

BOOKS

I N C A T I O N A L A S

**BACK TO THE FUTURE:
15 years of
Canadian writing**

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE:

**A short story by
Norman Levine**

**Al Purdy's adventures
in the publishing jungle**

**A photo gallery
by Paul Orenstein**

**And the winner of
our 10th annual
first novel award**



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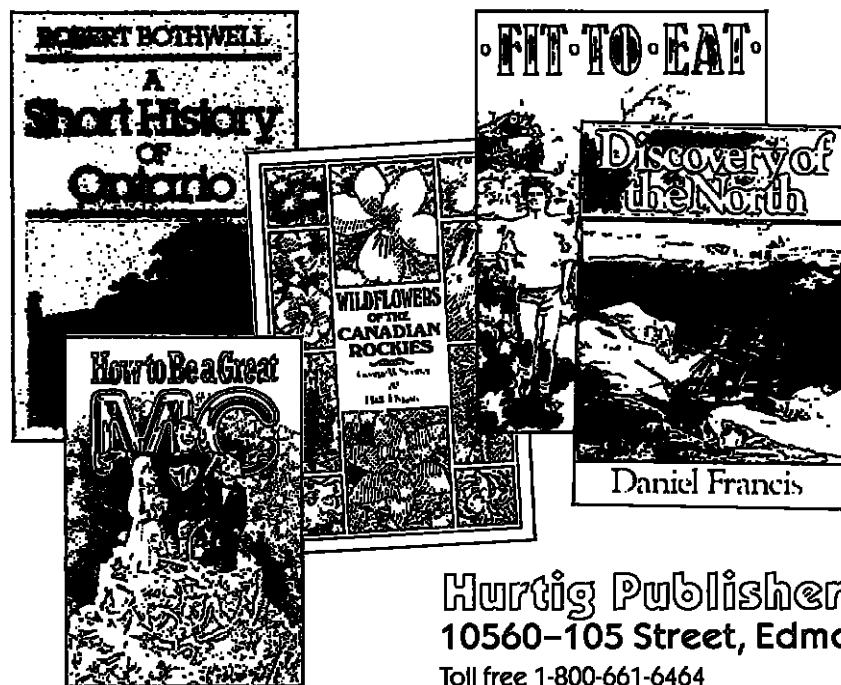
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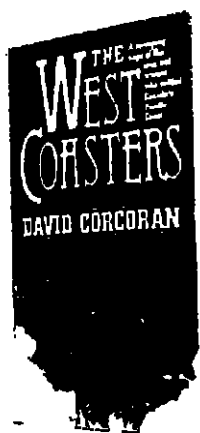
Freelance writer Dorothy Bohrens and artist Jay Belmore recently moved to Toronto from California and Calgary respectively. Bob Blackburn, our authority on English usage, sits corrected. Sylvia H. Brown has studied at five universities. Claire Brocascombe is a freelance writer with a special interest in biology. Howard Engel, whose drawings appear throughout the issue, will publish his latest Benny Cooperman detective novel this fall. Cory Fagan is a poet and critic. Ray Filip, whose short fiction is to be published by Guernica Editions, lives in Verdun, Que. George Galt's account of his cross-Canada train journey is to be published by Methuen. John Goddard, winner of a National Magazine Award for his *Books in Canada* profile of Edith Iglauer, lives in Montreal. Cyril Greenland is visiting professor of criminology at the University of Toronto. John Greenwood constructs buildings and book reviews. Rick Jacobson, who created our cover, is one half of the Toronto design team, Jacobson Fernandez. Collections of short stories by Norman Levine will appear in West Germany and Norway in 1986 and 1987. Louise Longo, who has read manuscripts for Harlequin, works for Scarborough Human Services. Ann Lukits, now in Winnipeg, covered local politics for the Kingston *Whig-Standard*. Roy MacLaren is the author of *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines 1939-1945* (University of British Columbia Press). Frank Mantley edits the Ottawa literary magazine *Noovo Masheen*. Sparling Mills is a Halifax poet. Patricia Morley, on sabbatical from Concordia University, will publish a biography of William Kurelek this fall. Paul Oranstein, *Books in Canada*'s most-employed cover photographer, contributed many of the writers' portraits for this issue. I.J. Owen, a former manager of Oxford University Press, is a freelance critic. Anneli Pukkonen writes for *The Atkinsonian*. The poet Al Purdy, who recently returned to Ameliasburgh, Ont., from Florida, has given up cigars but not beer. John Reeves is renowned for his photography of writers. Barbara Wade Rose, chronicler of our dubious achievements, is a Toronto freelance writer. Nancy Russell's M.A. thesis at Carleton University is on contemporary Western women writers. Jason Shorman edits the literary magazine *What*. Grant Stilling is a Vancouver freelance journalist. Mary Ainslie Smith surveys children's books from her home in St. Marys, Ont. Cyril Strom has taught European history at Columbia University. Paul Stocco is a freelance critic and bookseller. Allan Weiss's *Index to Canadian Short Stories 1950-1983* is to be published this fall by ECW Press. The quotations on pages 30-32 are taken from interviews or profiles by Doug Fothering and Wayne Grady, respectively former columnist and former managing editor of *Books in Canada*, and by Geoff Hancock, editor of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*.

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Macmillan of Canada

Back to the future

Notes and comments on 15 years of reviewing Canadian books, and the life of the magazine to come

AS SUITS THE occasion, this is both a historic and a pivotal issue of *Books in Canada*. This month — with an expanded format and a number of special features — we celebrate our 15th anniversary of reviewing Canadian books. But perhaps equally significant, after 15 years of free distribution in book stores (apart from a small but loyal group of subscribers), for the first time the magazine now is available only by subscription or for sale on the newsstands. As a result, as Rick Jacobson's cover illustration dramatically suggests, we find ourselves simultaneously looking over our shoulder at past accomplishments and looking forward to a new chapter in the life of the magazine.

