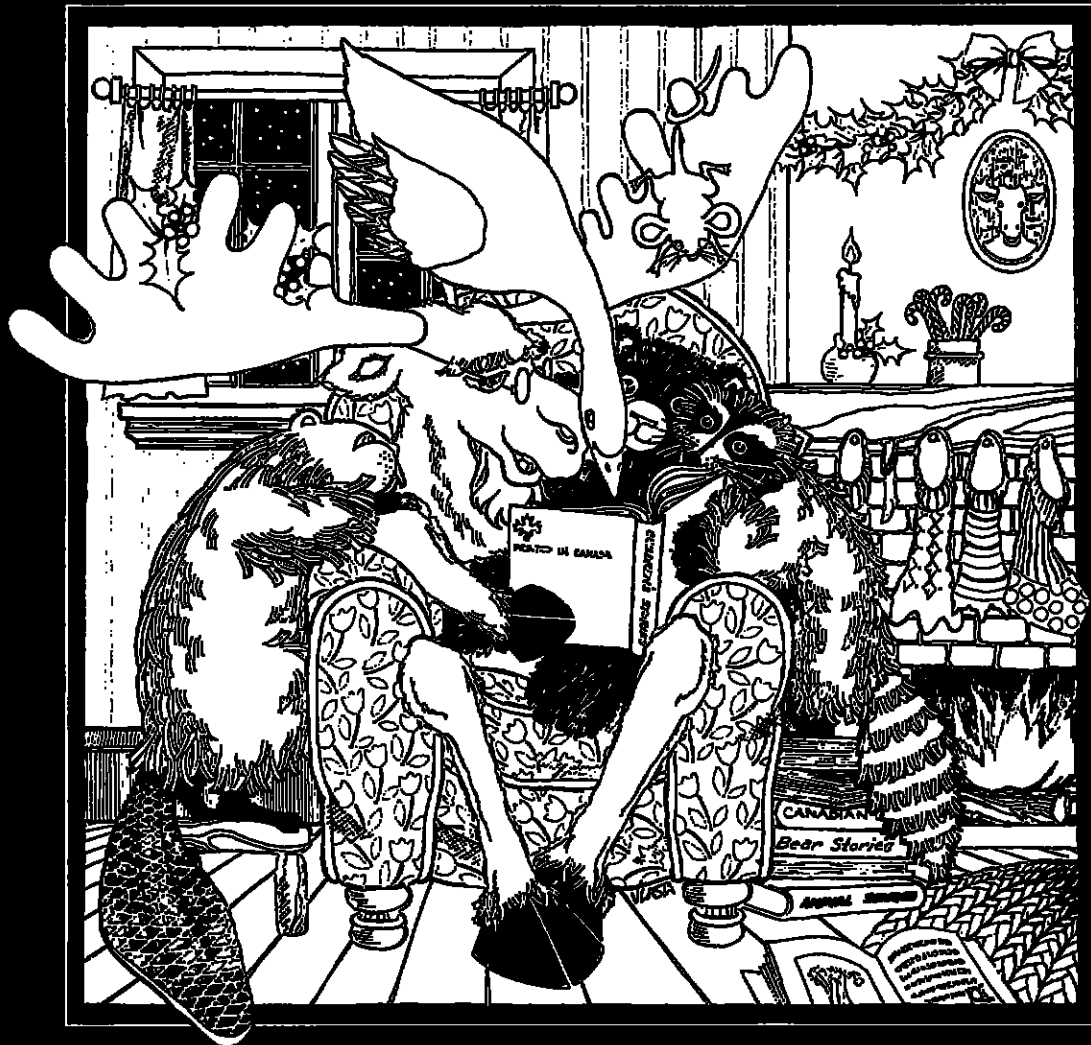


A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

BOOKS IN CANADA

ONCE UPON A TIME . . .

The season's children's books



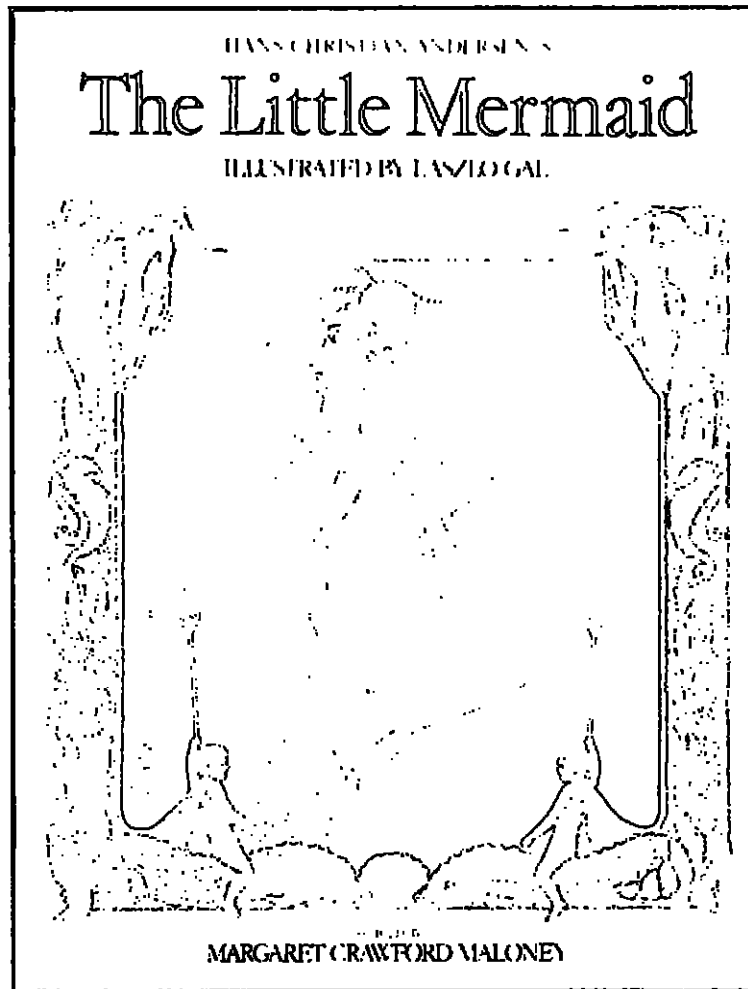
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Tension and release: overdosing on culture at the Edinburgh Festival

Edinburgh binge

AFTER 16 DAYS of seeing 33 cabarets, dance performances, films, art exhibitions, public readings, concerts, and yes, plays, your correspondent might be forgiven for behaving like Dr. Goebbels, who is supposed to have said that when he heard the word "culture" he reached for his gun. Yet along with a massive hangover, exhilaration remains. Where else in the world could you hear Jean Redpath sing Border ballads, a punk rocker declaim, "I am the milkman of human kindness, I will leave an extra pint," and the Haifa Municipal Theatre do *The Soul of a Jew*, all in the same two weeks? New York, maybe, but all this was happening in a city less populous than Hamilton.

The Edinburgh Festival is a collective name, of course, encompassing the International Festival — the Ballet Rambert, the Hamburg State Opera, and the like — the Fringe, with its 450 theatre companies and 800 productions; and separate smaller festivals devoted to film, jazz, and television. And for two weeks this year the Edinburgh Book Festival pitched its tents in midtown Charlotte Square Gardens, a leafy oasis where 30,000 paying guests could buy paperbacks and sip a pint of cask-conditioned ale under the stern, stony eye of Albert, the Prince Consort. Albert wouldn't have liked it, but everyone else did, including the media, apparently so desperate for copy that one nice lady with a tape recorder even interviewed me. There was no cause for panic, though: the media could choose from among such authors as John Updike, Anthony Burgess, Alan Sillitoe, and William Trevor.

Sillitoe and Trevor read jointly. The slim, white-bearded author of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* wore a brown suit that looked as if it had been bought at a street market and read from his latest novel, *Clear Victory*, which, as it happened, had its origin in London's Portobello Market where Sillitoe once saw a distressed woman and wondered how she came to be that way. On the evening's evidence, Sillitoe's powers have declined since his early *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*.

By contrast, Trevor, arguably the best traditional short-story writer in the English-speaking world, seemed at the peak of his form. In profile much resembling Dalton Camp, in full-face resembling him not at all, Trevor read "An Evening with John Joe Dempsey," a story that started out like a small-town Irish tale in the Frank O'Connor manner but rapidly achieved a series of dazzling other dimensions. Someone had the nerve to ask him where he got his inspiration. Trevor said he didn't know.

Since John Updike set his recent novel, *Bech Is Back*, partly in Edinburgh, the author had a certain vested interest in the place. (Bech marries an Episcopalian named Sinclair: they visit Israel, which she loves, and Scotland, which he does.) Looking well-groomed, amused, and mildly self-mocking, Updike drifted his way through an early short story, poems, and an excerpt from a work-in-progress called *The Witches of East Wick*, set in Rhode Island. "Witchcraft in New England has made a comeback as a sort of health measure," he told us. The demonologists in the audience chuckled, knowing the superiority of the Scottish product.

But for admirers of stage pyrotechnics, no author could match Anthony Burgess. The composer-novelist chose the relationship of music and literature for his talk, and proceeded to stagger us with his powers of memory — reams of Shakespeare and Gerard Manley Hopkins delivered at machine-gun speed — varied by random lunges at an electronic keyboard to illustrate his points. Schoenberg's 12-tone scale, Jacobean lyricists, Tennyson, Browning, personal artistic anecdotes (his father died of a heart attack while playing in a piano marathon in Blackpool), comparative linguistics — this was culture vulturism with a vengeance. By the end of his hour the raccoon lines under his eyes had deepened, and full-moon sweat patches stood out on his mauve shirt.

Burgess persistently apologized for being a writer, asserting that the composer's is the greater art and adding that he always feels sick when he writes a line because it does not have the resonance of, say, a polyvoiced fugue. Literature

has massive technical limitations compared with music. Yet at the end he neatly inverted his argument by citing literature's one great advantage: music has no content. "Music means nothing but tension and release, tension and release."

Released from tension, we stepped from the tent's gloom into the unexpectedly sunny Edinburgh day, confronting a momentous decision. Should we go to see *Ha Bloody Ha*, "a laugh a minute revue" put on by the Ha Bloody Ha Company in St. Columba's-by-the-Castle? Or should we queue for *Contaminated Material* ("The vital shot in the arm that the garbage disposal business has been waiting for. Leaves you clamouring for more heroin, morphine, anything to take away the pain . . .") staged by the Yorkshire Rip-Offs in the Jordanburn Lecture Theatre? Or should we just go to a pub? No contest. The pub was closer. — FRASER SUTHERLAND

QQ at \$0

QUEEN'S QUARTERLY has always been grey and solid, something like poured concrete: weighty essays and particles of poetry, reinforced by fiction and reviews. It is not an eclectic university-based literary magazine like *The Fiddlehead* or *The Antigone Review*; rather, it occupies the middle ground between stolid scholarly journals and risk-taking little magazines. The *Quarterly* addresses itself to a creature long on the endangered species list: the educated, cultivated common reader, a person who could conceivably be interested in Tom Marshall's poems and an article on hydroponics — both represented in the magazine's 90th-anniversary issue.

Compromise is all. While the *Quarterly* has always been a useful outlet for poets and fiction writers, it never ranked with, say, *Tish* or *Northern Review* as a dynamic harbinger of new literary art, except perhaps during 1953-56, when Malcolm Ross published many young writers now well-known. At the same

time its scholarship has usually been intelligible, its pages seldom open to academic ladder-climbers of the publish-or-perish persuasion. In an age of narrow specialization, it has taken the interdisciplinary overview.

George Woodcock — for readers of Canadian periodicals as unavoidable as the weather — sets the tone in "The *Queen's Quarterly* and Canadian Culture," though he may go too far in claiming that writing for the magazine is "as near as one can get in our age to writing for the great British quarterlies of the early nineteenth century that gave Hazlitt and his like so much scope and rein." Then again, I wasn't around at the time. In correctly praising the *Quarterly*, Woodcock says one silly thing. The poems and short stories the magazine has published, he observes, "give a comprehensive view of the variegation of styles and approaches which has been the sign of Canadian literature's development into a maturity that has no longer to define itself in the extraliterary terms of nationalist sentiment, any more than French writing has to insist that it is French or . . . American literature to insist that it is American." In fact, a few French or American writers do so insist, and as one of many artistic stimuli cultural nationalism has been so persistent that one wonders if it's extraliterary at all.

Still, the literary-minded may take pleasure in these pages. Tom Wayman's "Arboreal" tells us that evergreens are "rooted, permanent, marine," and Susan Musgrave offers an elegy for her father. Al Purdy gives us three poems, two of which are written in flexible, superbly controlled blank verse. Also notable is a well-turned sestina by Fred Cogswell; a poem by Elizabeth Bartlett set in two columns that may be read three ways: down each column or across — excellent value for money; and a fine Margaret Atwood story that succeeds despite its terminally coy title, "Significant Moments in the Life of My Mother."

Generally, though, the *Quarterly's* strengths, like that of its university, draw not so much on the creative arts as on the humanities and social sciences, particularly on what used to be called political economy. Barry Ferguson's "Political Economists and *Queen's Quarterly*, 1893-1939," while long and dull, reminds us how fertile and influential the discipline once was: two *Queen's* practitioners, Adam Shortt and O. D. Skelton, later became respectively civil service commissioner and undersecretary of external affairs.

The greatest of the political economists was the University of Toronto's Harold Innis, and Reginald Whitaker

provides a lucid summary of Innis's ideas on the interplay of intelligence and power, capping it with a lovely quotation from Herodotus: "This is the worst pain a man can suffer: to have insight into much and power over nothing."

Though it rapidly improves, Whitaker's essay begins ploddingly: "My analytical project is to abstract some of the elements of a political theory from Innis' thought, but only for the purpose of dissolving this theory back into the more comprehensive body of his thought. In so doing, I would hope that some clarification of Innis' writings will result." This is the characteristic lecturer's drone that has put countless undergraduates to sleep, and it's to editor Michael Fox's credit that few of these anniversary essays send us off as well.

Modris Eksteins's "Election Scrapbook: Germany 1983" is a model of alert, informed political reportage, and Thomas Hathaway's shrewdly edited interview with the acoustical consultant for Roy Thomson Hall provides the delightful fact that Andrew Davis, the Toronto Symphony's conductor, could never hear the woodwinds when he worked in Massey Hall, the symphony's former home. Occasionally, I found myself wishing that Fox's generalist sympathies extended further. Could not Flora MacDonald, MP for Kingston and the Islands ("The Status and Economic Prospects of Women in Canada") and Lewis Perry ("Sex and Communitas") have collaborated to produce "Sex in the House of Commons"?

Two contributions are highly individual, and extremely interesting. W. Basil McDermott, who teaches two Simon Fraser University courses "dealing with alternative interpretations of the future," writes on a subject that has somewhat troubled me: the existence of evil in the world. Like an academic *Screwtape Letters*, "Does Evil Have a Future?" helpfully ponders ways of making things worse than they already are. Given that "the central organizing principle for human existence has been man's preoccupation with the creation, preservation and development of evil," we ought to be better at it, McDermott suggests. Reviewing such promising areas as the health and automobile industries, as well as education, religion, law, and the military, he makes the predictable point that the military is especially good at promoting misery. The nuclear build-up is not as bad as we might hope, however:

Though some have suggested that nuclear weapons are excessively dangerous, these same individuals have overlooked the fact that the evil threat of nuclear war offers a deceptive cover

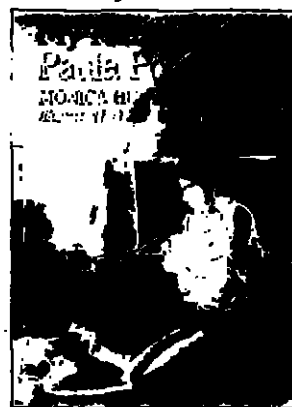
for the continuation of smaller wars, revolutions, military dictatorships, and the sale of weapons by the larger powers to the underdeveloped countries. Presumably this is a prime example of optimizing evil. By preventing the greatest evil from taking place . . . the system is maintained to do incremental evil over longer periods of time.

Generally, though, McDermott maintains that:

We are experiencing a colossal mismanagement of evil. The very survival of evil itself is being threatened by our mediocrity and shortsightedness. The world needs a new philosophy of evil that will enable us all to organize human life on this planet in a more reasonably punishing manner. Otherwise, evil may have no decent future whatsoever. And this would make life improperly bearable.

So spirited is George Grant's defense of the fascist fellow traveller Louis-Ferdinand Céline that one suspects that he, too, is aping C.S. Lewis in his creation of *Screwtape*. Not so. Grant means it, calling Céline the "greatest literary artist" of what he terms "this western era." (I would think that Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Tolstoy, rival claimants to greatness, also belong to the "western era," but it doesn't do to halt Grant in his headlong flight.) Basing his Olym-

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pian verdict ("this is a monumental chronicle telling the truth about a great event in terms of Homer") on Céline's late trilogy of *Castle to Castle*, *North*, and *Rigadoon*, Grant partly attributes the French author's viciously anti-Jewish pamphlets of the 1930s to wrong-headed patriotism. In any case, "it seems to me unimportant to take seriously the political judgements of most of us. They are caused by necessity and chance — occasionally a little by good. They are better understood in terms of comedy than by behavioural science."

A dark comedy, no doubt. Grant has a cavalier way with facts. In backing his contention that Céline's life was in

danger at the end of the Second World War, he tells us that "more French were murdered by French after the Allied invasion than during the years of Pétain." Good old Pétain's golden days. In speaking of murder Grant presumably isn't taking account of the French Jews shipped to Nazi concentration camps while the Marshal ruled.

But the very fact that I find myself hotly disputing Grant's statement points to the essay's stimulative power. G. M. Grant and W. L. Grant — George's grandfather and father — helped found the *Queen's Quarterly*. The 90th anniversary issue is the best evidence that it was a good idea. —FRASER SUTHERLAND

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

We have confirmed the fact that the status quo situation on pay TV is this: anyone who finds 'explicit sexuality' offensive is immature

By BOB BLACKBURN

BEFORE LIVE TV coverage of the proceedings of the House of Commons was begun, there were years of argument about the effects it might have on Parliament and its members. The chief concern was that the MPs would "go Hollywood" and start performing as entertainers rather than as politicians (as if there were any fundamental difference between the two).

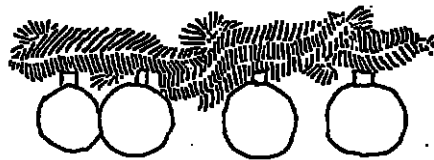
During all that time of indecision, I didn't hear a word of debate about the possible effects on viewers. Today, I cannot perceive any consequent deterioration in the behaviour of the MPs, but I am deeply disturbed about how these broadcasts may be affecting the people who watch them.

The danger lies in the possibility that impressionable viewers of all ages might believe that the language they hear being spoken in the august precincts of the Green Chamber is good English. It is not. Most of our elected representatives (I can speak only about the Anglo-phones among them) mangle our language as viciously as does the average sports commentator, and probably in a more damaging way. (I took a break after writing that sentence and heard a football commentator say, "And that's the status quo situation.")

It would be a very naive person indeed who would seek to improve his English

by imitating a sports commentator, but an only moderately naive person might assume that a parliamentarian, in the tradition of Macaulay and Disraeli and Churchill, would speak English well. This person might, for example, pay heed to the words of Gerald Regan, a former premier of my home province (Nova Scotia) and a minister of state in the federal cabinet, who stood up in the Commons recently and said, "We have no confirmation of the fact that . . ."

That's such a common mistake that you might think it unfair of me to single Regan out, but the fact is that I feel distinctly uncomfortable about being subject to the decisions of a cabinet minister who doesn't know that a fact is a fact. A philosopher might argue that there is no such thing as a fact, but that's



irrelevant. We have this word *fact*, and we use it correctly to refer to something that is true. I think it is important that a minister of the Crown know that a fact is a fact, and that, if he means to say he has no confirmation that a certain piece

of information is true, then that is what he should say. To call something a fact and then cast doubt on its truth is asinine. Yet we hear, "I doubt the fact that . . .," "true fact," "false fact," "questionable fact," and so on.

Fact is a hard, plain, unambiguous word, and an important one. Anyone who does not understand that should not be in a position of power.

THE SAME DAY that Regan was getting his facts confused, someone else (I think it was in the same place) said, using the phrase idiomatically rather than in its legal sense, that the verdict was still out on something. Anyone who thinks that *the verdict is still out* means the same thing as *the verdict is not in* is guilty of sloppy thinking. Jurors arrive at a verdict and then literally bring it in (to court). To say that it is still out implies that there is a verdict but it has not yet been brought in. That is a situation that normally exists for a matter of minutes, and it is not what those who use the phrase mean.

A RECENT WIRE-SERVICE story said, "The court found the company's emergency system completely lacking." I simply do not know what that means, and the context was of no help. Without the *completely*, I'd have assumed that the system was deficient or incomplete. Could it have been completely incomplete? Did the writer mean that the court found that there was no system? If so, why did he not say that? Was he about to say it was completely lacking in some specific thing when he was cut short by some emergency that the system lacked the capability to cope with? I guess I'll never know.

SUPERCHANNEL, the pay-TV service that used to warn viewers that a film was being presented "uncut and in its entirety," has mended its ways. Now the warning is that the film contains coarse language, or scenes of extreme violence or nudity or explicit sexuality, or all of the above, which may be offensive to some viewers, and therefore the film is recommended "for mature audiences only."

Do they really mean that? Do they want to say to me, a person who is paying them \$15 a month for their service, that if I find any of those things offensive, I am immature? I don't think they're stupid enough to *want* to say that. But they've said it.

