

# BOOKS IN CANADA

## THE CHILDREN'S HOUR



The award-winning wordplay of sean o huigin  
B.W. Powe's tough reassessment of CanLit  
And an interview with Kevin Major

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BOOKS IN CANADA



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# An American in Paris: notes on the birth of a journal named *Frank*

## Third coming

PARIS IS still beautiful. Never mind that fast-food joints burn neon holes in the Boulevard St. Germain, or that busloads of tourists wearing funny hats obscure the view of the Seine. Never mind that young Parisians dress as if they're trying out for parts in *West Side Story* or *Rebel Without a Cause*. Paris is still Paris.

These are my thoughts as I climb the marble staircase of the Rue Monge apartment building, past the old ladies peering from behind their doors. As there is no sign, it takes me some time to find the office of *Frank*, the latest journal to attempt a revival of the expatriate writing scene. Greeting me at the door, *Frank's* editor, David Applefield, doesn't look much different from the last time I saw him 10 years ago in a suburban Toronto high-school cafeteria. Wild curly hair, a long face, and a Boston drawl. The apartment is just what one might imagine for a writer in Paris — slanted ceilings, cheap wicker furniture, piles of books, even a French girl-friend at the kitchen table with a baguette and the Paris newspapers. And, of course, piles of *Frank*.

Applefield, 28, understandably looks haggard. Just back from Greece ("a tourist on every rock"), he is already packing for Berlin, where he will be teaching writing for the University of Maryland, mostly to kids of U.S. military personnel. These occasional stints, along with some teaching in Paris, have enabled him to live here for the past year. Originally from Boston, he moved to Toronto with his family and enrolled in the same high school I was attending. Applefield gained notoriety by running for school president and conducting a campaign that seemed too aggressive — too American — for our taste. He wallpapered the school with photographs of himself. Before the vote his candidacy was declared void by a student council that concluded (against his protests) that he had exceeded the campaign spending limit by five dollars.

Applefield returned to the U.S., and while taking his M.A. at Northeastern University he founded *Frank* with university money, producing one issue. (The name was chosen for being "short and unacademic.") When he settled in

Paris he hoped to become *Frank's* European editor, but that arrangement collapsed and he took over the magazine.

In Paris, Applefield sensed the arrival of a "third wave of expatriate writing." The 1920s produced such magazines as *transition*, *Transatlantic Review*, and *This Quarter*, while the '50s saw the birth of the *Paris Review*. "But this time," Applefield says, "the writers are isolated from each other. They aren't sitting in cafés talking about art." The '80s need a new magazine to act as a catalyst, and he has adapted *Frank* into "an international journal of contemporary writing and art."

The first Paris issue, a thin paperback of elegant, minimal design, contains work by Americans in Paris and exiles from enough countries to form a small United Nations. Chilean poet Luis Mizón and South African painter and writer Breyten Breytenbach are among the better known, but no single contributor among the nearly 50 is given enough space to make more than a fleeting impression. Generally the effect is literate and lively, if somewhat lacking in passion. The bold purple banner that wraps the cover heralds work by Ferlinghetti and Kerouac (an unpublished poem), but they belong to another era and aren't the names that *Frank* will need to prove Applefield right and place it alongside the legendary Paris magazines.

Applefield promises to make *Frank* "more avant-garde" in the future, but this intention seems to arise as much out of what's expected of a Paris magazine as any intellectual commitment or pressure from the work itself. Like editors of literary journals in Canada, he speaks of eclecticism and the need for being open to all kinds of writing. When I suggest that there are plenty of "eclectic" magazines in North America, he mutters phrases I have heard from editors back home: the more magazines the better; the old ones are stale; no one is publishing unknown writers.

Still, the first European issue of *Frank* is more than promising, and while many of us may dream of living in Paris and starting a magazine, Applefield has done it. He is promoting *Frank* with the same kind of energy that he put into that high-school election campaign. The first issue cost him \$4,000 (U.S.) and he has to

date sold 500 of the 800 copies needed to break even. Copies have been placed in book stores in London, New York, San Francisco, and Toronto. Working on the press for coverage, Applefield has managed a glowing article in *Passions*, Paris's English-language monthly. The *International Herald Tribune*, however, turned him down and instead covered the relaunching of *Paris Magazine*. Making its first appearance since 1967, *Paris Magazine* is issued by George Whitman, the man who has been running Shakespeare & Co. (named after Sylvia Beach's original bookshop) on the left bank for more than 30 years. Besides new writing, the journal includes articles about the earlier expatriates, and some writers are dismissing it as nostalgia.

Applefield plans two issues of *Frank* a year. While he was away in Greece the submissions quickly piled up. A lot of writers would like to appear in a Paris literary magazine, but so far *Frank* only has a handful of subscribers. If it survives will Applefield settle in Paris for good? He clears his throat and says, "Nowadays it's possible to live in two places at once." — CARY FAGAN

## Framed in Fredericton

FLYING INTO Fredericton is a little like being Alice dropping down the rabbit hole: the world becomes narrower and narrower as you slide into that forest-surrounded, river-washed, elm-shaded Loyalist outpost; then, in a blink of the eye, it expands, spreads outward, and shows you a hundred surprising facets.

After four days in Fredericton, you begin to think that there must be more writers per capita in that city than anywhere else in the country. You begin to see it as a cultural crossroads, a Samarkand of the Canada Council Silk Route — every Canadian writer of note must have passed through at one time or another, leaving his or her mark in the form of a nugget of gossip, a characteristic anecdote, an autographed book on a library shelf.

This fall Edna Alford, Carol Shields, Philip Kreiner, and myself made the trip down the rabbit hole. The occasion was the first Great October Fiddlehead Fiction Conference, arranged and presided over by Kent Thompson, the dapper, bearded magus of the East who seems enthusiastically and single-mindedly bent on creating a world full of literature and art and talk of same.

The four of us took turns reading at the Cellar Theatre on successive days; evenings, we convened for what Thompson called "peripatetic literary discussions," either at his house on Albert

Street near the university or in William and Nancy Bauer's living-room. The rest of the time we had to ourselves, to explore the city, walk along the river bank, wonder over the authenticity of the world's largest stuffed frog in the museum, or sit under Dali's *Santiago del Grande* in the art gallery — though at every turn our host was there, like Prospero, exhorting, adjuring, urging: "Talk about writing. Talk about writing."

Starting out, we were mostly curious as to why we'd been invited; what common theme or style had Thompson discovered? Except for Carol Shields (who

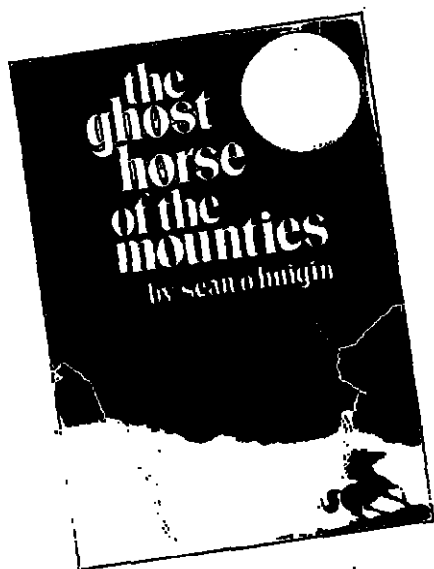
— note this as a possible answer in some future CanLit trivia game — met Thompson when they were undergraduates at Hanover College in Indiana), we were not well-known. And Thompson himself slyly refrained from labelling his conference, saying only that he asked us because he liked our writing, which he had discovered reading *Fiddlehead* submissions and Canada Council applications.

If anything became clear as the conference wore on, it was our common use of striking imagery — Gothic or apocalyptic: Alford's hoyer and the rotting bodies of the aged ("The Hoyer" from *A Sleep Full of Dreams*), Kreiner's fiery sunset over Montego Bay with the cane-fields burning in the background (from his novel *Heartlands*), my own frozen prairie city and a dog drowning under the river ice ("Dog Attempts to Drown Man in Saskatoon"). The stories seem almost to come out of the images; physical reality is enhanced until it is nearly hallucinatory, and the characters huddle in the interstices of the narrative, variously putrefying, sweating, and freezing — puzzled, complaining, and complex.

It was equally clear that we had all thought long and hard about manipulation of point of view and narrative distance. *Heartlands*, for example, begins in the brother's head and shifts to the sister's. In "Dog Attempts to Drown Man in Saskatoon" the narrator obsessively breaks off from telling the story to discuss language, truth, and meaning. The various readings left a strong sense of the minds behind the stories and that Nabokovian pleasure in the author's freedom to compose, break rules (Carol Shields's "Coincidence," about the use of coincidence in fiction), create surprising associations, construct wholes out of disparate entities.

In retrospect it seems the reason we were invited was that, without being doctrinaire or sacrificing narrative to theory, we eschew a strictly realistic approach and allow our interest in the act of writing to bleed into and become part of the structure of the stories. Or, to put it another way, Kent Thompson likes stories that talk, in some degree, about writing stories.

This is not to say it was only a conference about what the conference was about. There were several notable experiential threads: the feeling that one was warranted or endorsed as a writer (for Kreiner and myself this was practically our first venture into public as writers); the more complicated feeling of meeting other Canadian writers from far-off places — the sense of difference and sameness, the sense that the differences are also part of oneself and,



THE  
GHOST HORSE  
OF THE  
MOUNTIES  
by sean o luigin

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of the Canada Council  
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for 1983

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hence, the feeling that one's possibilities are multiplied.

Then there was the whole thread of the *Fiddlehead* community (cohesive, benign, mutually supportive, sophisticated). One comes away with this amazing sense of the place, the literary vitality, the individuals; all that publishing (*Fiddlehead*, Goose Lane Editions, Fiddlehead Poetry Books) and writing (two books, Allan Donaldson's *Paradise Siding* and Thompson's *A Local Hanging*, were launched at the close of the conference) going on there, and the sharp sense of the interpenetration of the arts.

Yet the quintessential Fredericton epiphany comes somewhere between the

beginning and the end when you've been standing in the English Department lounge at the University of New Brunswick. Perhaps you've been standing there five or 10 minutes, chatting nervously with another visiting writer, and you look up and see that somewhat satirical Bruno Bobak painting *Kent's Punch* on the wall and suddenly realize that the people in the painting (save for Alden Nowlan) are the people standing about you, or the people you met after the reading, or at that party, and you have this tremendous feeling of visual and literary resonance — the *Fiddlehead* coterie re-echoing down through the years until now you, yourself, are in the painting.  
— DOUGLAS GLOVER

### ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Checking it out: in which the *Reader's Digest* floats one, and it comes back stamped 'insufficient fun'

By BOB BLACKBURN

I AM PLEASED to report that the great *cheque* vs. *check* controversy reported in this space in the August-September issue has been settled righteously.

This story began more than a year ago, when Eric Elstone of Acton, Ont., spotted, in the August, 1983, Canadian edition of *Reader's Digest*, one of those filler items that make the magazine so popular in places in which people find themselves forced to sit quietly for brief periods with little external stimulation for the mind. It reprinted a sentence from Richard Needham's column in the *Globe and Mail*: "If it's a bill, the posties will get it to you in 24 hours; if it's a check, allow them a couple of weeks."

Elstone thought it unlikely that Needham would spell *cheque* in this way, and wrote the magazine a polite letter urging that it adopt the common Canadian spelling. The senior staff editor Alexander Farrell replied that he could not agree that usage in Canada favoured *cheque* and that *check* was the magazine's entrenched style. Elstone challenged this, and Farrell replied in May that Elstone did, after all, appear to be right, and that a revision of style was being considered, although he could make no promises.

Finally, on Sept. 26, Farrell wrote to Elstone, saying, "You'll be pleased to

know that we are adopting the spelling 'cheque' as of our December issue."

That is a happy ending, but it is not the whole story. Just nine days before Farrell announced this capitulation to Elstone, Ralph Hancox, the president of



*Reader's Digest* Magazines Ltd., wrote me a letter in which he said that "for a variety of sound reasons. . . *Reader's Digest* in Canada consistently spells

check as check as check [sic]." That seemed to me an uncommonly emphatic way to state an editorial policy that was then changed in little more than a week.

Elstone's exchange with the magazine was characterized by a greater measure of politeness than was mine. My earlier comment here had concluded:

Surely, you would think, anyone living or working or dealing with Canadians would know, even if he knew nothing else, that, no two ways about it, to a Canadian a cheque is one thing and a check is another.

I would, though, like to ask Mr. Elstone what he was doing reading *Reader's Digest* in the first place.

This segment, Hancox wrote me, "disturbs me on two counts: first, cultural chauvinism, particularly when it is applied to orthography, is a dangerous path for the unwary to follow. Second, your prejudicial jibe about *Reader's Digest* in Canada is not worthy of you." Hancox passed along some well-researched material on the history of the word. This, while it might provide some argument in favour of the U.S. spelling, does not alter the fact that, to a literate Canadian, a cheque is a cheque is a cheque.

As for my "prejudicial jibe," it was just that. Hancox may feel it was unworthy, but he is in no position to say it is not worthy of me, because he does not know me. It prompted him to cite a number of statistics intended to demonstrate that many Canadians spend a lot of time reading his magazines and enjoy them very much, and I do not for a moment doubt that. It is not, however, a consideration that would deter me from making prejudicial jibes.

Farrell's latest letter to Elstone extends "... best wishes to a considerate and committed reader. . . ." In his latest letter to me, that "committed reader" went on at some length to explain that on the day in question he had been held up in a waiting room to the point at which "I had to read something. Anything."

There is just one more point to be raised. Several readers of my earlier column on this subject pointed out that changing the spelling of *anything* in a direct quotation is an editorial sin, and that is true. However, *Reader's Digest* is primarily in the business of reprinting extracts and condensations of material from other publications, and the fact that Needham's quip was not displayed in quotation marks might provide an out.

But surely the magazine at least could have included some such parenthetical line as ( — Translated from the Canadian). □

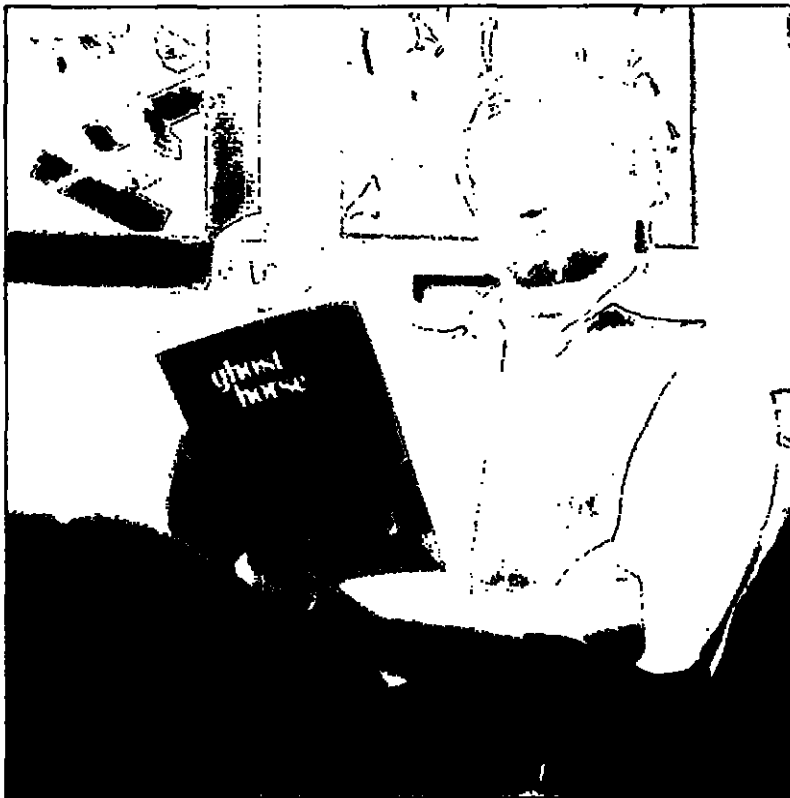
# A WAY WITH WORDS

Children's books and classroom performances have brought sean o huigin more recognition than he ever expected from his adult poetry

By BARBARA WADE

IF SEAN O HUIGIN'S Toronto home were made of gingerbread it couldn't hold a more fatal attraction for the children of the neighbourhood. His friend and publisher, Marty Gervais of Black Moss Press, calls him "a block parent in the more literal sense," although o huigin has no children of his own. He prefers to think of himself as "the block nut." The children come one by one or in groups, after school or on weekends, to stare at the abstract paintings on his walls, run short fingers over the granular curves of his 350-million-year-old fossil snail, or play word-games on his computer. Mostly, though, they come to hear o huigin's sonorous voice reading from one of the slender volumes of poetry he has written over nearly two decades spent leading workshops through the Ontario Arts Council's Artists in the Schools series. One of these books, *Ghost Horse of the Mounties* (for ages 8 to 16), recently won o huigin the 1983 Canada Council Award for Children's Literature.

The award has given o huigin (the name, pronounced "oh higgeen," was changed by its owner from Higgins to commemorate his late fellow poet Padraig O Broin, and is written in lower-case letters because "I hate using the shift key") the kind of recognition he has never expected through his experimental poetry



sean o huigin

for adults. He finds it ironic that it should come through the printed word. "I consider myself more of a performance artist," he says. "There has never been any money in writing adult poetry, either in Canada or in any other country, so I never bothered with publishing, because there was no point."

O huigin, 42, began his career after university with experimental visual and sound poetry groups. "We did the first multi-media event in Toronto. It was called 'Cricket,' and it had a whole lot of scrim hanging in a big room. Films were projected onto the scrim, there was electronic music going, and I had eight people stationed around the room doing live readings. There were dancers going through, and everyone was

given this white plastic sheet to cover them, so in moving through they became a screen as well. It was fabulous."

Another theatrical project was the New Writers' Workshop, which organized various street events in Toronto during the 1960s and '70s: "One happening was arranged by poet George Swede. Through the radio and by pamphlet he advertised the 'World's Loudest Sound Poem.' People were invited to gather at noon on the last day of winter in Nathan Phillips Square and for one minute scream out all their winter misery. This event took place for a number of years, and every time there were at least 200 participants.

