, Black Rose Books.  
*Profit from Pollution Prevention*, by Monica E. Campbell and William M. Gleason, Pollution Probe Foundation.  
*The Québecols Dictionary*, by Leandre Bergeron, James Lorimer.  
*The Resource Network: Major Issues Facing Canadian Libraries*, by Hope E.A. Clement, National Library of Canada.  
*Restoring Houses of Brick and Stone*, by Nigel Hutchins, Van Nostrand Reinhold.  
*Riot of Riddles*, by Edith Fowke, Scholastic-TAB.  
*Sandbars*, by Conah-McFee, M & S.  
*A Second View of Things*, by Albert W. Trueman, M & S.  
*Selected Poems*, by John Montague, Exile Editions.  
*Selected Stories*, by John Metcalf, M & S.  
*Sherlock Holmes: A Study in Sources*, by Donald A. Redmond, McGill-Queen's University Press.  
*Signal On: The Birth of Radio in Canada*, by Bill McNeil and Morris Wolfe, Doubleday.  
*Stretch Marks: 15 Years to Aislinn Cartoons*, M & S.  
*The Sweet Second Summer of Kitty Malone*, by Matt Cohen, M & S.  
*Till We Meet Again: The Sinking of the Empress of Ireland*, by Herbert P. Wood, Image Publishing.  
*Together and Apart*, by Margaret Kennedy, Virago (Lester & Orpen Dennys).  
*Towels, Triumphs and Tears*, by Tony Gallagher and Mike Gasher, Harbour Publishing.  
*Toronto Art & Artist's Guide, Visual Arts Ontario*.  
*The Treasure of the Long Sault*, by Monica Hughes, J.M. LeBel Enterprises.  
*Two Hugs for Survival*, by Harold A. Minden, M & S.  
*Ver Last Decade: 1972-1982*, by Charlie Farquharson, Macmillan.  
*Vision and Sincerity in Sophocles*, by David Seale, University of Chicago Press.  
*Wild Rose*, by D.M. Clark, M & S.  
*Wildcatters*, by Ernie Gray, M & S.  
*Women and Children First*, by Michele Landsberg, Macmillan.  
*The Work: Conversations with English-Canadian Playwrights*, by Robert Wallace and Cynthia Zimmerman, Coach House Press.

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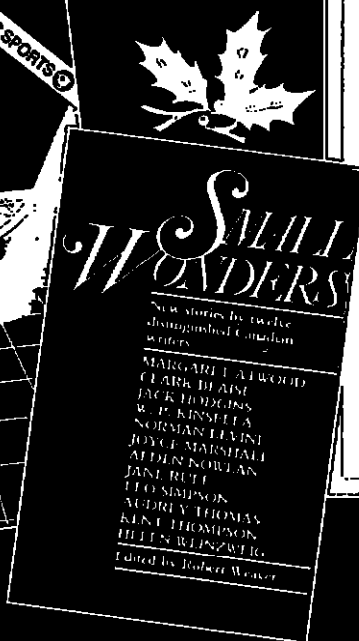
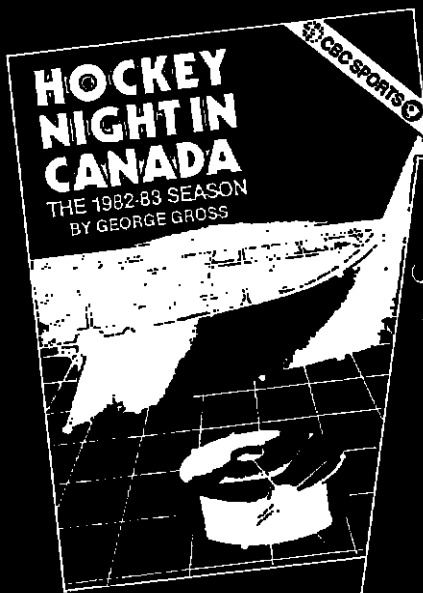
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