THE MILLIONAIRE CBS newscaster Dan Rather spoke of someone being "hired on." I think it's time Mr. Rather was hired off. □

THE TOUCH

As befits a 19th-century business, antiquarian booksellers possess a mystical ability to find books and match them to their customers

By PAUL WILSON

WHEN LARRY WALLRICH, who looks like a younger, saner, and jollier Ezra Pound, started dealing in second-hand books about 30 years ago, he had no idea what he was getting into. He had already been working in one of New York's best new book stores for several years, but he was becoming disenchanting and wanted a change. "It was a whole other world," he said recently in *About Books*, one of the two bookshops he runs with Antonia Greenwood on Toronto's Queen Street. "In fact, I didn't know how different the second-hand book world was. In second-hand books you're dealing with 500 years of book production. In the new book world, you're dealing with six months."

By six months, he meant the shelf-life of the average new, disposable, forgettable best-seller that has become the mainstay of the modern publishing industry. Wallrich saw books, which he loved, being turned into merchandise, which he did not. So, good Yankee rebel that he is, he revolted and bought himself a second-hand book store in Greenwich Village. In the 1960s, he took his family to Europe and began running his business — mainly in modern literature and scholarly books — as a mail-order service, first from the island of Majorca, then from Edenderry, 50 miles west of Dublin, and finally from a house in North London. In 1976, on the recommendation of a bookseller from Cleveland, he moved to Toronto and opened his first shop, also called *About Books*, across the street from where his new store is now. It was, and still is, a comfortable old place with creaky floors and thousands of interesting, modestly priced books, nestled in between the Soviet-Canadian Friendship Club and a used furniture shop.

The 500 years of book production Wallrich referred to is, of course, the span of time since the invention of the printing press, over which a good antiquarian dealer's expertise must range. And it is a vast field indeed. In the first 45 years of printing alone, an estimated 30-million individual volumes were manufactured and sold at something like 80 per cent less than the cost of traditional, hand-copied manuscripts. At that time, printing, publishing, and bookselling were usually conducted by the same person or firm, but gradually the functions

drifted apart until by the 19th century they were virtually separate, and bookselling itself had divided into areas we recognize as essentially modern: there were dealers in wholesale, retail, rare and second-hand books, and in periodicals. The modern antiquarian book trade (along with pockets of the new book trade) is still a child of the 19th century, which helps to explain the sense of genteel, civilized decorum that one notices upon entering any good bookshop where the proprietor is obviously a lover of books.

Since Wallrich arrived in Toronto, the second-hand book business has grown enormously. "In fact," he says, "there are so many more bookshops in Toronto than there were five years ago that we're pulling people in from the States. We have more good, general second-hand book shops than there are in New York and London — and that's of course totally economic because rents are still reasonable enough here that you can have good general book shops in the centre of town. And we haven't felt the recession. It would appear that there were a lot of people here just waiting for good book stores to open up. In a shop like this, on a street like this, in a town like this, you can sell any good book. I feel more socially useful in Toronto as a bookseller than I've ever felt in my life before."



Jerry Sherlock, who has white wavy hair combed neatly back from his forehead and a twinkle in his eye, was raised in Brantford, Ont., and still has an unmistakable central-southern Ontario twang in his voice. He owns a book shop — Joseph Patrick Books — on Bloor Street West near High Park, far from the Queen-Spadina area where most of Toronto's second-hand book stores are located. Antonia Greenwood calls Sherlock "the dean of Canadian booksellers," a reference both to his 25 years in the business and to the fact that he has one of the finest stocks of Canadiana in the country.

Unlike Wallrich, Sherlock drifted into bookselling gradually. Returning to Canada after the Second World War, he attended the University of Toronto and then landed a job as a reporter for the *Toronto Star* on the City Hall beat. He soon saw that the job was a dead end relieved by booze and cards



Queen's University Fellowships in the Humanities

From funding generously provided by the Webster Foundation, Queen's University offers two fellowships in the Humanities to begin 1 September, 1984. 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 or cultural 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 educational background is unconventional. The Fellowships are tenable for two years and carry a stipend for the first year of \$26,000. 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:

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("Don't get me wrong," says Sherlock, "a lot of fine people drink and gamble"); finally, when an editor assigned him to cover a local politician and then told him what to write, he decided it was time to quit.

While reporting from City Hall, Sherlock would spend his spare time browsing through Eaton's just down the street, which at the time had a second-hand book department occasionally stocked with entire private libraries purchased by the store. He would also scout through the second-hand shops along Yonge Street. Once, on a visit to Brantford, he met a woman who was acquiring books for the local Roman Catholic Church and offered to help supply her with material. Before he knew it, he was a bookseller.

Initially Sherlock had a mail-order service, and a lot of his business was with the newly expanding Canadian universities, which all wanted instant libraries of Canadiana. He looks back on this boom period, from the early 1960s to the mid-'70s, with a combination of gratitude and mild disapproval since, as so often happens when public collections are hastily put together, discretion and discrimination were not always exercised. By the time the boom was over, Sherlock was well established and felt it was time to move into a shop.

IN HER MEMOIRS, *The Side Door*, Dora Hood — the original proprietor of Dora Hood's Bookroom, which flourished in Toronto in the 1930s and '40s and only recently went under — divides all booksellers into two categories: the "movers" and the "stationary." Although based on personal observation, her distinction is in fact very ancient. In the Middle Ages, the itinerant bookseller was a popular figure, and his counterpart was the "stationer" — that is, the bookseller who operated from a stall or *statio* in the marketplace. In the modern second-hand and antiquarian book market, the bookseller who operates from a shop occupies the most visible position in a marketplace that is largely invisible but considerably more complex than meets the eye.

Most booksellers agree that the best description of that marketplace — at least as far as the United States and Canada are concerned (different principles apply in Europe for a number of complex reasons) — is contained in the briskly written memoirs of the famous American antiquarian book dealer Charles P. Everitt, who died in 1951. The book — itself somewhat scarce, although by no means a rarity — is called *Adventures of a Treasure Hunter*, and its very bluntness, the delight Everitt takes in describing the many transactions in which he bought some goody for a song and sold it for a bundle, is a good antidote to some of the more idealistic descriptions of the trade that can be found elsewhere. "Of all the millions of words that have been written about bookselling and rare books," says Everitt, "most are damn nonsense. The whole thing is nothing but a battle of wits."

Everitt calls the market "one of the most completely disorganized and smooth-working business structures in existence," a definition that does not contradict Larry Wallrich's description of it as "totally anarchic, in every respect," or Jerry Sherlock's more classical description of it as "obeying all the laws of supply and demand." The market has its own hierarchy and its own central organs that function as portable stock exchanges: thick weekly publications like the *Antiquarian Bookman*, in which dealers list the books they want and hope that some other trader will provide them.

At the bottom of the pecking order are the mudlarks of the business, or what Everitt calls the scouts, "footloose book-hunters who actually dig in people's attics, paw over other dealers' ten-cent counters, and put up with the officiousness of librarians." The scout has no overhead, and his only capital is his knowledge and his ability to uncover books of value that someone is selling for less than they could fetch. In Toronto, scouts are sometimes called "pickers" and their regular haunts

include places like the Salvation Army and Goodwill stores, church bazaars, and lawn sales. On a good weekend, a picker might make \$100.

Sometimes errors can occur. In Toronto recently a picker bought an unassuming turn-of-the-century Canadian novel at a garage sale and took it to a local bookseller, who quite honestly thought he could get no more than about five dollars for it, so he paid the picker two. After doing some research, however, the dealer discovered that the book was an autobiographical novel written by a former member of the RCMP and promptly put a price of \$150 on it, which is what he thought the book was worth in relation to its scarcity and historical interest. In cases like that, if the picker is a regular and valued supplier, the bookseller will often share a percentage of the unexpected windfall with him. But of course there are no rules.

Further up the scale are the dealers who work from their homes, issue catalogues and do business largely by mail. Both Wallrich and Sherlock have operated this way at various stages of their careers, and it has its advantages and its disadvantages. Very little capital is required to get going, but it can be a lonely occupation, and the dealer may feel compelled to keep his stock narrowly focused — factors that can be frustrating if one is gregarious and has wide interests. The catalogues, however, are an important part of the business, and good catalogues — well-produced ones with interesting, bibliographically sound entries — can be valuable collectors items in themselves.

ONCE A DEALER has a shop of his own, where people can walk in off the street, he can not only afford to be more flexible about how he runs his business, he is also exposing his stock to more or less random access. He provides an environment in which people — casual buyers and serious collectors — can peruse his books at their leisure. Many collectors, in fact, prefer this method of acquisition. Here is what one collector, Robert H. Taylor, had to say about it in a recent issue of *The Book Collector*:

I shall always feel that the most rewarding way of acquiring a book is from a dealer's stock. . . . You can examine its condition at length and hear whatever he can tell you about it, and learn its provenance. . . . If there is any doubt in your mind he will give you plenty of time to think about it. The whole episode will be one more link in that lengthy chain of discussion, bibliography, gossip, friendliness and acquisition with which collectors delight to fetter themselves.

Dealers frequently use each other as a source of books to sell. Wallrich and Greenwood, for example, make frequent buying forays into the best bookshops in Europe, and Jerry Sherlock makes a point of going through the better second-hand book stores to look for bargains the seller might have missed. Twenty years ago, the United States was a hunting ground for dealers in Canadiana, like Grant Woolmer of Montreal, since a good many American book dealers were unaware of the potential value of Canadian materials — even though some institutions in the United States, such as the Huntington Library in California, house the finest collections of Canadiana in the world. But contrary to what one might suppose, dealer-to-dealer transactions seldom occasion any bitterness, not even if large profits are made. The field of antiquarian books is so vast that no one can be an expert in everything, and plums will slip through the fingers of even the most experienced bookseller.

What qualities make a good antiquarian book dealer? Most would agree that a keen eye and a good memory are absolutely essential. Expert dealers remember not only the bibliographical details of books they have handled — who wrote it, who published it, and when — but the physical details as well: things like the colour and condition of the binding, the stamping on the spine and so on. And they look for what are called

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"points" — the little details that are important in distinguishing between various editions of the same book.

Wallrich recalls a book on the Salvation Army by General Booth. "It was called *In Darkest England and Beyond* or something like that, and it was a first in every respect except one. In the real first there's a line of type on the dedication page that is smaller than the rest of the type, and in subsequent editions it's the same size. What happened was Booth dedicated the book to his wife, but for some reason or other they set her name in smaller print. Booth thought it was disparaging to her, so they printed 500 copies or so and then reset that one line. Now the one with the line of smaller type is worth \$150, and when they reset the line, it's \$75. That's the sort of thing you have to know and remember. And it's not documented anywhere."

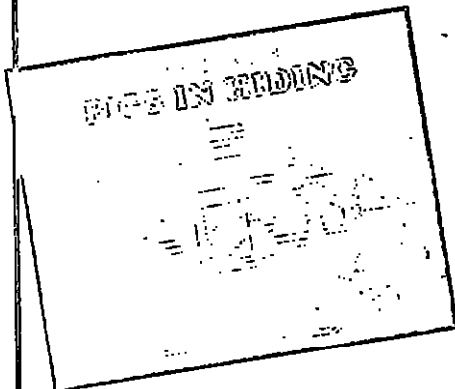
Some booksellers, and collectors too, so internalize their skill in handling books that they begin to talk about the process in terms that sound mystical to an outsider. Richard Landon, head librarian of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto said there is a phenomenon among book people called "the touch": collectors who possess it can walk into a shop and have the very book they are looking for pop out of the shelves at them, as it were. Larry Wallrich claims to be able to tell if a book is important just by the feel of it; in his experience books give off "vibes" that seem to draw the right customer to them. Very often he will buy books about which he knows very little and for which he has no one in particular in mind; almost before he can get them on the shelf, someone will come in, be flabbergasted and delighted to find them, and buy them without even looking at the price. But whether they believe in the mystical properties of books or not, most booksellers would agree that coincidence appears to play an unusually large role in their lives.

Perhaps it is not so surprising after all, because the entire business is set up to bring the right book and the right person together. Ultimately, it is the finite supply of books and the interests, needs, and passions of the customer — whether a reader or a collector — that together determine the shape, size, and operation of the market. Because hype and advertising play such a minor role in this market, and because the trade is regulated almost exclusively by the classic economic laws of supply and demand, booksellers have to be ready for anything and surprised by nothing. This is why Jerry Sherlock says a good bookseller must know not only what the demand is, but also what is in demand.

Not surprisingly, what is in demand varies enormously. Laura Rust of the Old Favorites Bookshop in Toronto has about 30,000 cards on her request file. She sees a great revival of interest in romantic and historical fiction of the 19th century, "imperialist adventure stories" by writers like G. A. Henty, Rider Haggard, and P. C. Wren, who wrote the *Beau Geste* books. "A lot of men want to collect the things they read and enjoyed as children, all that flash and dagger stuff," she says. Wallrich has noticed that there is more subject collecting going on these days. "It's very difficult to collect certain fashionable authors now. I mean, how could you start a Yeats collection today? You'd have to be a millionaire just to begin. So collectors are turning to subject collecting, period collecting and that sort of thing." Wallrich has regular customers who have definitive collections of books on magic — not occult magic, but sleight of hand, parlour tricks, and so on. He has a young customer who will buy anything he can provide, in any language, on ventriloquism. There is a professional man in Toronto who collects everything having to do with *Alice in Wonderland*, including the menus from the Walrus and the Carpenter Oyster Bar and Restaurant in

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Toronto's Yorkville. And another man, well-known and highly respected by every bookseller in Toronto, amassed an enormous collection of almost every left-wing book, pamphlet, newspaper, and manifesto ever printed in Canada. Privately, the collection was valued at around \$500,000, but the man turned it over to the Thomas Fisher Library for mere fraction of that.

One interesting aspect of collecting habits was raised by Dora Hood, who claimed that in her experience women do not collect books. "Women," she wrote, "rarely possess that irresistible, consuming passion to possess books that has led men through the ages to build up priceless collections." As with most other generalizations, there are exceptions that tend to confirm the rule. Gail Wilson, who runs her own book store on Queen Street in Toronto, has women customers who buy and collect books having to do with domestic arts like fabric and textile manufacturing, clothing, and costume design. Laura Rust finds that women tend to be more interested in reading good books than collecting them. Grant Woolmer knows one remarkable exception, a woman in Quebec who assembled a staggering collection of materials on witchcraft from all over the world. The woman is dead now, and Woolmer has been trying in vain to find out what happened to her collection. But whatever the truth of Dora Hood's contention, it is a fact that quite a few women are dealers, and this was noticeably true long before the advent of modern feminism.

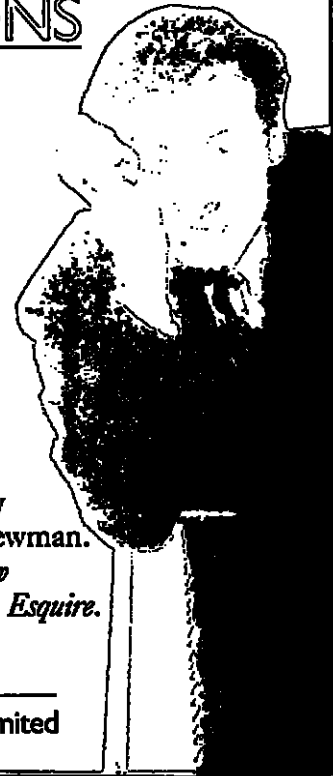
Despite the enormous value that some of the best collections have, booksellers actively discourage people from buying books simply as hedges against inflation. Investment in books has a tendency to put prices out of the reach of the people who really care about them, and to disturb the delicate, self-regulating mechanism by which prices in general are kept at a reasonable level. Bill Hoffer, a Vancouver book dealer, puts it this way: "If I start selling Irving Laytons for \$300 it means I can't buy them for \$20 any more. I've got to start buying them for \$150. So in the end, higher prices are hostile to being comfortable in the book trade and sellers themselves are constantly trying to keep them down."

With the exception of Montreal, where trade has slackened off in recent years, there is a general feeling among booksellers that the antiquarian and second-hand trade in Canada is expanding. Turning up solid numerical evidence for this, however, presents a problem. It is almost pointless to ask the booksellers themselves, for while they like nothing better than to talk about the wonderful profits made on individual transactions, they remain discreet about grosses and nets. Statistics Canada is no help either. Incredibly, it lumps the second-hand book trade in with the new book trade, so there are no separate statistics on used and rare book sales at all. Perhaps this is as it should be for an essentially 19th-century business.

It is equally difficult to get any agreement among booksellers as to why the business is better just now. Some say it is because of the recession; others say it is in spite of it. Some say it is because television is so bad, others because new books are so expensive. There is even the theory, put forward by Bill Hoffer, that the book trade is better now because it has finally attracted more intelligent practitioners and a more sophisticated clientele. But none of this really explains the observed fact that more people than ever before are buying and collecting second-hand books.

The answers, if there are any, are probably not so important. What matters is that thriving in our midst is this amazing organism for sifting through the detritus of centuries and making sense out of it. If Milton was right when he said that "a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit," then those in the book trade, and those whom the book trade serves, are the custodians of the circulatory system through which that life-blood flows. □

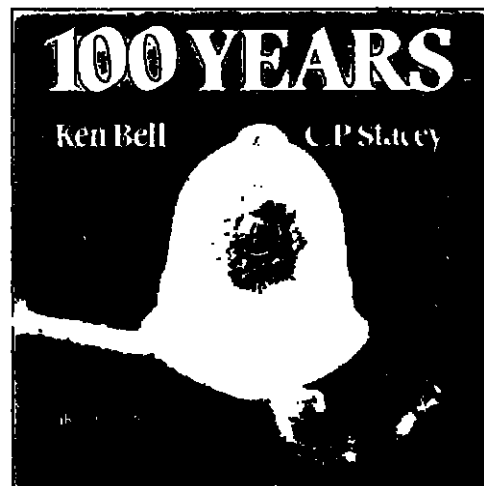
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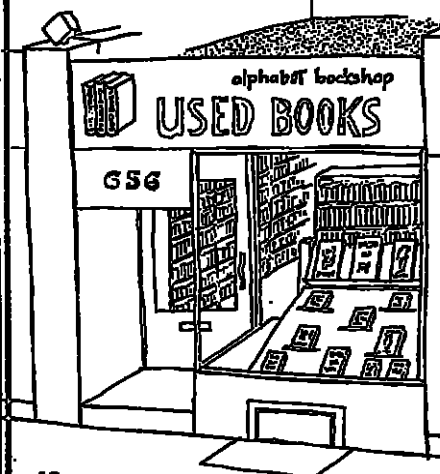
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By *MARY AINSLIE SMITH*

WRITERS FOR children probably feel strongly, as many of us do, the need to escape from the harsh realities of life in the '80s. Perhaps they use their writing as a means of temporary escape. Whatever the reason, there seems to be a very high proportion of Canadian children's books this year in which fantasy is a key element. Mysterious trips to other worlds, talking animals, beings with magic powers, ancient spells, and fantastic situations can be found in stories for all ages.

Fantasy picture books for the bedtime-story set can be a great deal of fun for adults and children. For example, Brian Froud's *Goblins* (Macmillan, 12 pages, \$12.95 cloth) is clever, if expensive, entertainment. It begins: "Edward took Myrtle to the wood to show her goblins." But Myrtle is a skeptical child, and always has her back turned as goblins pop out from within thorn trees, under fairy-mounds and behind bat wings in Froud's inventive paper sculptures. It's hard to resist a book with tabs to pull and wheels to turn to make things happen on its pages. Myrtle is missing a lot.

John Larsen has written and illustrated *Captain Carp Saves the Sea* (Annick Press, 28 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), a fantasy in the tradition of a tall tale — a sailor's yarn — and it also is a lot of fun. The Captain, who lives alone in a lighthouse and who loves to row, goes out one morning to launch his boat, but finds to his surprise that the sea is totally gone. Captain Carp is brave and determined, and soon rescues the sea from the giant purple polka-dotted monster that has swallowed it.

The Upside-Down King of Minnikin, by Fran Handman, illustrated by Robin Baird Lewis (Annick Press, 24 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), is the sort of fantasy that presents a ridiculous situation from which the characters must extricate themselves. An order comes from the king that all the subjects of Minnikin must walk only on their hands. Such everyday activities as carrying bread

baskets, jogging, playing in the royal band, and patrolling the castle ramparts become very difficult, and the subjects eventually rebel. By the end of the story, everything is right way up again and the king is much wiser.

Count Raisinblaa and the Dozens of Dishes, written and illustrated by David Johnstone (Three Trees Press, 24 pages, \$11.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), sets up another fantastic situation: the Count never washes dishes. He doesn't need to because the attic of his ancestral home is full of crates of new dishes; he only uses them once and then sets them down in a pile. As the years pass the buildings and gardens of his estate become so full of dishes that no one can find his way in or out. When the Count decides to have a party, he must find a solution to this problem — a solution that does not involve washing dishes, something neither he nor his housekeeper Nesbit is at all interested in doing.

Miller's Helper, by Wence Horai, illustrated by Sarie Jenkins (Three Trees Press, 25 pages, \$13.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), is a fantasy in the fairy-tale tradition. The brave hero, a young miller named George, gets help from a mysterious maiden to gain entrance to an enchanted castle that many strong armies have failed to conquer. The rich and beautiful princess who rules the castle then grants him his dearest wish.

Wise Eye, the Crafty Cat, by Margaret Bunel Edwards, illustrated by Rose Zgodzinski (Three Trees Press, 46 pages, \$11.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), is set in a country on a jungle river where hundreds and hundreds of cats live in harmony with the human inhabitants. When a plague of rats threatens, Wise Eye saves them all through his own ingenuity and the help of a friendly crocodile.

The Man Who Stole Dreams, by Barbara Taylor, illustrated by Judie Shore (Women's Press, 40 pages, \$7.95 paper), has a traditional fantasy-style villain, a sinister thin man who lives in a black tower on a hill overlooking the city.

Every night he steals dreams from the city's sleeping inhabitants and then attempts to resell them in his new supermarket. Two children, Sara and Tony, are the first to realize the trick, and to get the dreams back to their rightful owners.