In the midst of this creativity, o huigin was asked by a librarian friend to read poetry to the children at her school. He discovered the perfect audience to respond to his ideas without adult notions of what language should be. In *Poe-tree*, o huigin's 1978 guide to experimental poetry for children, he writes: "Suddenly sound poetry began to develop in my mind as a fabulous means of exploring language. I began to visualize words as something you could crawl inside and explore, stretching the sounds to see if they actually could tell you something about the word, repeating the sounds, repeating the letters to discover rhythms in the word,

rearranging the letters, picking the whole word and throwing it into your imagination, exploring what happened when it landed." Children would be divided into groups around the classroom, one group blowing out the first letter of the noun "wind," the second whining the "iiiiii" sound, and the third humming the "nnnnn," until a hurricane of sound vibrated the room.

The children responded easily to a man who suggested using sticks to make the letter "E" or the word "sticky," or making collages out of licence plates, street signs, and manhole covers. O huigin has stuffed poems into balloons, trailed kites spelling out words, and used just about anything imaginable to get

PHOTOGRAPH BY BARBARA WADE

children to look at words afresh and, at the same time, realize they are in control of their own use of language. Aided by the Inner City Angels and the Ontario Arts Council, O huigin expanded his involvement in the schools through the 1970s and travelled around the country. Last year he performed up to four times daily.

"This was a great way of getting kids involved, of giving them some sense of achievement," he says. "In school they just get lost. Language is a job there, and if you don't do it right you're made fun of or put in a special class." He remembers twin girls who simply weren't writing: "By the end of the year they were sitting down and writing out their own poems. It was a very long, laborious job for them — the physical problem of writing, and trying so hard to get everything right. But it was amazing that they would do that when they weren't prepared to write anything else."

Gervais, his publisher, feels the motivation may have been provided by more than mere words. "Sean's a superb poet, but he's also a great personality. I've watched him in the classroom, and found him making up ideas as he went along."

O huigin believes that once the love of language is established in children, they will eventually become interested in how to use language properly. "In this day and age, when we're surrounded by so much media input from all directions, teachers are still trying to teach reading and writing — a medium that's been out of date for a while. The way kids have to approach reading and writing now is to pick out relevant bits of information so they understand what is going on. Most of these kids, if you sit them down with a computer or you do speed writing with them, they pick it up real quick because they can cope with the information — when you're still worried about spelling and syntax and all that stuff."

*Poe-tree* was followed by several poetry volumes culled from the workshops or inspired by them. *The Trouble with Stitches* ("the trouble/with having/stitches/is that it/really itches"), for younger children, was published in 1981. Other volumes include *Pickles*, *Street Dog of Windsor* and *Scary Poems for Rotten Kids*, which achieved some notoriety for frightening parents more than their children. "I think the kids too: it all in stride," says O huigin, but "parents were bothered" by visions of mothers with spider webs and fangs.

The idea for the award-winning *Ghost Horse of the Mountains* evolved from some historical research. O huigin discovered that 250 horses had stampeded when a lightning storm shook the camp of the newly formed North West Mounted Police in Dufferin, Man., in the early summer of 1874. All were returned, except one. Six men were injured in the stampede, and all recovered, except one. O huigin forged a fantasy tale that uses his performance technique to make the reader successively the rider, the observer, and the horse:

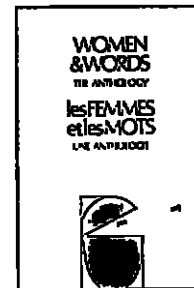
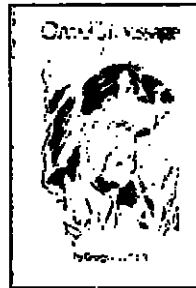
*imagine now  
you're huddled up  
your wet skin feels  
the shivers of your friends*

*and on it goes  
two hours now the world  
has turned to roar and  
mud  
when suddenly  
for one small moment  
silence falls  
illuminated still by  
sheets of light*

*and then*

*and then across the plain  
like giant legs and  
crashing beast  
huge bolts of lightning*

## CHRISTMAS BOOKS FROM HARBOUR



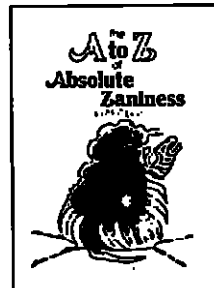
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Marching towards  
the camp

"Imagine now" recurs throughout the narrative, and is the key idea behind much of O'Huigin's poetry for children. "There's a big theory now going around that children don't know how to imagine, that television has taken away that ability," he says, and shakes his head. "There are guidebooks to teach your child to imagine. Well, I read *Ghost Horse* to the little kids. As soon as there's anything about the horses galloping, they start" — and he drums cloppety-clop noises on his knee with his hands. "When you read to older kids, half of them have their hands over their eyes so they can see it better. *Children don't imagine* — that's bunk. They don't imagine because you don't give them the opportunity to imagine."

O'Huigin vetoes expensive illustrations for his narratives, and has been criticized by some associates for writing "too

many words." He faults U.S. publishers in particular for their contention that "children can't cope with all the words in my books. They say the kids want big, glossy, picture books with no more than six words on a page. That's another thing that drives me crazy."

The pace of school performances, in addition to writing adult poetry (O'Huigin is the author of *The inks and the pencils and the looking back* and most recently *The granny poems*), have also driven him a bit crazy, as he puts it. Immediately after accepting the Canada Council award in October, O'Huigin retreated to Ireland for a month, and he will spend the next year on a sabbatical from children's poetry. One of his poems, "Acid Rain," is being made into a film by the National Film Board, but he doesn't plan to become involved in the process. "My poems are like kids," he says, "You have to let them grow up, go on their way, and stand up for themselves." □

## FEATURE REVIEW

# Fallen idols

A provocative new book of critical essays applies 'fresh scrutinies' to the reputations of eight of our best-known literary figures

By PAUL WILSON

**A Climate Charged: Essays on Canadian Writers**, by B.W. Powe, Mosaic Press, 196 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88962 258 2).

E.B. WHITE once said that letters flourish not when writers stick together, but when they are contemptuous of one another. He's right, and I've often felt that if there is something anemic and slack in Canadian letters, it is because those vital trace elements — argument, controversy, and contention over things that matter — are too often missing from our diet.

This is why *A Climate Charged* is so invigorating and hopeful. It is a stimulating, entertaining, intelligent, iconoclastic, and provocatively pleasurable book of critical essays that give eight well-established Canadian literary reputations (Marshall McLuhan, Northrop Frye, Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, and Mordecai Richler) a thorough shaking up. And unless those who disagree with the book's assessments turn out to be a bunch of puff-balls, it also promises to stir up some lively discussion.

The author, B.W. Powe, is a 29-year-old knight-errant of a new sensibility in

Canadian writing. It is a generational sensibility, inevitably, because Powe grew up and went to school at a time when CanLit, thanks to the entrenched warfare waged by an earlier generation of writers, became standard fare on high-school and university curricula, and not just something to be discovered after hours. In challenging the writers he has grown up with, Powe is asking whether or not their work can stand up to "fresh scrutinies" when they are taken out of the greenhouse of CanLit, as it were, and subjected to the harsh climate of life under the open skies. "The questions I raise," he writes in the title essay, "concern the authenticity and vitality of a writer and the relevance of his observations. You should be able to trust a writer's energy and intelligence, even when that author is suffering from what Irving Howe termed 'the generosity of confusion.' When we are reading we should be asking: is the writer making an approach to the truth? does he have the power to make words grip reality? is there a sense of grit and guidance?"

Powe's opening shot is really a 21-gun salute to a former teacher of his, Marshall McLuhan. More than a critical essay, this piece is an eloquent and vivid

portrait — not of McLuhan the media hero (by the time Powe took McLuhan's post-graduate course on media and society in 1978 the media had lost interest in him) but of McLuhan the teacher in his declining years, shortly before a stroke made it impossible for him to continue. Powe, who in all his essays displays not only an acute judgement but a keen eye for detail, gesture, and tone of voice, here shows us McLuhan in the classroom, at dinner, in public seminar and private consultation, while giving us, at the same time, a compendium of his ideas. McLuhan was an immensely complex and eccentric figure whose manner and mannerisms reflected the confusions and ambiguities of our fragmented culture. Contrary to what much of McLuhan's own writing suggests, Powe discovered him to be a conservative-minded, deeply Christian moralist who deplored the very processes he strove to explain. "I am resolutely opposed to all change," Powe quotes him as saying, "but I am determined to understand what is happening." At the end of term, when Powe told McLuhan of his plans to leave the university and devote himself to writing (an arrestingly archaic and revealing turn of phrase), McLuhan



warned him that this was a dangerous path to follow, and later that same day expanded on the idea: "You may never know . . . what it was like to experience a true literary response in society. When a book was published by T.S. Eliot, there was a genuine response to it as literature. But writers aren't known that way today. They're media figures. They're known for anything but what they write. There is no literary audience now." It was a comment, as well, on his own fate.

Against McLuhan, Powe opposes another Titan of Canadian letters, Northrop Frye. To say that he is not enamoured of Frye would be an understatement; his description of Frye's appearance ("the incarnation of what was once known as the browner") is full of distaste, and his critique of Frye's system buzzes with animosity and a sense of betrayal. Essentially, he argues that Frye's grand literary theory eliminates all-important connections between literature and life. He accuses Frye of "quietly defusing" the "potentially upsetting aspects of literature — its active penetrations into how we live, its insistence on *seeing* and *hearing*" and of dismissing value judgements. "When you eradicate value judgements, the moral dimension, the so-called interdisciplinary approach . . . and the location of a writer and his writings in time," says Powe, "then you risk eliminating what is humanly complex, unpredictable, dangerous, exalting. To teach students and critics to read without passion and urgency is to eradicate feeling and experience as ways of knowing."

If there is anything unfair or unbalanced in Powe's opposition of these two men, it may lie in the fact that he presents one — McLuhan — largely in the flesh, and the other — Frye — largely in terms of his theory. Perhaps if Powe had studied under Frye for any length of time, he might have come to appreciate the man for his *obiter dicta*, the kind of casual comments and exemplary gestures that all great teachers seem to shed as easily as an oak tree sheds acorns, and which often remain with students long after The Theory has been forgotten. As a matter of fact, one of Powe's central demands, for a writer he can "grow up inside," is just such an *ex cathedra* remark, made by Frye in *The Bush Garden*.

Powe believes strongly that literature should provide us with "strategies for living," a phrase that pops up several times in his book and one that surely epitomizes the sense of embattled existence that has descended upon us in recent times. When he turns, therefore, to examine the other writers on his list, he does so with all the urgency that the

phrase implies. He finds Irving Layton a man of ringing poetry but clunking, bombastic prose. "Layton's great failure," Powe says, "is that he never reconciled the tension between the demands of craft and his desire to change the world. . . . However," he goes on, "it may be that this ultimately destructive vulnerability is the only process which *can* bring insight today."

In the case of Leonard Cohen, he is disturbed and saddened by what he perceives to be Cohen's nihilism, and he hears in his poems, novels, and songs "a poignant reminder of the dissolution of spirit and mind in our time, the inability of our generation to come to grips with the contract between the word and the world." By contrast, Powe seems almost surprised to find Robertson Davies's mannered, elegant prose appealing: "He is one of the few Canadian writers who can handle ideas and remain readable. . . . He is anachronistic, but with a deliberation that mirrors the times rather than acts as mindless reaction. The Davies style is serene, almost unmistakable; who else would *want* to write that way?"

In his examination of Margaret Laurence, questions of "strategy" give way to matters of quality. Powe finds that exaggerated comparisons of Laurence to Tolstoy and George Eliot screen out the more earth-bound virtues of her work, which he calls "arguably the most sympathetically-minded corpus in Canadian fiction," despite the fact that at times, she can be "an astonishingly drab writer." Laurence's characters have a solid sense of their own identity, a quality Powe admires, and he bestows upon her what is perhaps his



highest praise: "For all her flaws, Laurence . . . knows the heart. She is not afraid to be old-fashioned or gutsy. She is not afraid to sound sentimental or confused. Her books have feeling, hard-won and real. And . . . her work is among the truest we have."

Powe reserves his sharpest, most devastating criticism for Margaret Atwood, and those who feel that some kind of non-partisan critical assessment of Atwood's writing is long overdue will find much to delight and instruct them

here. He calls her an "author of sophisticated self-help books," and argues that at the centre of her fiction is a single overwhelming question: not "how to live" but "how to act," which in turn is based on a preoccupation with the current intellectual fashion for "becoming," as opposed to "being."

Whether he is aware of it or not, Powe comes close here to a very important insight made more than 30 years ago by Hannah Arendt when she said that in totalitarian ideology, all laws — of nature, history, and justice — become laws of motion, displacing the traditional view that laws provide a framework of stability and integrity that inhibits the progress of tyranny through society. "Becoming" is a centreless concept replacing older notions based on the stability and integrity of human nature, and Powe observes that in Atwood's fiction it represents a "new kind of tyranny."

Despite Atwood's great talents as a literary stylist, Powe feels that this fashion for becoming does grave damage to her work, making it unexpectedly superficial and paradoxically complacent:

It is amazing to watch how time and again Atwood will go for the flip remark, the tight-lipped murmured suggestion, the parody that passes for satire, the political-sentimental 'yes,' the lyrical phrase that opts for polish and gloss. Rather than risk exposure, censure, or shock, she retires into a mist of acceptability and elegant form. . . . She apparently longs to be the opponent of society, but she cannot find anything too terrible to oppose. Yet the targets lie all around her, in her every book, on every page, in every sentence.

His last remark could be applied to a host of other writers as well.

It is impossible, in a brief review, to convey the full range of delights that await the reader of *A Climate Charged*. Powe spices solid argument with sparkling and surprising insights; he alternates formal with less formal approaches, like his satirical dialogue on Mordecai Richler ("the Philip Roth of the North"), which bristles with witty asides on a host of Canadian writers. Most remarkable of all is Powe's good will. In a book so full of well-aimed darts, there are few unfounded or gratuitous remarks, and even those authors who receive direct hits must at least feel grudging satisfaction at finding their work treated with such gallant seriousness.

Taken as a whole, *A Climate Charged* reveals the outlines of Powe's own hopes and desires for the creation of a genuine literary community in this country, one in which a young writer who longs to make literature count might win his spurs and eventually make his home. □

# Mixed blessings

The season's children's books not only celebrate the joys of childhood but also raise some complex personal problems

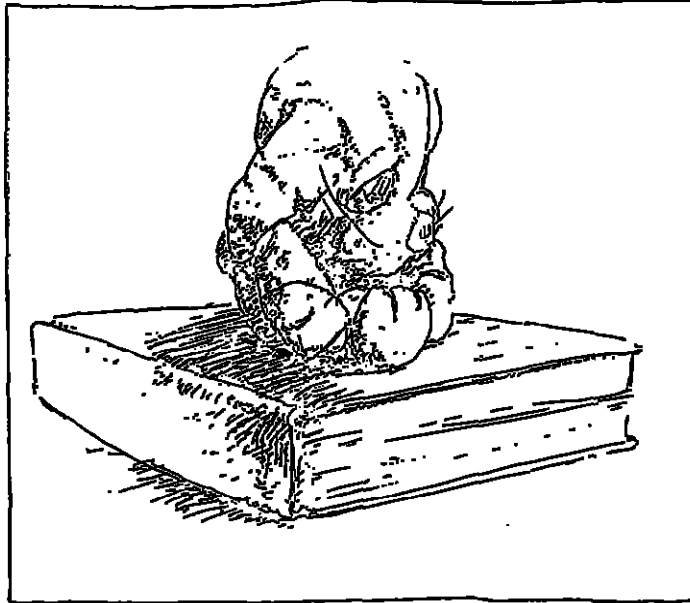
By MARY AINSLIE SMITH

CHRISTMAS, MANY of us would like to believe, is a time of simple, traditional pleasure, especially for children, and books are traditional presents that are particularly suited to the occasion. But as psychologists nowadays repeatedly inform us, Christmas is rarely a time of simple joy for our children. High expectations lead almost inevitably to let-down. All sorts of personal and social problems may be brought into sharp focus at gatherings of families and friends. Among new Canadian books offered for children this season is the expected range of animal stories, science fiction, fantasy, and fun. But there is also a significant proportion that reflects the darker side of childhood, the anxieties and tensions involved in growing up. Even a number of picture storybooks for very young children tackle some pretty complex problems.

**Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Any More** (Annick, 32 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper) explains its contents in its title. Kathy Stinson has written a poignant story of a little girl trying to understand why her parents have separated, and struggling to work out the implications for her own life. On weekdays she lives in the city with her mother. On weekends she and her brother go to their father's home in the country. Both locations have their attractions, and she loves both parents very much, but there are anxieties. Why can't she see her father every day? Will he remarry? Where will she and her brother spend Christmas, and will Santa know? She wishes deeply that her family could be together again, and finds it hard to accept that this will never happen. But children can learn, as the young narrator does, that in spite of such family upheavals, life and love can continue. Nancy Lou Reynolds has created a

wonderfully real little girl in her illustrations, with long, rather tangled hair and beautiful expressive eyes—a perfect complement to the text.

The heroine has another serious problem in **Emily Umily**, by Kathy Corrigan, illustrated by Vlasta van Kampen (Annick, 32 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper). Emily, shy and unsure of herself, is reluctant to start kindergarten.



Once there she finds it devastating when she is teased for her tendency to say "um" as she tries to talk. A nasty classmate called Priscilla counts Emily's "ums" and gives her the embarrassing nickname. The teacher, a remote and nameless presence, seems to have no control over the situation and eventually Emily withdraws totally and hates school. Cyril, the hero of **Taking Care of Crumley**, by Ted Staunton, illustrated by Tina Holdcroft (Kids Can Press, 28 pages, \$14.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper), also has a problem, this time with the school bully who is making his life miserable. This story tells of Cyril's search for the perfect plan to make Crumley leave him alone. Teasing and bullying are common problems, and

many children might well share Emily or Cyril's concerns to some degree. But both stories have resolutions so facile that not even the youngest child could take them seriously. It seems rather unfair to present a situation with a child facing a real, and not at all amusing, problem and then wind it up with a totally implausible solution — as if to suggest that children have no real way out of these difficulties.