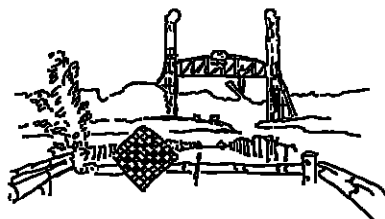
In the offices of *Books in Canada* the approaching deadline has provoked an even more frantic burst of activity than usual. As the editors scrambled to assemble additional material for this bumper anniversary issue, the circulation and business staffs were similarly busy gathering, for promotional purposes, comments on the magazine from members of the cultural community — in particular, from Canadian writers as diverse as Margaret Atwood and David Suzuki, Pierre Berton and Northrop Frye, Hugh MacLennan and Dalton Camp.

Knowing that they have come from many writers who have been both the subjects and occasionally the contributors of articles to *Books in Canada*, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by the open flattery to be found in some of these comments. (Atwood: "*Books in Canada* is a unique item dedicated to a once-unpopular proposition: that literature produced by Canadians is worth writing and therefore reading about. It has never failed to have the courage of its convictions." Frye: "It seems to me that *Books in Canada* does a heroic job of trying to keep up with its subject on all fronts, and anyone who cares about the fate of books in the country should care about the fate of the magazine.") Others, however (Jack Batten: "There have been only two times

when I could have done without *Books in Canada*. They were the times when its reviewers gave a couple of my books lousy notices"; Harry Bruce: "I don't love *Books in Canada* the way I love my cat, but I do like it"), did remind us of the singular, not always comfortable position that the magazine has held among the country's writers and publishers throughout its history.

The first issue of *Books in Canada*, dated May, 1971, featured a front-page review by Dave Godfrey of Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman* under the uncharacteristically bland heading, "A Major Canadian Novel." Inside were a profile of Robertson Davies and reviews by Hugh Garner, David Helwig, Alden Nowlan, and Al Purdy, among others. The introductory issue had been published with a \$250 grant from the Ontario government and a few dollars chipped in by the as-yet unpaid staff. As Val Clery, the founding editor, said at the time, "It's not going to be something that's going to make a fortune for any of us."

Clery, a freelance writer, had recently reported in a survey prepared for the publishing industry that Canadian newspapers and magazines seldom reviewed Canadian books. Book-buyers, he had discovered, were unduly influenced by publicity in U.S. periodicals, especially the Canadian edition of *Time*, which paid too much attention to U.S. best-sellers. What was needed, the book



publishers agreed, was a national book review of our own.

Judging from the reaction to early issues, what the booksellers and publishers hadn't expected was a magazine that dared to point out what was *wrong* with some Canadian books. From today's vantage-point, *Books in Canada's* early editorials

seem scrappy, self-conscious, and defensive as they answer the complaints of the book trade, most of which now seem parochial and shrill. In the past, some booksellers have even argued that Canadian books were better left unreviewed, because criticism might deter customers.

As one might expect, the book trade still tends to be wary of criticism. But in the intervening years *Books in Canada* has gained the support of a number of independent book stores, many of whom now will be offering it for sale. We are especially happy to boast that the magazine will be sold in 197 Classics and W.H. Smith stores, which together form the country's largest bookselling chain. In addition, W.H. Smith has generously agreed to sponsor our annual first novel contest (the winner of which is announced in this issue), which now is known as the W.H. Smith/*Books in Canada* First Novel Award.

Besides coverage of our first novel award, the contents of this month's issue are a blend of the old and the new. Some of the names that appeared in the first *Books in Canada* are present again — Purdy, Clery, and his successor Douglas Marshall, who served as editor from 1973 until late in 1980. On the other hand (though our usual policy is still not to publish fiction), we are pleased to present a special anniversary event — a new short story about writers and writing by Norman Levine.

Canada's writers represent only half of the equation, of course. Our primary allegiance continues to be with Canada's readers, upon whom our own existence necessarily depends. (It is our role as representatives of our readers — not as promoters — that our early detractors apparently misunderstood.) After all, as Walter Stewart said of us recently: "*Books in Canada* provides essential reading for anyone who writes books, anyone who reads books, and everyone who cares about books in this country." Then he added: "Even though it is sometimes, let's face it, loopy."

Who can argue with sentiments like that? □

Remembering Stilt Jack

Tormented by alcohol and neglected by the critics, John Thompson wrote poems that rank among the finest this country has seen

TO GET THE end over first: it was 10 years ago last month that John Thompson died in his apartment in Sackville, N.B. He had taken a lethal combination of pills and alcohol; shortly after, the family living below heard him rap on the floor and cry out. Thompson had left on the table a handwritten will and the manuscript of his second and final book of poetry, *Stilt Jack*. Not for his death should Thompson be remembered, but for *Stilt Jack*, an astonishing and elusive work that is one of the finest collections of poems ever written in this country.

Thompson was born in Manchester, England, in 1938. His father died in the war and his mother eventually gave him up to a children's home. After university and a stint in the British army, he went to the United States to take his Ph.D. at Michigan State University. A.J.M. Smith directed his thesis, a series of translations from the work of French surrealist René Char. In 1966 he received a teaching position in the English department of Mount Allison University and with his American-born wife and young daughter moved into a farmhouse in New Brunswick's Tantramar Marsh country.

John Thompson



That landscape so imbues Thompson's poems that it's hard to believe he wasn't born to that flat, grey land. His first manuscript, *At the Edge of the Chopping There Are No Secrets*, got fished out of the slush pile by James Polk of Toronto's House of Anansi Press. Polk immediately recognized the voice of a real poet:

*After the rain, dead
still; not even a crow
menaces;*

*a hole opens in
the ground of grey cloud:*

*the wind
must unfold a night
in this hour of dawn.*

Reviewing the book for *Saturday Night* in December, 1973, Dennis Lee wrote that *Chopping* "figures a whole way of being in the world, of living with courage when most of the lights have gone out." Calling it a "sophisticated return to the rural primitive," Lee noted that some readers might have trouble tuning in to the book's resonance, but that Thompson at age 35 was a "real discovery."

James Polk remembers meeting Thompson with some pain. The photograph he had sent for the book showed a strikingly handsome man, but it could not reveal that Thompson had a drinking problem that caused disturbing swings of mood. "The first time he came to Toronto for the book we had a party for him, just the Anansi staff to welcome him," Polk says. "He was quite belligerent. I guess he was worried about what he thought was a glamorous Toronto publishing firm. John was very insecure and not in his element. The party didn't work out at all. After, I thought, this is terrible, how are we going to work with him? But the next time we met he was wonderful. He was a very intelligent man with a vast amount of learning. He knew French literature, he knew his English poetry. He was a scholar as well as a poet."