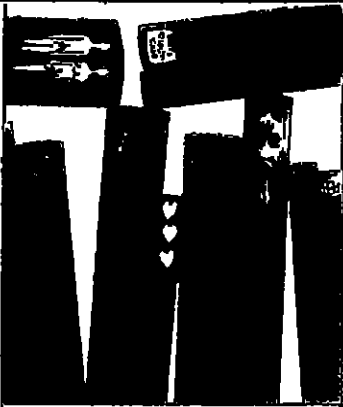
The Flight of the Callous Crow, by Lorraine McKay, illustrated by Sarie Jenkins (Three Trees Press, 48 pages, \$11.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), is the most complex and contrived of these fantasies for very young readers. Prince Melkan is the youngest of 13 children in the Kingdom of Zernott. Although his home kingdom is fantastic already, one day he is carried away by a huge crow. He travels through time and space to an even more unusual country where, with the help of some of its strange inhabitants, including a reclusive ghost, he defeats an ogre and rescues the king. So many strange events are fitted into the few pages of this story that the effect is overwhelming.

Fantasies that work better for young children are simpler ones anchored in some way to their personal experiences — ones over which they can see their imaginations having some control. The master of this sort of story is Robert Munsch, and his most recent book, *David's Father* (Annick Press, 28 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper) is another winner. Julie makes friends with David, a new boy in the neighbourhood. But the first time she stays at his house for



dinner she discovers that David's father is very different. He is a giant, and while Julie and David have cheeseburgers, salad, and milk shakes for dinner, David's father eats 26 snails, three fried octopuses, and 16 chocolate-covered bricks.

When they were done Julie said very softly so the father couldn't hear,

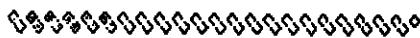


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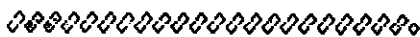
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"David, you don't look very much like your father." "Well, I'm adopted," said David. "Oh," said Julie. "Well, do you like your father?" "He's great," said David, "come for a walk and see."

And David shows Julie some of the advantages of belonging to a family where some of the members are different. Munsch has teamed up again with Michael Martchenko, whose illustrations have just the right flavour to complement the text.

The eight-year-old hero gives his imagination free range in *If I Had a Birthday Every Day*, by C. H. Gervais, illustrated by Ed Roach (Black Moss Press, 20 pages, \$7.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper). He reasons that although a birthday every day would mean lots of presents, it would also mean that he would turn a year older every day until he outgrew his classmates and friends. Soon he would be so old that he wouldn't have enough teeth to enjoy his birthday candy. This book's simple story and cartoon-like illustrations are appealing but probably would not stand up to very many rereadings.

Tobo Hates Purple, written and illustrated by Gina Calleja (Annick Press, 28 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), is a gentle fantasy with a strong connection to what a child may personally experience. Tobo is purple and hates being that colour. His mother just scolds him: "Oh, how silly. Purple is your colour. Get up and eat your breakfast." It takes the help of an understanding friend for Tobo to be happy with himself the way he is. Calleja's art work makes Tobo such lovely shades of purple that the readers will be glad he stuck with that colour too.

Earnaby Bear, by Margaret Leon, illustrated by Linda Leon (Penumbra Press, 28 pages, \$7.95 paper), is another pleasant fantasy, about the adventures of a favourite toy that goes missing over a winter. The sturdy pages and colourful illustrations make this a good story book for pre-readers.

Although many of this year's books are fantasies, others present opportunities for children to expand their worlds from a firmly realistic base. The *Baabee Books*, by Dayal Kaur Khalsa (Tundra, \$12.95 a set), are four interesting books intended for children under one year of age. Each has 12 laminated pages accordion-folded so the book can stand up. On each page is a picture, reminiscent of those in the Dutch Dick Bruna books, of objects that should be part of the baby's world. With each set of books comes a sheet of suggestions for games an adult can use the books to play games with the baby, connecting the pictures to the actual objects.

I gave these books to some babies of

my acquaintance and found that the bright colours did appeal to them, and that they enjoyed the way the books could be manipulated. In publicity material accompanying their release, Tundra says: "It seems that the earlier a baby recognizes that a two-dimensional picture stands for a three-dimensional object, the sooner that child will read and the higher its IQ is likely to be." Whether or not this is the case, the *Baabee Books* would make a more stimulating gift for a baby than yet another terrycloth sleeper.

For slightly older children, *Whoosh! I Hear a Sound* (Annick Press, 28 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper) will be a pleasure. The child in the story is about two years old and Heather Collins's illustrations portray a wonderfully alert and curious little person. Emily Hearn's text, which takes him on an exploration of the sounds of his environment, is rhythmic and altogether delightful.

Yeah, I'm a Little Kid (Annick Press, 26 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper) also encourages children to explore their environment. But in this story the children are older, and their world has expanded from the sounds and sights of their homes to the neighbourhood in which they play. The text by Darryl Borden is very straightforward: a consideration of the relative advantages of being a grown-up or a kid. The art by Lynn Smith is striking. The illustrations are collages, a colourful mixture of cut-outs of individual features, expressive hands, wonderful old cars, fruits, plants, and animals, and catalogue-type reproductions of textiles — all combining to create a rich and intricate world for an urban child.

Amie & Anka, written and illustrated by Terry Stafford (32 pages) is the first title from the newly formed Children's Studio Books (Box 438, Fort Langley, B.C.). Amie, the older child, adjusts to the arrival of a baby sister. The illustrations show the warmth and strengthening relationships within this family unit.

Works of fantasy outnumber works of realism in books for older children as well. There is an attractive new version of the famous Hans Christian Andersen story, *The Little Mermaid* (Methuen, 30 pages, \$12.95 cloth), poignantly retold by Margaret Crawford Maloney, but the book will be prized most of all for the beautiful illustrations by Lazlo Gal. In particular, he makes the sea kingdom originally inhabited by the Mermaid look so lovely that it is hard to imagine how she could leave it even in search of love and immortality.

The Private Adventures of Brupp, by Deirdre Kessler (Ragweed Press, 88 pages, \$4.95 paper), is a strange little story. Its topic — the adventures of a cat named Brupp who leaves home to see

Father Goose

DENNIS LEE'S fourth book of children's verse, *Jelly Belly* (Macmillan, 64 pages, \$9.95 cloth), is a departure for him. Though his earlier books — *Alligator Pie* (1974), *Nicholas Knock* (1974), and *Garbage Delight* (1977) — all celebrated the simple joys of nonsense rhymes, this one is particularly aimed at very young children, perhaps as young as 13 or 20 months. It is loaded with traditional-style nursery rhymes and what Lee terms "finger and toe poems," many of them as simple as one called "Chicoutimi Town":

Which is the way to Chicoutimi town?

Left foot up and right foot down.

Right foot up and left foot down,

That is the way to Chicoutimi town.

Not that Lee would be willing to concede that a four-line verse like "Chicoutimi Town" is all that simple. In fact, he finds that often the most basic poems are the most difficult to get right. Writing for children is a challenge, not an escape from the concerns of his adult verse. "In *Jelly Belly*," he says, "in a much more rococo, miniature way, I find the poems enacting a fundamental gesture of being human" — a gesture similar to the one he evoked in his sophisticated "The Death of Harold Ladoo," in which the tug-of-war between creativity and devastation are played out on a grand scale. The poems in *Jelly Belly*, enhanced by the superlative illustrations of Juan Wijngaard (unlike Frank Newfeld's unfortunate cartoonish accompaniments to Lee's earlier books), are a mesmerizing concoction of the gentle rural landscape of fantasy and the tough urban sprawl of high-rises and danger. In many ways, it is the world in which the adult Lee dwells, where the clash never ceases between mercy and cruelty.

"I write not for children, but as one of them," says Lee, "from the temporal layers within myself." Children's and adult poetry receive much the same attention: while he usually revises his adult poems about 100 times, the children's verse runs through his typewriter as many as 40 times. Still, he likens his best children's poems to "little explosions of energy," where nothing artificial, nothing consciously adult and intel-

lectual, intervenes between the words and the child. While writing *Jelly Belly* he became fascinated with Mother Goose, especially the moments in children's poetry when a character exists only as a name, a few attributes, and a slight story line. "For this kind of poetry to work," says Lee, "something else must take over: rhythm, sound patterns, incantations. These poems work because they stick in your body, not in your head."

During readings Lee revels in the response his poetry provokes in children. Some become rowdy, even raunchy, while others cuddle up and sit on his knee. They often crack up at his readiness to celebrate naughty words and rude behaviour, though he finds that their parents' reactions occasionally make him feel awkward. "Sometimes I feel like the Jack the Ripper of poetry, enticing kids to take off their pants. With their parents, well, it's as if the kids and I are looking at dirty pictures together."

One poem that works at both the primitive and the more socially con-

Kissing Georgie—

Mighty fine!

Just like kissing

Frankenstein!

Georgie, Georgie

Wash your face,

Or we'll kick you out

Of the human race:

Not because you're ugly.

Not because you're cute,

Just because your dirty ears

Smell like rubber boots!

"It's a morally corrupt poem," says Lee. "It invites you to have your cake and eat it too. You can be an absolute slob, a real pig, and tell Georgie off while feeling you're on the side of the angels."

Taking the lid off the high manners and laundered quality common to children's verse is important to Lee, but ultimately it takes second place to his groping for a true, childlike tenderness, for the submerged feelings of being frightened and alone that even very little children learn to conceal. For all its rowdiness and rambunctiousness, *Jelly Belly* is a quaintly gentle, evocative book. Not



Dennis Lee's conscious level is "Dirty Georgie," undoubtedly written by a scrappy little kid who resides deep within the characteristically solemn, 44-year-old Lee:

Georgie's face was
Never clean,
Georgie smelled like
Gasoline.

once does Lee condescend to his audience, however young, and it is in this that his children's poetry most resembles his adult work. Both present poetry as a place of solace and reflection and honest emotion, as a window onto a world in which fair dealing between people, young or old, is still possible. —JOYCE WAYNE

the world — suggests a young readership. But Brupp's adventures are ones from which an older child would learn most as he encounters examples of unhappiness, needless cruelty, loneliness, and bitterness in the human world. There are intriguing little pen-and-ink illustrations by Ken Shelton at the head of each chapter.

The *Three and Many Wishes* of Jason Reid, by H. J. Hutchins, illustrated by John Richmond (Annick Press, 63 pages, \$6.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper), is a fantasy within a modern context, and it works quite well. Jason, an 11-year-old, meets Quicksilver, an Elster of the Third Order, who must grant Jason's three wishes in order to "step through" to his own world. Jason's immediate reaction is to wish for a magic baseball glove that will always catch the ball. His second wish is that no one will get excited about this special glove, but will just accept it. These two wishes are granted easily, but then Jason hesitates. He is intelligent and conscientious, and feels he must use this opportunity to be more than selfish. Much against Quicksilver's will, he wishes for three more wishes, and continues to use this device to stall for time while he and his friend Penny try to decide on a really worthwhile final wish. Since Quicksilver's powers do not extend to stopping war and hunger, theirs is a very difficult decision — especially since Quicksilver, impatient to be done with it all, keeps tempting Jason with all sorts of treasures.

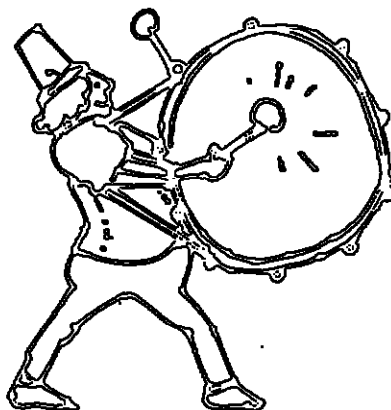
Several more books use the well-worn device of transporting their heroes and heroines from this world to another time or place. In *The Druid's Tune*, by O. R. Melling (Puffin Books, 240 pages, \$15.95 cloth, \$7.95 paper), two Canadian teenagers on a vacation in Ireland are taken to prehistoric times, where they participate in the battle between Queen Maeve of Connaught and the young Celtic hero Cuculann of Ulster.

The *Prophecy of Tau Rldoo*, by Welwyn Katz, illustrated by Michelle Desbarats (Tree Frog Press, 175 pages, \$6.95 paper), tells how a family of five children is magically transported to a land that has suffered 700 years of darkness. There they become part of an ancient prophecy and help to free the land from its oppressors.

In *The Seventh Princess*, by Nick Sullivan (Scholastic, 107 pages, \$2.95 paper), Jennifer finds herself no longer riding on her school bus but instead being taken in a beautiful carriage to a palace where she is greeted as Princess Miranda. Soon she finds out that she is the seventh girl to be summoned to this

strange world to serve as an annual tribute to the powerful witch Swenhild. With the help of a wise, old scroll-seller, a dwarf jester, and some good magic, Jennifer defeats Swenhild and her evil lieutenant, Duke Rinaldo, releases the king from enchantment, and restores all the princesses to their real families. This book is another example of how cramming too much into one small story lessens its effectiveness.

Monica Hughes never allows her plots to get out of hand. Her recent science-fiction novel, *Space Trap* (Groundwood Books, 153 pages, \$12.95 cloth), shows her mastery of writing good stories for young people. The story is an exciting one, again involving transporation to another world. Valerie, her older brother, and little sister — children in the year 3114 — are caught in a space trap, a matter transmitter, and find themselves prisoners on a hostile planet where all captives are considered animal species to be sold as exotic pets, exhibited in zoos, or sent to research



From *The Upside-Down King* of Minnikin laboratories. Valerie, the insecure middle child, finds that she has the resources and ingenuity to rescue her brother and sister. With the help of a crotchety robot and some other fugitives, they manage to take over the matter transmitter and escape. This is fantasy that works. The logical plot sequences allow for no confusion, while the sound characterization and quick pace make it highly entertaining.

Gordon Korman is also a master of his particular brand of fantasy. *Bugs Potter Live at Nickaninny* (Scholastic, 184 pages, \$2.95 paper) is a fantastic romp of a story, an extended joke that sees the same Bugs Potter we met as the fanatical teenaged rock drummer in *Who Is Bugs Potter?* removed by his parents to the wilderness of Northern Ontario for a family camping trip. Driven by his own personal necessities, Bugs creates out of nothing a drum set, a band, a vocalist,

and at the climax of the story stages a grand rock concert on the shores of what had been a peaceful lake. He also manages to accumulate enough notes on a lost tribe of Indians to write an anthropology paper that will upgrade his high-school science mark to a pass and satisfy his parents.

Another sequel of a different sort is *With Love From Booky*, by Bernice Thurman Hunter (Scholastic, 160 pages, \$2.95 paper). Hunter's first book, *That Scatterbrain Booky*, tells the story of a little girl growing up in Toronto during the Depression. This second book continues her story into early adolescence. The setting is earnestly recreated: there is swimming at Sunnyside, skating on Grenadier Pond, and a lot of flat tires on the way home from Muskoka. Booky sets her hair with green Hollywood lotion, sneaks into the Runnymede Theatre on her first date, and experiences the death of a favourite grandparent. The tone is pleasantly nostalgic, and Booky is a likable heroine.

Joey Runs Away, by John F. Jansen in de Wal, illustrated by Bev Hagan (Annick Press, 60 pages, \$6.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper), is also set in Toronto, this time in the present. Joey's situation is somewhat similar to Booky's life in the city 50 years earlier. There are still problems arising from the scarcity of money, lack of safe play areas, run-ins with authority. Joey's friends from his apartment and from school give him some sense of community. But whereas Booky had always lived in the city, Joey is a recent arrival. He wants very much to be back on his grandfather's farm in Newfoundland. Booky was surrounded by family — almost everyone on her street was related in some way or another. Joey lives alone with his mother, who must work to support them and can spend little time with him. Joey's act of rebellion against these problems leads to tragedy, but he does survive, and the story has a hopeful ending.

The General, by Frank Etherington, illustrated by Jane Kurisu (Annick Press, 60 pages, \$6.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper), is based on a true event. When the small village of Bridgeport becomes a suburb of the city of Kitchener, Ont., the General, who has served for many years as a volunteer crossing guard for the village school, is told his services are no longer needed. His eccentric dress and behaviour do not conform to city expectations. Young Jainin becomes very involved in the community's effort to save the General's job, helping to circulate petitions, picketing at his intersection and speaking on his behalf at city

hall. Which, she finds out, you can't fight.

The Not Impossible Summer, by Sue Ann Alderson (Clarke Irwin, 112 pages, \$7.95 paper), tells the story of Jenny, who lives with her mother and feels she can do nothing to please her. During summer vacation her mother, a historian, works on an article she is writing while Jenny spends much of her time with an imaginary friend, Debra, who can do everything. But when Jenny starts to make real friends, things start to happen — lots of things. She buys a baby calf, begins a weaving project, teaches an older friend how to read, becomes lost on a mountain, gets a lesson in the Dewey Decimal system, helps rescue another friend who has been stranded with a sprained ankle during a violent storm, reads *Anne of Green Gables*, and improves her relationship with her mother immensely. This all happens in such a disconnected, breathless fashion that the reader is left quite unconvinced. Alderson's choppy, cheerful style, just right for her *Bonnie McSmithers* series, doesn't suit this story of the relationship of an older child with her mother nearly so well.

Teach Me to Fly, Skyfighter! is the title of a book of four stories by Paul Yee, illustrated by Sky Lee (Lorimer, 133 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper). Each story features one of four young friends who live in the Strathcona neighbourhood of Vancouver. Three are Chinese Canadians, two recent immigrants, one Canadian-born. Their stories tell of their responses to the conflict between their heritage and their own personal aims and ambitions. For instance, Sharon, the Canadian-born one, rebels at the way Chinese things are forced on her. She is resentful that she looks Chinese, because she feels Canadian. A kite given to her by an old friend of her grandfather's in Chinatown flies beautifully, and at last something Chinese makes sense to her and she can feel happy and proud of what she is.

The last story is about Christine Thomas, the non-Asian member of the group. She lives alone with her mother in a housing project and is considered a problem at school. Her decision to try out for an all-girls soccer camp at last gives her a sense of direction, while the support she receives from her friend Sharon increases her sense of self-worth. These stories are sensitively written and nicely capture the home, school, and leisure life of the four friends.

There are several good activity books for children this year, including *The Creative Kids' Colouring Book*, by Kate Christie and Peggy Patterson, illustrated by Kathy Vanderlinden (Lorimer, unpaginated, \$5.95 paper). The pages of



Penguin's Stocking Stuffer Checklist

FICTION

- The Deptford Trilogy*, Robertson Davies \$10.95
- The Timothy Findley Collection: The Wars, Famous Last Words, The Last of the Crazy People* \$12.95
- Locksley*, Nicholas Chase \$16.95
- The Moons of Jupiter*, Alice Munro \$3.95
- Obasan*, Joy Kogawa \$3.95

NON-FICTION

- Amazing Trivia From the World of Hockey*, Stan Fischler \$3.95
- For Services Rendered*, John Sawatsky \$4.95
- The Pie's The Limit!*, Judy Wells & Rick Johnson \$9.95
- Women & Children First*, Michele Landsberg \$4.95

CHILDREN'S CHOICE

- The Druid's Tune*, O. R. Melling \$7.95
- Puffin Canadian Collection I: Black Diamonds, Frozen Fire, River Runners*, James Houston \$8.95
- Puffin Canadian Collection II: Days of Terror, Underground to Canada, Barbara Smucker; The Root Cellar*, Janet Lunn \$9.95

this book contain only clues, not complete pictures. Children may create the rest of the pictures according to their own ideas. For example: "Sometimes people look like their pets. Draw the owner of this dog." Or, "A spaceship from Pluto has landed in this backyard. Draw the ship and its crew."

Owl has a new series of attractive

books, just the right size for stocking stuffers: *Owl's Jokes and Riddles*, *Owl's Puzzles and Puzzlers*, *Owl's Amazing but True No. 1 and No. 2*. (96 pages, each \$2.95 paper). These books, prepared by the editors of *Owl Magazine*, are entertaining and informative. Perhaps you already knew that a flea can jump 200 times its own length,

but did you know that a whistling swan has the most feathers of any bird (23,216), and that the loudest fish is the Arpaïma fish of the Amazon Basin? This fish swallows a huge gulp of air, then releases it to make a bang that sounds like a bursting brown paper bag. This noise can be heard the equivalent of many blocks away. □

FEATURE REVIEW

Quiet desperation

Margaret Atwood's short stories flourish on knowledge: they show the reality of experiences that our slogans are designed to hide

By MARK ABLEY

Bluebeard's Egg, by Margaret Atwood, McClelland & Stewart, 285 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 0808 2).

BEHIND THE LOUD advertisements and the studied self-promotion; behind the hoopla and the rhetoric, the jargon and the hype; behind the sad desire to convert the "first lady of Canadian letters" into that always longed-for but never-attained commodity, a Great Writer — behind all this, Margaret Atwood is an amazingly versatile and proficient author. To a majority of readers, she may be best known for her sourly perceptive novels; to her keenest and oldest admirers she remains a poet first and foremost; among those who make formal studies of Canadian literature, her provocative criticism is irreplaceable. As if all that weren't enough, she also happens to possess an offhand mastery of the short story. The 12 stories in *Bluebeard's Egg*, her second collection of short fiction, are not uniformly good; but then, what book of stories ever has an exact evenness of quality? *Bluebeard's Egg* may be dismissed by some as run-of-the-mill Atwood. Yet it contains enough wit, intelligence, and imagination that, if it were the work of almost any other story-teller in Canada it would seem a revelation.

I say this despite an occasional coarseness of tone that probably indicates a lack of interest, or a loss of belief, by the author in her own creations: "The life she's led up to now seems to her entirely crazed. How did

she end up in this madhouse?" Atwood knows better than to finish a story with such a cheap effect as that. Such lapses are rare. The first and last tales in this book, which describe the narrator's parents, are radiant with a kind of gentleness and amused love one hardly associates with Margaret Atwood. Even more unusually, they are full of *admiration*, "for although my mother is sweet and old and a lady, she avoids being a sweet old lady." Atwood could well be describing herself, or the self she would like to become, when the narrator of "Unearthing Suite" says of her father, "How to reconcile his grim vision of life on earth with his undoubted enjoyment of it? Neither is a pose. Both are real." Examining her own generation, Atwood does not allow herself such a relaxed, generous spirit.