There's an Alligator Under My Bed!, by Gail E. Gill, illustrated by Veronika Martenova Charles (Three Trees Press, 24 pages, \$11.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), handles things better. Kevin, a preschooler, has bedtime fears that no one, not even his mother, can understand. The large green alligator he believes lives under his bed disturbs his sleep at night and curtails his daytime activities. Certain areas of his room are just too dangerous to play in, and he runs a constant risk of getting his toes bitten as he climbs in and out of bed. At last, on his own, he finds the courage to confront his fears, and the alligator shrinks and vanishes.

In **The Big Secret**, by Jed MacKay, illustrated by Heather Collins (Annick, 32 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), Mario also feels that no one understands his concerns. He is six years old and has been living with his new adopted family for about one year. It has been a happy year, but now suddenly everyone seems to be hiding something from him. Something is going to happen on Saturday and no one, not his family, his friends or his neighbours, will tell him what. But just as Mario is beginning to feel some of his old loneliness and insecurity return, the story has a happy ending. Saturday's event is an anniversary party, celebrating one complete year that Mario has lived in his new home.

ILLUSTRATION BY RICK JACOBSON

**Good Morning Franny, Good Night Franny**, by Emily Hearn, illustrated by Mark Thurman (Women's Press, 32 pages, \$4.95 paper), is an upbeat, cheerful story about overcoming a number of problems. When Franny's wheelchair knocks over an old lady's bundle buggy, Ting, a little Chinese girl, helps her pick up the parcels. Franny and Ting become great friends, playing together in the park, where Franny also teaches Ting some basic English. But Franny has to go briefly to the hospital, and when she returns home Ting and her family have moved away, leaving no message—well, almost no message. On the sidewalk into the park Ting has painted the words "Good morning Franny" for Franny to see as she arrives and "Good night Franny" for her to see as she leaves. Hearn and Thurman are used to working together—they provide us with the popular *Mighty Mites* comic strip—and the smoothness of their collaboration shows in this attractive little book.

Tundra has had great success with its series of Baabee books, created by Dayal Kaur Khalsa. They provide vivid, colourful symbols that babies as young as two months can enjoy and identify. The first Baabee books were mounted on stiff paper and could be opened out in strips to form frescoes or be folded into cube-like forms. The latest four books are bound in the ordinary way and intended for babies now at least one year old, presumably able to manipulate and turn pages. The range of experiences dealt with in the images now is wider. While the first books showed pictures of toys and familiar objects around the home, the titles of the latest four are: *Bon Voyage, Baabee*; *Happy Birthday, Baabee*; *Merry Christmas, Baabee*; *Welcome, Twins* (each 12 pages, each \$3.95).

A charming story for children a bit past the Baabee stage is *A Friend Like You*, written and illustrated by Roger Paré (Annick, 24 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper). Translated from the French title, *Plaisirs de chats*, it gently talks the warm friendship of a grey cat and a brown cat through the seasons of a year. The cats are lovely roly-poly anthropomorphites who play the piano, colour with crayons and bundle up to go cross-country skiing. Their pleasure in each other's company is so obvious in the illustrations that their purring is almost audible.

*Erenda and Edward*, written and illustrated by Maryann Kovalski (Kids Can Press, 32 pages, \$14.95 cloth, \$6.95 paper), is a similar story, this time about the friendship of two dogs. But their companionship is interrupted when Brenda has a traffic accident and is taken miles away from Edward to a

house in the country to recover. After many sad years, they have a touching reunion.

When children graduate from picture storybooks, they enter the world of real novels, books that may have as many as 300 words per page and few, if any, illustrations, although always a colourful cover. In books for readers in this age category—approximately eight to 12—the problem is usually everything. Family break-ups, problems with school, with identity, with friends, with pets—this is the meat of such stories. That is why it is refreshing to find a book that really doesn't worry about problems, but instead concentrates on the funny side of growing up.

*Quincy Rumpel*, by Betty Waterton (Groundwood, 94 pages, \$5.95 paper), tells the story of the Rumpel family as they settle into their new home on the West Coast. Quincy, the madcap heroine, fails in her attempt to make spaghetti, gets stuck on the roof of the house, falls through the ceiling in her parents' bedroom, and has other similar adventures. In the course of the story she perhaps gains a bit of wisdom and grows up some, but no traumas shake her happy family and no crises demand racking solutions. The story is rather silly but fun, and makes no pretensions otherwise.

Also pure entertainment is *No Coins Please*, by Gordon Korman (Scholastic, 184 pages, \$10.95 cloth). Travelling at his usual breakneck pace, Korman takes us on a cross-continent summer trip with "Juniortours: Fun, Education and Adventure." While two teenaged counsellors try unsuccessfully to keep control, one of the campers, Artie, a 12-year-old confidence man, works a new scam at every stop.

*Beyond the Door*, by Jacqueline Nugent (Groundwood, 160 pages, \$7.95 paper), and *All Kinds of Magic*, by Florence McNeil (Groundwood, 155 pages, \$6.95 paper), are two books that take readers beyond reality. In *Beyond the Door*, Luc and Iris, two children from Montreal, are overcome by smoke as they try to escape from a burning theatre. When they wake up, they find themselves in another time and place, a strange desert country where they are imprisoned in a jail-like hospital. The book tells the story of their escape and the long journey back to their own world. *All Kinds of Magic* is set in Barkerville, the legendary gold-mining town in British Columbia. While two children, Gen and her adopted brother Mark, are vacationing there, they encounter an old lady who says she is a ghost. They help her prove the truth of the story that her husband was a hero who saved Barkerville in a time of winter

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famine back in the 19th century.

In both novels, the children are allowed to escape through magic or fantasy from the actual problems of their lives. Luc has been deserted by his father, Iris has a club foot, but these problems shrink during their fantastic journey back to Montreal. Gen is jealous and contemptuous of the younger Mark while he is pathetically eager to win her approval. Their adventures together bring them closer to a harmonious family relationship.

But another group of novels for young readers brings the problems directly to the fore with no magic provided to cushion the blows of reality. Jean Little's *Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird* (Penguin, 212 pages, \$11.95 cloth) presents a crisis that must be the hardest for a youngster to deal with—the loss through death of a parent. Jeremy, 11 years old, finds out during his summer holidays that his father has cancer. Soon after school starts in the fall, his father dies. When his mother decides to go back to school herself, Jeremy and his younger sister have to adjust to living in a single-parent household with a mother who is now away all day. By the time Christmas comes, Jeremy is in trouble. He keeps the memory of his father suppressed because he cannot bear to confront his grief, and he withdraws from any real communication with his mother. But with the help of a new friend, a small cat and a polished stone owl, last presents from his father, he manages to open his heart again to the joy of the season and to the understanding and compassion that have always been part of his family.

*Hockeybat Harris*, by Geoffrey Bilson (Kids Can Press, 158 pages, \$5.95 paper), is the story of another boy whose life is disrupted. Twelve-year-old David Harris has been sent from England to Canada during the early years of the Second World War. He is part of the Child Guest Program, which was aimed at assisting families in England threatened by bomb attacks. Bob Williams is the Saskatchewan boy his own age whose family makes room for David. There are many problems. David's extreme homesickness manifests itself in acts of aggression and petty thievery. Bob, used to being an only child, finds that it is not at all easy to share with someone who is so hostile and different. Christmas in this book acts as a catalyst, bringing the two boys closer together in understanding.

The Christmas season also plays an important part in *Angel Square*, by Brian Doyle (Groundwood, 128 pages, \$6.95 paper). Tommy, whom readers met in *Up to Low* (1982), is preparing to celebrate with his family and friends in Ottawa, the first Christmas since the

war. Tommy is a very busy boy. To finance his Christmas, he has an after-school job at Woolworths, he cleans a Hebrew school, he serves as altar boy at St. Brigit's, and he sings in the choir at St. Albany's. He also has concerns with school, a secret double life as *The Shadow*, and a beautiful classmate whose attention he is trying to win. But overriding all of this is his concern about the father of his best friend, Sammy. Sammy's father was night watchman at the streetcar barns and was beaten up by someone who hates Jews. Tommy is determined to find out who did it. Doyle writes with an extravagant style, and creates a surreal and highly comic portrait of life around Angel Square in Ottawa's Lowertown in the 1940s.

Creating poetry for children and then popularizing it seems to require very special talents, and no other Canadian has had the success in this area that Dennis Lee has enjoyed. He follows last year's very popular *Jelly Belly* with *Lizzy's Lion* (Stoddart, \$8.95 cloth), one 56-line poem stretched over a 28-page book. *Lizzy's Lion* contains the now familiar combination of comedy and violence that marks Lee's children's verse. The lion that Lizzy keeps in her bedroom attacks a rotten robber who is after Lizzy's piggy bank. By the time the lion is finished, he and Lizzy have merely to stuff the robber's "toes & tum & head" in the garbage, "And they both went back to bed." Lee has always been very fortunate in his illustrators, and Marie-Louise Gay's pictures for *Lizzy's Lion* are great—funny and eccentric, filling up and adding weight to what otherwise seems to be a rather slim volume for the money.



Sean O hugin, winner of the Canada Council Award for Children's Literature, has had a great deal of experience creating poetry for and with children. His new book, *Blink* (Black Moss, 24 pages, \$5.95 paper), is subtitled *A Strange Book for Children*. When a little girl wakes up one morning, everything she sees from her left eye is in the city, while simultaneously everything she sees from her right eye is in the country. Later

on in the day, her left eye shows her surroundings in the tropics, while her right eye takes her to the Arctic. The next morning, from her left eye her mother and the kitchen are normal, but from her right eye her mother is a monkey sitting in a tree, feeding her bananas and picking fleas out of her hair. Narrow columns of text run down the right and left sides of each page, presenting, in a parallel fashion, the situation as seen from each eye. Illustrations by Barbara di Lella are fun to look at and must have been fun to do.

Although Irving Layton is a poet whose work requires a fairly mature sensibility and depth of experience to appreciate, *A Spider Danced a Cosy Jig*, edited by Elspeth Cameron (Stoddart, 32 pages, \$9.95 cloth), presents 14 of his poems as a selection for children. All are examples of Layton's animal poems, including some, such as "The Bull Calf," that have previously been anthologized as part of the Canadian content in school poetry texts. Older children will be able to derive a great deal from this book, responding to the vivid Layton images and the irony of his observations about humanity. Illustrations by Miro Malish are rich and colourful, each animal from the Laughing Rooster to King Kong having a human face with the appropriate expression fixed onto his animal body.

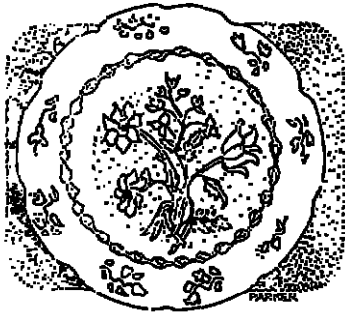
Layton, O hugin, and Lee are among the more than 50 poets represented in *The New Wind Has Wings*, an anthology of Canadian poetry for children compiled by Mary Alice Downie and Barbara Robertson (Oxford, 112 pages, \$15.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper). This is a new version of the 1968 anthology *The Wind Has Wings*, and it contains most of the poems of the original with additions from such poets as P.K. Page, Alden Nowlan, and Gilles Vigneault. Elizabeth Cleaver, whose collages and linocuts illustrated the first edition, has added several new illustrations to this recent volume. With more than 80 poems in this attractive and colourful book, it is a valuable addition to anyone's Canadian literature collection.

*Time Is Flies*, by George Swede, illustrated by Darcia Labrosse (Three Trees Press, 48 pages, \$11.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper), is a pleasant volume of verse for children. These are short poems, some only one line long, but they summon clear, often amusing, images to the reader's mind. Here is the title poem, for instance:

*For the fat green frog  
crouched on the log  
time is flies*

This season also has a range of non-fiction books for children to suit many tastes and interests. For example, *The*

**Junior Computer Dictionary**, by Kathlene Willing and Suzanne Girard (Highway Book Shop, 68 pages, \$8.95 paper), is just one in a series of publica-



tions from these authors designed to help both children and adults feel at ease with computers. This particular book is for grades four to seven, and defines 101 computer terms with plentiful illustrations by Melanie Hayes.

Rudi McToots's **Kids' Book of Fun & Games** (Dreadnaught, 128 pages, \$4.95 paper) offers more than 100 indoor activities, including string games, games to be played with pencil and paper, guessing contests, origami, and tongue twisters. It also shows children how to do simple card tricks, how to make their noses snap, and how to make a trumpet noise with a piece of grass held between the thumbs. Most children seem to know how to do a lot of these things without instruction, but here is a source for any who have somehow missed out.

The *Owl* books from Greer de Pencier can always be counted on to provide good stories about the natural world. This year two are for very young children, *Slip the Otter Finds a Home* and *Flip the Dolphin Saves the Day*, both written and illustrated by Olena Kassian (each 24 pages, each \$1.75 paper). Because of *Owl's* distribution arrangements with Golden Press, these two little books are available in the format of the Golden Look-Look Book series. Perhaps this means that *Owl* will be making a big impact on the children's section of supermarket book shelves. Good luck to them!

Also from *Owl* are two excellent reference and activity books for children, *The Kids' Cat Book* and *The Kids' Dog Book* (each 96 pages, each \$6.95 paper). Created by the editors of *Owl* magazine, both have wonderful photographs and drawings, tips on the care and training of pets, Mighty Mite cartoon adventures, a family tree tracing the ancestry of dogs and cats, and puzzles, games, and animal jokes. Example: Q. Why did the cat join the Red Cross? A. It wanted to be a first-aid kit.

One more *Owl* book, *Granny's Gang*, by Katherine McKeever, illustrated by Olena Kassian (96 pages, \$8.95 paper),

contains interest for readers of all ages. It describes the activities at the Owl Rehabilitation Research Foundation in Vineland, Ont. Run by Larry and Kay McKeever, this centre helps injured owls and whenever possible returns them to their natural habitat. Granny is an owl whose injuries prevented her from leaving, so she stayed to become part of the McKeever family. This book presents her story and the adventures of other owls who have passed through the centre.

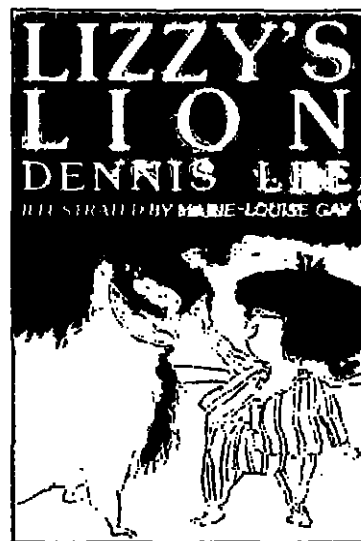
**The Orchestra** (Groundwood, 48 pages, \$10.95 cloth) is an excellent introduction for young children to the different families of instruments and to such musical terms as melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics. It sounds dry, but it's not. Mark Rubin's text is clear, straightforward, and instructive, but the real fun lies in the illustrations by Alan Daniel, which tell their own story, independent of, although complementary to, the written narrative. Two children are invited to see different parts of the orchestra rehearsing, to meet the different musicians, and to see their individual instruments. They meet the conductor, see a full rehearsal, and last of all accompany their mother to a concert. Daniel has taken great care to portray the personalities of the musicians, sometimes in apparent conflict with the

personalities of their instruments. They are all shown wearing casual, sometimes colourful and eccentric clothing as they rehearse. This makes an effective contrast to the final two-page spread where, for performance, the entire orchestra is dressed in formal, uniform, concert black.

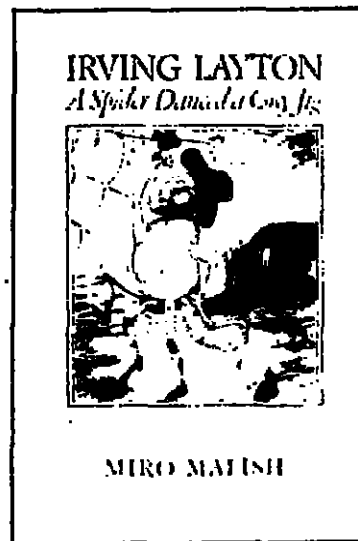
At this time of year there appears a group of books that are sort of coffee-table books for children. This is not meant to be a deprecatory label. These books are usually very beautiful. They are also often fairly expensive and seem likely to appeal more to the tastes of adults looking for presents than to the children for whom they are intended. These books are frequently preserved as keepsakes and can become valuable family treasures.

One such book is **Canadian Fairy Tales** (Groundwood, 128 pages, \$15.95 cloth). Eva Martin has chosen and retold 12 stories, most from the collections of Marius Barbeau and other students of the folklore of French and Maritime Canada. All these stories depend heavily on their European roots and present kings, queens, giants, younger sons, impossible tasks, magic steeds, secret gardens, and castles—the standard stuff of all good fairy tales. And they are good stories, but there is little, if anything, to distinguish them as Cana-

## CHRISTMAS AND KIDS MEANS . . .



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## Mommy's boy

By I.M. OWEN

The Twelfth Transforming, by Pauline Gedge, Macmillan, 416 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9823 8).

IN HER FOURTH novel, Pauline Gedge returns to 18th-Dynasty Egypt, the setting of her first (*Child of the Morning*), and she almost matches that astonishing work. This is a relief. In her second book, *The Eagle and the Raven*, she tried her hand at first-century Britain; I thought it a historical travesty and an artistic disaster. Her third, *Stargate*, was a cosmic fantasy, told from the point of view of a group of supernatural beings. It was a brave try, but this merely human reader had trouble identifying with the main characters. It's fair to add that both these books have made it into Penguins, complete with endorsements from Rosemary Sutcliff and Mary Renault, which makes it possible that I'm wrong about them.

The 18th Dynasty, which began about 3,600 years ago and lasted for two and a half centuries, is thoroughly representative of the society we generally picture when we think of ancient Egypt. It wasn't the pyramid-building age — in the dizzying time-scale of Egyptian history, the Great Pyramid was at least 1,200 years old when it began — but a time of a highly sophisticated architecture, literature of some quality, and considerable splendour; the objects from Tutankhamun's tomb give a good idea of the dynasty's style in its declining years. (Lots of gold, but the jewellery was mostly glass.)