Except for a year's sabbatical in Toronto (where he temporarily overcame his dependence on alcohol), Thompson continued to live in the marsh country. The paucity of reviews of *Chopping* disappointed a poet who

had spent so long meticulously working on his art, and Thompson told Polk that next time he would try an international publisher. The new poems were in the form of Persian ghazals, which he later explained in the preface to *Stilt Jack* as a series of couplets having "no necessary logical, progressive, narrative, thematic (or whatever) connection." But ghazals were not mere "surrealist free-association poems," wrote Thompson; they allowed for a "controlled imaginative progression" that was the "essence of poetry."

Thompson teased Polk about the manuscript. He said he would send the poems to the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *New Yorker*, although apparently he never did. Instead, he would telephone Polk at odd hours of the night to read his latest ghazal long-distance. "Jim, listen to this!" Thompson would say, and after reading would demand Polk's suggestions for revision. "You're the editor, what do you want to cut?"

Thompson continued to teach at Mount Allison (his students admired him despite his unpredictability) and also at the Dorchester Penitentiary, where he was popular with the prisoners. But a series of personal disasters began to undermine his stability. First he and his wife divorced (she retained custody of their daughter) and then the farmhouse burned down, taking with it Thompson's books and manuscripts. Word of Thompson's death arrived at Anansi, and, shortly after, the manuscript of *Stilt Jack*. When Polk read it he wept.

Now you have burned your books:

*you'll go
with nothing but your blind, stupefied
heart.*

So begins *Stilt Jack*, a cryptic revelation of despair of such poetic skill that it amazes the reader as it wounds. Voices of other poets haunt the lines (Yeats, Roethke, Ted Hughes), but the elemental images and the compassion are Thompson's own.

This time Thompson got the reviews he deserved, if posthumously. "Obsessive," "troubling," and "incandescent," the reviewers said. Yet despite its reception and Thompson's influence on poets such as D.G. Jones and Phyllis Webb, his name is usually left off the

lists of significant modern Canadian poets. His isolated life and relatively small output have contributed to his obscurity. And it may be that Thompson's uniqueness has made him too difficult for the critics to slot neatly.

The two books sell slowly but steadily, and Polk hopes that Thompson's reputation will grow gradually, like those other reclusive poets, Emily Dickinson and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Recently Xavier Press of St. Francis Xavier University published *SeaRun: Notes on John Thompson's Stilt Jack* by Peter Sanger, a line-by-line annotation of the poems.

When Polk thinks of John Thompson now, he likes to remember not the difficult moments, but the conversations about poetry over drinks when Thompson would proudly pull out from his jacket a complicated pocket knife or compass to show off. Those who know Thompson through his poems will hear his voice over and over again:

*Lord, lord, I'm thinking of you.
I'm gone.*

—CARY FAGAN

Hemingway of the Star

YOU HAVE TO imagine a stamping, snorting Arabian stallion being broken to become a plough horse. That was the short, unhappy life of Ernest Hemingway at the Toronto *Star* under the daily whip of the managing editor, the misnamed Harry Comfort Hindmarsh. The indignities of being sent to cover one-alarm fires (not to mention receiving jeering letters from Ezra Pound addressed to "Tomato, Can") were not palliated even by a transfer to the *Star Weekly* to join his buddy Greg Clark. He soon quit a job that was "like being in the German army with a poor commander." The rest is legend, if not history.

Hemingway first arrived in Toronto in January, 1920, at the behest of Harriet Connable, an attractive, fur-swathed friend of his mother who'd hired him after he'd given a talk about his war wounds to the Ladies Aid of Petoskey, Michigan. As a paid pal to the Connables' lame, reclusive son Ralph, Jr. (giving him the "right slant on life, especially as to his sports and pleasures"). Hemingway earned \$50 a month and room and board in the Connable mansion at 153 Lyndhurst Ave.

Besides skating and boxing with Ralph, Jr., Hemingway squired his sister Dorothy Connable to hockey games, and through Ralph, Sr., got taken on at the *Star* at a penny a word. The elder

Connable, who managed the 100 Woolworth stores in Canada, was a big *Star* advertiser. Yet it wasn't entirely favouritism, for Hemingway earlier had served a strenuous six-month apprenticeship on the Kansas City *Star*, one of the best newspapers in the United States.

After the Connable contract expired in May, Hemingway freelanced for the *Star Weekly* in Chicago until November, 1921, when, now married and Europa bound, he was hired as foreign correspondent. But with his wife Hadley pregnant, Hemingway returned to Toronto in the fall of 1923, taking an apartment at 1599 Bathurst St., toiling in what Wyndham Lewis would later call a "sanctimonious icebox." That his first son John Hadley Nicanor (making the baby technically a Canadian or rather British citizen) was born while he was off on a assignment did not improve his temper. He resigned on December 31.

Some recent books remind us of Hemingway's S&-studded years. Peter Griffin's *Along with Youth: Hemingway, the Early Years* (Oxford, 258 pages, \$24.95 cloth) is the first volume of what "promises to become the definitive Hemingway biography of this generation." Promises, promises. The book's scholarship is sieve-like. Griffin deduces a youthful copulation from an unpublished short story when, as is well-known, Hemingway was about matters sexual a notorious bull-shipper. (Hemingway's sexual partners during his lifetime probably numbered fewer than 10; as William Faulkner wittily put it, "Hemingway's mistake was that he thought he had to marry all of them.") Moreover, Griffin hilariously tells us that "For Hemingway's stay in Toronto in early 1920, his letters to Charles Fenton in the 1950s offer the best source." This three-volume biography undoubtedly will set a new sludge-standard for the academic drudge.

A fully satisfying life of Hemingway has yet to be written, but the prolific Jeffrey Myers's *Hemingway: A Biography* (Harper & Row/Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 644 pages, \$40.50 cloth) offers an advance on readability to Carlos Baker's droning *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story*, hitherto the most comprehensive account. Although he sometimes registers 6.9 on the Freud Scale, Myers notes patterns and draws intelligent conclusions.