Her title story is a subtle exploration of complacency, centring on a woman who has gladly submerged her gifts, if not her identity, in marriage to a man she thinks she can control. The image that gives this story its name refers to the bloodied egg by which the murderous Bluebeard learns that his orders have been disobeyed; it evokes, yet again, the power struggle between men and women. In this and a few other tales (especially "The Sunrise" and "Significant Moments in the Life of My Mother") Atwood's sensitivity to texture and shadow, her unforced talent for the precise word and the expressive image, replace the slightly mechanical certitudes that have, in the past, tended to

disfigure her prose. "Bluebeard's Egg" is a story about betrayal, blindness, and egotism; it's not hard to imagine the savagery with which Atwood could have written it. Yet it has a tenderness, almost a warmth, that stands apart from the author's implied attack on her characters' way of life. Perhaps in middle age she is learning mercy — or else, in the shorter forms of fiction, her claws are sheathed.

One recurrent feature of the stories is the hypocrisy of the central characters: their unwillingness to live by the standards they demand of other people, or the distance between their own behaviour and the concepts by which they claim to live. In a sardonic fantasy called "Loulou; or, the Domestic Life of the Language," a group of male poets falls in love with "Loulou" — not the strong-armed potter who nourishes and shelters them, but her farouche Parisian name. Gradually she realizes that this attraction to her name is very different from a loving interest in Loulou as a person. At such moments, Atwood the poet and Atwood the contriver of fictions overlap their territories to unusual, sharp effect.

Likewise, at the end of "The Sunrise" an artist called Yvonne, who gets up every day before dawn to watch the sun ascend above Toronto, understands that "her dependence is not on something that can be grasped, held in the hand, kept, but only on an accident of the language, because *sunrise* should not be a noun. The sunrise is not a thing, but only an effect of the light. . . ." None-

theless, without such sustaining illusions, even the careful, knowing Yvonne would be helpless, a stranger in the world. Her triumph is a private ritual. Atwood has often written about dependence in one form or another, but I suspect that in her recent work she condemns it far less broadly than she once did.

Few of her characters behave spontaneously; instead, they scour each other's lives for implications. In *Bluebeard's Egg* the analysis of human behaviour produces some marvellous passages, although now and then Atwood overdoes the intricacy: "She suspects they know she does this. It's her way of keeping up . . . with what they want her to think they're thinking." (R.D. Laing has nothing on Loulou's coterie of bards.) One of the book's least successful stories, "The Sin Eater," is fascinating intellectually for the connections it suggests among sin, hunger, psychiatry, guilt, and emotional transference; but Atwood chooses to retell events through the mouth of a woman who knows relatively little about the story's main character, a dead psychiatrist. The narrator's ignorance reduces the author's beloved capacity to analyze; despite a lively flow of anecdotes and images, the story fails to satisfy; its questions flutter in the air. Atwood's imagination flourishes on knowledge; it is hard to imagine her creating fiction from any standpoint of innocence.

Interviewed by Robert Enright on CBC-Radio's *Stereo Morning*, she admitted that in *Bluebeard's Egg* "the reader has to enter into the process of composing the story." Certainly four or five of these stories have a provisional quality to them, an edge of uncertainty, as if, for all the calm assurance of her prose, Atwood was feeling her way into her plots and themes. She enjoys telling a story in the present tense, which allows her to make frequent forays into the future: a strategy of speculation, one that gives her short fiction an open-ended feel. She shares with Mavis Gallant the alarming ability to see through our evasions and our cherished weaknesses; but in her short stories at least, Atwood seems to distrust the magisterial certainty, the pleasure in omniscience, that so often characterizes work by Gallant.

One eight-line paragraph in Atwood's story "Scarlet Ibis" has the following rhetorical structure: *could . . . could . . . would . . . wouldn't . . . would . . . would either . . . or . . . maybe . . . might be*. Such locutions are especially apt for a chronicler of our unease, an eloquent worrier, a woman deprived of certainties. Sometimes Atwood writes as though we had every-

thing to doubt but doubt itself. Although this book never specifies a year, these are tales for our time; a mild future defies belief.

The stories in *Bluebeard's Egg* were written with a common thirst to show the reality of experiences that our slogans are designed to hide. "Live in the now. Encounter experience fully. Hold out your arms in welcome": such phrases may hint at a truth, but the phrases themselves can be barriers, tongue-warmers empty of real meaning. A character in the grim story "Ugly-puss" used to believe the beguiling words of promise; now she finds herself tying up her former lover's cat inside a plastic garbage bag. Impulse and action are so far apart they have almost ceased to connect. These stories concentrate on relationships under strain, relationships approaching a crisis or an end. To write about beginnings would require a different manner, a different state of mind. Atwood revels in our quiet desperation, but she is not exempt. Of all the sentences in *Bluebeard's Egg*, I think the most typical is this: "Sometimes he makes her so happy she thinks she's about to burst; other times she thinks she's about to burst anyway." A line as sweet as a bruise. Atwood may be mellowing, but her characters are still faced with collapse. And she still chooses to start the book off with the death of baby chickens. □

REVIEW

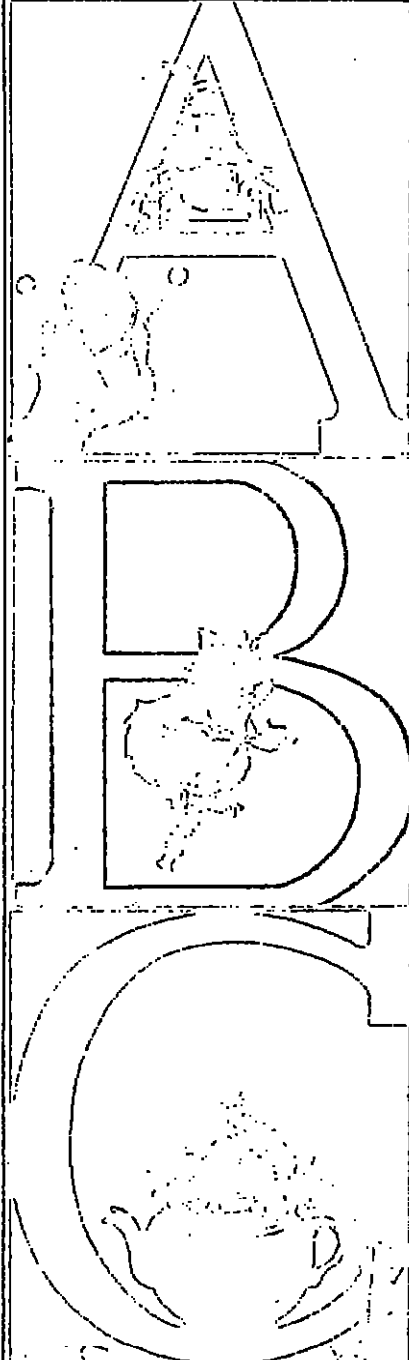
To hell
and back

By ELWIN MOORE

John Coe's War, by Clive Doucet, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 322 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 07 548648 2).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE played the piano. He wrote: "Without music, life would be a mistake." John Coe, the hero of this novel, plays the piano — is indeed at various times between 1939 and 1951 an accepted Juilliard candidate, a Brockville music teacher, a Montreal jazz-band leader. Coe reflects: "Music may have caused me some grief, but it also protected me from thinking too much about the changes that were going

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on inside me and around me."

It is wildly unfair, I suppose, to criticize John Coe, a nice boy from Toronto's Beaches district, for not being Nietzsche. The trouble is that Coe is Coe: passive, stiff, and a demon for remarking on the unremarkable. Alphabetically, of course, Coe is next-door neighbour to John Doe, that undistinguished Anyman; this seems planned, and apt. Here is Coe describing his own wedding:

And it gradually dawns on me that this is truly a once in a lifetime occasion. I'll never see so many of my friends and relatives gather together in one place again. . . . It's a sad moment and a very happy one. The two feelings all rolled up into one. Sad because there is no going back. Happy, because a new door is opening.

Actually, *John Coe's War* is a fair bit better than that excerpt suggests. The first third of the book — the war part — has the engaging quality of a small person's memoir of great events. Coe starts this section as a skinny, girl-scared high-school student, finishes it as a survivor of the Second World War's Italian campaign, wounded, decorated, dazed. Author Clive Doucet (born 1946) provides what seems to me (born 1946) persuasive detail on matters as various as the feeling of pre-war Toronto ("a collection of little villages strung together"), the nature of the Spandau machine gun, and the social standing of a Commonwealth Sandhurst cadet in the home of a titled Englishman, circa 1940.

But the war ends early, by page 105 of a 322-page book, and when the weight of the story falls on Coe himself, he can't carry it. A reader might forgive Coe his stodginess if Coe were stodgy and deep. Doucet's talent, however, is much more for incident than for character. Thus we see Coe unhappy in classrooms, triumphant in jazz clubs, exhausted in a tuberculosis sanatorium. We see him hauling hay in the Upper Ottawa Valley, see him finally holed up alone a little south of Algonquin Park, snacking on bread fried in bacon grease and feeling "like an old pine tree that welcomes the stillness of winter. Happy as can be." He has had a marriage, affairs (attractive women pursue him throughout the book, drawn, I guess, by his passivity), visits from old army buddies, war memories, children, grandchildren. Yet he remains in his 60s boyishly defensive, and the main way his character seems to have deepened over 43 years is that he has gone from ingenuous to sententious. I liked him better ingenuous.

Doucet has written four plays (as well as one previous novel, *Disneyland, Please*, and the non-fiction *My Grand-*

father's Cape Breton) and *John Coe's War* is very much a playwright's novel. It proceeds briskly, by short scenes. Much happens offstage. Doucet's habit is to go staccato through scene-setting, then relax and record everything when he reaches the haven of dialogue. Several minor players are portrayed admirably, with emotional sharpness — the simple-minded son of an English aristocrat, the sour alcoholic who is Coe's superior at Brockville. But Coe's wife, Coe's best friend, and Coe himself are seen fuzzily, almost as if Doucet were relying on the interpretations of actors to make them real.

It's worthwhile to compare *John Coe's War* to *Disneyland, Please*, which was published in 1978. Both novels have youthful heroes, anxious to impress. Women are solace in both books, and so is country life, life out of the mainstream. Hockey and football provide in *Disneyland, Please* the violent testing that is furnished in the current novel by war. And in both books the toughness seems to me a little more willed than natural. It is tempting to imagine Clive Doucet as a gentle-spirited writer compelled to put his heroes through one hell or another to keep them interesting. □

REVIEW

Lost in translation

By ALBERTO MANGUEL

The Oxford Book of French-Canadian Short Stories, edited by Richard Teleky, Oxford, 268 pages, \$8.95 paper. (ISBN 0 19 540298 7).

ANTHOLOGIES CAN serve two purposes (rarely combined): they can allow the reader a comprehensive glance at one subject limited by historical, geographical, or thematic considerations, or they can reveal to him the very best of the chosen subject. I was hoping that *The Oxford Book of French-Canadian Short Stories* would fall within the second category, introducing me to neglected masterpieces; unfortunately — perhaps inevitably — it falls only within the first.

Twenty-three authors are represented here in chronological order, from

Aubert de Gaspé in the first half of the 19th century, to Michel Tremblay almost in the 21st. Certain common themes emerge, certain landscapes, certain ghosts — poverty, religion, the quest for an identity, the conflict of languages — and yet, taken individually, few of the stories are good short stories, stories "without which the world would be poorer."

Two are superb (but alas, not revelations: their excellence has long since been established). The first is Gabrielle Roy's "Ely! Ely! Ely!" which under the guise of a chronicle of a simple experience (a writer visiting a small, forgotten town near Winnipeg) bursts its quiet narrative style and becomes an illumination, making clear the intuition of what this country, Canada, is and means. Gabrielle Roy accomplishes the impossible, defining a people and their loyalties in 15 breathtaking pages Hemingway would have given his right arm to have imagined.

Anne Hébert's "The Torrent" is the second masterpiece in this book; it can hold its own among the great short stories of all time. It has been analyzed by countless critics, and stands comparison with Gustave Flaubert's *Trois contes*. A child, his mother, free will, and the will of God are its visible elements. Its sense derives from its imagery and from the exquisitely wrought language; its symbols are born from its sense, forming a chain of ambiguities of meaning that mirror and renew each other.

The anthology has two forewords, one by Marie-Claire Blais and one by the editor, Richard Teleky, and both make excuses for the 19th-century writers. "We can sense how religion and duty subdued the thought of Philippe Aubert de Gaspé," says Marie-Claire Blais, and Richard Teleky points out: "It is important to recall that until the 1920's Québécois writers had to struggle with the distrust of fiction that plagued their society. Many French classics were listed on the Index of Forbidden Books and not available in Quebec." Certainly, but what the editor calls "some of the finest short stories to appear in French Canada since the early nineteenth century" seem weakened by the effects of this plague, and appear poor and uninteresting to the modern reader. From the point of view of literary history, their inclusion is no doubt important; from the point of view of the common reader, most of these stories show serious flaws.

Aubert de Gaspé's story has the defects of the minor tales of Edgar Allan Poe, constantly verging on the ridiculous and the obvious. The none-too-beneficial influence of folk-tales lurks here, and Aubert de Gaspé's yarn about

the Devil who comes to court a girl, leading her to destruction, is at its best trite. Pamphile Lemay follows with a classical melodrama of greed and punishment (a variant of this tale appears in the collection by the Brothers Grimm) cluttered with such lines as, "However unnatural a mother may be, there always remains at the bottom of her heart a breath of sacred love that she alone can know, and her efforts to forget fully the blessed joy of motherhood are always bootless." ("Bootless" is perhaps a poor word for the translator to have chosen.) As examples of 19th-century writing these are interesting; as short stories, today they are painful to read.

A few of the selections are mere sketches, not stories — that is, they describe a moment or impression; they do not tell, or try to tell, a tale. Louis Dantin's vignette ("You're Coughing?") is well-written but reads like a section of a Maupassant story. Others drift into easy humour: Yves Thériault's "The Whale" is a silly fantasy about a man who single-handedly catches a whale; no one believes him and his girl-friend imagines he has lied to impress her. Louise Maheux-Forcier's "The Carnation" describes an old woman going mad and eating a flower in a restaurant before dying. Claire Martin portrays the downfall of a Don Juan in "The Gift." Antonine Maillet gives a glimpse of her famous character, la Sagouine, in "Two Saints." Roch Carrier pokes fun at bilingualism in "What Language Do Bears Speak?" All these are readable, but none is remarkable.

Zola's naturalism permeates certain stories: "The Patient" by Albert Laberge, where the mother's recovery in the poor household is seen not as a blessing but a curse; Marie-Claire Blais's "An Act of Pity," where a priest, after many failures and ominous dreams, is touched, too late, by compassion. "May Blossom" by Alain Grandbois is reminiscent of the less-brilliant Somerset Maugham: the tone is right but the end is hurried.

Social humour (of the kind favoured in France by Marcel Pagnol) is continued in Quebec by Roger Lemelin in "The Stations of the Cross," an obvious story about conservatism in Montreal; and by the proliferous Claude Jasmin, whose "Lulu" — the portrait of an effeminate young man — reeks of prejudice and bourgeois conventions. Better are Ringue's "The Heritage," a sentimental homecoming that fails; Gérard Bessette's "The Mustard Plaster," a Katherine Mansfield-like tale in which an old man tries to find some use for himself; and Naim Kattan's "The Neighbour," which begins in a

promising manner but then fades into triviality, and cannot stand next to Gabrielle Roy's story as another effort to understand the meaning of Canada. Hubert Aquin's "Back on April Eleventh" is moving and well-written, and is certainly the best of this group.

Two fables are included in this anthology: "Mélodie and the Bull" by Jacques Ferron, a re-interpretation of a story written by Rudyard Kipling in 1924, "The Bull That Thought"; and "The Devil and the Mushroom" by Michel Tremblay, from his early collection, *Stories for Late Night Drinkers*, a short and naive tale written when Tremblay was barely 17.

In this collection Richard Teleky has tried to show the evolution of the French-Canadian short story: he succeeds in tracing the local roots from which today's Quebec literature stems. For the common reader it is disappointing to find only a handful of excellent tales (one impossibly hopes for 23 "The Torrent's") but a historical collection must also show those less successful intermediate stages in which themes and styles are experimented with. To understand the future voices of Quebec, certain tones and certain accents, it will perhaps be necessary to listen to these fainter, tentative sounds from an all too recent past. □

REVIEW

Thirty years of solitude

By TOM MARSHALL

A.M. Klein: *Short Stories*, edited by M.W. Steinberg, University of Toronto Press, 338 pages, \$35.00 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 5598 2) and \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 8020 6469 8).

THIS BOOK POSES a special problem for the reviewer who is already on record with the judgement that A.M. Klein is one of the three or four finest poets that English Canada has known. As a prose writer he has been known only for his passionate poetic novel *The Second Scroll* — a response to the Holocaust that antedates *The White Hotel*, another poet's novel, by some 30 years. Now Klein's collected shorter fiction offers us a few hits, some near-misses, and a

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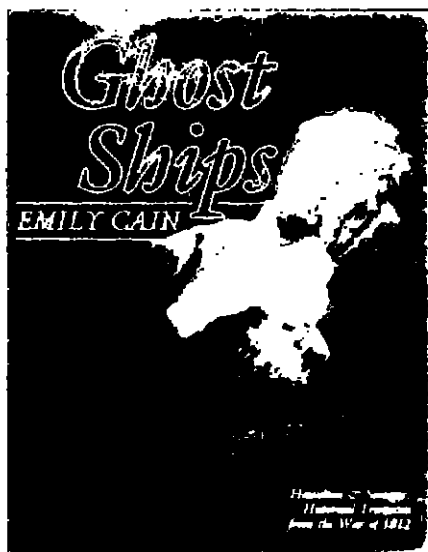
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number of embarrassing or immature sketches that might perhaps better have been left interred in old journals. These pieces are, with significant exceptions, more interesting to the serious Klein scholar (who will find Prof. Steinberg's informative introduction and notes very useful) than to the general reader or the critic in search of excellence. But then Klein the poet also left us a good deal of undistinguished, mannered, and overblown work. It is his finest poems, especially those in *The Rocking Chair* (1948), that matter.

Klein's fictional bent seems to have been in the direction of the metaphysical and the fantastic. His fables and parables (for these are not "stories" in the sense that admirers of Alice Munro, Clark Blaise, Joyce Marshall, or Mavis Gallant might use the word) are populated by ghetto eccentrics: half-wits, talking birds, dwarves, fairies (like Jews and poets an endangered species in the modern technological world), giants, devils, Siamese twins and other physical grotesques, spies, beggars, hangmen, and prisoners. As in his poetry Klein's focus shifts as time goes on from fairy tales and charming anecdotes of the ghetto to social and political fables of the 1930s and afterwards. Some of the later pieces are surreal and Kafkaesque; there is a flavour of anti-communism and of the world after the war about these. The best "fictions" are intellectual and philosophical in their appeal, like those of Borges and Nabokov, two other multilingual poets with highly metaphysical concerns.

Unfortunately, Klein's wit, his playfulness of style and language, can be ponderous, ornate, and offputting in a way that Borges and Nabokov (and their common forerunner Joyce) usually know how to avoid. And some pieces are didactic in a heavy-handed way. In others (for example, "A Myriad-Minded Man") a sometimes delightful linguistic exuberance overwhelms any serious point or narrative development. Some readers may nevertheless enjoy, as I do, the *flavour* of such sketches.

And there are some notable successes. Some of the ghetto sketches and tales (such as "The Seventh Scroll") are interesting slices of life. "Friends, Romans, Hungrymen" is a weirdly effective fable about unemployment. "And the Mome Raths Outgrabe" wittily describes an international conference whose delegates come to blows over Freudian, Marxist, and other interpretations of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky": this was written long before *The Pooh Perplex* and before the arrival of such current jargon-ridden critical fads as post-structuralism and deconstructionism, but it can serve as commentary

on them. A more sombre piece, "Letter From Afar," has as its premise the notion that the prominent victims of Stalin's purges were not executed but lived on a remote part of the Soviet Union as a reward for having confessed and played their parts in the show trials. Klein explores here the paranoid psychology of a totalitarian regime.

Anti-communism also informs his finest fiction, "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," in which a Russian composer becomes a victim of the Revolution. Through his experience Klein illuminates the modern experience of exile, the relationship of the artist to ideology (whether Christian or Marxist), and the relationship of the ideal and the material, the spiritual and the carnal, in the creation of art. This is Klein's subtlest and most resonant fable apart from *The Second Scroll*. The book is worth having for this piece alone.

Who knows? If "The Bells" had been published when it was written, and if Klein had not fallen silent in the 1950s, then perhaps the author of *The Second Scroll* might have blossomed anew as a Montreal South American, one of the new fabulists of the novel. □

REVIEW

Lives of girls and women

By CATHY MATYAS

A House Full of Women, by Elizabeth Brewster, Oberon Press, 104 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 486 8) and \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 487 6).

FIVE YEARS AGO Elizabeth Brewster told an interviewer: "I feel much less sure with a story than with a poem; I haven't written very many [stories], and I still feel as if I'm experimenting. Perhaps it's the experimentation that I enjoy, the trying to focus a particular moment of illumination in a life, which it seems to me the short story does."

Experimentation isn't a word one would readily associate with Brewster's work. Her poetry has been admired for its emotional simplicity and sensitivity, and her prose for its careful accumulation of detail, creating a texture that

makes the lives of her characters seem real. All of her work is plain both in style and subject matter, and yet accomplished in an unobtrusive way. The two Canadian writers that Brewster most resembles, I think, are Norman Levine and Alice Munro. The resemblance to Levine lies in understated descriptions that add up to a whole that is much greater than its parts. The similarity to Munro lies in a common regional focus, and an ambivalence about families and their emotional claims.