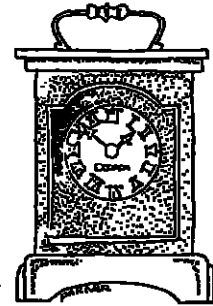
The capital was moved from Memphis in the Delta to Thebes, far upriver, and the local Theban god Amun rose to the top of the complicated Egyptian pantheon. Three other innovations distinguish this age from those that went before it. First, in expelling the Hyksos, the Semitic warriors from the desert who had dominated Egypt for generations, the Egyptians had learned from them; and Pharaoh now stood at the head of a large and efficient army. Second, priesthood became a full-time (and crowded) profession instead of an occasional function of prominent citizens. Third, the Crown acquired most of the land (this was Joseph's doing, according to

Genesis), transforming the nobles from landed gentry to professional courtiers, dependent on royal favour. Life in Thebes for the upper classes was a glittering social round. Egyptian mortuary practices seem morbid at first sight, but a little thought shows that the opposite is true. These people so enjoyed life that they were determined not to allow the accident of death to bring the fun to an end. Tutankhamun *did* take it with him.

The fourth pharaoh of the dynasty was Hatshepsut, the woman who insisted that she was King, not Queen. Her prosperous and pacific reign was imaginatively reconstructed by Pauline Gedge in *Child of the Morning*. When Hatshepsut's energetic young co-regent, Thothmes III, at last succeeded in getting rid of her, he embarked on a long series of aggressive wars in Asia that turned Egypt into the first truly imperial power in the history of the world.

*The Twelfth Transforming* takes up the story about a century after Hatshepsut's death, when Pharaoh Amunhotep III is nearing the end of his long reign, and the government is in the hands of his principal wife Tiye. She is the central character in the book, though the main story is the strange reign of her son, who ascended the throne as Amunhotep IV but changed his name to Akhenaten.

Akhenaten was the oddest pharaoh of them all. He imposed monotheism, in the form of the worship of the Aten, the visible disc of the sun (as distinct from the traditional sun-god, Ra). Hence his change of name; hence, too, he abandoned Thebes, the city of the false god Amun, and built a new capital, Akhetaten, in a desolate spot, until then uninhabited for very good reasons. It was a beautiful city, though built in such haste that nobody remembered to put in



sewers. After Akhenaten's death, it was abandoned in such haste that the Foreign Office files were left behind, to be discovered on the site, now called Tell el-Amarna, in 1887. The Amarna letters, 350 of them, make this the best-documented period in the diplomatic history of the ancient world. They demonstrate that Akhenaten was allowing the empire to crumble away.

Was he a saint or a nut? Both, prob-

dian. An endnote to the book tries to make a case that the presence of the forest in these stories is particularly dark and sinister, symbolic of the settlers' struggle with their new environment. But the Canadian forest was probably no more sinister and foreboding than the forests of Europe in the Dark Ages, where these stories had their origin. Perhaps this collection's main interest is to show just how strong these old themes must have been to have been transmitted almost intact through oral tradition, even many generations removed from their sources. Laszlo Gal's full-colour illustrations represent people in costumes and settings of a Europe in some romanticized past, without the slightest hint of the New World. However, they are hauntingly beautiful pictures, as we have come to expect from his previous work.

Another beautiful book is *Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance*, written and illustrated by Ian Wallace (Groundwood, 32 pages, \$10.95 cloth). It tells the story of a young boy in Vancouver who has been training with his grandfather to perform the Dragon's Dance in the traditional street parade celebrating Chinese New Year's. His grandfather is the head of the dragon and Chin Chiang is to dance the part of the dragon's tail. But on the day of the dance he has severe stage fright and runs away. A new friend helps him regain his courage and become the best dragon's tail ever. Wallace's illustrations make this book special—colour and pattern fill the pages, and the pictures of the dragon's dance are especially rich and exciting.

*Who Goes to the Park* (Tundra, 32 pages, \$17.95 cloth) showcases the paintings of Warabé Aska. The text, a series of verses by the artist, is really a superfluous accompaniment to 14 pictures of life and activity in Toronto's 400-acre High Park. As the seasons of the year pass, bands perform, couples pose for wedding photographs, lawn bowlers compete, and skaters circle on Grenadier Pond. And while all this occurs in the park, Aska fills the air above with clouds, birds, spirits and, in the Grenadier Pond picture, flowers formed by the breath of the skaters.

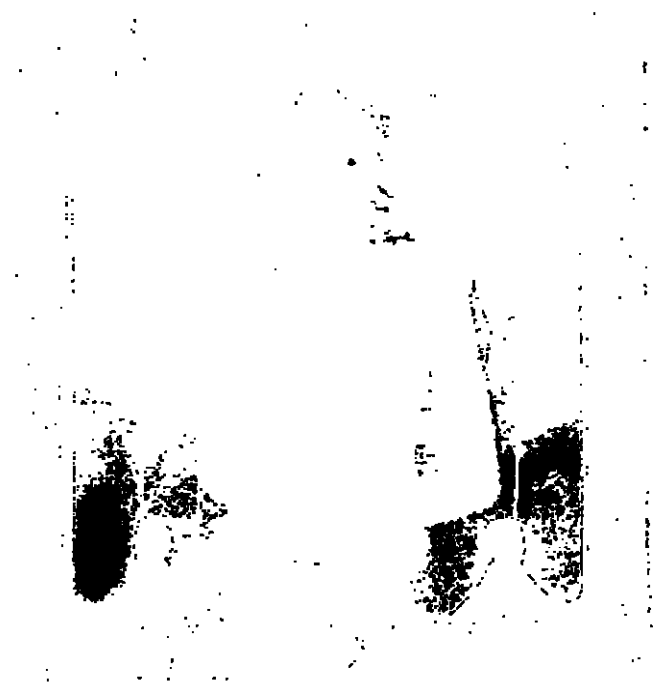
A very popular Christmas present should be *The Hockey Sweater* (Tundra, 24 pages, \$14.95 cloth). This is, of course, Roch Carrier's classic story about the young French-Canadian boy whose mother makes him wear a Toronto Maple Leaf hockey sweater, sent by mistake from Eaton's, when all the other players in the village wear the famous number 9 of Maurice Richard of the Montreal Canadiens. Illustrations are by Sheldon Cohen, based on his art for his 1980 National Film Board animated film, *The Sweater*. □

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ably; and that's how Gedge shows him. His boundless enthusiasm for his new religion, arising, as is evident from his beautiful hymns, from a genuine love of the natural world, simply left no room for the conduct of practical politics or ordinary human relations. The naturalistic style of art he introduced allows us to see him as he was: quite extraordinarily ugly and ungainly. He must have made a strange contrast with his wife Nefertiti, so famous for her beauty. Gedge makes him lovable, though clearly an impossible person. She makes Nefertiti detestable, though pitiable in her hopeless situation.

We have the names of the successive pharaohs and of many of their relations, but owing to the practice of incestuous marriage and polygamy the exact relationships are a matter of conjecture. Gedge works it out most ingeniously, though some may find it hard to swallow the idea that Akhenaten married his mother Tiye — not just as a formality to keep her on as the real working ruler, but actually having children by her. There's an echo here of the suggestion (first made by Immanuel Velikovsky, I think) that the Oedipus legend was originally about Egyptian Thebes, not Greek Thebes, and that Oedipus was Akhenaten.

With so much difficult detail to work out, it's an immense achievement not only to have done that well, but in the process to have created a sunlit world of living people. Maybe they weren't like this at all, but I thoroughly believe in the characters as she shows them: shrewd old Ay, the Master of Charioteers who briefly took over as Pharaoh; young Tutankhamun; Horemheb, the military man who became Pharaoh at the end of the dynasty and set things to rights; and his swaggering, engaging wife Munodjme.

The book isn't quite perfect, of course. As always, the Gedge style would have benefited by a bit of pruning. And I *think* she's wrong on one small historical point. She has Nefertiti writing to the King of the Hittites that her husband has just died and she wants him to send one of his sons to marry her and become Pharaoh, because she can't marry one of her servants. This did happen — the Hittite prince obediently set forth and was assassinated at the border — but I thought it was now established beyond doubt that the queen who wrote was Tutankhamun's widow. However, it fits Gedge's characterization of Nefertiti, and she has obviously studied the period carefully, not dipped dilettantishly into it as I have. □

## REVIEW

# On the brink

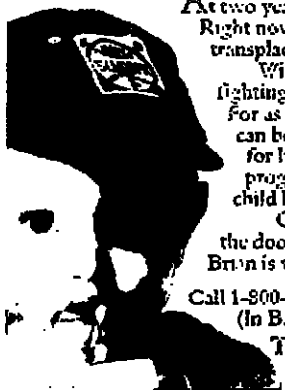
By LUCILLE KING-EDWARDS

*Secular Love*, by Michael Ondaatje, Coach House Press, 128 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88910 288 0).

ONCE AGAIN a book by Michael Ondaatje, and the expectancy is qualified by the memory of one's first encounter with *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, a book that swept one through it on an ever-cresting wave. Until *Running in the Family* and now *Secular Love*, the passion that Ondaatje has put into his poems and novels has been projected onto characters from the myths of his imagination: Billy of the Wild West and Buddy Bolden of Storyville. This imagination produced powerful books, but they were books that allowed their author a certain privacy removed from

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the scene of passion. Ondaatje questions himself in "White Dwarfs"

*Why do I love most  
among my heroes those  
who sail to that perfect edge  
where there is no social fuel  
Release of sandbags  
to understand their altitude —*

Perhaps there is no answer to that question, or at least it is not for us to know the answer. What arouses interest in *Secular Love* is the opening quotation from Peter Handke, in which an actor is instructed to stop holding back and to learn to run and scream properly, without embarrassment. Although there is still the distancing of persona, as in any poetry, Ondaatje would seem to be that actor who must express his own true feelings and passions.

*Running in the Family* certainly opens the door for this book of poetry, for it takes Ondaatje back to his roots and the passions of his family, particularly of his father, a drunk and drowning man as he is portrayed in the book. It is almost as if *Secular Love* was written in order to get closer to the psyche of this father. The title comes from "Women Like You," a poem set in the heart of Sri Lanka:

*Seeing you  
I want no other life  
and turn around  
to the sky  
and everywhere below  
jungle, waves of heat  
secular love*

I find this passage enigmatic, but would suggest that it opens the possibilities of the passionate journey that is the book.

*Secular Love* opens with "Claude Glass," and the poem does embody the "luscious chiaroscuro" of the concentrated night imagery, but the focus is on the man flowing drunkenly through it. This man appears in the first person. He is called to the river; a river flows through his house, and finally the people of the poem exist for him underwater. It is also the stream of the unconscious that functions here; in that river he embraces nature as he would a woman, kissing both arm and branch with equal love. "Claude Glass" is a romantic poem, a poem of night and darkness, and one immediately recognizes its precursors in Lowry, in John Berryman, who pops up a couple of times later in the volume, and in the romantic strain from Keats on down.

Away from reason and control seems to be the main thrust of this book:

*I wanted poetry to be walnuts  
in their green cases  
but now it is the sea  
and we let it drown us,  
and we fly to it released  
by giant catapults  
of pain loneliness deceit and vanity  
("Tin Roof")*

If the opening poem depends on drunkenness to achieve this letting-go of emotions, in "Tin Roof" it is the exposure of a man on the edge of the sea. He is facing whatever is in the blue beyond the volcanic shore. Alone he contemplates the loss of self:

*How to arrive at this  
drowning  
on the edge of sea*

The structure of "Tin Roof" is of individual poems that make up a long poem; the writing appropriately becomes spare. Dense long lines disappear. The writing has an acerbic quality, and bamboo as a talisman seems to be correct for this stripping away. Sparse as furnishings in the cabin in which he lives, the poet's pretensions are jettisoned. It is the poem of a man functioning on the brink who sees the plunge into the sea as a compelling magic. Through the poem he discovers this other, starker passion:

*which puts your feet on the ceiling  
this fist  
to smash forward  
take this silk  
somehow Ah  
out of poetry.*

The third section of the book, "Rock Bottom," is divided into two sections. The first is a series of poems that plays with the idea of exposure and the confessional mode. They are primarily a prelude to the second section, a testing of the poet's willingness to, as he puts it, go "whole hog the pigs testament/what I know of passion." It has its ironic as well as its romantic moments, neatly described as

*near the delicate  
heart  
of Billie Holiday*

The second part of "Rock Bottom" is more of a mixture of styles and types of poems than the previous parts of the book. There is the passion of a love affair as theme for part of it, but we bump into the domestic Ondaatje of children, suburbs, and friends as well. The dominant theme is that of a man painfully removing himself from a known domestic environment out onto the edge of the desert with Billy the Kid.

The early part of the book has led one into expectations of continuity of tone and timbre. It is jarring now in this last section to go from the confessional poems of anguished, passionate love to the more mundane ones of friendship and fatherly love, even a clever dog poem. This is not to say that these latter poems are not well-made, but that they appear gratuitous here. In real life one does linger on friends and children when life is in upheaval, but the whole hog of passion diminishes these poems, which would thrive better in a different book.

I would like to have seen *Secular Love* as pure as *Coming Through Slaughter*, or *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, but there is always that other side of Ondaatje that refuses the final leap

*The tug over the cliff.  
What protects him  
is the warmth in the sleeve.* □

## REVIEW

# Marking time

By JEAN WRIGHT

The *Scenic Art*, by Hugh Hood, Stoddart, 256 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 2023 5) and \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 7737 5010 X).

WITH THIS BOOK Hugh Hood gives us the fifth installment of his ambitious 12-part series *The New Age*, a tale of Ontario's immediate past. Full marks for grit. In a country noted for the extreme difficulty and the passage of great stretches of time attendant upon the production of slim volumes, it is always encouraging to see such untypical vigour. In addition to the first five volumes of *The New Age*, Hood has produced four other novels, six collections of short stories, and four volumes of non-fiction.

This installment deals, as the title hints, with drama — specifically the ferment of post-war theatre life in Ontario that gave birth to the Stratford Festival, to the present Toronto theatre world, and to the vigorous and varied stock companies of the Ontario hinterland. It introduces its main characters while they are bit players and props-people living in jolly digs during 1953, the first year of the Festival ("In the first season at Stratford that tent sang all the time") and ends with a disastrous Centennial Year theatre festival in mythical Stoverville, the epitome of small-town Ontario. In the intervening years narrator Matt Goderich, his family, and friends lead their complicated, intertwined lives on stage and in bed on two continents.

When I read the first book in the series, *The Swing in the Garden*, in 1975, I found it interesting in large part because I had once lived in Toronto's Summerhill area, where much of it is set. Those who experienced the flowering of post-war Toronto theatre in the 1950s

will no doubt find the same kind of first-hand interest in *The Scenic Art* — that pleasant sensation of recognition. Beyond that point of evaluation, I must admit to an uncertain and divided response. *The Swing in the Garden* struck me at the time as non-fiction disguised as a novel. The same applies, to a lesser extent, to this book.

There is much that reads as reportage, although the structure gives a fictional atmosphere. The author plays with time, darting back and forth between past and present, and uses a near-stream-of-consciousness structure that he juggles very successfully. There is great good humour and rollicking vigour, acute observation, ingenious transition from one scene to another. Example: Matt, newly wed, is lying alone in uxorious semi-consciousness in bed — “a sweaty, messy bed” — when he is accosted most physically by a young actor, Adam Sinclair, whom he has known since childhood. Rebuffed, Adam croons “You were much nicer to me when we were in Othello.”

This statement starts Matt off on a 60-page series of flashbacks that include his childhood, family, university days, wartime, Hart House theatre of the late 1940s and early '50s, Robert Gill, Nathan Cohen, Herbert Whittaker, Dominion Drama Festivals, Stratford, and Tyrone Guthrie, then back to the sweaty bedroom, where Matt's wife appears and banishes the amorous Adam with a broom. Talk about Proustian! And at that very moment, in the midst of a thunderstorm, the great Stratford tent has been raised for the first time and is singing in the storm. Talk about symbolic!

It's a tour-de-force of construction, but the trouble is that one is always aware of the structure. Somehow the narrative thrust is underpowered; the reader is never swept away by the whole, only admiring of the bits. As I read this passage, always nagging at the back of my mind was the worry — how will he get back to Adam? The novel must be sufficiently interesting at any given moment to sustain the reader despite the lack of traditional movement. If interest in the content flags, as it does in *The Scenic Art* from time to time, then the novel stumbles. Hood attempts to compensate for this danger of flagging interest with joviality and colloquialisms — “Boyoboy, were we gloomy!” . . . “My gosh!” . . . “Symbols, my God! We were up to our ass in symbols” . . . “Do I need to point out that it is because of this kind of reasoning that the arts don't really effloresce in Stoverville? I don't? Terrific!” All this sort of thing is addressed, I should point out, not to other characters in the book, but to you,

the reader. Sometimes it works, but frequently it has a hollow ring. The author intrudes in a jarring way between word and reader.

The book is clever, intelligent, full of those symbols, figures of speech, and mimetic arcs so helpful to academics trying to fill the golden hour. It makes a genuine contribution to the laborious forging of the uncreated conscience of the Canadian race, at which so many have been working for so long. (To paraphrase Robert Harlow in *Scann*, while I am not getting any younger, Canada doesn't seem to be getting any older.) Hood's book adds to our self-awareness and maturity; it is a *Lanny Budd* of our time and place. But frequently *The Scenic Art* doesn't so much evoke as describe. It is reminiscence rather than the moment.

And yet. It's early days. Could Hood have achieved the same effect without fictionalizing? Probably not. There are two possible evaluations of this book. Either the author is attempting to use the novel for wrongful purposes in the mistaken belief that a novel, *per se*, is superior to non-fiction. Or he is developing a slight variation on the conventional novel form, with the furtive possibility that he might be succeeding, and brilliantly, at forging a form we can't yet recognize because we haven't a name for it. Time, in its musical way, will tell. □

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## Ants in your plants

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By PHIL SURGUY

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**Tropical Nature: Life and Death in the Rain Forests of Central and South America**, by Adrian Forsyth and Ken Miyata, John Wiley & Sons, 268 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 684 17964 4).

THERE IS A TOUCH of veiled irony in the authors' choice of a title: it is also the name of a book by the great Victorian naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, and in their text Forsyth and Miyata make a point of quoting his statement that “the luxuriance and beauty of Tropical Nature is a well-worn theme, and there is little new to say about it.”