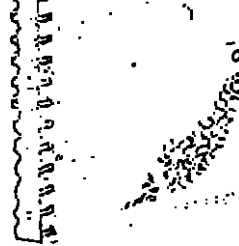
Certainly he does not go so far as to say, as does William White, editor of *Dateline: Toronto, The Complete Toronto Star Dispatches, 1920-1924* (Scribner's/Collier Macmillan, 478 pages, \$29.95 cloth), that "From these years in Toronto, and reporting for Toronto readers as their foreign correspondent, came the creative writer and

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Voyage of the Iceberg

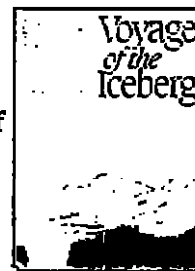
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the author of some of the finest short stories and novels of our time." Nonetheless, White, who previously compiled a useful collection, *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway, Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades* (Scribner's), has given us the needed evidence about the author's early journalistic prowess, or lack of it.

Was Hemingway much good as a reporter? Well, yes, he probably deserved his peak weekly wage of \$125 (no small amount in the early '20s) at a time when journalism was of a higher standard than nowadays, the reporting sharper and less homogenized, the feature-writing less sycophantic.

The first of 150 pieces, dated Feb. 14, 1930, was an unsigned squib, "Circulating Pictures a New High-Art Idea in Toronto"; the last (as "John Hadley" and published after he left the newspaper) was another wry fragment, this one about the peril of wearing a Freiburg-bought fedora in his adoptive city. After telling how he was almost punched for wearing one, the writer says he traded it in for typical Toronto head-gear. "I have one of that kind now. But I know very well that if I ever try and wear it in Europe, somebody will want to take a poke at me." As a *l'envoi* it was good enough.

The journalistic Hemingway progressed from lecture notes on fishing and camping ("All there is to a pie is a cup and a half of flour, one-half teaspoon of salt, one half-cup of lard and cold water. That will make piecrust that will bring tears of joy to your camping partner's eyes") to shrewd political analyses and nature-descriptions that anticipate his later evocations of terrain. In Europe he was watchful for Canadian angles, and a fine portraitist. Reporting the Genoa Conference of 1922, he superbly depicts Aleksandr Stambouliski, the Bulgarian farmer-prime minister:

... Stambouliski sits forward in his chair, looks at the ceiling with his bull-like old face, and the light from the great chandelier glints on his shiny, blue serge suit. Occasionally a slightly less stolid expression comes over his face, it relaxes just the least bit, that is the nearest he ever comes to smiling. When that expression comes it means that Stambouliski is thinking that while the conference at Genoa is going on, back in Bulgaria men are farming.

Hemingway favoured the Ward (Chinatown) for "adventures in eating," and nominated Thomas Chandler Haliburton as the one great writer Canada had produced, adding wryly, "I do not believe his works are widely read." He also scribbled the occasional bit of free verse for the *Star Weekly*, such as "I Like Americans" ("They do not hang lady murderers/

They pm them in vaudeville") and its mate. "I Like Canadians":

They let **women stand up** In the **street-cars**

Even if **they are good-looking**.
They ore **all in a hurry to get home lo supper**

And their **radio sets**.

One **item** printed **April 11, 1920**, reads grimly today. "According to the Mayo brothers, world-famous surgeons of

Rochester, Minnesota, **ninety percent of all infections of the body are located above the collar.**" Forty-one years later Hemingway was admitted to the Mayo Clinic for **treatment of severe depression**. He believed that he was being **tailed** by the F.B.I., which fear his wife **Mary** and friend **Aaron Hotchner** attributed to **cbmnic paranoia**. But, as **Jefrey Myers** chillingly relates, **Hemingway was right**. Even as he prescribed

electro-convulsive therapy, Hemingway's **psychiatrist** was **chattily informing an F.B.I. agent about the famous patient's regress**.

One **side-effect** of **shook treatments** is **loss of memory**. A writer without memory is no longer a **writer**. **Having effectively killed the writer in Hemingway**, the clinic **discharged him**. He went home and **finished the job**.

—FRASER SUTHERLAND

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Downhill all the way

One used to have to search for grammatical **idlocies** in **periodicals**. Not any more. Nowadays they seem to jump right off the page

By **Bob Blackburn**

THIS PUBLICATION is celebrating one of those round-number anniversaries that usually inspire some sort of Stock-taking. I find them irresistible, although I recall with glee that the *New Yorker* marked its 25th birthday with a short comment to the effect that this was that anniversary, and it seemed to the editors that things had changed either a great deal or not at all.

That was about it. (I'd be grateful if someone were to send me the exact words.)

I am capable of no such self-restraint. Last fall I observed the conclusion of my fifth year of tenancy in this Space. I am not really entitled to any similar self-indulgence until 1990, but, what the hell, I'm nor going to miss this chance.

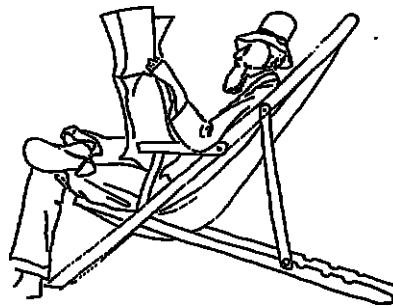
I don't know whether things, in relation to the Subject of this column, are changing. I am quite sure that things are not getting better, but my perception that they are rapidly getting worse "my be coloured by a sensitivity that has increased since I began wiring these columns.

I am sure that yesterday I saw and heard **plus used as a conjunction more times than** I did the day before, and I think that a decade ago that happened **only a couple of times a day, rather than dozens**. Advertisers love this usage, and there is obviously no hope of stamping it out. I watch many TV newscasts, and hear **nucular** at least once a day. Doubtless the newspapers will adopt that spelling before long.

I believe that sources say is a new abomination. The use of **source** to mean a **cautious blabbermouth** is a hoary journalistic tradition. I don't like it, but I've become inured to lines like "a source in the Prime Minister's Office says. . . ." But I don't know what sources say

means. It is never **a source says**; it is always in the plural, as if to reassure us that the reporter has not simply taken the word of one possibly unreliable person but has checked the information with at least one other possibly on-reliable person. It turns a **questionable practice** into an insupportable one., and it seems to have become entrenched almost instantly.