The seven stories in *A House Full of Women* will please anyone who accepts the ordinariness of Brewster's world, and who sees in it the fusion of universal concerns (love, loneliness, memory, imagination) with the particularities of a certain time and place (usually a small town in the Maritimes or on the Prairies). The main characters in these stories are all female, though they range from a young girl living on her own for the first time ("Her First Apartment") to a middle-aged artist who is trying to understand, through her memories, the importance of her relationship with another woman artist ("Essence of Marigold"). Most of the women in *A House Full of Women* have such uninspiring names as Gladys, Maud, Dily, and Edith, but the men that hover in the background don't fare much better: there's a Malcolm, a Dylan, a Jake, a George, and even a Sergeant Rumble. (The single exception is Lord Peake in a somewhat disappointing story, "A Question of Style"; but after all, he's a lord and is quite clearly a few social notches above the other characters.)

These names are an accurate indication of the physical and psychological milieu that Brewster's characters inhabit. Even if they leave their Maritime or Prairie hometown, Brewster's characters are still emotionally accountable to it. A continuing concern is dislocation: the importance of place in shaping the individual, and what it means to leave that place. In "Her First Apartment," for example, a young girl named Cass moves to an unnamed city in the United States to take a job as a librarian. She falls in love, is jilted, and decides to quit her job and go to graduate school. The story ends as she is moving out of her apartment and into a student residence.

On the surface, nothing extraordinary happens in the story; in this regard, Brewster's fiction bears a striking resemblance to Levine's. But you know by the end of the story that Cass isn't the same person she was at the beginning. Brewster doesn't articulate the change, but Cass's small-town ideals have been repeatedly tested against the larger world. As she's leaving the apartment, Cass thinks that the place is just as

beautiful as when she moved in. But what's important is the fact that she's decided to move, and that she'll very probably move again, perhaps to "other countries, on other shores." It's an emotional resilience that's at once reassuring and unsettling.

Quite often the stories in *A House Full of Women* involve the death of a parent. In "The Letters," a middle-aged Muriel takes responsibility for her invalid mother. As she nurses the old woman, Muriel hears how her mother's marriage was jeopardized by a letter that was never mailed to Muriel's father. Then Muriel's mother confesses how she once hid a letter that had been mailed to Muriel's sister, knowing it was from the sister's old lover. In this way, Muriel's mother believes she saved her daughter from heartbreak. Morally, it was a dishonest act, but in many of these stories Brewster shows us how ambiguous morals really are. The mother's confession about the two letters, hers and her daughter's, becomes Muriel's secret after the old woman's death. By acting as her mother acted and by keeping the information about the letters to herself, Muriel believes that she can "protect" both her living sister and her dead mother.

It's in such small illuminations that these stories find their focus, and it's through ordinary details like the colour of wallpaper, the print of a dress, or the description of a flower that Brewster creates settings and moves her stories to their quiet conclusions. This is certainly the case in "A Nest of Dolls" and "A House Full of Women." Although it's flawed by some really bad dialogue ("Well, Maud, keep your shirt on, don't go flying off the handle all over the place"), the title story is my favourite in the collection. It involves three generations of women — grandmother, mother, and daughter — who live together in one house. It's war-time, and the grandmother decides to rent a room to the wife of a soldier. The tenant is Gladys, who turns out to be a prostitute. Luckily, Gladys goes before the grandmother has to ask her to leave. The mother moves into the room where Gladys slept, and as the story draws to a close she contemplates Gladys and the other women that have appeared in the story. "Why, she wondered, were some women's lives so different from other women's lives?" And immediately realizes: "But you could never answer that."

Although Brewster's style is simple and straightforward, the connections between women that she is interested in are not easy to describe. It's true that the stories in *A House Full of Women* often lack emotional sophistication, and they

rarely reach beyond that which is familiar. But Brewster knows her characters, and she knows their world. "I am a good painter," the central character in "Essence of Marigold" says, and I believe she's speaking for Brewster. "Maybe not great, but good. Too conscientious, maybe? Not experimental enough? A failure in imagination? My fans (and I have fans, bless them) wouldn't say so." □

REVIEW

Rhinestones in the rough

By FRASER SUTHERLAND

An *Innocent Millionaire*, by Stephen Vizinczey, McClelland & Stewart, 388 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 8760 3).

LIKE AN EMU, Stephen Vizinczey's second novel is impressive but flightless. Twelve years in the writing, *An Innocent Millionaire* comes with a book-jacket blurb brigade that includes such spear-carriers as Brigid Brophy, Anthony Burgess, and Graham Greene. Film rights reportedly have been sold for \$750,000, attesting to the novel's expertly managed scenes, cardboard characters, and varied locales: London, Paris, Rome, New York, Toledo (Spain, not Ohio), the Bahamas. Undoubtedly, many paperbacks will be sold.

Yet *In Praise of Older Women*, the slim, self-published novel that went on to sell 2.5 million copies, compactly reproaches its author for this pretentious technicolour saga that reads like a contemporary pastiche of Balzac. *In Praise of Older Women* was an elegant blend of melancholy and gaiety filtered, indeed purified, by the protagonist's sexuality. *An Innocent Millionaire* forsakes such intimate involvement of author with character in favour of an icy moralistic voice telling a lurid but essentially boring story.

The story is simple. Mark Niven, the young, European-reared son of an impecunious American actor, becomes obsessed with finding a treasure ship that sank off the Bahamas in the early 19th century. About the time his melodramatic father gains stage and screen

success, Mark finds the ship but loses almost all of his \$335,127,100 booty to modern pirates: tax officials, terrorists, art dealers, and lawyers. The only plot complication, if it can be called one, is Mark's on/off affair with the beautiful wife of a wealthy industrial polluter. The polluter takes out a Mafia contract on Niven's life, and Mark is killed, albeit by accident: the Mafia boss had only wanted to scare him. The mafioso "never thought about the nine men he had gunned down in his youth, the two he had blown up, the one he had strangled and dismembered with his own hands, the scores of others whose executions he had ordered — he thought of the hundreds he had spared. But then, how many people judge themselves by what they have done? The good conscience of the wicked rests on all the villainies they refrain from committing."

Such compulsion to moralize at every opportunity creates a jerky cast of puppets manipulated by the author. Vizinczey's people do not live: they illustrate aphorisms. The aphorisms themselves are often excellent. A random selection: "No doubt eliminating politeness from society is a cost-effective way of hastening the day when people will bite each other in the street." Domestic peace depends on efforts "to look on the bright side of deception: if hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue, marital lies are the tribute indifference pays to love." On a famous Marxist dictum: "People tend to perceive others as having more than they need and see themselves as lacking a great many things, so that to each according to his needs translates psychologically into less to others and more to us! It is simply a matter of natural justice." Yet there are rhinestones among the diamonds: foolish generalizations about lovers ("No man loves unless he feels he is a child again") and lawyers ("Attorneys deal in wool and their clients are the sheep that are shorn").

Not content with speckling his narrative with maxims, like the 19th-century masters Vizinczey admires he also incorporates verse quotations, and precedes each chapter with an epigraph selected from among such well-known cultural figures as St. Paul, Napoleon, Dostoyevsky, and George Jonas. McClelland & Stewart's promotional copy claims that Vizinczey believes that "reading is re-reading and writing is rewriting." Indeed, but a lot as well as a little knowledge may be a dangerous, or at least an aesthetically damaging, thing. The author is less a novelist than a wholesaler of ideas.

This is a moral novel. What are the main points the moralist presents for our

edification? Money corrupts, and "an innocent millionaire" is virtually a contradiction in terms. Society extravagantly values high-priced crooks and con-men. Predators prey not just on the innocent, but on each other. Fair enough, and often well said, but where in 388 pages is the bewildered child turned duped treasure-hunter Mark Niven? Left stranded on a coral reef of authorial commentary, and despite the extensive background his creator provides, so faceless is Niven that the reader has no inclination to send out a search party.

Perhaps the most telling indictment of this novel may be left to Vizinczey himself. Commenting on Mark's empathy with the Indian victims of Spanish greed, the author calls it "a rare gift which might have been his saving grace, for whether people are good or bad, useful or harmful, depends not on their moral principles or even their conscious aims, but on the strength of their imagination." This dedicated and immensely intelligent author has strayed from his own strength. □

REVIEW

Rewriting history

By MARK GERSON

A *Year at Hartlebury or The Election*, by Benjamin and Sarah Disraeli, edited by Ellen Henderson and John P. Matthews, University of Toronto Press, 221 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2439 4).

WHEN BENJAMIN DISRAELI and his sister Sarah wrote *A Year at Hartlebury or The Election* in 1833-34, they intended the novel's true authorship to remain a secret. Accordingly, they chose the pseudonyms Cherry and Fair Star and prefaced their story with a note establishing the Stars as newlyweds recently returned from their honeymoon.

The Disraelis' literary conspiracy remained intact for nearly 150 years and might have survived a further century but for the diligence of the scholars associated with the Disraeli Project at Queen's University. This highly regarded research project, which has as

its aim the publication of Disraeli's complete correspondence (two volumes are already out), is responsible for the new edition of *A Year at Hartlebury*.

Disraeli had good reason for not wanting his involvement with *Hartlebury* widely known. As John P. Matthews recently pointed out, all Disraeli's writing enabled him "to analyze past mistakes and learn from them, to project future ambitions and test them, and to assess his present position between the two." But in *A Year at Hartlebury*, writes Ellen Henderson in one of the two essays that follow the original text in this edition, he was "more honest with himself . . . than anywhere else in his writings." And with his political future far from assured, "he doubtless feared that these youthful musings would be misinterpreted and used as ammunition against him."

This, like much of Disraeli's prose, has strong elements of autobiography. In *Hartlebury*, Aubrey Bohun, like Disraeli, returns from the mysterious Middle East and is impelled by the passage of the Reform Bill to seek a seat in the House of Commons. Bohun's resemblance to his creator ends, however, with the outcome of the ensuing election. Where Disraeli had already lost two consecutive bids to enter Parliament, Bohun squeaks in by a single vote in a borough not unlike the real-life High Wycombe of Disraeli's electoral defeats. (It wasn't until 1837 that Disraeli, after several more failed attempts, won his seat in Parliament.)

As its title suggests, the book takes us through a year with the residents of Hartlebury, a village modelled after the Disraeli's own Bradenham. In the first volume, written with incisive wit and occasional melodrama by Sarah, we're introduced to English country life and to the various characters who people 19th-century Hartlebury. Sarah's portrait of Bohun's cousin, Neville, typifies her ability to paint brief yet consummate character sketches:

Colonel Neville was a fine tall military-looking personage — one of those men who are unanimously declared by their co-mates and contemporaries, to be most gentlemanlike fellows, which means they eat, talk, and dress according to the most approved models, and have the capability of following, where they have not wit enough to lead.

Her description of a country dinner party "consisting of individuals all whose ideas are in common" is delightful: "Every possible combination of conversation has been previously experienced, every train of ideas has exploded a thousand times. . . . Conversation proceeds with the regulated precision of the machine for calculating logarithms."

Formal affairs, "where the dresses, like the fish, seem as if they had come down from town express," simply add "elaborate coiffure and splendid costume" to the preceding formula.

Sarah is Helen Molesworth to Disraeli's Bohun in the book. An early feminist, Helen scoffs at suggestions that she visit London rather than remain "shut up" in the country. " 'But I am not shut up,' said Helen laughing, 'I do what I like, which I could not do in London.' " Later, Helen longs for the excitement a seat in Parliament would bring, "were I a man." But Sarah displays her true view of that hallowed institution or, perhaps, what she feels men have done with it, through Colonel Neville:

The dullest business in the world when you are in. Trying to get in is some amusement. But every man I know in the House tells me he is bored to death. There's Crawford — Crawford could never sleep 'till he got into parliament; and Harry Stairs, he always says it cured his dyspepsia. There is no place in the world where you can sleep so soundly as in the House of Commons.

Of course, the real interest for historians and literary scholars is found in the nine chapters written by Disraeli. Gone for the moment are Sarah's social commentary and her descriptions of life in the provinces. In their place are political philosophy and rough-and-tumble campaigning as Disraeli takes us through Bohun's election campaign. Here we find Disraeli's view of the Whigs: A "party of political swindlers" who should be removed from power "at any price" as "the dismemberment of the empire [would be] the necessary consequence of the Whigs long remaining in office."

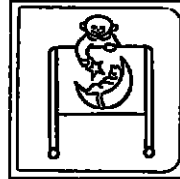
The campaign that wins Bohun the hearts and votes of the electors of Fanchester is filled with the kind of politicking that would not be foreign to today's backroom politicians. Babies are kissed, promises made, and alliances forged. Bohun's victory owes much to an "anyone but Jenkins and Prigmore" coalition that is reminiscent of the conspiracies that marked the recent Progressive Conservative leadership convention.

Yet the electoral process, with its deceit and trickery, is the price of victory, and it clearly makes Disraeli uncomfortable. "Well this is life, this is excitement, and that is all I care about," reflects Bohun on polling day. "And yet there is something petty and vulgar in all this bustle, which half disgusts me."

In the final section of the book, melodrama returns with even greater force as Sarah disposes of Bohun through a twist of the plot considered excessive by her

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brother. "Poetical justice is all stuff," he replied to her queries about an ending that leaves Bohun murdered by his neighbour, George Gainsborough. Gainsborough, who was being black-mailed by Bohun over some unsavoury, unspecified incident in the Middle East, remains unpunished, despite Sarah's recorded uncertainty over his deserved fate.

Here again, Bohun's tale differs from Disraeli's. For Disraeli lived, not only to write again, but to lead the Tory party he once dismissed as moribund to triumph as one of Britain's greatest prime ministers. □

REVIEW

An orchid in exile

By RUPERT SCHIEDER

Redney: A Life of Sara Jeannette Duncan, by Marian Fowler, House of Anansi, illustrated, 336 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88784 099 X).

SINCE THIS BOOK arrived I've been experimenting, trying out the novelist's name on quite literate friends, acquaintances, and others met by chance, and I've been surprised at the amount of negative response: "Sara Jeannette Duncan. Who is she? What has she written?" Perhaps I should not have been disappointed. I think I heard about her first, if my memory isn't betraying me again, when James Reaney read a characteristically witty graduate paper on her fiction in the late 1940s. I realize, however, that her name seldom appears before a general public, and relatively rarely even before an academic one. Of her 22 books only *The Imperialist* is available, in paperback. She has not been considered important enough for the Canadian Writers series of the numerous Twayne studies. Checking the Canadian literature offerings in the calendars of universities across the country, I find that Trent alone insists that students read her. Elsewhere her work may be included as an option.

Although understandable, this relative obscurity is regrettable, for Sara Jeannette Duncan is, in specific areas, one of Canada's most rewarding writers. In addition to a great deal of profes-

sional, still interesting journalism, she produced 22 books, one indubitably first rate and at least four others that are quite successful.

Thomas Tausky of the University of Western Ontario has made an appreciated contribution to the study of her work with a useful selection from her journalism and an admirable, detailed study of her journalism and fiction, obviously aimed at an academic audience. Now Marian Fowler's new book for a wider public is to be welcomed. Its popular approach and its emphasis are indicated by the two parts of the title: *Redney: A Life of Sara Jeannette Duncan*. The first, the nickname, suggests the intimate, the familiar; the second, the biographical. Marian Fowler's credentials are solid. She received the Canadian Biography Award in 1979, and in 1982 *The Embroidered Tent* appeared, her account of the lives of five gentlewomen in early Canada. Both the bibliography and the text of this new work evince the writer's extensive research into and her detailed knowledge of her subject's life and the successive societies that determined her reactions and writings. Faced with such a mass of material, Marian Fowler strives to find themes and symbols that will provide a unifying structure for her biography. Her feminist concern is also evident. Like Leon Edel in his work on Henry James, she is prone to derive biographical "facts" from the fiction. She also indulges in frequently imaginary reconstruction of her subject's thought at crucial moments, marked by the frequent use of "perhaps," "no doubt," and "surely." The style is mixed; stiff phrases such as "her chosen field of endeavour" read oddly with "bossing her younger brothers," a "well-heeled family," "she fell for Joaquin Miller," and the repeated "thrilled."

Fortunately the life, as Marian Fowler sees it, is presented graphically and entertainingly. Born in Brantford, Ont., in 1861 of Scottish and Ulster Irish parents, into a solid, prosperous, conventional, middle-class, Protestant society, Duncan spent a great deal of her driving energy attempting to demonstrate her unconventionality and to dominate the societies she encountered. Her egotism and ruthless ambition and her conscious use of important men, often functioning as what Fowler labels "father-figures," served her climb, difficult in the 1880s for a woman, in the newspaper world, from the Brantford paper, through the Toronto *Globe*, to the New Orleans World's Fair, to the Washington *Post*, and to Montreal and Ottawa. In 1890 her first book, *A Social Departure*,

appeared in England and the United States, and was "an instant success"; she attained the "social peak" that she coveted with her presentation at the court of Queen Victoria, and made a triumphant return to Canada. That same year she left Canada for good.

For on a world tour — typically, deliberately, "wrong way" round — she had met Everard Cotes, assistant superintendent of Calcutta's Indian Museum, with impeccable British connections. Seeing him as in Fowler's phrases, "a gateway to two worlds," "the mysterious East" and "the civilized world of British custom and ceremony which her Brantford upbringing had taught her to revere," she married him in 1891. Then began the exile from which she never really returned. The years between 1891 and her death in 1922 were spent chiefly in Calcutta, Simla, the Himalayan summer capital of the British raj, and England. This absence may account, in part, for her relative obscurity in Canada. Fowler also sees it as the beginning of the decay of her creativity: "the long drought began." And she quotes as the epigraph to her biography a sentence from one of Sara Jeannette Duncan's short novels: "A human being isn't an orchid, he must draw something from the soil he grows in."

Realizing that Everard Cotes would not provide that "gateway to two worlds," she became disillusioned and reactionary. Fowler sees her writing from this time on as a source of money and a defence against the realities of her disappointing existence. Certainly her output was steady: 22 books in the last 32 years of her life. All are not of the same quality. *The Imperialist* stands securely with the best of Canadian fiction. Several of the others are consistently praised, among them *An American Girl in London*, *Cousin Cinderella*, and *The Simple Adventures of a Mem Sahib*. At her most accomplished, her work ranks with the finest social comedy, not a large category in Canadian literature. Her treatment of the international theme, with the bright, sensitive, unconventional young woman from the new world reacting to an older civilization, England and India, has resemblances to that of Henry James and W.D. Howells, with whom she cultivated relations. Of her contemporaries in Canada only Gilbert Parker and Lily Dougall attempted this subject with any success. In the narrower area of the novel concerned with the inextricable relation between politics and social, economic, and religious facts, she is superior, rivalled only by Francis William Grey in his important *Curé of St. Philippe* (1898) and by Margaret Adeline Brown in her lesser but inter-

esting *My Lady of the Snows* (1908). As a detached and at the same time committed observer, although only one of her novels has a Canadian setting, she makes and keeps the reader conscious of Canadian assumptions, thought, and speech. At her best she is astute in conception, deft in execution, and thoroughly entertaining. She never has been nor is likely to be popular, but Fowler's new biography should introduce her to a wider public that would find her work rewarding. □

REVIEW

Sins of omission

By WAYNE GRADY

The Cambridge Guide to English Literature, edited by Michael Stapleton, Cambridge University Press, 993 pages, \$42.00 cloth (ISBN 0 521 26022 1).

THE PUBLICATION OF the new *Cambridge Guide* must come as a blow to anyone who has been inclined lately to feel a certain amount of satisfaction at the extent to which Canadian literature is being extolled, or even noticed, abroad. The *Guide's* 3,100 entries purport to include "the literatures of Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, the Caribbean, and Africa": in fact the book is a meticulous compendium of the literary trivia of England from Aaron (in *Titus Andronicus*) to Yvain and from Beowulf to about the mid-1970s (the most recent Graham Greene novel mentioned is *The Human Factor*), a grudging admittance to the existence of some meritorious writing in the United States up to and including Mary McCarthy, and a myopic insult to the immense body of writing that has come from Canada, Australia, the West Indies, and Africa since the end of the Second World War.

The following are the *only* eight Canadian entries in a volume that is supposed to represent the accumulated wisdom of one of the two greatest universities in the English-speaking world: Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, Stephen Leacock, A.M. Klein, Irving Layton, Morley Callaghan, Earle Birney, and Lucy Maude Montgomery. Goldwin Smith is acknowledged to have

"eventually settled in Toronto in 1871"; John Galt "stayed for three years" in Ontario; and Malcolm Lowry "married and became a wanderer and a drunk" until "his wife divorced him" in Mexico, whereupon he "acquired another wife and lived in a shack in Dollarton on the coast of British Columbia from 1940 to 1945."

At least Stapleton got Lowry's name right — Clarence Malcolm — which is more than Norah Storey managed in the 1967 edition of the *Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*, in which she called him Malcolm Boden Lowry. But Lowry lived in Dollarton for 14 years, not five — from 1940 to 1954 — an important correction for those of us who like to think of Lowry as at least a *de facto* Canadian novelist: he wrote *Under the Volcano* in Dollarton as well as drafts of the subsequent novels and most of the short stories; his poems exist only in a Canadian edition edited by Earle Birney; his short stories are included only in Canadian anthologies; and most of the scholarship has been written by Canadians. *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* won a Governor General's Award in 1961. Stapleton lists Lowry's posthumous novel *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid* as a book of stories, being very shaky on anything that happened outside London after the death of Queen Victoria.

I belabour Lowry in order to point out that even such facts as are easily accessible (Lowry was a Cambridge student) are often wrong. More esoteric information eludes Stapleton completely. Here is the entire entry for A.M. Klein:

Klein, A(braham) M(oses) 1909 — A.M. Klein was born in Montreal, of an orthodox Jewish family, and was a barrister from 1933 to 1954. One of the 'Montreal Group', he is highly regarded as a poet in Canadian literary circles. Among his books of verse are *Hath not a Jew* (1940), *The Rocking Chair* (1948), and *The Second Scroll* (1951). Klein's poetry is not as yet well known outside Canada.