Actually, there is still lots to say. On the basic scientific level, it is believed

that very many rain-forest plant and animal species have yet to be discovered, described, and named. And, on a broader level, northerners, even northern biologists, still don't fully appreciate what rain forest has to tell us about the diversity, interconnectedness, and possibilities of life.

One example of the temperate zone prejudice with which we view the world is our unthinking habit of regarding migratory birds as northern creatures who fly south for the winter. Yet there are naturalists, including the authors, who argue that they might actually be tropical birds that fly north for the summer, because our longer days, which extend their bug-hunting time, and the relative absence of predators enable them to raise more young.

Another prejudice is the view that temperate-zone frogs are the norm by which all amphibian life histories must be measured. “However,” Forsyth and Miyata write, “the aquatic polliwogs so beloved of children in northern temperate latitudes are by no means the only path a developing frog can take. The frogs of the Neotropical rain forests exhibit a remarkable set of adaptations that belie the simple picture of amphibian life histories found in most textbooks and make an open-minded naturalist wonder what a normal amphibian life history really is.”

They make their point by describing a number of marsupial frog species, some of which exhibit forms of parental care for their young. In certain other species, the new tadpoles climb onto the backs of their parents, who take them up to the treetops in search of plants whose leaves form natural water-storage tanks. The tadpoles are left in these havens and the parents go back to the ground, returning periodically with nutrients that they deposit in their offspring's tanks.

Adrian Forsyth is a Canadian, a Harvard biology Ph.D. and the winner of two National Magazine Awards for science writing: for a 1981 article in *Harrowsmith* and a 1982 piece called “Rain Forest Requiem,” which appeared in *Equinox*. The late Ken Miyata was also a Harvard-trained biologist and Forsyth's partner on many field trips to tropical America. He drowned during a trout-fishing holiday on the Big Horn River while this book was being printed.

Their book is not intended to be an exhaustive catalogue of tropical nature. Their purpose is “the celebration and preservation” of a rapidly disappearing part of our earth, where “common species are rare and rare species common.” Instead of generalities, they present a ceaselessly fascinating array of their own observations of the frequently wondrous adaptations by which rain-

forest plant and animal life competes for, harvests, and protects its share of the rather limited supply of available nutrients. To take only one example, here is their description of the nutritional economics of the partnership between a species of acacia tree and a species of ant that lives in its hollow thorns:

... The bullhorn acacias not only provide these ants with a dwelling; they also supply extrafloral nectaries at the base of leaves as well as pinhead-sized globular orange bodies attached in rows along the edges of young leaves. These nectaries ... contain all the nutrients required by a colony of acacia ants. Since the ants' needs for food and shelter are provided by the plant, all of their excess energy should be channeled into promoting the welfare of the tree.

To see this self-interested loyalty in action, you need only rustle an acacia tree or poke the leaves with a stick. Ants will come pouring forth from the thorns, and if they chance to get on your skin, you will quickly feel the wrath of their stings. These powerful stings must deter most mammalian grazers, and the constantly patrolling workers remove insect herbivores before they do any damage. There are obvious direct benefits for the plant, but the situation also has an interesting hidden benefit. Most acacias produce nitrogen-rich, cyanide-like defensive compounds to protect themselves from herbivores. However, these compounds can be costly to produce in certain soils; it is far less costly to produce the sweet exudates that ants need, and bullhorn acacias do not need to produce large quantities of these substances.

The interconnectedness of all life is nowhere more profusely evident than in the rain forests of tropical America, one of the greatest pools of genetic diversity on earth. But we are now in grave danger of entering what the authors call "a dark age of biological simplicity," as vast tracts of rain forest are being wiped out every day — much of it to make way for rangeland to supply beef for northern fast-food chains.

*Tropical Nature* concludes with a report on this disaster and the steps that can be taken to arrest it. Among the things we can do is support conservation groups like the World Wildlife Fund. But, Forsyth and Miyata add, "Contributing money is an important gesture, but it is a passive one . . . . Perhaps the most significant thing you can do for the welfare of tropical rain forest is to visit one of the national parks in tropical America in order to see, smell, hear and feel some of the things we have written about. Only then will your intellectual concern . . . be translated into an emotional one that will spur you to help do something. Your simple presence will contribute in more ways than you might

think." To that end, the book closes with a dozen pages of tips for the first-time traveller. □

## REVIEW

# Life with father

By AL PURDY

**Frederick H. Varley**, by Peter Varley, Key Porter Books, illustrated, 208 pages, \$50.00 cloth (ISBN 0 919493 11 4).

**The Best of the Group of Seven**, by Joan Murray, Hurtig, illustrated, 95 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88830 265 7).

**Sometimes a Great Nation: A Photo Album of Canada 1850-1925**, by Edward Cavell, Altitude Publishing, illustrated, 208 pages, \$49.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919381 13 8).

OVER MOST of my lifetime, the Group of Seven has echoed in my ears so often that it has all the impact of a detumescent handshake. And in referring to the Group, Graham Coughtry has said that every tree in Canada has been painted.

Therefore I approach a book of Fred Varley's paintings in trepidation mixed with anticipation. Books about all other members of the Group have been published previously (I think), but I have seen only the best-known of Varley's paintings. And I realize suddenly that my liking for him is based on very little: *Vera*; *Stormy Weather*, *Georgian Bay*, and three or four others. But here is a feast, and my trepidation is needless.

Peter Varley — now a photographer living in Tofino, B.C. — is very interesting and very frank about his father, who consisted of unequal parts of Joyce Cary's Gully Jimson, wild boozier, incandescent genius, womanizer, and dozens of other things. During an era when art was almost anathema in this country, Varley sold few paintings, but people loved him, took him into their homes, gave him money, and women certainly found him attractive.

Frederick Horsman Varley was born in Sheffield, England, in 1881. As a red-haired six-year-old youngster, he was precocious enough to draw his own self-portrait. After attending art schools in Sheffield and Antwerp, winning prizes, medals, and certificates, he still found

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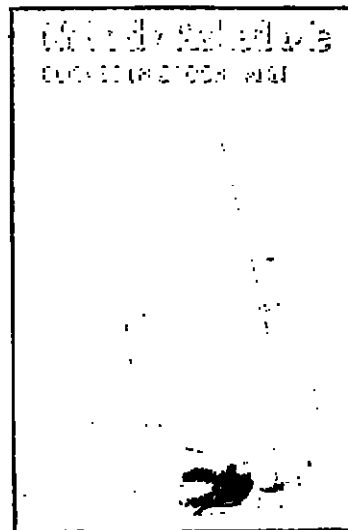


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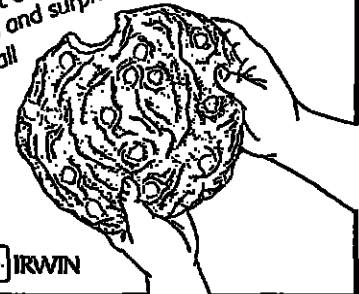
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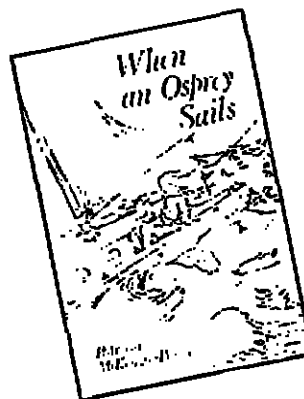
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earning a living difficult. He became a dock worker, and got married in 1910. Two years later he came to Canada after receiving glowing reports from another ex-Englishman, Arthur Lismer.

In Toronto, Varley met Tom Thomson and A.Y. Jackson, and went on painting expeditions to Algonquin Park with them. During the First World War he was commissioned to paint for Canadian war records. But it was only in 1920 and 1921 that the Group became known to the public as an entity, and was blasted left, right, and centre by venomous critics.

With a wife and four children, Varley sold few paintings. In 1926 he went west to teach in Vancouver. His wife, Maud, was forced to hold a "fire sale" of paintings to pay for her own and the children's train fares west.

One of Varley's Vancouver students was 13-year-old Vera Weatherbie. She became his constant companion for the

next 10 years. He called her "the greatest single influence in my life," and her image is scattered through his work.

*Vera* (1930) is the first painting in the book. You look at its green glow and think: wow! In fact, you don't have to look at it very long; the thing imprints itself on your brain. In *Dharana* she kneels on a veranda with face upturned to mountains in weird green light, and a little prickle runs up your spine at the expression on her face and the twisted-together hands.

Of course, all this Vera stuff didn't go down so good with Maud Varley. She sought refuge in sleep, sometimes slept outside, and walked in her sleep.

Through all this artistic and sexual odyssey, there was very little money. In Toronto they had been unable to manage the mortgage payments and lost their house. In Jericho, B.C., they were forced from their house, unable to pay the rent, and at one point their furniture

was seized by the bailiff. Varley began his lifetime wanderings in search of artistic sustenance and money across the country: to Lynn Valley, Toronto, Montreal, Trenton, Picton, the Maritimes.

In her appreciation, Joyce Zemans propounds less gobbledegook than some critics. She mentions Barker Fairley's opinion that since the Group emphasized landscape to the exclusion of nearly all else, then their existence was a detriment to portraiture. But Varley himself may have been the supreme Canadian portrait painter.

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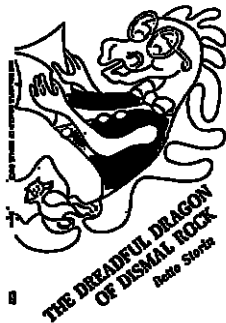
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*The Best of the Group of Seven* is another thing. Joan Murray has selected 53 colour plates for the book, which I view with occasional ardour. However — and it's a big however — the repros are too small. These big Group landscapes need space and size. You can't get that feeling in four or five inches. It's a feast, sure, but laid out on a small table.

I like some of the photos. Here's Lawren Harris, sphinx-face betraying nothing to the camera except dignity, and A.Y. Jackson, first lieutenant and Dean of St. Paul's, both of them supporting a presumably sloshed Varley, who glances mischievously sideways at Jackson. The picture's caption says "The action of Harris and Jackson (supporting Varley) suggests their role in the Group, that of unofficial leaders."

*Sometimes a Great Nation* is a collection of Canadian photographs, dating from 1850 to 1925. Edward Cavell, who made the selection, also contributes a rather boosterish intro with lines like, "We have earned our greatness." However, he does make some points about the 19th-century United States ("the bully of the block"), for which I award him a star-spangled maple leaf.

Photograph nomenclature ranges from daguerrotypes to albumen prints to ambrotypes. The jacket blurb says there are 192 of them, all full-coloured. Well, if you regard sepia-tone as full-colour, the blurb is correct; and a number of them are actually hand-coloured — but years ago, I think.

What's important about such a book? In my opinion, it gives you a sense of the past — in this case the Canadian past. All those numberless people who preceded us, the shadows in our brains who made us real and thereby became fic-

tional themselves. Dressed in their odd clothes, with fixed unnatural expressions, they stare backward in time. The universe in our own heads somehow fails to include them, despite the logic of our knowing they once existed, as we now exist and eventually shall disappear as they have disappeared into nowhere. The oddness, the strange differences between then and now sometimes give you a feeling that here we are, the warm, living, and visible tip of a cold invisible dead iceberg below the surface of time.

And you thumb through the big picture book looking for them, the parallels, similarities, evidence of our own moving fraction of eternity. Sir Casimir Stanislaus Gzowski and family, 1857. Why, I know him, don't I? No, I'm thinking of Peter. And those shad fishermen on Back River in 1865, their backs to us, pretending they don't know the photographer is watching. And bodies of Crow Indians killed by enemy Piegans in the prairie Sweetgrass Hills in 1873, the deathly shadows of their flesh fading into grass and wheat and prairie flowers.

Freight wagons at Yale, B.C., in 1868, moving through shouldering mountains to the Cariboo gold rush. Massive timber on a Vancouver freight train in 1890, labelled "British Columbia Tooth Picks." Blood Indian Sundance in Alberta, 1887, with ropes driven through the pectoral muscles of young Indian braves. Threshing wheat on the prairies, 1898, on the eve of the great explosion of prairie wheat production: "from 17 million bushels in 1900 to 188 million by 1912."

But enough. We see their faces, bodies so similar to ours, simulacrum of ourselves in the past. Stopped in mid-

action. And one of the pictures stays with me.

A boxing match. It's between gladiators representing two B.C. fishing communities, Brighthouse and Steveston, in 1913. The bout is just over. The winner's hand is being raised. He is bloody and bruised. The loser looks chirpy and belligerent still. Expressions of spectators are mixed: some believe the winner won, others don't think so. One well-dressed man in the ring is amused. A cigar-smoking spectator is grinning and triumphant. His man won, and he's about to collect his bet. There is danger in the picture. The two fighters disagree over who won. They may continue the scrap into now, right into this excellent book of photographs, and spatter it with blood, sweat, and tears. □

## REVIEW

# Power to the people

By JOHN GODDARD

*Denendeh: A Dene Celebration*, by René Fumoleau, the Dene Nation (McClelland & Stewart), illustrated, 114 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 9691841 0 7).

*Home and Native Land: Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution*, by Michael Asch, Methuen, 156 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 458 97380 7).

IN FAR-NORTHERN native settlements, where winters are long and severe, where alcohol problems and domestic strife underlie daily life, and where the struggle to maintain a distinct cultural identity is constant, it is easy to forget how well northern native peoples have adapted to change generally and how much they have accomplished politically in the last 15 years. *Denendeh: A Dene Celebration* is a reminder. It is a large-format book of colour photographs marking the 15th anniversary of the founding of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, now called the Dene Nation.

The word Dene (pronounced "DEN-eh") means "the people" to the Athapaskan Indian groups living in what they refer to as Denendeh, or "land of the people," a vast region more com-

## Hugh Kane, 1911-1984

WITH THE RECENT death of Hugh Pyper Kane, the book trade — and Canada's writers — lost one of the most important influences on the Canadian publishing industry as it exists today. A former travelling salesman, Kane helped Jack McClelland transform McClelland & Stewart from an agency firm publishing foreign books to its present independent stature. After 33 years with M & S, he served through the early 1970s as president of Macmillan of Canada, where his presence was most strongly felt in the publication of books by such writers as Donald Creighton, W.O. Mitchell, Morley Callaghan, Alice Munro, and

Robertson Davies, and the introduction of such emerging writers as Jack Hodgins and Ian McLachlan.

Born in Belfast in 1911, Kane came to Canada at the age of 10, and was educated at New Brunswick's Rothesay College School. Except for service in the Royal Canadian Artillery, he spent his life in book publishing, which he considered "the gentleman's profession." "I had always been interested in books and authors," he once reflected. "Here was a way of making a living out of a hobby. It wasn't until very much later that I learned that once you get into publishing you lose the hobby." □

monly known as the Mackenzie Valley, in the western portion of the Northwest Territories. The Dene Nation is the political organization acting for the Dene in pursuit of an aboriginal-claims settlement and some form of self-determination within Confederation.

In 35 pages of text, author and photographer René Fumoleau outlines the history of the Dene from aboriginal times to the present, with special emphasis on how the Dene have asserted themselves in recent years. It is an uplifting story, told chronologically, of how the devastation of imported illness, modern industry, and government ignorance have been largely overcome by the Dene during their struggle to take charge of their own affairs.

To help tell the story, Fumoleau frequently quotes individuals speaking on everything from colonialism to the spiritual significance of the drum dance. The impression he tries to convey is that the Dene now are speaking for themselves, even in this book. To emphasize the point, Fumoleau lists the Dene Nation as publisher and McClelland & Stewart merely as distributor. Also, he disguises the fact that he is the author and writes in the first-person plural, as in: "Together we of aboriginal descent constitute over fifty per cent of the resident population [of Denendeh]." The effect is disconcerting, giving the reader the feeling of being addressed by a disembodied chorus.

But these eccentricities are no doubt well-intended, arising from Fumoleau's modesty and his dedication to the Dene cause. He was born 58 years ago in France and came to Northern Canada in 1953 as an Oblate missionary, settling first in Fort Good Hope near the Arctic Circle. There he learned to hunt, fish, drive a dog-team, and teach the catechism in the Slavey language. He later moved to Yellowknife and wrote *As Long As This Land Shall Last* (1975), a history of Treaties 8 and 11, signed between the Dene and the federal government around the turn of the century.

Fumoleau continues to travel among the settlements, fishing camps, and hunting grounds, following events and taking pictures. His annual photo exhibitions in Yellowknife have made him well-known in the North as a photographer. And the photos in *Denendeh*, culled from 15 years of work, are excellent, celebrating an indomitable people still fundamentally attached to the land, to their traditions and to each other. There are five or six duds in the collection but many pictures are so superb it is hard to imagine how he got them. All are enhanced by Fumoleau's unique access to the Dene and his appreciation of their way of life.

*Home and Native Land: Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution* is also a celebration, in part, covering some of the same ground as Fumoleau.



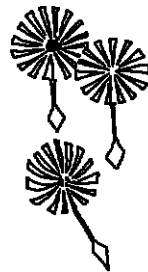
One chapter traces how the determination of various native groups in the last 15 years caused a complete turnaround in federal policy under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau — from outright rejection of the notion of aboriginal rights to entrenchment of aboriginal rights in the constitution.

Asch is an anthropologist who began studying the Dene of the Northwest Territories in 1969 and who has since worked with the Dene Nation documenting native land use, preparing papers on

economic and political institutions, and contributing research for use in aboriginal-claims negotiations. He also teaches at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. In this book, he borrows from his experience with the Dene to make a case for the entrenchment in the constitution of special political rights for native people across the country — that is, the establishment of a distinct form of self-government for native people within Confederation.

It is a tough subject and sometimes a dull one, which Asch's academic prose does little to enliven. The book contains such mind-numbing sentences as: "In the context of the comprehensive claims policy, this 'identity' is seen as a result of the successful incorporation of strengthened traditional lifeways with 'meaningful' participation in the lifeways of the dominant society."