"The Ring is dead; long live the Ring" is an elegant ritual pronounce ment, but I object to the use of the present tense in news reports of the death of a famous person, not because it is wrong (it isn't) but because it is a useless fad. Newsworthy people don't die any more; they become dead. The foolishness is that the same reporter who will write, "sources say the dictator has fled the island," and congratulate himself on having saved a few words by not giving



the slightest indication of whom the information came from, will write, "John Smith is dead. He died today. . ." and so on. Instead of "John Smith died today."

That is new. So is the increasing frequency of evidence of editorial slackness in rich magazines. Whatever bizarre styles it affected in the past. Time used

to be meticulously edited, and lately I have seen in the *New Yorker* lapses that would have been impossible in the days of Harold Ross.

Here is a line that jumped into my peripheral vision from a newspaper item I wasn't, even reading (about a new comic strip): "Unlike most comics that are geared to adults only, Orson's Place is aimed at kids and grown-ups, Davis says." I doubt that Jim Davis, the creator of *Garfield* actually said anything so nonsensical. On the other hand, I heard with my own ears (and with an enormous sense of relief) the following statement made to an interviewer by the Toronto police chief: "We don't advocate capital punishment for everyone."

I am still puzzling over this one: "Celebrities have been endorsing products almost as long as the advent of television." Now, if we knew the length of the advent of television, we would know that the products in question are shorter than that, but do we really care?

Just now, I left the keyboard for a moment and walked past a TV set and heard a voice (British, at that) say, "... this has not changed the minds of investors that the economy is improving. . ." (I paused long enough to ascertain that he was reading from a script.) It is not necessary to go hunting for these things. It used to be.

If others are slipping, I guess I am, too. I'm sore that at some time I have made a nasty remark here about people who confuse alternate with alternative, yet I committed the same error a couple of columns ago. That, of course, is embarrassing, but what troubled me even more was the fact that it was not brought to my attention until it was mentioned in a letter from a reader in Australia. Think about that. □

We're Signing Up

GREAT AUTHORS



Yves Beauchemin

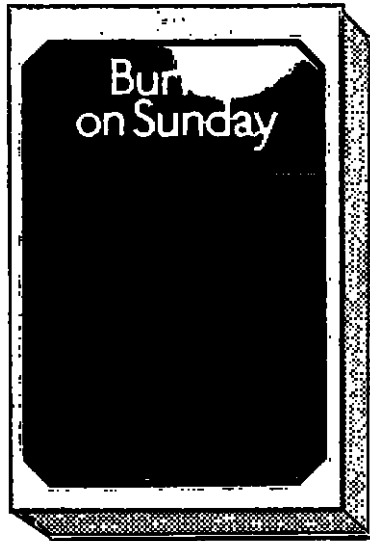
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A star in the East

Wayne Johnston's comic account of adolescence in Newfoundland is the best first novel of 1985

WAYNE JOHNSTON of Fredericton has won the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award for *The Story of Bobby O'Malley*, published by Oberon Press. Described by novelist Douglas Hill as "filled with insight and compassionate understanding," Johnston's novel, set in Newfoundland, was the first choice of two of the four judges on the panel. The award, which is being co-sponsored for the first time by the W.H. Smith chain of book stores, offers a prize of \$3,000 for the best first novel published in English in Canada during the previous calendar year.

Johnston, who turns 28 this month, is the first writer from the Atlantic provinces to win the award. A graduate of Memorial University, he worked briefly as a newspaperman in St. John's before turning to writing fiction full-time in 1981. Perhaps fittingly, as the annual

prize celebrates its 10th anniversary, it now has been won by writers from coast to coast.

In addition to Hill, who writes a paperbacks column for the *Globe and Mail*, the judges for this year's award were: Nii Berrisford, book marketing manager for W.H. Smith; journalist and author Heather Robertson, who won the 1983 Books in Canada award for *Willie: A Romance*; and novelist and short-story writer W.D. Valgardson, winner of the 1980 award, who teaches creative writing at the University of Victoria.

Besides Johnston's novel, the books on the short list were: *A Nest of Singing Birds*, by Susan Charlotte Haley (NewWest Press); *A Certain Mr. Takahashi*, by Ann Ireland (McClelland & Stewart); *Master and Maid*, by Frank Jones (Irwin Publishing); and *Wales' Work*, by Robert Walshe (Stoddart). As the judges' comments indicate, several were strong runners-up to *The Story of Bobby O'Malley*:

Nigel Berrisford: My choice is *Wales' Work*, a masterfully written, funny, explosive, and accomplished work. I was reminded of Robertson Davies in some of the scenes. To those in publishing or bookselling, there are scenes that show an author who knows how the publishing world works. This book is not, however, only of interest to people in the book business. There is some writing of extraordinary quality. My own favourite being:

There is a land where flowers bloom in winter, where wine still tastes of the grape, and coffee of the bean. In the morning you walk out of your house and pluck figs for breakfast; the orange tree is so plentiful that it serves as decoration in the streets. At the table one pours oil and lemon over freshly picked salad; the oil is coloured green and the lemon has not yet been embalmed in plastic. Everywhere the sun beats down and reflects its warmth in stone, occasionally in faces. And because for a time the people there were grateful for the natural good, they painted their houses in hues of rose and gold, and so arranged their world that even the rooftops were a celebration. Paradise was not there, but proximate — in books, handwritten; on walls, handpainted; in the lines and lives of poets. And if, before he died, a man were lucky in his gifts, they would cut a bough from the sacred tree and wind it for his crown.

Elsewhere the leaves bend low under their watery burden, and cats slouch about the gardens shaking the mud from their paws.

I found it hard to believe that this is Walshe's first novel, as it shows none of the usual pitfalls and traps that first authors usually fall into. (It also has a list of some of the best book titles I have ever seen, my own favourite being *Sex Through Nine Innings* by Gloria Hymen.)

A Certain Mr. Takahashi is a very tightly plotted, beautifully written story that jumps backwards and forwards in time as it describes two young girls' adolescent relationship with a Japanese pianist. With her rich imagery and very real characters, Ann Ireland shows promise. I believe she could become a major Canadian novelist.