Neither, apparently, is the fact that Klein died in 1972, that *The Second Scroll* is a novel, nor that there never was such a thing as a Montreal Group. Irving Layton will learn with some dismay that he was "editor of *Preview*, an experimental literary magazine": it was Klein who was associated with the *Preview* Group; Layton was its staunchest and most caustic adversary.

But Layton and Klein and Lowry and the others have less reason to complain than any other Canadian writer living or dead. At least they got in. If there is room for a separate entry on Moth, for example (Don Armado's page in *Love's*

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Terror of the Cocoons, Judy Stubbs. Space-voyagers must find their own answers to why they are "cocooned" in a crewless craft on an unknown course. 56 pp., 1983, pa. \$6.95, cl. \$14.95.

Ginny and the General, Nancy Freeman. A girl learns to cope with life while preparing her Golden Retriever for a prize show. 106 pp., 1983, pa. \$8.95, cl. \$18.95.

The Secret of Marie Broussard, Eileen Murphy. Marie's dangerous, emotional, exciting experiences during the Acadian expulsion in the Maritimes of the 1770s. 46 pp., 1983, pa. \$5.95, cl. \$13.95.

Labours Lost), could not room have been found for Mowat or Munro or MacLennan or Moore or Mitchell, none of whom appear? Do we need to know that Gatty, Margaret (1809-73), was the founder of *Aunt Judy's Magazine* and the daughter of Nelson's chaplain on board the *Victory*? Well, yes we do: but at the expense of Gallant, or Atwood, or Richler, or Levine, or Laurence, or Hodgins, or Frye, or on and on?

With courses on Canadian literature being taught in some 40 universities in Germany alone, with Canadian novelists invited to be writers-in-residence at universities in Italy, with at least three Canadian writers having been nominated for the Nobel Prize, surely one has reason to expect more than this from so grand an undertaking. In the brief preface to this tome Norman Cousins reminds us "that Dr. Johnson once defined a lexicographer as 'a harmless drudge.'" Mr. Stapleton's disservice to Canadian letters is far from harmless. □

REVIEW

Solid Gould

By VICKI POSTL

Glenn Gould Variations: By Himself and His Friends, edited by John McGreevy, Doubleday, 319 pages, \$20.00 cloth (ISBN 0 385 18995 8).

THE EXTRAORDINARY phenomenon that was Glenn Gould has yielded a marvelous collection of essays and photographs, brought together by television producer John McGreevy and published one year after Gould's death at the age of 50. Many facets of this reclusive and controversial artist are revealed in these pages: his ideas on performing, particularly those on the uses of electronic technology, are intriguing and provocative even if the results — recordings, videotapes, documentaries, and film scores — are uneven. His childhood and musical training, his brief career as a concert pianist, his work in radio and for television, his musical compositions, including the film scores for *Slaughterhouse Five* and the yet-to-be-released *The Wars*, are all described, discussed, and analyzed by an interna-

tional collection of writers, musicians, critics, and friends.

The essays divide into several types. Primarily anecdotal are "The Truth About a Legend," by Leonard Bernstein, "Growing Up Gould," by Robert Fulford, and "Memories: Glenn Gould 1932-1982," by Robert Silverman. "Reminiscences," by John Lee Roberts, provides many details about Gould's fruitful relationship with the CBC, and "Apollonian," by Joseph Roddy, which first appeared in 1960 as a *New Yorker* profile, are more comprehensively biographical. Analytical essays such as "The Music Itself: Glenn Gould's Contrapuntal Vision," by Edward W. Said, and John Beckwith's "Shattering a Few Myths," put Gould's work into perspective. Beckwith and Gould both studied piano with Alberto Guerrero, and several of Gould's so-called eccentricities — his use of a hot-water hand bath to limber the fingers before performance, seating himself low in relation to the keyboard, using the finger muscles in a particular way for very precise, fast finger technique, and performing Bach on the piano in a harpsichord-like fashion — were actually taught to a whole class of Toronto students.

William Littler's essay, "The Quest for Solitude," focuses on the hermetical aspect of Gould's personality, mentioned by virtually all the writers in this collection. It was, says Littler, "a quest for a kind of isolation that permitted intellectual concentration and control Whether in a hotel room in Hamburg, a cottage on Lake Simcoe, a penthouse in Toronto, or its extension, a studio with 24-hour room service in the suburbs, Glenn Gould sought out private environments whose very banality fostered the life of the mind he so actively lived." Gould's CBC documentaries, "The Idea of the North," "The Latecomers" (about Newfoundland), and "The Quiet in the Land" (about the Mennonites of Red River), are subjects that Littler feels allowed Gould to explore his own obsession with isolation. This self-imposed solitary attitude allowed Gould the luxury of taking "the infinite pains that are traditionally ascribed to genius."

Gould's own prolific writings haven't been neglected. Five essays are included, each revealing different sides of Gould's output. "The Art of the Fugue" is a musicological article about Gould's favourite composer, Bach. "Stokowski in Six Scenes" describes in endearing detail Gould's childhood encounter with Stokowski in Frankfurt ("In the beginning, the dream was more like a nightmare. I was eight when 'Fantasia' hit Toronto, and I hated every minute of it") as well as his eventual CBC-Radio

documentary and a performance of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto with him. "Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould," reprinted from *The Piano Quarterly*, shows Gould's tongue-in-cheek style: "Some of my best friends are critics, but I'm not sure I'd want my piano to be played by one"; reveals his disappointment with the final product of *Slaughterhouse Five*; and discusses everything from the nuclear disarmament movement to Marshall McLuhan. "Toronto," the text of a television documentary, reveals much about Gould's puritanical leanings. "As an anti-athletic, non-concertgoing teetotaler . . . The Last Puritan," Gould always felt that "Toronto The Good" was a very nice nickname." North York "represented the North American suburban dream at its best. And I love it!"

"The Well-Tempered Listener," a conversation between Gould and Curtis Davis, clarifies Gould's approach to performing and recording. "I think it is very difficult to make all of those things, all of those incredibly complicated statements of Bach, available (in a live performance). I think it's impossible to do it by any means other than the phonograph and through recording." Gould thought of music recording in terms of film technology — using multiple perspectives by employing variously placed microphones, splicing, adding reverb, fading in and out, providing a sense of motion unavailable in a concert hall — and conversely, his radio documentaries are constructed like musical compositions, employing counterpoint (several voices edited to speak at once) and concepts of musical form: "I want you to pay special attention to this next part. It's in ABACADACABA form."

An intriguing aspect of this collection is the way in which several writers each refer to the same incidents and personal quirks, such as Gould's habit of dressing in multiple layers of warm clothing, even in summer, his hypochondria, his fear of flying, his lengthy late-night phone calls, his search for the perfect piano (Gould's unpleasant humming while playing was in direct proportion to his liking of the piano being used), his love of sharing his performances (friends were invited to view his videotapes and listen to his recordings), and his love of musical quizzes and games. True to the book's title, each writer provides a different viewpoint or image of these habits, which adds a depth of dimension for the reader unavailable in a standard biography. Similarly, the 48 full-page photographs, most taken of Gould at the keyboard, show him in various stages of concentration and ecstasy.

For the most part, McGreevy was able to avoid sentimentally reminiscent essays, although Yehudi Menuhin's "Glenn Gould: The Creator," which closes the book, gushes overmuch for my taste. On the other hand, no overtly critical essays were included, and there are many writers, such as Harvey Sachs in *Virtuoso*, who have criticized what they considered Gould's self-indulgent, egocentric posings. *Glenn Gould Variations*, taken as a whole, provides the musician, the fan, and the general reader with a multi-dimensional, highly readable insight into the creative process and its outward manifestations, as well as discerning accounts of friendship and collaboration. □

REVIEW

A fine madness

By LUCILLE
KING-EDWARDS

Animal Spirits: Stories to Live By, by David McFadden, illustrated by Greg Curnoe, Coach House Press, \$30.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88910 205 8).

a pair of baby lambs, by David McFadden, The Front Press (78½ Spruce Street, Number 11, Toronto M5A 2J1), 32 pages, \$4.00 paper (no ISBN).

REACHING BACK in time, David McFadden has come up with a collection of stories from what one might call his early period, the late 1960s and early '70s. (There are two exceptions in the collection that date from the late '70s.) Early McFadden: a touch of whimsy, even madness, to leaven his "suburbs of a typical Canadian city." One wonders why McFadden has not yet won the Stephen Leacock award for his books of humour; they are dark, but then so were Leacock's.

Animal Spirits is set in Hamilton, Ontario, and the stories abound with descriptions of McFadden's native city. They are not, however, all of a piece. The first three conform to the title: a cat with its head crushed like a lightbulb, a dog's lover, and a man who metamorphoses into a cat, all within the commonplace setting of suburban Toronto. The other stories, except for the last, are

an on-going saga of one Brownie Bananas, closely related, one would guess, to David McFadden — they share certain biographical facts, and certainly Hamilton.

McFadden's pursuit of the little guy mentality, which takes us through convolutions of sentimentality, sex, egotism, and hard facts — the phone booths are gone from the corner by the ex-Terminal Hotel — is often touching, sometimes dull, and now and then depressing as we see ourselves as Brownie the guilty owner of a beautiful but stolen Indian head-dress, Brownie underpricing a cripple selling Christmas cards, or Brownie praising, then disparaging, his profession of proofreader. There is much that is gratuitous in the Brownie stories, and they lack the wild Bunuel quality of the opening and closing stories of the book, as well as the deft modulations that one finds in McFadden's earlier lake books: *A Trip Around Lake Erie* and *A Trip Around Lake Huron*. It is at the point where he weds realism and surrealism that he is at his best in this volume.

Animal Spirits can't be discussed only in the light of McFadden's stories, for what makes it a truly wonderful book to own are the drawings by Greg Curnoe. Curnoe and McFadden conspired earlier

to produce *The Great Canadian Sonnet* in the form of a little big book; in *Animal Spirits* they have produced a large-type adult picture book. Curnoe's visual humour enhances the text while often adding new dimensions, as the drawings, although captioned from the text, don't always follow the plot of the stories. One such caption reads "red," taken from the sentence: "The driver had quite a few red pimples on his face." The drawing is of an artist's palette of reds. Another caption, titled "round about midnight," treats us to a portrait of Thelonius Monk, who does not figure in the story. In this play and dissonance between story and picture McFadden and Curnoe have added much to the humour and depth of the book. Brownie, as he is pictured by Curnoe complete with idiot grin, will never dim from the memory. Even so, this collection of stories is definitely not every Canadian's bottle of beer; they are as eccentric as they are sound.

Although he often dips his pen in the stream of prose, David McFadden is primarily a poet, and although his early poetry strikes a similar balance between realism and whimsy, some of his more recent work, notably *A New Romance*, and the long poem "Night of Endless Radiance," catapult him into a different

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category, "Night of Endless Radiance" appears in a collection of three long poems — the other two are by Ken Norris and Jim Mele — included in the newest issue of *Cross Country* magazine, subtitled *New Romantics*. There are many long-standing McFadden readers who do not adapt well to his new material which, while retaining some humour and hard-headedness, seeks to soar into the world of imagination and feeling.

One is tempted, and I think not wrongly so, to put these recent long poems into the same category as Wallace Stevens's "The Idea of Order at Key West" and W. C. Williams's "The Desert Music," for they are about the poet exploring the very source of his own imagination. In "Night of Endless Radiance," night becomes the metaphor for a music that defies understanding and interpretation. It is a poem of and about the imagination, in which the borders of thought and feeling are blurred as the voice of the poet slides through the various keys of creation, from innocence to consciousness, and from music to non-musical singing:

*An absence of music, not made
by blowing into brass tubes or hollow
reeds,
an unforced absence, a vacuum strayed
from the myriad influence of
surrounding music,
storming from the radiance*

*...
producing a music
too slippery to cling to or even to
apprehend.*

It is here that McFadden begins to combine thought, feeling, intelligence, and the deft use of language to make us realize that we are reading poetry in the upper scale. There is little being written in Canada that can touch the quality of this poem. It is a poetry antithetical in many ways to the earlier McFadden, and to the poetry of the '50s that "...so much depended upon." It is a poetry not easily accessible to those who have grown accustomed to realism in poetry as well as prose. In some ways it is truly anti-modern, although it does not shirk modern elements in its content.

In his introduction to *New Romantics* Jim Mele quotes Brian Hepworth as saying that the Romantic was one "absorbed by the infinite dimension of a single moment." It is an adequate definition of this long poem by McFadden; the poem continuously circles around and rides through "the night of endless radiance."

Quixotically another small chapbook by McFadden has also appeared on the scene. The two poems in a pair of *baby lambs* are obviously written in a different mood from "Night of Endless Radiance." Under the guise of a tall

tale, "The Cow That Swam Lake Ontario" seems more a continuation of the animal stories of *Animal Spirits*. It takes an outrageous look at our attempts to render animals in a sentimental light, belying our own sentimentality about death, and our hypocrisy when faced with it. The tough ending of the poem comes as a relief. The other poem, which already toys with the phrase "night of endless radiance," is more serious in intent, albeit whimsical in presentation.

These three manifestations of McFadden should remind us of the range of his virtuosity and his deep cunning, for he has, as does the mind of his poem,

*An ability to entertain the night as a
trained bear entertains the crowd. . . . □*

REVIEW

Glorious mud

By GEORGE GALT

Everson at Eighty, by R. G. Everson, Oberon Press, 136 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 481 7) and \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 482 5).

FROM TWO BRIEF meetings I remember Ron Everson's bright, observing eyes and his rich, unstoppable monologues. Being acquainted left me curious to see how he could distil that rush of words into a poem. Perhaps because in person he struck me as somewhat pernickety and censorious, I didn't have very high expectations for his work.

How wrong I was. Everson is, as Al Purdy says in the introduction to this book, "a poet of high excellence." He knows how to grow poems, organically out of the whole earth, how to let the world swarm in his mind's eye, blotting out ego, and also how to stand astride this little ball of a planet and report what he sees with extra-terrestrial vision. Mostly, though, he is remarkably terrestrial, letting us feel the mud between his toes, 80-year-old mud, five-million-year-old toes, always the infinite layers of history that he sorts and shuffles for new meaning.

Here he is in "Haycocks" with his toes in that mud:

*At seventeen, when camping, startled
awake*

*by a hoot owl, I left my fellows
to wade out of the woods into a field
where I leaned back on a haycock, fell
asleep.*

*Waking hours later in a dawn
with the fragrance of mounded grass
(near Oshawa),*

*I half-dreamed an emotion that remains
mystical and unexplained as Asia.*

A man moves through his life on these pages, in the lines and between. It's an intimate book, selected by Purdy from 50 years of writing. The images are apt yet startling, the poems as finely crafted as any now being written.

Everson the world traveller is here, on the Pacific, in Mexico, in Africa, and in the cold jungles of Canada:

*Grey autumn dawn
I shuddered from the chill
of our first quarrel.*

*Furiously pushing the canoe from shore
away from our scrubland home,
I paddled the boat around a hill
into a sheltered inlet where I found
sharp ice, thin as a razor blade,
slicing the throat of summer.*

That poem also suggests Everson the domestic man, Everson the naturalist, and Everson the hunter, the tender of emotional trap-lines laid in unlikely networks through his own heart and mind.

The only pieces I don't much like here are the liberal polemics in favour, for example, of justice for Indians and fair bird shooting. The sentiments are admirable, but in themselves don't make good writing. On the other hand, if these pious statements are the price of the gentle morality running through the other, subtle poems, I'm willing to pay.

The joy of finding, of discovering with astonishment a moment as it opens, informs this book. One feels the exhilaration of being Ron Everson, and



the laughter; also the great love, and more than love's share of sadness, the disappointments, the family illnesses, which he has made into dark, disturbing poems like "View of a Madhouse":

*Curving downward in front of the
window
where they have my lady,
an awning is slowly lowered,
away out toward me and over —
hair thrown forward
above her head
baring her nape
as the whole scene falls on its knees.*

To read a poet like Everson, unrepentantly himself, quietly independent in style, durable yet always supple with sur-

prise, is to be visited with little epiphanies. Eighty years old and still writing strong, young lines, he deserves more readers, and our gratitude for poems like "My Sympathy is with the Fish":

*Beak like a long, thin Austrian cigar,
the Great Blue Heron
stands with wings folded on high
shoulders
in old-fashioned opera-cloak style.*

*A man about mangroves, he leans down
delicately into the water as though
stooping for a light at a cigar counter.*

*Now he straightens crookedly
in a tall gentlemanly flourish,
smoking a death-pale puff of fish.* □

REVIEW

Women and words

By LIBBY SCHEIER

Primitive Offensive, by Dionne Brand, Williams-Wallace International, 59 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88795 012 14).

A Gathering Instinct, by Betsy Warland, Williams-Wallace International, 60 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88795 007 8).

Life: Still, by Gay Allison, Williams-Wallace International, 60 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88795 011 6).

DIONNE BRAND is one of the best young poets writing in Canada today. One could add that she is one of the best young black poets, or one of the best young woman poets, but the qualifiers are not necessary. She's simply one of our best young poets.

It's useful, however, to point out that she is a black, female writer, because black writers are so little known in mainstream Canadian literary circles, and it's time their work received wider attention. Brand is not new on the literary scene. *Primitive Offensive* is her fourth collection of poems. Her third book, *Winter Epigrams/Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia* was issued at the same time. These follow *Forz Day Morning* (1979) and *Earth Magic*, a book of children's poetry published in 1980.

Primitive Offensive is a long poem composed of 14 cantos. Its tone is serious, sometimes sombre and violent, its subject matter the search for a black history and identity, and for a commonality of spirit within today's worldwide black diaspora. It reaches for and achieves an epic and mythic quality. The poem begins by evoking the figure of an old black African woman, an "ancestor," whom Brand urges to speak, to tell the "name of our tribe." The third canto evokes the "dismembered woman" who is later identified with the "dismembered continent" of Africa. The poet's voice sometimes confronts her ancestor, sometimes becomes the ancestor's voice, as the poet goes on her "primordial journey."

Brand's use of rhythmic repetition is extremely effective in creating a kind of driving chant, a song of desire and longing for lost truths. The chanting pushes forward the descriptive and moving narrative; the reader is pulled into the intensity of the poet's search. The language is sharp and vibrant, the imagery original and evocative, the rhythmic phrasing beautifully achieved.

One gains an even greater appreciation for Brand's talents if one compares *Primitive Offensive* to *Winter Epigrams/Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal*, work done at approximately the same time. *Epigrams* contains poems of a very different sort and shows Brand to be a poet of considerable range and diversity. The poetry in "Winter Epigrams," the first section of the book, is funny, witty, and terse, railing against Canadian weather as only a transplanted West Indian can do. "Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal" are also humorous, but the humour here is biting, pointed, political. Brand carries off these poems with great intelligence, style, and wit, avoiding tiresome rhetoric and posturing. It is political poetry of the best kind and in its adept combining of human and social (or personal and political) themes, reminds the reader of Brecht.

One hopes Brand's fine poetry will begin to receive the kind of attention it deserves.

Betsy Warland's language is spare and strong — she has a point to make, a clear picture to paint, or a forceful emotion to convey in her first book, *A Gathering Instinct*. She experiments with language, but there's no form for form's sake here. Art is at the service of ideas and feelings.

Her subject matter moves from clever feminist poetry that is sometimes humorous and sometimes caustic to musical poems that mimic the rhythms of nature or love-making. "I Am Unwrapping Myself from You" and "Who-Who-Hum" are two of the best

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sound-oriented poems. "Who-Who-Hum" does not sit on the page too well, but is very effective when Warland performs it.

Warland sees herself as a poet who is actively searching and developing her language and her voice, and this book is therefore somewhat uneven. The advantage to the reader is in seeing the poet in process of her search. Warland is particularly interested in reinventing language to be women's own language — and within that, in exploring the specifics of a lesbian sensibility, as she explained in the Lesbian Writing Workshop at the Women and Words conference in Vancouver. The poem "Language of My Own" brings to mind the work of Judy Chicago:

*Then I dream
dream of finding my old body
limp in the lake like a memory
. . . while*

*out of the bud
of my new vagina grows
a translucent hand
which begins to compose
pure poems
in a language of my own*

The search is exciting and I look forward to Warland's next books, to see where

her exploration of women's language takes her.

Gay Allison's first collection is gentler and more meditative in tone, as the title *Life: Still* suggests, but she shares many of Warland's concerns. She has a gift for humour that is most evident in her feminist poems, and a lyrical intensity in several of her poems about nature and personal relationships.

Some of her best poems depart from the gentle tone, speaking in stronger, more explicit language. "We Cannot Speak," about Allison's mother, is powerful in its imagery and emotion:

*we sit in rock silence
my arthritic tongue
crippled as your hands*

*. . . .
I am the antelope in you, mother.
My backbone is yours.*

In "I Feel I Should Tell You," Allison describes herself as a "mad stranger" who "writes about murder . . . sex and obscene positions," whose books contain "clippings of axe-slashing and pubic hair." Tellingly, the poem says, "The woman who writes in my book/is not me. She's a mad stranger . . . /I only hope they catch her some day." One hopes Allison allows herself more such poems in the future.

Like Warland's book, Allison's is somewhat uneven. Both would have been neater if some poems had been left out: a stronger editor's hand would have been useful. But there is considerable talent evident in all three books, and the promise of interesting work in the future. □

IN BRIEF

The Chaperon, by Kurt Palka, McClelland & Stewart, 306 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6937 5). In 1864, French troops overthrew the republican government of Mexico and installed a Hapsburg prince and his wife as heads of the new Mexican empire. After only three years the deposed Benito Juárez was again president of Mexico, millions of francs and tens of thousands of French and Mexican lives had been spent, the Emperor Maximilian had been executed, the Empress Charlotte had gone mad, and Napoleon III's Second Empire had been irreparably weakened. In another three years it, too, would fall.