But the book is a welcome one to anybody wanting a solid reference text on the legal and political underpinnings of aboriginal-rights policy, and to anybody wanting to catch up on what came out of the last two first-ministers conferences on aboriginal rights and the constitution. Asch presents a convincing argument that Confederation is incomplete without entrenchment of special political rights for native peoples. □



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# Kevin Major

'I write about young people, not exclusively for them. I would hope that my books have an interest for adults'

By **SHERIE POSESORSKI**

AN AWARD-WINNING author of young adult novels, Kevin Major was born in Stephenville, Nfld., in 1949. After graduating from Memorial University, he taught high school in a number of Newfoundland communities, and continues to teach part-time. His first book, *Doryloads* (Breakwater, 1974), was an anthology of myths, poems, and fiction set in Newfoundland and illustrated with his own photographs. Since then he has published three novels, *Hold Fast* (Clarke Irwin, 1978), *Far From Shore* (Clarke Irwin, 1980), and *36 Exposures*, which has recently been released by Doubleday. Now a resident, with his wife and year-old son, of Sandy Cove, Nfld., Major talked to Sherie Posesorski during a recent visit to Toronto:

**Books in Canada: What led you to write young adult fiction?**

Kevin Major: As a substitute teacher, I saw that young people were voraciously reading the new genre of American realistic young adult fiction by Judy Blume, Robert Cormier, and S.E. Hinton. Those novels seemed to have a wider appeal and readership than the traditional fiction aimed at young people — adventure and animal stories. Initially, I was attracted by the novels' directness, straightforward first-person narrations, and characters who were not idealized or old-fashioned. I saw that there were no comparable stories for a similar age group situated in Newfoundland, so I decided to write a story about young people growing up in the outports, dramatizing situations that would be relevant to their lives.

**BiC: What features of young adult fiction appealed to you?**

Major: Actually, a lot of the novels don't appeal to me at all. Certainly there are good writers of them, like Robert

Cormier, but I find many of the novels shallow and too pre-packaged. The writers have a tendency to choose a highly topical problem, like anorexia nervosa or homosexuality, and then build a story around it. Novels should be relevant and readable in years to come — which I doubt many of them will be. As well, I'm dissatisfied with the way they are written. They frequently lack



Kevin Major

any strong feeling for character, being basically sociological problem novels. The writers make it too easy for the readers, don't challenge them enough. Young readers need to be exposed to more than one method of telling a story. Many of the novels rely too heavily on telling the story with a first-person narrator.

**BiC: What are the experiences and issues of your readers that you want to address?**

Major: Primarily, I want my books to be relevant to the experience of growing up in Newfoundland. Newfoundland society is in the midst of tremendous changes. The young are caught between the old

traditional values of Newfoundland outport society and the onslaught of American popular culture. For those young people growing up in small communities, that struggle is causing stress and estrangement in the family structure. My novels dramatize the conflicts that have developed between parents and their children because of those changes. In a more general sense, the novels deal with the issues that confront all teenagers — family relationships, dealings with authority on a parental and societal level, the effects of peer pressure, experimentation with drugs, exploration of sexuality, contemplation of the future. However, the problems are never the focus of the novels. My emphasis is on how individual characters cope with the problems.

**BiC: In each novel, you've used a different narrative point of view. Why?**

Major: I'm always aware of not wanting to repeat myself. In changing the point of view I wanted to go beyond the standard stylistic conventions employed in young adult fiction. Often, young adult novels are quite simplistic in their approach to story-telling. My books, particularly the last

two, require more involvement on the reader's part. I'm interested in the reader who is willing to take a little more time and effort.

**BiC: The language in the novels is frank and your characters experiment with drugs and their sexuality. Have you encountered any censorship problems?**

Major: Two years ago, I was scheduled to do a reading in Rainy River, Ont. A week before the reading, the chairman of the library board cancelled the reading without informing the other members of the board. He said that he considered passages of the books unsuitable for the young people of the com-



munity. There was an outcry from the Writers' Union and the Canadian Library Association. The reading was held when another board member provided his school for the reading. The irony of the situation was that no young people attended. I asked one of the board members where were the teenagers? He replied, "It's Friday night. They're probably out drinking." I found that amusing, considering the chairman's objection to characters drinking in my books.

There have been a number of instances where the books have been removed from library shelves. In one small library in Newfoundland, the principal wouldn't allow my books in the school library, because he thought the characters were too similar to teenagers in the community. My books are not listed on any of the novel lists put out by the Newfoundland Board of Education, which seems to me to be the most obvious place for them to be listed. Obversely, I have met librarians who have told me they are glad that there are novels that are portraying teenagers in a more realistic light and that are situated in Canada.

**EC:** *For teenagers, isn't the attraction of your novels, in part, the confirmation of their own experiences?*

**Major:** Yes. What attracts young people to the books is that they have a feeling that others are experiencing similar problems, holding the same outlooks and attitudes. When we were growing up, there weren't books available that reconfirmed our experience in a realistic manner.

**EC:** *Do you anticipate any problems with 36 Exposures due to its explicit language and sexuality?*

**Major:** No doubt. I think it will cause problems. As a writer whose main readership is 12 years old and up, one of the problems you have is that your readers don't purchase the books. The novels filter through adult hands. Adults are concerned that their children will try to emulate the characters' actions.

**EC:** *Isn't that concern diffused by the strong core of moral values held by your characters, despite the dilemmas they encounter?*

**Major:** Yes, countering any so-called modern problems faced by the characters is their own strong sense of the traditional moral values of Newfoundland society.

**EC:** *Is there any significance to the fact that your characters are getting progressively older in your novels?*

**Major:** At some critical point, I may turn to adult fiction. Since my characters have been getting older, it now seems a logical move. Add two more years to the age of the main character of

my next novel and the protagonist will be 20, which I guess moves me into adult fiction. But really, I haven't decided as of yet. With the birth of my son I have been thinking about writing for a much younger audience. Right now, I'm thinking about adapting one of the books into a play, and about the plans to turn *Holdfast* into a TV movie.

**EC:** *Do you plan to continue writing young adult fiction?*

**Major:** I dislike being labelled a young adult novelist. I write about young people, not exclusively for them. I would hope that my books have an interest for adults. Adults with teenage children have told me that they enjoy the books in themselves and for the insights they give them into their children's thinking. A good novel, whether it is about someone five or 55, should be able to stand on its own. □

## POETRY

### Balancing the books: some interesting connections make two new anthologies more than just collections of parts

By DOUG FETHERLING

KEN NORRIS today fulfils the same valuable role in poetry that John Robert Colombo, for example, did a short generation ago. He is a poet who doubles not so much as a critic but as a publicist in the old sense of the word; he's someone who puts together anthologies and brings out people's books and generally causes poetic activity to happen around him. Until recently he was most easily identified with the Montreal poetry revival, but has now taken the decidedly national step of editing *Canadian Poetry Now: 20 Poets of the '80s* (192 pages, \$12.95 paper), the most recent in the House of Anansi anthology series.

This is not an anthology that tries to present new discoveries. Most of the poets, such as Christopher Dewdney, Erin Mouré, and Pier Giorgio di Cicco, are familiar to anyone reading current poetry. Nor does it attempt to reflect the viewpoint of any school, to use an old-fashioned term. Norris states in his introduction that the contributors "are hard to restrict to a set of beliefs or

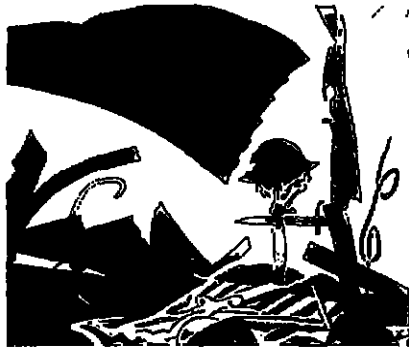
tention that the book help define a generation: not a biological generation so much as a career generation, those who started publishing collections in the late 1970s and emerged fully only during the past few years. To show how the generations have in fact changed it may be instructive to compare *Canadian Poetry Now*, in a somewhat statistical but not very scientific way, with a number of key anthologies of the recent past.

Of the 20 poets in Norris's book, half are women: a percentage the editor deliberately aimed for but one that certainly mirrors the present reality. The average age of all the poets is 35. Eight of them, or 40 per cent, were born outside Canada, as against 20 per cent of the Canadian population as a whole and 25 per cent of the population of Ontario. It's interesting to look at these figures in light of two important anthologies of the 1960s, *Poetry 62* and *Poetry 64/Poésie 64*.

*Poetry 62* (Ryerson Press, 1961) was edited by Eli Mandel and Jean-Guy Pilon. Of 21 poets, the 14 who wrote in English were a curious, satisfying mixture of those who had been around for years but were just beginning their significant work, such as Al Purdy, those who were perennial newcomers, such as Leonard Cohen, and those such as Colombo or Alden Nowlan who were more genuine newcomers in terms of the breadth of their reputations. Two of the anglophones were women; the average age of anglophones of both sexes was 35 (the presence of Wilfrid Watson having pushed the figure up a bit).



truisms about poetry, but it is possible to see in their works some common features." This is the sort of anthology, rather, that in a good consumerist way shows what's out there to be purchased in greater quantity. Yet it is Norris's in-



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*Poetry 64/Poésie 64*, edited by Colombo and Jacques Godbout, was published by Ryerson only two years later but revealed a much different poetical economy. It presented such small-press figures as Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen (the only two female poets in English) and John Newlove, and also showed the emergence of the West Coast movement through George Bowering, Frank Davey, and Lionel Kearns. The average age dropped a full 10 years, to 25.

Perhaps the most significant anthology of the time (certainly it was closely read and hotly debated when it appeared in 1966) was *New Wave Canada*, edited by Raymond Souster and published as one of the last Contact Press titles. Looked at now, it is an extremely ecumenical anthology, for it came at a time when individuals seeking access and tradition had not yet created their own support systems and infrastructure. Coach House Press had only just begun, and there was no *Open Letter*, no ECW, etc.; young poets had not yet ascended to academic positions or important editorships.

*New Wave Canada* was also a most political anthology. In his brief foreword Souster traced the history of Canadian modernism, noting how the "forward progress was rejected almost entirely by developments in our literary situation in the 1950s . . . this reactionary period." He was determined to show more fully the West Coast movement and how it had put down roots in the East as well. The book also included many non-aligned poets who did not seem to fit the subtext except in that they were modern, not unmodern. Again, a breakdown: of 17 poets, all male but one, the average age was 26, and three were born elsewhere. Nearly 20 years later a rough look at the contents page reveals that nine are still publishing collections of verse, two are writing prose but not verse, one is dead, and two are officials or bosses in the so-called cultural industries. This leaves three whose whereabouts are unknown, at least to me.

*New Wave Canada* was definitely designed to have a revelatory impact, to show off new voices, some of them almost totally unknown and others discoverable only in the most wretchedly mimeographed magazines available in no more than four or five shops nationwide. This emphasis on freshness and newness was in fact a characteristic of the period 1965 to 1975, as witness the three anthologies edited by Al Purdy in that time or the 1969 Anansi anthology *Canada First* edited by Peter Anson. In Anson's book, the average age of the 19 poets had crept up to 27, and once again

there was only a single woman among them. Poets in such new-faces anthologies naturally have a lower survivability rate than those who are already more established. But one figure in *Canada First*, who stood out for his tone of almost conversational irony, was Lloyd Abbey, who has continued to grow steadily and has recently published his richest collection, *The Antlered Boy* (Oberon Press, 96 pages, \$9.95 paper, \$17.95 cloth).

What do these worthy though perhaps somewhat apples-and-oranges comparisons mean? Well, it's significant that the notion of how old a "young" poet should be has gone from about 35 in the early 1960s to around 25 later in the decade and now, since the 1970s, has climbed back up to 35. It's curious, too, that the percentage of non-native-born poets has increased but that this has not necessarily made the mix more cosmopolitan since most of them have come from literary environments far less sophisticated, not more. And it is worth noting, though hardly surprising, that so many of the present generation are women, following all those years in which there were no doubt seriously under-represented. In fact, the final and most useful comparison may be between Norris's anthology and a new one edited by Mary di Michele, *Anything Is Possible: A Selection of Eleven Women Poets* (Mosaic, 186 pages, \$19.95 cloth, \$10.95 paper).

The amount of overlap between the two is revealing, for instance, but so is the presence in *Anything Is Possible* of people not in *Canadian Poetry Now*. One notices in particular Libby Scheier, who reminds us again how these poets are more fully available elsewhere for those whose interest has been aroused. In her case, there is a new book *The Larger Life* (Black Moss, 56 pages, \$6.95 paper), a quite remarkable collection written from within the anatomy of violence, imagined, perceived, and witnessed, and as an escape from it, with insights into the process of its own composition: "sometimes poetry reruns the day/heightens colors and shapes/sometimes poetry prefigures the day/sometimes poetry is a dry run . . ."

By not dealing with male poets (who seem less likely to write alike but less likely, most of them, to achieve the same depth) *Anything Is Possible* presents, in a way, a more incisive statement on the present generation. The names and the voices are all familiar but it's good to have them brought together in chorus. In Roo Borson's abruptly shaped but richly textured poems one gets a sense of nature denatured, and there are occasional bits of an older poetic imagery ("Night drips tar onto the grass . . .").

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Marilyn Bowering comes with a more geographical or topographic imagination. Di Michele herself hints at liturgy and ceremony. A most amazing writer is Lorna Crozier. She resists the trend towards one long discontinuous poem but writes individual pieces that are sad acknowledgements of everyday life, unified by a toughness but free of defensive posturing.

The point is that all of them write very

differently indeed, yet most share common assumptions. The starting points include not just gender but a fear of desensitization in a materialistic, illiberal world. Or so it struck me. This may or may not be a real similarity or an important one. But as one reads through anthologies like these, one stumbles on such connections, which help make the books more than just collections of parts. □

## IN TRANSLATION

Two books from Quebec show their writers at the top of their form, while a third reflects thematic criticism at its most banal

By PAUL STUEWE

A DARK and compelling fantasy lurks between the covers of Roch Carrier's *Lady with Chalmers* (translated by Sheila Fischman, House of Anansi, \$8.95 paper), a novel that finds one of our most talented authors writing at the top of his form. Those who know him only as the creator of such congenial, somewhat sentimental tales as *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* and *The Hockey Sweater* will discover a rather different literary persona here, as Carrier demonstrates that Anne Hébert isn't the only Quebecois writer capable of describing Gothic situations in the language of modern psychological realism.

The *enchained lady* is a young pioneer woman shattered by her husband's abandonment of their child in a snowstorm. As Virginie methodically plots his murder, her mind spews forth a terrifying deluge of malicious imaginings. And when she finally decides to turn her fantasies into reality, her actions set in motion a bizarre but believable chain of events that culminates in a cathartic revelation.

Carrier works wonders with this deceptively simple plot. His protagonist's gradual breakdown is conveyed through stream-of-consciousness narration rather than external description, and her memories and hallucinations are so vivid that one often feels right inside a mind near the end of its tether.

Contrast and relief are provided by passages in which Virginie imagines herself the wronged heroine of a historical romance, and by her impassive reception of her husband's verbal assaults on her

refusal to speak to him. Her husband's nattering functions as a reminder of the everyday world Virginie rejects, placing her murderous impulses in mundane contexts that keep the novel linked — although certainly not chained — to a world of mutually comprehensible communications. It's a marvellous book that makes supremely moving literature out of the most basic of raw materials.

*Selected Tales of Jacques Ferron* (translated by Betty Bednarski, House of Anansi, \$9.95 paper) includes and augments *Tales from the Uncertain Country*, the 1972 volume that first brought Ferron to the attention of English-Canadian readers. This new collection contains more than twice as much material as the earlier one, and gives us an even better idea of why the Montreal doctor, Rhinoceros Party founder, and all-round belletrist is so highly esteemed in his native province.

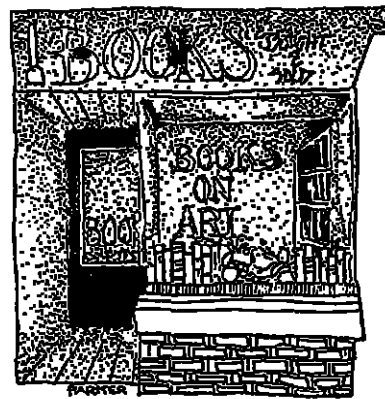
Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of Ferron's shorter pieces — he is also an accomplished novelist — is their unusual and refreshing eclecticism. Here one will find everything from surreal farces to slice-of-life vignettes to fabulist myths, and much of the fun comes from our uncertainty as to just which of the author's landscapes we've entered. Longer stories such as "Mélie and the Bull" are greatly enhanced by the periodic eruption of indeterminacies into their naturalistic frameworks, and magic-realist sketches such as "Back to Val-D'or" are likewise strengthened by timely touches of realistic detail.

But whatever the literary forms and techniques Ferron uses, his work is

always suffused with a profound sense of the complexity and unpredictability of that abstraction we so confidently call "life." His *Selected Tales* are a delightful gathering of strange worlds made accessible and familiar surroundings made new, and they will give much pleasure to readers open to an uninhibited exploration of literary possibilities.

Those preferring a tamer and more conventional approach to literature will find it in Clément Moisan's *A Poetry of Frontiers* (translated by George Lang and Linda Weber, Press Porcépic, \$19.95 cloth), a generally tedious comparative study of Quebec and English-Canadian writing that exemplifies the pitfalls of a simplistically thematic approach to criticism. This is the sort of book in which statements such as "Canadians are torn between past and present" and "Both poets [Anne Hébert and P.K. Page] connect death with the past" are offered as significant generalizations, and profundities such as "Al Purdy, born in 1918, is not a young poet" are at any moment liable to boggle the innocent reader. An editor's note claims that much time and trouble were taken with the translation, but infelicities such as "successive generations are capable of working toward a same ideal" and three separate misuses of "consecrated" within a five-page span of text do not bear out this assertion.

When Moisan descends from the thematic heights and stoops to analyzing literary work, he occasionally comes up with a fresh insight. His discussion of semantic ambivalence in Anne Hébert's poetry is very well done, and his com-



parison of symptoms of urban alienation in the work of Gaston Miron and Raymond Souster is also illuminating. But in order to get to these scattered aperçus one must wade through vast stretches of the most fearsome intellectual aridity, and the rewards simply aren't worth the effort. *A Poetry of Frontiers* seldom steps outside the boundaries of the most banal thematic methodology, and as a consequence it fails to engage effectively with the literature it seeks to explore. □

Stalking the wild book: from the  
overwhelming vastness of prairie skies to the  
close-up delights of rosy pussytoes

By JOHN OUGHTON

EACH YEAR, when pumpkins swell in fields silvered by nightly frosts, the migration of a colourful, quaint, and costly species begins. After their plumage is fully developed in rookeries as exotic as Hong Kong, Canadian gift books flock back to their native shores. There, they must wait in book stores where Christmas gift-hunters weigh them, prod their vitals, and envision them basted in tinsel paper under a plastic tree.