Master and Maid is a fascinating novelization of a famous murder and trial that took place in Toronto in the early 1900s. It is extremely well written, giving a wonderful portrait of the Upstairs-Downstairs lifestyle of the time. Jones's thorough research has uncovered many interesting facets of a case that

Wayne Johnston



most people have long forgotten. The book, however, is far more than just a fictionalized version of an actual murder case. It stands on its own as a novel, with believable characters and reconstructed dialogue that is totally credible. I read this book through in a single sitting and, not knowing the result of this case, cheered at the end when the wronged Carrie Davies was acquitted. I believe this book would make a wonderful Canadian movie, and hope that some entrepreneur has already bought the script.

The Story of Bobby O'Malley is set in present-day Newfoundland and tells the story of an intelligent and impressionable youngster. It is an extremely funny book with many slapstick incidents that at times strain credibility. The

'The Story of Bobby O'Malley is a rewarding surprise — a thoroughly enjoyable book, gracefully written, lighthearted but deep. It should take this prize and walk off with the Leacock as well'

characters and incidents are often grotesque. The ending, however, is beautifully written and redeems some of the earlier unevenness. I would look forward to reading Johnston's next novel.

A Nest of Singing Birds is set in the present, in a small Canadian university with a stifling atmosphere. The range of characters comes from the university. The shortest description of this book would be to call it a well-written, highly stylized Harlequin romance. It is fun reading but light on substance.

Douglas Hill: These are five intelligent, competently written novels. Good novels. None is great; none will find a prominent place in a reader's imagination the way the best of the previous contest winners (Clark Blaise's *Lunar Attractions*, Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*) have done. But those two books were produced by experienced writers turning in mid-career to the novel. This year's five candidates are beginners; on the evidence all seem capable of significant accomplishment in the future.

I find little beyond competence in three of the books: *A Nest of Singing Birds*, *A Certain Mr. Takahashi*, and *Master and Maid*. The first takes far too long to get through a minor tale, and though the romance at the centre occasionally catches fire, there's too much slack prose, too much tedious explaining, too much weak dialogue. The second is upbeat and breezy, but it's psychologically dull (except for glimpses of tension between the two sisters) and the writing is fairly mechanical and commercial. The third is fine as fictionalized history, but less successful as fiction. Clearly if earnestly written and massively researched, it simply doesn't come alive.

Wales' Work is the most ambitious of all the entries. It's impossible not to respect Walshe's energy, erudition, and puzzle-making ski. For me, however, the novel sinks under the weight of its own polished pedantry and self-indulgent cleverness. "Beware novels with footnotes," the old fella said; he gives sound advice. This is extremely literary stuff. Self-reflexiveness in post-modernist fiction is one thing; self-regard that becomes mere preciousness is another. There's talent and wit in abundance here, and much that's interesting and fun, but the novel wastes too much of the reader's time, and its own.

The Story of Bobby O'Malley is a rewarding surprise. I opened it expecting another account of Maritimes adolescence (there are more than a few in the Canadian canon) and indeed found one, but also discovered a mastery of tone and a supple humorous prose style that makes the whole endeavour a delight. The book's charms are understated and unforced. Comic scenes are truly funny; Johnston has a sure sense of place (the Goulds, Newfoundland, I'm guessing—just outside St. John's); the serious moments in the novel are filled with insight and compassionate understanding. *Bobby O'Malley* is a thoroughly enjoyable book, gracefully written, lighthearted but deep, and is my first choice by a substantial margin. It should take this prize, and walk off with the Leacock as well.

Heather Robertson: I liked *Master and Maid*. The story is skilfully told, with plenty of suspense and surprises. Jones has an excellent ear for speech, from the British inflections of the immigrant masses to the haute Toronto drawl of the Masseys. The characters are vivid and memorable; Jones's portrait of the maid, Carrie Davies, is especially evocative. There are occasional slips into reportage, and Jones's history is a little shaky, but I found the book compelling and moving. Anyone who can call Vincent Massey a "little turd" deserves a prize.

In *A Certain Mr. Takahashi*, Ann Ireland had a terrific idea for an erotic novel — North Toronto nymphets meet talented Japanese sybarite, purpose: seduction. Unhappily, Ireland seems as terrified of eroticism as she is of Mr. Takahashi. She has inexplicably chosen to tell the story from the point of view of the prissy, spinsterish sister, Jean, and it soon dwindles away into another conventional exercise in neurosis. Ireland has a tendency to deflate the significant and inflate the inconsequential: she needs more confidence in her style and her voice.

Wales' Work, by Robert Walshe, is a novel for people addicted to words, puns, etymologies, and conceits. Although constructed like a conventional mystery novel, the book itself is an elaborate conceit. Rather than using words to tell a story, Walshe tells a story about words. Sometimes funny, some-

by Susan Goldenberg
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times fascinating. *Wales' Work* is often heavy going, and the big scenes seldom come off sufficiently to justify the effort. A novel about pedantry can easily become pedantic.

The *Story of Bobby O'Malley* is more memoir than novel, since it's almost totally lacking in plot, drama, or resolution. I am not convinced we need another coming-of-age-In-Canada book, but Wayne Johnston has such a sure command of the language, and such a marvellous comic touch, that I was charmed as long as Bobby O'Malley played the role of Wise Child. Precocious boys, however, tend to grow up into snotty, smart-ass young men. Worse, O'Malley loses his sense of humour and the book sags into maudlin sentimentality.

A *Nest of Singing Birds* is yet another novel about malice

'Not just once, but many times, I had to quit reading for laughing. And yet, as with all the books I really cherish, behind the humour there is a tremendous sadness and understanding.'

and misery in the groves of academe. As a love story, it's one long, self-pitying moan. The characters are shallow, the heroine dreary, the ending contrived. Susan Haley has her moments as a novelist, but they're too few and far between.

W.D. Valgardson: I was impressed by each and all of the books. Actually, I found it difficult to believe that they were first novels. Again and again, I had to remind myself that these were not books by authors who had a long list of credits behind them.