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The Chaperon is the fictional memoir of one Colonel Hubert de Moy de Chevalier, a professional soldier and the intermediary through whom Napoleon III pulls the strings that control his puppet rulers in Mexico. Although using a fictitious character to narrate a true story is not an original device, Palka uses it to great effect. Hubert's presence at nearly every stage of the three-year affair gives him a unique perspective on the Mexican misadventure and on the motives — gold and glory — of its principal players. Hubert cannot be everywhere at once in a story that takes place on several fronts, and as Napoleon's emissary he is best equipped to relate the imperial side of the drama. But the memoir format gives Palka the freedom to have Hubert retrospectively piece together events that

have occurred in his absence, and Palka's handling of these instances is remarkably uncontrived.

Expertly and elegantly written with a distinct 19th-century flavour, *The Chaperon* is more than popular history. Through Hubert, Palka explores the morality of soldiering, of unquestioningly obeying orders: "Doubts about his profession are an indulgence no soldier, and least of all an officer, can afford," Hubert reflects in the book's opening pages. By the disastrous end of his Mexican experience he realizes that in suppressing those doubts he has harmed not only himself but those he was supposed to be serving. "Now I see that I have been right instinctively, and have merely taught myself to be wrong."

— MARK GERSON

INTERVIEW

Science fiction for children,
says Monica Hughes, helps to take the
terror out of growing up

By ROSALIND SHARPE

MONICA HUGHES was born in England in 1925, educated in Scotland (where she studied mathematics at the University of Edinburgh), and lived in Egypt and Rhodesia before coming to Canada en route to Australia. She got no further than Ottawa, where she was diverted by an interesting job with the National Research Council, later marrying a Canadian and moving to Edmonton, where she and her husband have raised four children, the youngest of whom is 19. She is probably best known for her science fiction for adolescents, which she began writing in her mid-40s, although last year she won the Canada Council's prize for children's literature for a contemporary novel, *Hunter in the Dark* (Clarke Irwin). One of Canada's most prolific children's writers, she has three books being published this fall: *Space Trap* (Groundwood Books), *My Name Is Paula Popowich* (James Lorimer), and *Ring-Rise, Ring-Set* (Methuen). During a recent visit to Toronto she was interviewed by Rosalind Sharpe:

Books in Canada: You write for children. What childhood experiences influenced you?

Monica Hughes: I remember that when I was six or seven years old I spent two

years at a wonderful school in London. In addition to the usual reading and writing, we were taught about cuneiform letters and hieroglyphics, and about ancient mythology, and we were taken to the British Museum to see the Magna Carta and the Domesday Book. We were constantly reading or being read to —



Monica Hughes

tales from the Norse sagas, I remember. Looking back, it seems to me that right back then I discovered that words and the telling of stories had always been part of everyday human experience.

My classroom in that school was

stocked with all the works of E. Nesbit, who rapidly became a favourite. She was a remarkable Edwardian woman who was married to a good-for-nothing husband and raised her family on the proceeds of her writing. That was amazing for a woman in those days, but what is even more amazing is that you never sense any bitterness in any of her stories. She had an enormous influence on me. She wrote about the "gossamer veil that separates the worlds of reality and magic." I've always loved that magic world, and I still love reading fantasy.

BiC: And yet you write science fiction, which you are careful to distinguish from fantasy. What's the difference?

Hughes: Science fiction has a very clear set of widely accepted rules. It's understood that you must abide by all the laws of the known universe: the laws of thermo-dynamics, the laws of matter and energy, and so on. The fiction has to be feasible in terms of what we know about science. Fantasy is a genre in which you create your own universe. Having established its laws, however, you should abide by them. That's what distinguishes good fantasy from sloppy fantasy. Ursula Leguin, Frank Herbert, and J.R.R. Tolkien are all good fantasy writers in this sense. Personally, I feel more comfortable as a writer with the known equations of science fiction. It's logical, practical. I'm interested in the whys-and-wherefores of things — all sorts of things.

BiC: How did you come to write specifically for young adults?

Hughes: I got a how-to book from the library! That's not unusual for me, and in fact when I took this particular book home I had no idea that I was meeting my future. It led me to the very impressive world of modern children's literature — say post-late-1960s — which up until then I'd had no idea about. As I discovered it, I got more and more excited, and I thought, This is it, this is what I want to do.

I'd written a bit before. Years ago, I tried writing articles, which I hated, and I started a couple of adult novels, not very good, nothing publishable. But this felt quite different.

I feel that children's literature is incredibly important. I get annoyed when people — critics especially — regard it as a second-class cousin of the adult form. The kind of books children read influences the kind of people they become, and also of course the kind of books they read as adults.

BiC: Do you find yourself having to simplify your ideas for your readers?

Hughes: In terms of structure and vocabulary, I certainly don't find myself making compromises. I don't think of a sentence and then simplify it before I

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type it. At the level of emotions, I suppose if I were writing for adults I would make some things more covert. The emotional interplay could be enacted at a deeper level. But I've been surprised. In one of my books, a human girl is mutated so that she looks and functions differently from — in some ways better than — human beings. When humans meet her, they react with suspicion and even hostility. I suppose what that book is partly about, though it didn't really occur to me in these terms when I was writing it, is prejudice. I've talked to grade-five kids who had obviously understood that, and thought about the book on quite a deep level.

BiC: *Issues such as prejudice, or damage to the environment and its consequences, or questions of personal morality are often near the surface in your novels. Do you set out with any deliberate intention to teach?*

Hughes: I have never sat down and said, This is an issue I want young readers to address. The plot and characters are the main things. Most of my stories start with a what-if question, very often arising from an item I see in the newspapers. What if people lived under the sea? What would you do, how would you react, if you really did see a UFO? Those are my starting points, not "How can I present prejudice in a way that's relevant and real for young people?"

Even in *Hunter in the Dark*, where the hero, who wants desperately to go off alone on a hunting trip, is battling leukemia, the main motivation was not to show a young man facing courageously up to a deadly disease. The main idea in that story was the solitary hunting trip. For the purposes of the plot, the threat hanging over his life has to be real, but he also has to be fit at the time when he's actually in the bush. So leukemia was a practical choice, not a moral one. Obviously, a number of issues then arise; when they do, and can be dealt with naturally and unobtrusively, that's fine.

I don't care for "problem" novels, which deal with, say, divorce in totally realistic terms, in precisely the sort of setting where a young reader might be. Does a book dealing with the circumstances surrounding one particular fictitious divorce help other children of divorced parents? I think that if young people recognize the emotions they may be feeling themselves — loneliness, rejection, uncertainty — in a totally different setting, then that's a more challenging, and perhaps a more constructive exercise.

What I would like to provide, rather than explicit guidance, is an old-fashioned sense of heroism, the idea that sometimes there's more than just self-

interest at stake. I suppose this again goes back to my Norse sagas. I think that larger-than-life figures who inspire us to ennoble ourselves and make ourselves better people, without necessarily spelling out how to do it, are lacking in today's world.

BiC: *Quite often your hero or heroine is in love. Almost all of your books have some romantic interest at some level. Why?*

Hughes: Actually, I'm torn two ways about this. Part of me says, I should go into that more because kids are so wrapped up in it; the other part says, I shouldn't go into that more, because kids are already wrapped up in it enough. There's so much emphasis on personal beauty and sexual fulfilment everywhere — on TV, in advertising, in movies — that in the end I feel I don't want to add my voice to it all. I try to make my characters as believable as possible, and beyond that I try to make them — the goodies, at least — into nice people in a rounded sort of way.

Writing science fiction, of course, gives one licence to play fast and loose with stereotypes and expectations. A critic once complained that in one of my books, set in the future, the heroine was still in the kitchen. In fact, that was

deliberate. I rather feel that if ever our planet were seriously threatened, women would quickly lose all the advantages they've gained in the good times.

Incidentally, when I first started writing, I was told that giving books a heroine rather than a hero was the kiss of death. Apparently girls don't mind reading about and identifying with heroes, but boys object to identifying with heroines. Well, I objected to that, so I gave my books both, and I don't think they've suffered for it.

BiC: *What do you think fiction — science fiction — can do for your young readers?*

Hughes: I can only truly say what it does for me, and assume that perhaps it does the same for them. It opens up a window out of the mundane into the extraordinary. It can take you into every possible kind of world, even into the past or the future. You can trust it. It becomes a friend.

Claude Lévi-Strauss once said that mythology "explicated the terrifying." I think growing up can be terrifying, and fiction, especially very imaginative fiction, can explicate it — make it less frightening — much as mythical tales made the world less frightening for our ancestors. □

COOKBOOKS

The theme of this year's cookbooks is inventiveness: surprising sauces, unusual tourtière, and have you ever had *Ham Wellington*?

By DuBARRY CAMPAU

RECENTLY I WAS at a dinner party with five other women, each of whom is highly successful in her career. The meal had been prepared by our hostess, and after sincerely complimenting her on it we continued to talk of food, what to do with it, and how to eat it. One of the women said, "We're all interested in cooking — why don't we get together and write a cookbook?" To my amazement and horror her idea was taken up enthusiastically by everyone but me. And that, dear readers, is how a whole lot of cookbooks get born.

Those same women also happen to be interested in travelling, but it wouldn't have occurred to them to cooperate on a guide to Europe or South America. And although they all have charmingly furnished houses, they wouldn't presume to

be didactic in print about interior decoration. But writing about cooking seems to be fair game, and anyone so venturesome as to have discovered that Worcestershire Sauce on a poached egg gives it a zing is willing to fill in for Fanny Farmer.

So do look at the qualifications of the authors of the next batch of recipes that tempts you — and do check them out to see that they're not handing you just another rehash of Kraft commercials.

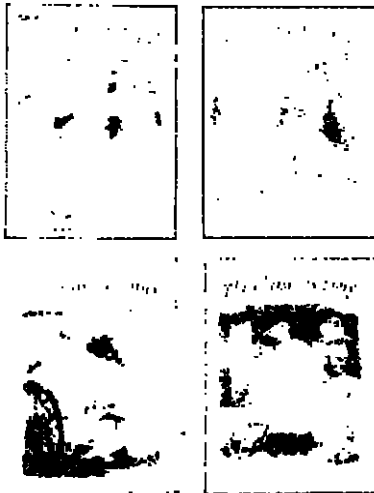
For instance: the authors of *The Pie's the Limit* (Penguin, 158 pages, \$9.95 paper), Judy Wells and Rick Johnson, run a catering company in Toronto that specializes in savoury pies. That gives me some confidence in them — and it is well deserved. Savoury pies can give a whole new dimension to your cooking reper-



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toire because, as far as I'm concerned, everything tastes better if it's got a crust on it. The crust, of course, must be light, flaky, and perfectly suited to its purpose, and this book will enable you to achieve all of that.

The recipes are different and delectable. The one for Savoury Napoleon gave me dyspepsia while I read it but it is irresistible, as it contains cream cheese, whipping cream, mayonnaise, shrimp, and chicken — all topped off with puff pastry. The Canada Cipaille — made with six layers of pastry — has in it chicken, duck, pork, beef, chicken thighs, onions, garlic, leeks, and herbs. Compared to those, the Valencia pasties — with prawns, sole, and pine nuts — seem almost austere.

But these savoury pies go off in all directions — from simple to elaborate, from Sunday-night snacks to ceremonial banquets — and the directions for them are clear and easy to follow.

Any book on food published by Larousse carries its own bona fides, and *The Good and Easy Cookbook*, by Carol Bowen and Jill Spencer (Hurtig, 224 pages, \$29.50 cloth), is no exception but actually is a bargain at the price. It serves two purposes: the primary one, of course, is to instruct you in making good and easy dishes; the second is that of adorning the coffee table. Wouldn't you rather leaf through pictures of gorgeous-looking casseroles, salads, entrees, and desserts than another of Roloff Beny's *Peeks at Persia*? Don't bring it out until after dinner, however, as before any meal it would set an almost impossible expectation of what's to come and would also make your guests ravenously hungry.

One good and easy suggestion I tried is chicken goujons with cucumber sauce, which can be served either as an hors d'oeuvre or, as I did by doubling the recipe, as an elegant supper dish. It is an example of the uncomplicated but sophisticated combinations found throughout the book. Many of the sauces are excellent and surprising and can be served with a variety of fish or meats. A curried mayonnaise also has in it broth, tomato paste, lemon juice, mango chutney, and cream, and can go almost anywhere, including into a rice salad made with green peppers, pineapple, almonds, and raisins.

This is a beautiful book and as useful for its one-dish family meals as for its spectacular (but always easy) dinner-party menus.

The Bon Appetit Dinner Party Cookbook, by Jinx and Jefferson Morgan (Penguin, 276 pages, \$25.00 cloth), is also a handsome volume and published by the magazine *Bon Appetit*, which gives it a definite cachet. It not

only gives menus and recipes, but lists the provisions required for each meal and a timing sequence for its preparation. It also recommends the wines (*always* in the plural) to accompany it.

And I have a hunch that when Jinx and Jeff ask the gang over on Saturday night, that gang is going to be stunned, over-awed, and stuffed. That pair must do nothing but give dinner parties, and they must have a freezer the size of the Ritz. And they must keep running into each other as they pop in and out of the kitchen to look at the schedule they've taped to the fridge to see who's supposed to be doing what and when.

They tell us that they're ever so informal and that they like their guests to join them, with their drinks, while they do those little last-minute things to the meal. Very few of us, I suspect, have kitchens that can accommodate six to eight people and their drinks while we're testing the soufflé and hoping the parsley will stretch all around the platter.

Taken individually, many of the recipes are excellent. There's a watercress sauce that is delicious with any cold meat, a grilled salmon with tarragon mayonnaise that I highly recommend, as I do their eggplant tempura style and



many, many more, especially their fromage blanc as a substitute for cream, if not an improvement on it. But the overall effect is pretentious, and I kept wondering why, if they could afford all of these exotic ingredients and vintage wines, they didn't stretch the budget just a tiny bit more and hire someone to come in to do the finishing touches so they could go into the sitting room and join their friends and have a drink there.

The Absolute Beginner's Cookbook, by Jackie Eddy and Eleanor Clark (Hurtig, 224 pages, \$12.95 paper), is an absolute joy. Normally I am put off by those cute primers for bachelors or brides, but the whole effect of this book is that it is written for people with literate palates who just need a little nudge or shove in the right direction. It is sophisticated and imaginative and can bring joy to your family and friends, while giving you confidence and a bit of a swagger in front of the stove.

I don't know why I never thought of grilling a peanut-butter sandwich, but *they* did and it's delectable. And why not put my eggs in toast cups instead of on top of a flat piece of tanned bread? It's no big deal, once it's mentioned.

The Cobb salad with tomatoes, eggs, bacon, avocado, and blue cheese laid

More coffee-table tomes: from the
Alpine heights of an English perfumist to
the deaths of 126 men at sea

By JOHN OUGHTON

out on lettuce leaves in pie-shaped wedges is fine as it stands, but the nice thing about it is that if you're short on some of those things and happen to have ripe olives, red caviar, and mushrooms on hand, they will do just fine instead. The marinade for flank stake improves even that luscious and underrated cut of beef, and the linguine with crab sauce is a lot easier and more sustaining than sending out for Chinese. But it is the inventiveness of these two women that dazzles me — have you ever had *ham Wellington*? And why not? Do you know how to make a one-dish apple pie, or peach pie for that matter? Well, now you will. No matter how far advanced you may think you are in your pursuit of a gourmet degree, take a little refresher with this course in *Cooking 101*.

Loyalist Foods in Today's Recipes, by Eleanor Robertson Smith (Lancelot Press, 167 pages, \$6.95 paper), will be of special interest to those whose ancestors stayed true to king and country; it also has some historic and sociological appeal. But it's not really an essential prop in the kitchen. It is astonishing to realize how limited the variety of food was in the 18th and 19th centuries in North America, and almost touching to read what lengths women went to to keep it palatable and nourishing. It is genuinely surprising to find that some of their recipes, re-interpreted for modern methods, stand up very well today.

The directions for a variety of breads sound very good indeed, as well as those for scones and muffins. The clam fritters are good and quick and easy, and many kinds of fish could be frittered away in the same fashion. It's unusual to see an otherwise standard recipe for *tourtière* without garlic, but maybe that fragrant plant wasn't available in those days. I like the idea of a cold salmon loaf — and the Loyalists had theirs steamed. The beef stew with herbed dumplings is as good today as it was then, and the directions for chicken in sherry and ginger in lemon sauce has understandably lasted for centuries.

But the real contribution of the book is its evocation of the way of life and the day-to-day problems and pleasures of the 18th-century households.

A Taste of Toronto, by Helen Duclworth and Hetty Blythe (Hounslow Press, 85 pages, \$8.95 paper), might make a pleasant souvenir for a tourist who had a happy visit in the city and ate some amiable food while he was here. As is printed in the introduction, "interwoven with sketches and comments on Toronto life and landmarks is a selection of recipes for fine-tasting yet easily prepared food." It scarcely seems a premise for all that paper and print, but may have sentimental value for some. □

THIS MONTH'S gift books share an ambition uncommon among their kind: to instruct as well as to impress. Often coffee-table books are little more than bound collections of those glossily produced greeting cards with dreamy nature photos and sentimental sentiments that populate card stores. But several of these volumes have serious aims to cast light into previously obscure corners of Canadian history. The general reader may be quite happy to stay out of those corners, but at least the books are available for those who do care.

The most entertaining is *British Columbia: A Celebration* (Hurtig, 208 pages, \$29.95 cloth), with photographs by J.A. Kraulis and text edited by George Woodcock. This collection is both good value (for a large, well-printed book \$29.95 isn't excessive these days) and fascinating reading. Woodcock has ignored the tradition peculiar to "celebrations" of including only praise. Instead, he offers a good selection of history — with excerpts from the



writing of George Vancouver, Simon Fraser, and other founders of B.C. — stories and essays by most of the well-known writers associated with the province, and even a healthy handful of poetry. It's stimulating to read Earle Birney and then early anthropologist Franz Boas, or logger-poet Peter Trower beside Emily Carr.

The photographs are also of consistently high quality. Kraulis emphasizes nature rather than man. He has an excellent eye for composition and col-

our, particularly with mountains and glaciers. Rather than illustrating Woodcock's selections, he agreed with the editor to "go his own way" visually. There are some stunning discoveries: a forest fire that suggests a demonic tornado; an elegant group of cormorants caught in silhouette against rolling waves. There was room in the book to print some of the images considerably larger, but their visual grandeur generally compensates.

On the whole, the book will satisfy both Lotusland inhabitants and strangers who want to know more about the province. The one question it doesn't answer is: how *does* Social Credit continue its reign when no one there ever admits to voting for the party?

A darker aspect of B.C. is revealed by Toyo Takata in *Nikkei Legacy: The Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today* (NC Press, 160 pages, \$19.95 cloth). Takata, a Nisei, was born in Victoria and exiled, along with 22,000 others of Japanese ancestry, to detention camps in the B.C. interior during the Second World War. A former editor of the Japanese-Canadian newspaper *The New Canadian*, he tells the story of Japanese Canadians in their adopted country from the first settler in 1877 to the present.

A number of recent books by Japanese Canadians, most notably Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, have focused attention on the incredible racism and injustice behind our government's treatment of them during the war. Takata's book is an objective and factual companion to Kogawa's impressionistic work. Frequently illustrated with black-and-white photographs, *Nikkei Legacy* should be included in any course that purports to teach Canada's history. It should also add fuel to the growing urgency to pay reparations for the internment and displacement of so many innocent people.

One of the most debilitating effects of the internment must have been the loss of contact with the sea, a friend and source of sustenance to an island-reared race. Canada has one of the longest coastlines, and perhaps the greatest

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number of navigable waterways, of any country. We owe our knowledge of them to the people profiled in *The Chart-makers: A History of Nautical Surveying* (NC Press, 256 pages, \$34.95 cloth), by Stanley Fillmore and R. W. Sandilands, with photographs by Michael Foster. The occasion for the book is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Canada Hydrographic Service.

Such a history may sound like the ideal cure for insomnia. As the introduction suggests, "hydrography's greatest success lies in the lack of publicity — when no ships run aground, when newspaper headlines and television newscasts do not shriek of lives lost at sea." To their credit, the authors try to make the story interesting, relating the development of the science to larger historical issues and leavening technical notes with anecdotes — explaining, for example, that British sailors became known as "limeys" because lime juice was prescribed for sailors on Arctic exploration voyages as an anti-scurvy measure. However, for a history of charting waterways, it does have some rather dry passages. More about the people who made the maps, and less about their instruments, would have helped.

Michael Foster's colour photos do suggest the drama inherent in the profession, particularly as practised in the often-treacherous Arctic waterways. Vistas of water, ice, and sky are juxtaposed with images of bearded faces concentrating on charts. Against the backdrop of sea, the colour of clothing and ships stands out brilliantly.

A less happy maritime history is *Unlucky Lady: The Life and Death of HMCS Athabaskan, 1940-1944* (Canada's Wings, 200 pages, \$29.95 cloth), a biography of one of Canada's tribal class destroyers, sunk by a German

torpedo boat in 1944. Among the 126 sailors who died were the brothers of co-author Len Burrow and book designer Ed Stewart. Co-author Emile Beaudoin was telegraphist on the doomed ship.

More lives would undoubtedly have been saved had the Royal Navy not cancelled a rescue order out of fear for its own ships. The book covers the adventures of the Athabaskan in detail, and includes photographs of the men lost and even space for the signatures of the survivors. Although many photographs are necessarily of less than professional quality, the book creates a gripping picture of war at sea — and probably gives a better idea of what Canadian fighting men experienced than any number of general war histories.

A title that promises less hair-raising reading is *Cornerstones of Order: Courthouses and Town Halls of Ontario, 1784-1914* (Clarke Irwin, 284 pages, \$45.00 cloth). The author is Marion MacRae "in continuing consultation with Anthony Adamson who wrote the Commentary and made the drawings." Adamson is Ontario's leading authority on historical architecture, and his contributions here are considerable: precise drawings of probable layouts of even the earliest such civic buildings, and captions that both convey information and wittily criticize unfortunate designs and ugly additions to the buildings.