The gift-book hunter's problem is different from that of his 12-gauge cousin. The latter already knows which of his relatives and friends savour mallard sprinkled with lead shot as an entrée. But each gift book is aimed at a specific taste, and presenting the wrong choice can produce the same response as serving steak tartare to a vegetarian: not only a stern refusal of the offering but also a distinct implication that your powers of discrimination have left for Florida a few weeks before the rest of you.

With that problem foremost in mind, this Christmas's crop of gift books is considered in terms of likely recipients. However, no warranty express or implied can be placed on this counsel: as Ann Landers might say, don't sue me, Toots, if following my advice leads to a divorce.

Any relative who has enough wealth and taste to collect modern art, or any aspiring artist who likes colourful abstraction, is a potential candidate for Jack Bush (McClelland & Stewart, 216 pages, \$65 cloth), a plentifully illustrated tribute edited by Karen Wilton. *Potential* is a key word, because the art-world jury is still out on Jack Bush's work. By the time Bush died in 1977, at the age of 63, he was generally appreciated as a charming and generous man who set for the next generation of Canadian artists an example, as David Silcox writes, "of inspiration, purpose and determination."

Although influential New York critic Clement Greenberg has long been a champion of Bush's art, many others are disturbed by the "awkwardness of drawing and layout" Greenberg describes as one of Bush's charms in the essay included here. He lauds Bush's gifts as a

colourist, calling him "a master of saturation and warmth," a discoverer of new and unorthodox harmonies. That side of Bush's talent is seldom debated; but his forms, to some enchantingly instinctive and childlike, are to others simplistic, undramatic. The 96 colour plates are well reproduced on super-white paper that as a side-effect makes the type appear a bit "op art" for the reader.

Naturally, the essays in this volume are from Bush's fans. Other U.S. critics join Greenberg; the Canadian side is represented by editor Wilton, Ken Carpenter, Barrie Hale, Terry Fenton, Dennis Reid, and David Silcox, with Scottish academic Duncan Macmillan adding a British perspective. Anecdotes from dealers and artists who knew Bush are included. There's also a transcript of an interview with the artist conducted for a TV station in Edmonton. Considering the rather lame quality of some questions, this could have been edited into an informal statement of the artist's intent. For example, when inspired by flowers: "I'm not painting flowers. I'm painting the essence, the feeling to me only, not how somebody else feels about those flowers."

Your Uncle Edgar, who lives near Saskatoon and is an amateur landscape artist, is *sure* to be delighted with *Land of Earth and Sky: Landscape Painting of Western Canada* (Western Producer Prairie Books, 148 pages, \$29.95 cloth). The 80 colour plates chosen by Ronald Rees reflect both amateur and professional visions of the Prairie provinces.

Rees is a professor of geography rather than art, so his approach to landscapes is intriguing. He provides a history of how artists dealt with the vast space and sky of the West, from the early European explorers, who found their vocabulary of hill, dale, and glen inadequate, to the native sons and daughters of the present. Despite occasional slips that the book's editor should have caught ("the luminous quality of its light" for one), he writes energetically and objectively.

He makes it clear that European-trained artists were not the only ones who couldn't find visual excitement in

the Prairies. Arthur Lismer, for one, told Saskatchewan painter Illingworth Kerr that "the only interesting objects on the prairie were telephone poles." Kerr went on to prove him wrong, as did Kurelek, Dorothy Knowles, Lemoine Fitzgerald, Takao Tanabe, and even Lismer's colleague A.Y. Jackson. This book represents good value, another of Uncle Edgar's watchwords.

A close-up version of the natural delights of the West is contained in *More Than Meets the Eye: The Life and Lore of Western Wildflowers* (Oxford, 242 pages, \$35 cloth). Author Joan Ward-Harris is both a naturalist and a water-colour painter; her talents produce a good present that should have extended shelf life for the hiker-gardener in your family. Incidentally, someone should talk the lady into writing her memoirs next. The publicity material mentions that in her youth she won bets by spending a night in the Count of Monte Cristo's prison cell in the Château d'If and by travelling with a circus as the knife-thrower's target; she was also drugged in an attempt to market her to the white-slave trade.

Along with skilful full-page paintings of each wildflower, she appends a mini-essay on the flower's Latin name, habitat, herbal uses, and place in Indian lore. There are some choice bits for the trivia collector too: leaving one per cent of a wheatfield to ox-eyed daisies helps the crop grow better, and the common names of some of the plants include such delights as mannikin twayblade, rosy pussytoes, corseplant, and hider-of-the-north.

A Canadian painter whose life *has* been recorded is Robert Harris, the P.E.I. native whose massive portraits *Fathers of Confederation* and *A Meeting of the School Trustees* have become part of our national inheritance. Give your favourite Canadian history buff or art-history student *Island Painter: The Life of Robert Harris (1849-1919)* (Ragweed Press, 160 pages, \$12.95 paper). It is the second edition of Moncrieff Williamson's biography, originally published by McClelland & Stewart but long out-of-print.

Williamson has added new material arising from his research since the first book, and has rounded out a charming portrait of one of the founding fathers of Canadian portraiture. While Harris's main love was stately representations of dignitaries, he was also a delightful cartoonist and caricaturist. Hired by the *Globe* to sketch the main figures in the sensational Donnelly murder trial in 1880, he had to exercise the same wiles as today's photojournalists: "I got one old villain just as he was running from the wicket hiding a cake in one hand and a

mug in the other. Like Lot's wife, he could not help giving a glance over his shoulder as he fled. I got his face in that position."

Harris, a lifetime teetotaler, travelled a good deal throughout North America and Europe until illness slowed him down. Although he appreciated the genuine praise of his colleagues and collectors, fulsome "criticism" brought out his barbs. One article in an Ottawa paper made him "feel as though one had been painted red and was swimming in treacle." This is not a coffee-table book, being of modest size and furnished only with black-and-white illustrations, but it does provide a enjoyable vehicle back to the world of 19th-century Canadian art.

Your friend who just graduated from urban studies and landed a job with a Maritimes city is the ideal recipient for *Saint John: Scenes from a Popular History* (Petheric Press, 80 pages, \$12.95 paper). Author George W. Schuyler is a transplanted American historian who finds fascination in the story of the only Canadian city with reversing falls. Schuyler takes us up to 1918, covering the exploration of the area, the founding of the city, the skirmishes between Irish-Canadian Protestants and Catholics in the early 1800s, massive fires, the rise and fall of its ship-building industry,

and the Street Railway Strike — possibly the only Canadian instance of mass rioting and police brutality over street-cars.

Schuyler gives us a reasonably lively account of the city's growth, complemented by historical engravings and photographs. Two minor points are irritating: the book is set in a tall, condensed typeface, which induces a kind of typographical vertigo, and there's no index to help students and historians.

Perhaps an even rarer breed among your acquaintances than the Maritimes urban development specialist is the Maritimes historical church-architecture devotee. Not everyone will rise to the bait of an opening sentence like: "The churches of Pictou County are an interesting phenomenon." If you know someone who does, there's a good chance he/she got *Thy Dwellings Fair: Churches of Nova Scotia 1750-1830* by Elizabeth Pacey a few Christmases ago and has been on the edge of the pew, since, waiting for her sequel *More State-ly Mansions: Churches of Nova Scotia 1830-1910* (Lancelot Press, 192 pages, \$10 paper).

Pacey made a survey of 577 churches in the province and chose for this book 22 of the most interesting, with an eye to regional and denominational balance.

Aided by Halifax architects George Rogers and Allan F. Duffus, she gives plans, history, special design features, and includes photographs. The photos are definitely amateur in quality, as are the black-and-white reproductions, but this is intended more as a guidebook than a memorial.

Much more of a coffee-table effort, and a contender for the armchair sailor in your flotilla, is *A Sea Within: The Gulf of St. Lawrence* (McClelland & Stewart, 176 pages, \$29.95 cloth). This book by writer Wayland Drew and photographer Bruce Littlejohn goes head-to-head in the gift lists with *The Gulf of St. Lawrence*, by Harry Bruce, Wayne Barrett, and Anne MacKay reviewed last month.

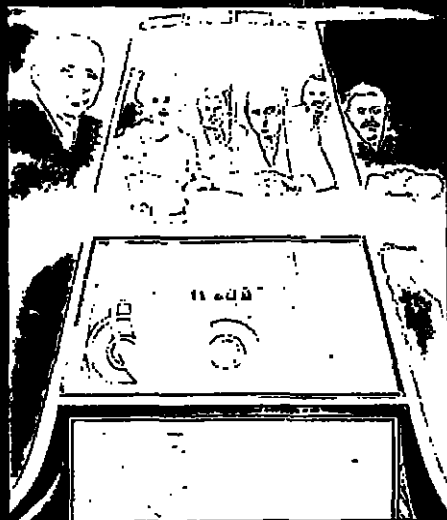
The Drew-Littlejohn effort gives a more equal representation to text and photography. Drew adds a thorough (by gift-book standards) account of the Gulf's role in our history. Besides well-known explorers and adventurers, he writes about lesser-known but fascinating figures like Marguerite de Le Roberval. She was marooned on an island in 1541 by her father, a French nobleman, when he discovered her romance with a sailor. Marguerite survived on her own for two years — after her servant, lover, and child all perished — until she persuaded some French fishermen to take her back home.

Littlejohn presents a view of the Gulf distinct from the usual sunny postcard images. He is a master at capturing the moody, misty light that often rules the *St. Lawrence*. The photographs are particularly well-chosen in that facing pages generally complement each other beautifully. The printing is good enough to hold even the most subtle greys and pinks in Littlejohn's images. This book doesn't have as much flash as the version by Bruce *et al.*, but it does have more depth.

A Canadian photographer known for celebrating more exotic areas is Roloff Beny, who died at just 54 while *Rajasthan: Land of Kings* (McClelland & Stewart, 200 pages, \$39.95 cloth) was in production. Beny's gift for capturing landscapes (especially ruins), art, and colour has been internationally recognized by such distinctions as medals from the French Academy and the title "Knight of Mark Twain."

This, his last book, is an opulent memorial that will please (and perhaps humble) the many Canadians who travel with cameras in hand, as well as those whose heritage includes the land of the Rajputs. The text is by Sylvia A. Matheson, a journalist and traveller who has obviously done her homework on India's northwestern province, the source of much great art, one of the

## The Computer Revolts



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most distinctive Indian cuisines, and the garment jodhpurs.

There are many stunning photographs here, rich with the colours and heat of the land. Whether he focuses on a temple attendant feeding sacred rats or a sari-dyer, Beny's approach to people is definitely static, capturing them more as living statues than beings in motion. In all the plates, however, his eye for composition and detail is impressive.

A photographer with a more relaxed approach to people ironically spends nearly all his career photographing formal occasions. Tim Graham is a British freelancer whose often delightful shots of royalty fill *On the Royal Road: A Escade of Photographing the Royal Family* (Methuen, 160 pages, \$19.95 cloth). Graham has versions of many of the expected images: the Queen looking stern and self-possessed, the Queen Mum smiling sweetly, Lady Di looking glamorous, and Prince Charles looking dashing in his ceremonial uniforms.

Naturally, this makes it an ideal gift for monarchists and Royal Family-watchers (and probably not for anti-colonialists), but its saving grace for those neither especially pro nor anti-royal is Graham's sense of humour and timing. He catches the Queen grimacing as she steps through a muddy paddock or sitting doughtily in her Harrods outfit in a dugout paddled by painted Maoris; the Duke of Edinburgh scowling while a man behind him in a ceremonial buffalo-head hat wears the same expression; and one of the many royal dogs being carried by a bodyguard down the steps of a plane. There are nice motor-drive sequences of Prince Charles falling off his windsurfer and his sister Anne falling from her horse into a water-trap.

At the opposite extreme are the stately, unpopulated images of Paris in *Eugène Atget 1857-1922*, by James Borcoman (National Gallery of Canada, 140 pages, \$35 cloth). Atget, relatively unheralded during most of his career, documented the buildings and gardens of Paris erased by modernization during his lifetime. His work was discovered by U.S. photographer Bernice Abbott, and since has achieved both popular and critical acclaim.

The full-page reproductions are in beautiful brown-and-black duotone, but there are only 24 of them. Borcoman discusses Atget's life and work in detail, dispelling myths about him. This is a study of more interest to historians of photography than to the general reader; more copiously illustrated volumes of Atget's work are available.

Instead, although not in any sense (beyond co-publishing) a Canadian product, consider giving the family photographer Michael Ruetz's *Eye on*

*America* (McClelland & Stewart, unpaginated, \$49.95 cloth). Although it will take half a C-note out of your Christmas budget, it's a stunning collection, sumptuously printed. Ruetz is a German photographer whose favourite tool is the Linhof Technorama, a Mercedes-Benz of cameras. It can encompass a 100-degree sweep of landscape with no distortion, and Ruetz knows when to use it.

The most striking vistas here are printed on pages with a fold-out, giving more than a metre of continuous image. The Dakota badlands, New Mexico mesas, and U.S. cities have seldom looked this good. The only drawback to this book is that the designer's reluctance to clutter the photos with page or plate numbers makes it very hard to discover where they were taken.

For Second-World-War veterans, and

devotees of detailed military histories, a good choice might be *Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp* (Maple Leaf, 144 pages, \$24.95 cloth). This is the third in an ambitious six-volume series by Robert Vogel and Terry Copp covering the Canadian Army's Northwestern European campaign in 1944-45. The same virtues displayed in earlier volumes are here: solid research, including war diaries and Vogel's translations of German army sources; good use of photography and maps; and an uncluttered design. The only shortcoming is a lack of personal anecdotes that help give a human dimension to war histories; the war diaries, written as an record of battles, are necessarily rather elliptical in their record of the individuals that won them, and died in them. By the time the series is completed, there should be few unanswered questions left for future historians. □

## COOKBOOKS

The pleasures of the kitchen: beyond the neighbourhood muffin cabals lies the tantalizing promise of cooking adventure

By DOUGLAS HILL

FOR THOSE committed to the pleasures of the kitchen, the holiday season is a fine excuse to sweep out the cobwebs of tired cuisine and get a head start on a New Year's vow of cooking adventure. If you put on 10 or 15 pounds doing it, so what? Cold weather's coming. And if you terrorize the supper table with your experiments and excesses, that won't be fatal either. Conviviality pardons honest error, or should do so, and your guests will have something to gossip about at the next party.

The past few months have produced an ample shopping bag of new cookbooks. Many are of negligible value, the unoriginal efforts, shamelessly eclectic and cheerfully trite, of neighbourhood muffin cabals and men's encounter groups. Tuna casseroles and jello fantasies, it would seem, like the poor, always ye have with you. But here are some books of more than casual interest, each with substance enough to keen any cook's anticipation.

A pair of all-purpose volumes to begin. Pierre Franey's *Low-Calorie Gourmet* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 276 pages, \$21.50 cloth) will please anyone who wants (or needs) to turn out ap-

petizing dishes with reasonable efficiency and no cream, no flour-based sauces, little butter and salt. Franey's approach to food that won't kill or disfigure is sensible, neither zealous nor severe; he adapts and invents gracefully, and emphasizes balanced lightness and the role that thoughtful presentation can play in compensating for caloric overload. Joanne Kates, the Toronto-based critic, has, as her regular readers understand, no absolute philosophical predisposition against the sinfully rich and silkily scrumptious, but *The Joanne Kates Cookbook* (Oxford, 202 pages, \$12.95 paper) is careful, too, when flavour won't be sacrificed, about fatteners and thickeners. Each of the book's 12 sections (the range is from appetizers to camp and barbecue fare to preserves) has at least a couple of recipes that look so interesting they demand to be tested immediately.

One book that will likely induce tears of hungry longing for the all-too-short Canadian summer focuses on fresh vegetables. Elizabeth Ayrton, in *The Pleasure of Vegetables* (Penguin, 189 pages, \$5.95 paper), offers a good assortment of fairly basic recipes, all

glossed with the charming English tones and terminology that admirers of such Penguin cooks as Elizabeth David, Arabella Boxer, and Claudia Roden will find familiar and somehow reassuring. Make a note now to buy a freezer on Boxing Day and cram it full next August.

More specialized tastes will find rewards in the next three items. The *Etty Jane Wylie Cheese Cookbook* (Oxford, 182 pages, \$12.95 paper) is a comprehensive collection, homey and straightforward, that runs from rarebits and fondues to soups and soufflés. There is valuable information about cheese types and peculiarities; Wylie pays homage to such eternal verities of family life as macaroni-and-cheese, but provides a fair sampling of more exotic fare as well. *Ginger East to West*, by Bruce Cost (Raincoast, 189 pages, \$13.95 paper), opens up its subject in detail; the introductory matter—history, geography, folklore, special tools and ingredients to deal with the flavourful rhizome and its relatives—takes up nearly a third of the book. The recipes come from a United Nations of cuisines along the “ginger route”; many of them sound very strange indeed. But worth a try, if you’re daring, and there’s a good selection of gingerbreads if you’re not. *Cynthia Wine’s Hot and Spicy Cooking* (Penguin, 160 pages, \$12.95 paper) is for the stout of heart and stoic of tongue; it also helps if you live near a beer store. “Food so good it hurts!” threatens the cover, but author Wine does point out, as she scatters garlic and hot chillies in her fiery international wake, that tolerance for these soul-cleansing delights increases with experience.

Three new books are devoted to ethnic cookery. The most unusual of these is *From My Grandmother’s Kitchen: A Sephardic Cookbook*, by Viviane Alchech Miner and Linda Krinn (Triad Publishing, Gainesville, Florida, 184 pages, \$8.95 paper). The collection of recipes blends Turkish, Greek, Romanian, and Bulgarian cuisines with a Spanish touch, and is flavoured with Alchech’s family reminiscences and photographs of a vanished era. Some of the food sounds awfully bland and heavy, but the basic dishes are inviting enough. *Recipes from Pasquale’s Kitchen*, by Pasquale Carpino with Judith Drynan (Doubleday, 223 pages, \$12.95 paper), is by television’s “singing chef.” This is tomato-and-garlic Italian, without much flair, though the author’s tips and miscellaneous information make this a useful starter-book. About his garnish of personal philosophy, presented in bold type (“I am never rough with a good cut of steak. I treat it as gently as if I were touching the face of

a beautiful woman”), one should not speak. *Cooking from an Italian Garden* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 354 pages, \$23.95 cloth) is a far classier book. Paola Scaravelli and Jon Cohen have compiled over 300 meatless recipes here, with menus for a variety of occasions. Many are simple, some quite sophisticated; 12 months with this volume as your only guide would surely make for elegant and inventive dining.