Wales' Work I found clever. The point of view and the voice were interesting. I found myself caught up in the strangeness of the plot, with the odd cast of characters and their intricate and shifting relationships.

Master and Maid was well written and the main character was drawn in a way that helped me to understand her. Although the story was based on an actual incident, it was re-created well enough that I was concerned for the heroine and intrigued by the momentary revelation of the scummy underside of Canadian society, an underside we are constantly told doesn't exist.

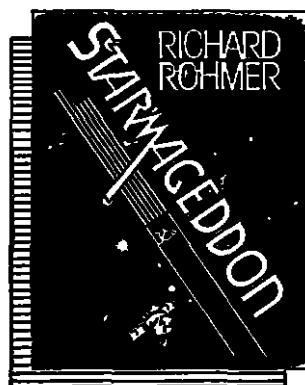
A *Certain Mr. Takahashi* I thoroughly enjoyed. I felt that the author's handling of plot was particularly good. She solved difficult problems — how to keep Takahashi in the story, for example, after he has moved away. The obsession of the narrator I found believable and shamble (this, because the description was dear and well developed).

As an academic, I particularly enjoyed *A Nest of Singing Birds*. The author has an eye and ear for absurdity. There were various jolts of recognition (some funny, some painful). She has a particular ability for drawing character and for making the most of social relationships.

The *Story of Bobby O'Malley* is my choice for the prize. As much as I enjoyed the other books, this was the only one that caused me to rush about, saying to friends, "Listen to this," and then reading them two or three pages of story. Not since I first came across the stories of W.P. Kinsella have I done this. Who, having read this wonderful book, will ever forget Mrs. Upton-Downton Huntington-Smith? For the rest of my life, Ambrosia will be with me as she lies on the floor in Bobby's soutaine. Nor will I forget the Teddy-tank and Bob-sled. Not just once, but many times, I had to quit reading for laughing. And yet, as with all the books I really cherish, behind the humour there is a tremendous sadness and understanding. Whoever you are, Wayne Johnston, I hope you are already preparing another novel for us. □

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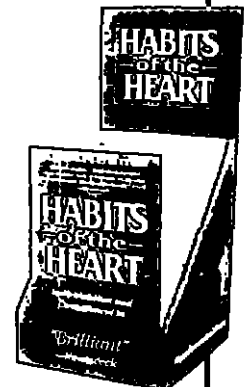
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SHORT STORY

To be forgotten

'The last time I walked into a public library It was like going into a cemetery. All those lives. All those ambitions. What does it come down to? A few books on a shelf'

By Norman Levine

IN THE SPRING of 1974 I received an invitation to tutor, for four days, a class of teachers in their final year of training. On a bright morning I set off for an estate in West Cornwall. I took the train to Penzance. Then a green country bus. It went slowly up a steep mad. At the top it levelled out. We "we on a" open moor. It was exhilarating. I could see for miles. A brilliant blue sky. Haunches of earth with gone and bracken end scattered granite boulders. The only sign that said people were about — a row of wooden telegraph poles, by the road, carrying a single wire.

I got off the bus, on a plateau, and walked with my bag along a rough dirt mad. It brought me still higher onto the moor. A cool breeze. A smell of coconuts came from the gorse beside

me. I watched three gulls fly over. They appeared to fly in slow motion. There were no sounds. Not a car, not a person.

When I saw the estate I didn't expect anything as isolated to be so grand. From the moor it was almost hidden by trees and a few granite boulders. And the boulders, made smooth by the centuries, were taller than the trees.

I swung open a heavy white gate and walked along a pebble drive. On either side — behind tall, trimmed green bushes — were thick sub-tropical gardens with flowers whose names I didn't know. Bright pinks, whites, orange, yellow, light and dark purples and blues. A gap . . . a low stone wall . . . and behind it a fruit garden. Another stone wall . . . and behind that a vegetable garden with a greenhouse.

The drive ended at the side of a large house with tall windows. A bus (Hereford Education Authority on its door) was parked by a used truck that had gardening tools. A path to the left of the house. Another to the right. I walked to the left, under a granite arch. And past the arch a sunken grass lawn neatly cut. The sunken grass lawn, with steep grass slopes, was sheltered on three sides by bushes, trees, and the front of the granite house. The wide other side was open. To the left—the upward doping moor, and the mad across it the bus had taken. White in front, and to the right, tall grass with campion and foxgloves. Then a sharp drop of bracken and gorse. Several hundred feet further down the bracken and the gorse levelled out to a patchwork of cultivated small green fields with hedgerows for fences and cows around an isolated farm. The small fields went right up to steep cliffs. And past the cliffs, to the horizon, was the sea.

Looking at all this, I didn't notice a tall man with a slick (who must have come from the house) walking towards me. His feet kicked out slightly ahead and to the side while he held his head and shoulders back, as if to balance his walk. It gave him a slightly arrogant presence, even when he smiled. Fine features in a longish heavy face, a strong jaw, thinning white hair combed back. He was neatly dressed in grey flannels, a light grey tweed jacket, a red checked shirt, a dark blue tie. He looked English and vaguely familiar. He also looked out of place here. But so did the sunken lawn, the sub-tropical gardens, the large house.

"You a student?"

"No, a tutor."

"You must be the other one."

It was then that I recognized him. Eric Symes, a singer in musicals, looking much older than the photographs I had seen in newspapers and magazines. But they belonged to the time he was well known. When I used to hear him on the radio and on records.

"You will have the goosehouse," he indicated with his stick. "Past those trees. His is further along. After you leave your things go to the other side of the house to the kitchen. Meet your students. They arrived earlier. If there is anything you want — ask Connie."

We stood looking at the view, in silence, for several minutes.

"It's beautiful," I said.



"Yes," he said. "I have to **fight** to keep it this way. It's **Bronze Age.**"

He began to walk . . . stiff and **erect**, using the stick, **while** his feet kicked out. I **guess** he had a stroke. . . **along** the top of the **grass slope** . . . **by** the sunken **lawn** . . . towards an **opening** . . .

"Come and see me," he **called** back. "I'll show you the house and the gardens."

A **HALF-HOUR** later I was in a warm kitchen, by a scrubbed wooden table, having a **coffee** (a red enamel pot **was kept warm** on the **Aga**) **looking**, from a wide **window**, at the moor the sea **the sky**, and **talking** with some of **the** students.