As any structuralist would tell you, it makes sense that the structure of our legal and government systems would be mirrored in the design of the buildings that house them. As a result, Ontario's courthouses and town halls combined borrowings from English Regency, Georgian, and Victorian traditions with adaptations to the rougher climate and reduced budgets of Upper Canada.

The book does a good job of telling the human story behind the official buildings. We learn that one early courthouse architect had unusual insight into the design problems of jails because he had spent time in one. An occupational hazard of the architect's profession in those days was debtor's prison: when the client held back on payments, the architect could be jailed for failure to pay his contractors.

The first woman known to have entered a Canadian architectural competition is also honoured: Sarah Glegg submitted a design for the Kingston Town Hall. The author adds, "It would be well over a hundred years before another woman would dare to enter an architectural competition in Canada."

Cornerstones of Order is well laid-out, illustrated, and indexed. It has evident uses as a reference book and text for students of Ontario's architectural history. It also has a surprising amount of appeal to natives of Southern Ontario towns whose buildings are featured here, and those generally interested in Upper Canadian history.

Hyla Wulfs Fox's Antiques: An Illustrated Guide for the Canadian Collector (Methuen, 200 pages, \$14.95 paper) offers a reasonable introduction to collecting less imposing artifacts. This is a primer for the new collector, introducing all the major areas of collectibles as well as cautioning the over-eager, with an intriguing section on the faking of historical furniture. Fox is credited with exposing "the fiasco surrounding Canada's wedding gifts to Prince Charles and Lady Diana." (The "antiques" were not especially distinguished and were largely American-made.)

This book is perhaps a little late on the market. Canadian antique-collecting really boomed about 15 years ago, with

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the result that most genuine bargains have been snapped up, and flea markets now generally contain flea-bitten merchandise. However, the book does cover relatively new areas of collecting, such as folk art and photography. The illustrations are black and white.

One artist who hardly needs introducing to collectors is William Kurelek. He died in 1977, but remains one of our best-known painters. Kurelek's *Vision of Canada* (Hurtig, 80 pages, \$19.95 cloth) contains the 48 works selected by Joan Murray for showing at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa, where she is director. As Murray points out in her introduction, there are many irritating aspects about Kurelek's work — his colour choices, badly rendered figures, and religious dogmatism — but his ability to create striking images (especially of Prairie landscapes) and communicate a moral vision have seldom been equalled in our art. His comments on the paintings are included.

This well-produced small book will have little effect on an already polarized audience. Those who admire Kurelek's art will chuckle again at the multiple images of David Crombie in "The Dream of Mayor Crombie in the Glenstewart Ravine"; those who don't will remark once again on how the "sleeping" mayor resembles a corpse, and the other figures, dolls. The book is a good, and (thanks to Murray) relatively objective introduction to a controversial, and untimely deceased, Canadian artist.

Finally, two books that have no connection with Canada except for their publication here. The *Alps* (Whitecap, 204 pages, \$24.95 cloth) is the latest effort of Walter Poucher, a 90-year-old mountaineer-photographer well known to English readers. He has apparently taken three million (!) shots of mountains over his long life, so there are inevitably some great Alpine photographs here — and considerable information for the aspiring Alps-walker. On the other hand, a book full of mountains is ultimately a bit boring to the non-alpinist; the colour reproduction is inconsistent, and I would have preferred to learn more about the author (for 30 years a chief perfumist at Yardley's) and less about the peaks.

A less specialized British photographer, Lord Snowdon, is responsible for *Snowdon Sitings 1979-1983* (Methuen, 144 pages, \$24.95 cloth), a collection of portraits mostly made on magazine assignments. The structure of the book is clever: subjects are arranged by age, so the reader proceeds from baby portraits through youth and middle age to the experienced faces of the very aged. The work, both in black and white and colour, is effective editorial

photography, less formal than, say, Karsh's portraits. There are some striking images (a baby held by a gorilla, Sebastian Coe demonstrating his more

than seven-foot stride) and a generally strong rapport evident between photographer and subject. A good gift for aspiring people-photographers. □

FIRST NOVELS

Three thrillers prove that it's not always the readers who win when publishers start giving pre-publication prizes to their own books

By PAUL WILSON

WHEN YOU THINK about it, the idea of reading a book that has received a prize before it was published is one that any discriminating reader ought to treat with the utmost suspicion. These are more than just in-house pats on the back, they are attempts to turn the publication of a particular book into an extra-literary event, and one of the damaging side effects of this (apart from the fact that it quickly becomes very ho hum) is that it is difficult to read the book as anything other than "winner of the coveted Golden Bull award for this or that." You might argue that the launching of a new book is always accompanied by hype and that a pre-publication prize is just part of the biz, but there is good biz and bad biz, and prizes, especially when accompanied by a lot of money, are bad for the book business because they are a lazy way of promoting books. Instead of working to draw attention to a book's merits, publishers merely draw attention to their own largess, if that is the proper word for it.

This month's crop of first novels are all pre-publication prize winners. *Dead in the Water* (John Wiley and Sons, 170 pages, \$13.95 cloth), by Ted Wood, a former Toronto cop turned ad-man, won the Scribner Crime Novel Award, about which I know nothing. It is a swift-moving, competently written murder mystery set in the Muskoka lake district of Ontario, and what I found most interesting about it was hardly developed at all, although Wood might still do something about it, since he has decided to revive his detective, Reid Bennett, in future novels.

The thing is that Bennett is himself a professional killer, a Vietnam vet who has been taught to kill swiftly and unthinkingly with his hands. This skill gets him into trouble in Toronto, where he was a police detective before he retired from the force. He gets a job as police

chief of a sleepy little resort town and soon finds occasion enough to use both his brain and his brawn.

The problem is that Wood pays little more than superficial attention to the human drama of his hero's readjustment to society. Instead he presents Bennett as a rather unsympathetic and bitter man who goes doggedly about his work of protecting a society he resents from criminals he loathes. There is an intriguing story and an important social problem embedded in this situation, and one wishes that Wood had paid more attention to it.

The Seal First Novel Award this year was split two ways, and while the winners may not deserve rave reviews, I think they are worth taking a serious look at. To put it another way, I could name several world-famous writers who got off to shakier starts.

Pluck (McClelland & Stewart, 362 pages, \$18.95 cloth), by Jonathan Webb, is a slow-moving psychological crime thriller in which the focal point of interest is a group of men who are bound together by loyalty that reaches far beyond their Cambridge University years. At the centre of the group is a charismatic leader named John Pluck, whose ill-advised marriage to a homicidal sex maniac kicks off the action. When he chooses the classical British way out of his unhappy estate, his friends rally round to help him escape the consequences. Inevitably, their conspiracy begins to come loose at the seams, the bodies start piling up, and what began as the collective of the century is revealed to be nothing more than a sordid group of frustrated, suicidal males bent on their own, and each other's, destruction.

If Webb is not entirely successful in orchestrating his baroque tale it is partly because he tries too hard to preserve a complexity of plot and relationship that

isn't always essential to his stated aim of entertaining the reader. Webb alters his point of view, particularly in the early pages, with such bewildering frequency that he risks losing the reader altogether. Still, the book has many redeeming moments, and Webb does succeed in maintaining tension and interest throughout, even though one knows the outcome beforehand. It is clear that Webb has a novelist's skills.

The cream of this small crop is *Lazaro*, by David Kendall (McClelland & Stewart, 213 pages, \$18.95 cloth). It is the story of a young savage born to an Indian woman and a Canadian priest in the jungle of the Amazon basin. After being orphaned by a brutal band of cocaine smugglers, the boy is raised for a time by a pod of fresh-water dolphins, which apparently inhabit the rivers in that part of the world. Eventually he is kidnapped, brought into civilization, named Lazaro, and educated after a fashion in a Catholic orphanage. One day he accidentally discovers the identity of his mother's killer and, at the age of nine, sets out on a journey of revenge that takes him in a series of Huck Finn-like adventures through the lush corruption of the jungle and highlands of the Andes. He finally runs his prey down in Bogota. As he carries out his revenge, Lazaro's best friend is almost killed, and thus the boy learns the relativity of all human action.

It is well-told story, with eloquent passages of narrative and description interspersed with a wealth of interesting information about life in the Amazon basin. Kendall was one of the first white people to visit the headwaters of the Amazon, and he writes vividly about the jungle as a huge, luxurious, and dangerous biosphere in which the Indians are completely at home, and about the destruction created when civilized men try to move into it. Kendall's description of how Lazaro is brought up by the dolphins, although probably pure fantasy, is fascinating and very emotionally convincing, and I was almost sorry when it ended.

When Kendall follows the boy into civilization, however, I find myself quarrelling with his attitudes. He has little use for civilization, and consequently all its adult human products are poor, weak, twisted, bigoted, dishonest, and downright nasty. Given the author's tendency to see people in this one-sided way it is not surprising that, except for the children, the only positive characters in the book are terrorists. And even they are flat and two-dimensional, though they are supposed to be based on real people.

But that is a quibble, and I suppose all it really indicates is that when it comes to

creating characters, Kendall's imagination seems to serve him better than his journalistic skills. *Lazaro* is a strong and interesting first novel. □

LETTERS

Bad neighbours

I WAS very disturbed after reading the article on Tom Marshall in October's *Books in Canada*. I suppose Mr. Marshall's children (if he has any) are all in mint psychological condition. I suppose he and his wife (if he has one) never scream at each other. Why else would he have the smugness to judge and condemn the parenting of his neighbours and allow a picture of their son to be published in your magazine to be readily identified by anyone picking up the publication? I guess that he (and you) suppose that Tony's parents are too illiterate ever possibly to pick up *Books in Canada* and see their son's picture and

read what Marshall thinks of them. And that any of their friends and relations are similarly illiterate. Anyway, even if they did find out about it, being "always on welfare" they wouldn't have the money to sue anyone.

I think that picking on the defenseless this way makes you people look pretty small.


Anne Miles
Sechelt, B.C.


Seeing red

AFTER READING M.T. Kelly's "The Literary Life in Leningrad: Notes on an Evening with Juvan Shestalov" (October), I've begun to question all that stuff I've read about books being banned in the Soviet Union and Soviet writers being sent to mental institutions for disagreeing with the government. Kelly didn't see or hear of anything strange going on in Russia. What Kelly saw was Armenian cognac, vodka, and "two kinds of wine, white and red." Maybe the Soviet Union really is as Kelly says, "a writer's paradise." Maybe Alexander Solzhenitsyn was exiled because of bad table manners, and not because of something subversive he wrote.

Robert Eady
Kanata, Ont.

TORONTO IN ART





Edith G. Firth

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the City of Toronto, *Toronto in Art* presents a spectacular full-colour history of the life and growth of a great city, as seen through the eyes of successive generations of artists. \$45.00

150 Years Through Artists' Eyes

Fitzhenry & Whiteside

EVER SINCE the U.S. Post Office began using a two-letter computer code to denote the various states, we've been gleefully composing fictitious place names (such as Oompa, PA; Yes, VA; and No, MO) to go with them. Now comes word that Canada Post has adopted a similar system for the provinces (BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, PQ, NS, NB, PE, NF), territories (YT, NT), and Labrador (LB). We'll pay \$25 for the best list of place names, real or imaginary, designed to combine with the post office's abbreviations, and an additional \$25 goes to W. P. Kinsella of White Rock, B.C., for the idea. Deadline: January 1. Address: CanWit No. 88, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 86

OUR REQUEST for non-rhyming limericks prompted a number of submissions that gracefully managed to find satisfaction in a lame climax. The winner is Madeleine Bailey of Kelowna, B.C., for her tribute to the various Margarets among Canada's authors:

*There once was an author called
Atwood
Whose work, although good, was not
that bad
She was viewed with abhorrence
By her peer, Margaret Trudeau —
A fact that would seem beyond reason.*

CLASSIFIED

Classified rates: \$8 per line (40 characters to the line). Deadline: first of the month for issue dated following month. Address: Books in Canada Classified, 388 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9. Phone: (416) 363-5426.

FERRY COMMAND — The Story of Trans-Atlantic Wartime RAF Ferrying by Don McVicar, captain-navigator. \$24.95 from Ad Astra Books, Box 2087, Dorval, Que. HSS 3K7.

OLD AND RARE BOOKS. Canadiana Catalogues. Heritage Books, 866 Palmerston Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6G 2S2

TORONTO book discussion group seeks new members. Reply Box 9, Books in Canada, 366 Adelaide St. E., Toronto, Ont. M5A 3X9.

USED LAW BOOKS. 30 day free examination. Write J.L. Heath, 66 Isabella St.

Honourable mentions:

*There was a young girl from Regina
Who had a reptilian syntax.
When she slithered in denim
Her poisonous couplets
Were proof she'd been fondling Lamia.
— Mark Abley, Outremont, Que.*

*A prima ballerina named Kain
Came down with a terrible cramp.
Said she, "I don't care,
I can dance anyhow,
I'll take Aspirin to cope with the
discomfort."
— Diane M. Stuart, Vancouver*

*A lady who ought to know better
Once girded herself in a blouse.
It proved rather tight,
In fact, quite a spectacle—
Leading to traffic congestion.
— Christine Hurrell, Weston, Ont.*

*A poet who lived in the sticks
Tried CanWit No. four less than ninety.
She had a terrible time
Finding words that don't have the same
end sound,
And asked, "How did I get into this
predicament?"
— P. Colleen Archer, Omemece, Ont.*

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

Café le Dog, by Matt Cohen, McClelland & Stewart. Usually sombre in tone, these eight stories offer so bleak a world-view that they are sometimes frightening, and there is little spiritual or psychological comfort for Cohen's troubled characters. Nevertheless, there is some fine writing.

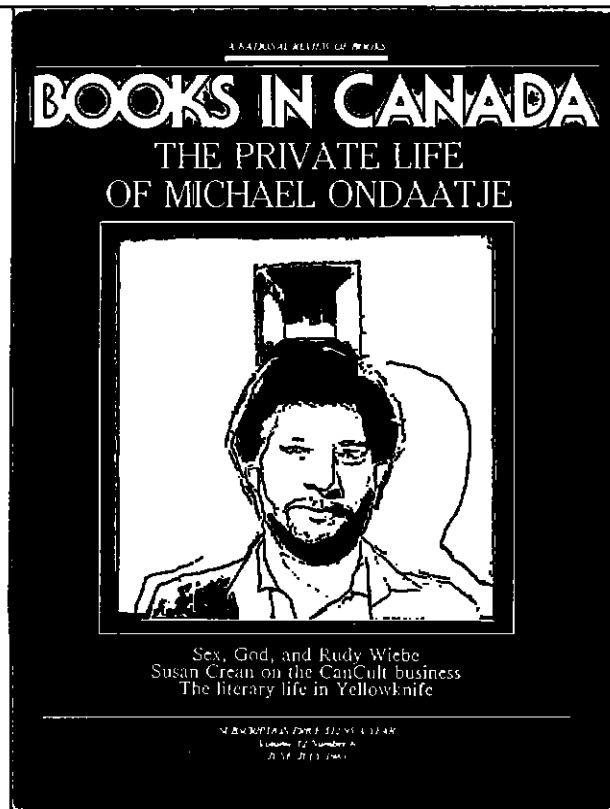
NON-FICTION

Storm Signals, by Charles Ritchie, Macmillan. The perceptions are less venturesome, the interests less broad, but the old ambassador's prose is still as elegant as the young foreign officer's in this fourth volume of Ritchie's diaries, which covers the years 1962-71.

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:

Aerobic Fun For Kids, by David Steca, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Agenda 1934, selected by Eudre Farkas, The Muses' Company.
An Anecdotal Memoir, by Charles Templeton, M & S.
The Anglo Guide to Survival in Quebec, edited by Josh Freed and Jon Kalina, Eden Press.
The Argo Bounce, by Jay Teitel, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
The Blue Wall: Street Cops in Canada, by Carsten Strund, M & S.
Born to Be Hung, by H. "Dude" Lavington, Sono Nis Press.
Brides of the Stream, by Joe Rosenblatt, Colman Books.
Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution, by Margaret Randall, New Star Books.
Colombo's Canadiana Quiz Book, Western Producer Prairie Books.
The Complete Hoser's Handbook, by Hugh Brewster and John Forbes, Prentice-Hall.
Dirty Business: The Inside Story of the New Garbage Agglomerates, by Harold Crooks, James Lorimer.
Doctors, by Martin O'Malley, Macmillan.
Dogs, by Ben Wicks, M & S.
A Dutch Heritage, by Joan Magee, Dundurn Press.
Everest Canada, by Al Burgess and Jim Palmer, Stoddart.
Eye Language, by Evan Marshall, New Trend.
A Fairly Good Time, by Mavis Gallant, Macmillan.
The Farmer Takes a Wife, by Gisele Ireland, Concerned Farm Women.
The Female Column, by Richard Stephens, Northwood Publishing.
A Fine and Private Place, by Morley Callaghan, Macmillan.
First People, First Voices, edited by Penny Petrone, U of T Press.
Funny Things, Computers, by Trevor Hinchings, James Lorimer.
The Genesis of Grove's The Adventure of Leonard Dreads, edited by Mary Rubio, Canadian Children's Press.
The Girls of the King's Navy, by Rosamond "Fiddy" Greer, Sono Nis Press.
Globe Doubts, by Barry Dempster, The Quarry Press.
Going Solo: Startling Your Own Business in Canada, by Helene and Larry Hoffman, Methuen.
Green Water, Green Sky, by Mavis Gallant, Macmillan.
Hearken to the Evidence, by Murray Feden, Canada's Wings.
Heart of Gold: 30 Years of Canadian Pop Music, by Martin Meluhsh, CBC Enterprises.
The History of Camp Borden, 1916-1918, by William E. Chalkowsky, Station Press.
How to Get Rid of Bad Dreams, by Nancy Hazbry and Roy Condy, Scholastic-Tab.
"H Must Be Nice to Be Little", by Lynn Johnston, Andrews and McNeil (U.S.).
It's Jake with Me, by J. D. Geller, Paperjacks.
Karen Kula's Fitness & Beauty Book, Doubleday.
The Last Season, by Roy MacGregor, Macmillan.
Little Is Alive and Well (revised edition), by B.C. Taylor, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
Learn This Poem of Mine by Heart, by George Faludy, Houslow Press.
Lifelines: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children, by Bryan Mellore and Robert Ingpen, Bantam.
The Loved and the Lost, by Morley Callaghan, Macmillan.
The Loyalist Governor: Biography of Sir John Wentworth, by Brian C. Cuthbertson, Fetheric Press.
The Lucy Waverman Penny Fischer's Wine Guide, Avon.
Marketing Concepts and Applications, by Charles D. Schewe et al, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
Max: The Best of Brulthwaite, by Max Brulthwaite, M & S.
Mecca, by William Deverell, M & S.
Migration of Light, by Brian Henderson, General Publishing.
Modern Canadian Architecture, by Leon Whiteson, Hurdig.
Modern English-Canadian Prose: A Guide to Information Sources, by Helen Hoy, Gale Research (U.S.).
My Own Years, by Barry Broadfoot, Doubleday.
No Sex Please . . . We're Married, by Gary Lautens, M & S.
The Northern Imagination, by Allison Mitchell, illustrated by Carl Schaefer, Penumbr Press.
Our Generation Against Nuclear War, edited by Dimitrios Roussopoulos, Black Rose Books.
The Oxford Book of Dreams, chosen by Stephen Brook, Oxford.
The Painter's View of Canada, by Elizabeth Collard, McGill-Queen's University Press.
Prisoners of Isolation, by Michael Jackson, U of T Press.
Puzzle Picnic, by Pauline Philip, Scholastic-TAB.
Queen's University Volume II, 1917-1961: To Serve and Yet Be Free, by Frederick W. Gibson, McGill-Queen's University Press.
Reading from Left to Right, by H. S. Ferns, U of T Press.
Ring-Rise, Ring-Set, by Monica Hughes, Methuen.
The Shadow Cat, by Sylvia Hahn, Penumbr Press.
The Sourdough and the Queen: The Many Lives of Houdie Joe Boyle, by Leonard W. Taylor, Methuen.
Studying Effectively and Efficiently, by Polly MacFarlane and Sandra Hodson, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
Through the Eyes of a Cat, by Sean Virgo, Sono Nis Press.
True North Not Strong and Free, by Peter C. Newman, M & S.
Tumbling Mirth: Remembering the Air Force, by J. Douglas Harvey, M & S.
Two in the Bush, by Rosemary Gaymer, published by the author.
Ulsterman Folk Stories, by Marko Vovchok, translated by N. Pedan-Popil, Western Producer Prairie Books.
An Unbroken Line, by Peter Gzowski, M & S.
Under the Moon, by Jane Buchan, M & S.
Visions: Contemporary Art in Canada, edited by Robert Bringham et al, Douglas & McIntyre.
Willie: A Romance, by Heather Robertson, Lorimer.



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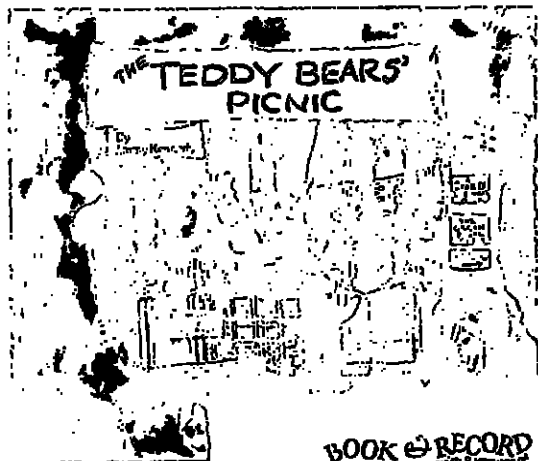
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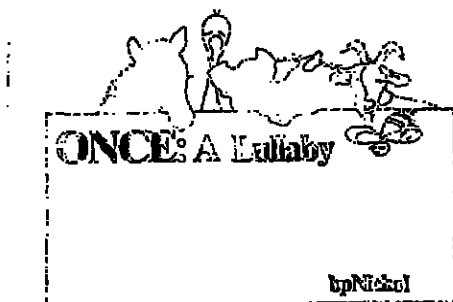
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