No festive season would be complete without at least one “ultimate” dessert book. *Chocolate, Chocolate, Chocolate*, by Barbara Myers (Penguin, 293 pages, \$10.95 paper), ought to take care of all but the most extraordinary urges and provide employment for at least a generation of dentists and dermatologists. *Brownies*, by Linda Burum (John Wiley, 168 pages, \$8.95), with more than 100 recipes in a compact format, is a handy back-up. Finally, if you can’t cook and don’t care to try, study *The Cook’s Quotation Book*, by Maria Polushkin Robbins (Penguin, 86 pages, \$4.95 paper), and dine out often in good company. A judicious sprinkling of the wit and insight assembled here should guarantee you’ll be invited back. □

#### LETTERS

## The doctor’s dilemma

IT IS A mystery to many of us why the Toronto press has ground its heel in the face of Matt Cohen’s *The Spanish Doctor*, and I’m surprised at I.M. Owen’s joining in with this somewhat undeserved (any reviewer has a right to dislike a book and God knows I’ve been bad to a lot of people) chorus.

On specific points, I don’t see why he has to doubt Cohen’s research. My own is creaky and old, but I do remember special status was given Jewish physicians in the Lusignan and Venetian regimes in the Eastern Mediterranean. And women, providing they were widows, were sometimes able to arrange trader status for themselves; particularly Jewish women, who were allowed to participate in usury, even as agents of Christian traders who couldn’t for the sake of their souls.

As for characterization, has Owen forgotten that in a picaresque structure such as *The Spanish Doctor* the development of character runs broad rather

than deep? And I think it’s entirely appropriate that the Doctor’s romance is with his Jewishness rather than his women, which is frustrating to the women: time someone wrote a novel like this.

It’s interesting, though, isn’t it, to think, why this wave of indignation? Were people expecting another *The Name of the Rose*? Were they offended by having their noses rubbed in the anti-Jewish side of the Inquisition? Or has my taste slipped? I think it’s a good book.

Marian Engel  
Toronto

WITH REGARD TO the review of *The Spanish Doctor* (October), I have not read this book, as my library is still waiting for it. But what I would like to know is: why do you have a reviewer who says, “I don’t know enough to challenge [Cohen’s authority]” or “I wish I knew enough about medieval Spain . . .” or “Passing references in books I have . . .”? Wouldn’t it be better practice to get a reviewer who actually did know something about the Sephardic Jews and medieval Spain? There are several Sephardic associations, educational institutions, and synagogues in Toronto and Montreal where, with a minimum of inquiry, you might have discovered that there are several knowledgeable people more than qualified to write a somewhat more informed review than I.M. Owen.

Judith R. Cohen  
Toronto

*I.M. Owen replies:* Thanks to Marian Engel for giving me some of the information I was hoping for; but doesn’t her phrase “providing they were widows” bear out my doubts? Gabriela is an established trader as an unmarried woman of 21.

I was disappointed not to like the book, and correspondingly glad that judges as reputable as George Woodcock (*Saturday Night*, October) and Marian Engel did like it. What surprises me is to find the latter advancing a conspiracy theory of reviewing. I didn’t join a chorus, I read the book twice and gave my opinion, solo. I don’t understand her question about the picaresque novel—which I don’t think *The Spanish Doctor* is—but here are my answers to the last four questions: (1) I’m not indignant. (2) Why *not* expect another *The Name of the Rose*? Do you mean that we shouldn’t expect Canadians to write such good books as Italians? (3) I’ve been accused of being soft on Communism; this is the first suggestion that I’m soft on the Inquisition too. (4) I doubt if your taste has slipped,



though in this one instance it's unaccountable to me, as mine is to you.

To Judith Cohen: There seems to be some misunderstanding: I wasn't writing a book: about the book, I was writing a review. However, if Judith Cohen will guide me to some of those Sephardic libraries, I'll guide her to a book store so that in future she won't have to write about a book review without reading the book.

### Who's who

YOUR REVIEWER of my book, *A Mouth Organ for Angels* (October), noted that "oddly" the name of my poet, Flowers Coghill resembles that of my friend and colleague, Fred Cogswell.

May I have space to explain to your readers, now that my sins are catching up with me? The name Tibbets Coghill popped into my head as Tibby's name

weeks before I was to meet his family and discover that his father had to be Flowers Coghill, a multi-bellied poet, who wolfed oysters and called his poems *pearls*.

About a year after that, Fred Cogswell came out with a fine book of poems called *Pearls*, which I had not known about. My book at that time was with its publisher, but I thought it prudent to disclose to Fred the double coincidence of the name and the oysters. He professed not to believe in the purity of my intentions. Nevertheless, out of sheer mischief I suppose, I stuck with my poet and his name, secure in the knowledge that anyone who knows Fred knows that he is as far from being what Flowers is — the poet as parasite — as anyone can be.

Robert Gibbs  
Fredericton

## CanWit No. 98

*Rusty Bedsprings*, by I.P. Nightly

AFTER A juvenile acquaintance sprang that old chestnut on us recently, we began to wonder how such phoney titles would work if they were tagged with the names of *real* writers. *The Klan in Canada*, by Hugh Hood, for example, or *Oops!*, by J.M.S. Careless. Or (shudder) *Adventures in Prosthetic Medicine*, by George Woodcock. We'll pay \$25 for the best list of fraudulent titles combined with the names of well-known Canadian writers. Deadline: January 1. Address: CanWit No. 98, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 96

OUR REQUEST for definitions of otherwise meaningless Canadian place-names brought an avalanche of entries, as well as the news that ATB Publishing's Calgary Region Edition of *The Meaning of Liff* (which provides definitions of such places as Dalroy, Seebe, and Waiparous, Alta.) is already into its second printing. The winner is Margaret Carrington of Richmond Hill, Ont., for a list that includes:

**Chleoutimi:** A parasite that lodges in the lungs of horses causing wheezing and coughing.

**Duntroon:** Past participle of *Dotroon* (to behave ethically under difficult circumstances).

**Shuswap:** A literary device that attributes to one sense qualities that are actually apparent to another. E.g. "the glittering notes of the harp," "the bright turquoise taste of mangoes."

**Pickering:** Ineffectual complaining.

**Temagami:** Torture by tickling.

**Sicamous:** An ediphonic, parasitic fungus characterized by greenish-

yellow spongy clusters.

**Kapuskasing:** A stucco-like material used to finish interior walls and (especially) ceilings.

**Kipling:** Fastening together by means of small metal dowels.

### Honourable mentions:

**Ingonish:** The expectant pause, after a deep breath, that often precedes a sneeze.

**Antigonish:** The feeling when after a long ingonish the sneeze doesn't come.

**Tignish:** A sneeze that after a dramatic ingonish is much smaller than you expected. Also used for the half-repressed, genteel sneeze of a maiden aunt.

—Mary Tomlinson, Halifax

**Flin Flon:** When the water in the shower changes unexpectedly from hot to cold or vice versa.

**Thessalon:** A small group of traveling Bible students.

—Neil Muscott, London, Ont.

**Okotoks:** Set of wooden implements used to scrape mud and bugs from an automobile windshield.

**Squamish:** Easily crushed; a term applied to a type of paper ideal for ripping out of a typewriter when things are not going well.

—Lois Grant, Calgary

**Montreal:** An annual event when public transit personnel take a short vacation lasting anywhere from a few days to a month.

—Steve Marquis, Montreal

**Winnipegosis:** A disease caused by overstimulation as a result of gazing at the prairie.

—Warner Winter  
Islington, Ont.

### East and West

ONE COULD ALMOST conclude from Paul Wilson's review of *The Writer and Human Rights* (October) that he thinks the function of the writer in the West ought to be continually to congratulate us on our good fortune in living under liberal democracy. Of course we are fortunate to live in a liberal democracy; of course the tyrannies of Eastern Europe make the physical and spiritual repression suffered in the West seem trivial by comparison. Does it follow that we should be silent about the way things are, just because, as Wilson points out, things could get worse? I would have hoped the substitution of cheerleading for social criticism was the exclusive province of "Socialist Realism." The acute contrast between Canadian society and the societies of Czechoslovakia or Chile should not blind us to the actual conditions in Canada. To see our own world in terms of what it is not, rather than what we can make it, is the way to paralysis.

Finally, "repressive tolerance" is not a vague, undefined term. It was coined by Herbert Marcuse and set out in an essay by that title. Although Josef Skvorecky, whom Wilson quotes, fudges the question by confusing "repressive" and "oppressive," Skvorecky's description of "the kind of spineless tolerance some people display toward any nonsense or provocative stupidity whatsoever," is curiously close to Marcuse's notion, though doubtless of different intent.

D.S. Proudfoot  
Montreal

*Paul Wilson replies:* D.S. Proudfoot misunderstood what I was saying. I was

not arguing that writers should be less critical of life in a democracy, but simply that if they are going to be critical, they should do their homework (like Carolyn Forché or Allen Ginsberg, in this instance) and let facts, not rhetoric, do the persuading. Inflated, ideologically inspired rhetoric like Ian Adams's (my main example) is in many ways worse than nothing because (a) it distorts the facts; (b) it discourages people from acting; and (c) it undermines the ability of language to describe reality. Surely if a writer has any "function" or responsibility at all, it is to keep the tools of his trade—words—in good working order. I believe that far from "blinding us to actual conditions in Canada," contrasts between our society and those under repressive regimes are important precisely because they sharpen our nose for dangerous trends at home that bring us closer to tyranny. One of these trends—which I tried to describe in my review—is the devaluation of language. When words fail us, a semantic vacuum

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is created—call it silence, if you like—that can only be filled with the babble of propaganda. And then we're in for real trouble.

## 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

Not Wanted on the Voyage, by Timothy Findley, Penguin. By revivifying the myth of Noah and the Flood so extravagantly, Findley turns the deliberate destruction of that ancient world, by Yaweh, into an illuminating metaphor for the likely accidental but all too imaginable destruction, by us, of this one.

### NON-FICTION

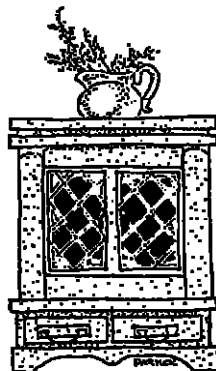
Urban Scrawl, by Erika Ritter, Macmillan. When Ritter casts her beady eye on the foibles of contemporary life—from Caribbean holidays to bicycling—her observations are clear and detailed, if not comforting. We can run for cover and shout that we are not like *that*, but the book is shot through with moments of recognition.

## 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:

Advertising: First Canadian Edition, edited by John S. Wright et al., McGraw-Hill Ryerson.  
An American Spy Story, by David Gurr, M & S.  
"And What Are You Going to Do for Us?", edited by Margaret Bard et al., Simon & Schuster.  
And When You Go Fishing . . . , by Ron Nelson, Oolichan Books.  
Anti-War Poems, edited by Stephen Gill, Vesta.  
The Anarchist Moment, by John Clark, Black Rose Books.  
Arctic Oracles: The Journal of John Richardson, edited by C. Stuart Houston, McGill-Queen's University Press.  
Art at the Service of War, Maria Tippett, U of T Press.  
Il Barbiere di Siviglia, translated by Marie-Therese Paquin, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.  
Beaters of the Sun, by Chris Foster, Integrity International Press.  
The Bequest & Other Stories, by Jerry Wexler, Véhicule Press.  
Berlin Solstice, by Sylvia Fraser, M & S.  
Broken Silence: Dialogues from the Edge, by Andre Stein,

Lester & Orpen Dennys.  
Canada Notwithstanding, by Roy Romanow et al., Carroll/Methuen.  
Cash from Your Kitchens, by Catherine Harris, Macmillan.  
Cavaller in a Roundhead School, by Errol MacDonald, Signal Editions.  
Cedar, by Hilary Stewart, Douglas & McIntyre.  
Chippy's Computer Numbers, by Suzanne Girard and Kathleen R. Willing, illustrated by Melanie Hayes, Highway Book Shop.  
Chippy's Computer Words, by Kathleen R. Willing and Suzanne Girard, illustrated by Melanie Hayes, Highway Book Shop.  
Continuity with Change, edited by Mark Fram and John Wiley, Dundurn Press.  
Cookies and Silica, by Eva C. Fingas, Frye Publishing.  
Cultural Attitudes in Psychological Perspective, by Joseph L. Henderson, Inner City Books.  
Debusk's Illustrated Guide to the Canadian Establishment, by Don Harron, Macmillan.  
Eldorado, by Robert Buthwell, U of T Press.  
Elizabeth Baird's Favourites, James Lorimer.  
Emma: Canada's Unlikely Spy, by June Callwood, Stoddart.  
Emma Albani: Victorian Diva, by Cheryl MacDonald, Dundurn Press.  
Federalism and Fragmentation, by Thomas O. Hueglin, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University.  
The Female Eunuch, by Dale Loucares, Waltaka Press.  
Firewine, by Donald R. Gordon, McEwan Publications.  
Getting Started on Social Analysis in Canada, by Michael Czerny and Jamie Swift, Between the Lines.  
The Gourment's Guide to Chocolate, by Leah Berger, Prentice-Hall.  
The Gourment's Guide to Fish and Shellfish, by Ken Anderson, Prentice-Hall.  
The Gourment's Guide to Mixed Drinks, by Thomas Cowan, Prentice-Hall.  
Guardians of Time, by Peter Baltesperger, Three Trees Press.  
Hags and Heroes, by Polly Young-Eisendrath, Inner City Books.  
Hallstorms and Hoopsnakes: Tall Tales from the General Store, by Ted Stone, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
Happy Endings, by Bob Malcolmson, illustrated by Sae Jenkins, Three Trees Press.  
The IMF and the Poorest Countries, by John Loxley, North-South Institute.  
Jean Lesage and the Quiet Revolution, by Dale C. Thomson, Macmillan.  
The Kept Woman, by Edna Salamon, Orbis (Academic).  
A Killing Rain, by Thomas Pawlick, Douglas & McIntyre.  
Lantern-Silvered Wings, by J. Douglas Harvey, M & S.  
Love-15, by Dennis McCloskey, Three Trees Press.  
The Making of the Modern West, edited by A.W. Rusporth, University of Calgary Press.  
Managing Diversity, by Catherine A. Murray, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University.  
Marie Anne: The Frontier Spirit of Marie Anne Lagimodière, by Grant MacEwen, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
Moon Country, by Denys Chabot, translated by David Lobdell, Oberon.  
More Than an Island, by Sally Gibson, Irwin.  
Mullins: A Love Story, by Helen L. Kaezovich, Frye Publishing.  
Murder and Mayhem, by Max Haines, Grosvenor House Press.  
The National Deal, by Robert Sheppard and Michael Valpy, Macmillan.  
1984 and After, edited by Marsha Hewitt and Dimitrios I. Roussopoulos, Black Rose Books.  
Nineteenth-Century Pottery and Porcelain in Canada (2nd Edition), by Elizabeth Collard, McGill-Queen's University Press.  
No Cold Ash, by James Deahl, Sono Nis Press.  
Oren: The Whale Called Killer, by Erich Hoyt, Camden House.  
An Ounce of Prevention, by Michael Gordon, Prentice-Hall.  
Paula Lake, by George McWhirter, Oberon.  
Play Ball! Level One and Two, by Al Herbeck and Al Price, Playball Baseball Productions.  
The Pursuit of Ernest Cashel, by M.J. Malcolm, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
Safari Ride, by Cecilia Mayrow, illustrated by Thach Bol, Three Trees Press.  
Seaways and Snowfall: Selected Poems, 1950-1982, by George Thanell, Amaranth Editions.  
The Second Creative Kids' Colouring Book, by Kate Christie and Peggy Patterson, James Lorimer.  
Snow Apples, by Mary Razzell, Greenwood.  
The Spirit of the Hackleberry: Sensuousness in Henry Thoreau, by Victor Carl Friesen, University of Alberta Press.  
Sudbry Time Twist, by Wexler Horal, Three Trees Press.  
Tales from the Canadian Rockies, edited by Brian Patton, Hurler.  
Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/Grant, by Arthur Kroker, New World Perspectives.  
Tender Only to One, by Richard Taylor, Oberon.  
Tiger: A Hockey Story, by Tiger Williams, Douglas & McIntyre.  
The Top Secret Tory Handbook, by Deep Chin, Lester & Orpen Dennys.  
Two Sides: The Best of Personal Opinion, 1964-1984, by John H. Redekop, Kindred Press.  
A Visit from Mr. Lucifer, by Don Lemna, Western Producer Prairie Books.  
Voice of the Planner, Volume Two, compiled by Bill McNeil, Macmillan.  
Whiskey Hill, by Welwyn Wilton Katz, Greenwood.  
The World of Canadian Wine, by John Schreiner, Douglas & McIntyre.





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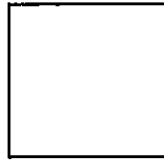
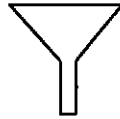
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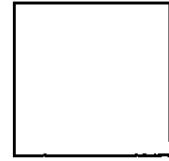
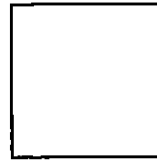
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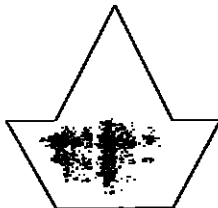
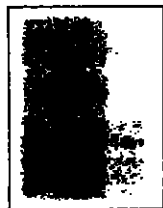
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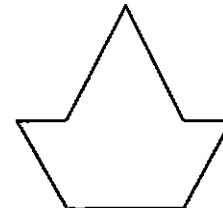
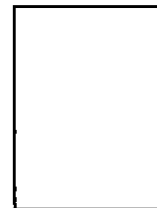
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