When a taxi drove **up**. A **thin**, tired **looking man**, of **average**

'Take things from life,' Adolphe said. 'Bad experience is better than no experience. Invent as little as possible. **You** are inventing the piece the way you use words and the way you are telling it'

height, appeared. He wore a mustard, military cut, overcoat and a black fedora. When he **came in**, **carrying a green canvas bag**, everyone stopped **talking**.

"I'm Adolphe **Cayley**," he said in a **nervous** voice.

He looked uncomfortable.

One of the girls said. "Like a coffee?"

"Thank you."

"Milk and **sugar**?"

"No. **Black.**"

He had a **few** sips. Then **walked over** and asked if I **was** the other tutor. We shook hands **formally**. Coming **closer** he said. "Your **first time**, isn't it? Don't **worry**. I **have done** this many times. They **usually** send me to break someone in."

I had heard of Adolphe **Cayley** in **much** the **same way** as I had heard of **Eric Symes**. And in both cases I met them too late. Adolphe **Cayley** was known because of a **short** poem he had **written** some **30 years earlier**. It was used **in an** understated English **war film**. I can't **remember** the **lines**. But it was how **ordinary life**, during a **war**, goes on. And **will continue** to go on **after the war** is over.

He took **his** glasses off. He had **light grey eyes**. And, with the **other** band, rubbed them. He put the glasses back on and asked if I **was** Canadian. He said he had been **in** Canada as **part** of the **Commonwealth Air Training** scheme.

"Did you fly?"

"No, I **wrote** propaganda."

He had a **sister**, he said, in Toronto that he visited.

I asked if he **liked** Toronto.

"It is **very** clean."

He **kept wearing** the black fedora. I **thought** he was bald. But **later when he took** it off his short **straight** hair **was** black. **not a grey hair anywhere**. And I **knew he had to be** in his **60s**.

I **also** assumed he was English. But it was **evident** he was **something else**. When I **finally** asked him. He said. "I'm **not thoroughbred**. My mother is **from France**. When I'm introduced, if **people** look **surprised**, I tell them — **like Hitler** but with an **e**." He smiled. "**Any of your books in** print?"

Surprised by **this** I said "No."

"Neither **are** mine. So we both know why we are here."

The white **shirt** was frayed at the neck. **There was** a stain on **his** tie. **His** brown shoes had the **leather** split on top. And the

heels were worn right down. **Yes** despite his awkwardness and the outward **appearance** the impression I had **was** of someone with an **inner dignity**.

And the awkwardness also seemed to disappear when he took charge. He told two students that their jobs would be to go out every day and bring back **dead** wood for the **fireplace**. He picked two others. **told** them to see Connie in the **office**. She would give them money and a **list** of food to buy in Penzance for the rest of the week.

"We have to **look** after ourselves," he said.

On a sheet of paper he **drew** columns for the **days we would** be here. And asked the students to write their **names for specific** jobs.

"Every day two people **will** prepare lunch and **dinner**. Two others **will wash** and **clean up**. At breakfast we fend for **ourselves**. The **best cooks will** be on the **last night** when the **final meal will** be **something** special with tic."

THAT EVENING we had supper in the **dining-room**. **Bare** timbers across the **ceiling**. A bright **fire** in the large **fireplace**. We sat on **fixed** wooden **benches** by wooden tables. **While we were** having coffee. Adolphe stood up. "I thought," he said, "I **would** say a few words before we **begin**."

"Tomorrow morning, at eight, we **start** to work. **I'll** have seven — Peter **will** have seven. **I'll pass around these** two pieces of paper. They are marked for every half-hour of the **morning** with a **five-minute** break. Put your name down for the time you want to come. We **will** see you **in** that **order**. We'll talk, give you assignments **and**, when you write **them**, go over them. The **rest** of the **time** you **are** free to do what you like. There is a small library. There **are** moms to be by yourself — though everything in them is faintly damp. There **are** good walks. **This extraordinary** landscape. And no distractions. No radio, no **television**, no newspapers. We are **cut off** —"

He drank some coffee.

"One of the **things** you need is a good pair of **eyes**. I **was in** Paris **last** summer. **Walking in a** street. **When** I saw, on the pavement, outside a shop, cages with **small** animals inside. **In** one cage were pigeons. They were **pecking at the grain** on the bottom of their cage . . . **sending some** of the **grains** outside. A lone pigeon came **flying** along the street. It landed beside the cage. It began to peck at the outside **grains**. Then **at grains** it could reach between the bars. Someone came **from** the shop, clapped her hands. 'Vu-t-en.' **The pigeon flew** away. Those inside the cage went on **pecking at the grain**."

The students were **making** notes.

"Take things from life," Adolphe said. "Bad **experience** is better than no experience. Invent as **little** as possible. You **are** inventing the piece the way you **use** words and the **way** you **are** telling it. Wherever you go you **will** notice things."

"After Paris I went to a **small** provincial town. It was September. AU day Christmas carols **were** being played on loudspeakers **in the** streets. I got to know a teacher in this **provincial** town. Her name was **Martine**. She had taught **French in** a London school and had come back to where she **was born** because her marriage broke up. Her parents bought her a woolshop. And they kept **an eye** on her. **Martine** and I **were having dinner** in a restaurant — it was **9:30** — and there was **her mother and father standing outside the restaurant window**, **smiling** at us, and **pointing to the time**. Next **morning** we were having a coffee in the **woolshop** and **talking** about W.H. **Auden** . . . **his death was** announced. **When Martine** said. 'A young boy, **from across** the street, **was killed** last night **in a car** accident. He would **always** wave to me when he **went** by. I **won't see him again** . . . We can't talk about him.' she said **angrily**. 'But we can **talk** about W.H. **Auden** and neither of us knew him.'"

Adolphe waited for this to sink in.

"Sometimes when you **see something** it **will suggest**

something else. On **the** train coming down I saw two magpies. I remembered the **rhyme**.

*One for sorrow
Two for joy
Three for a letter
Four for something better.*

And made up **this** scene. There is this **young** family **in** a **train**. Mother, father, **young** daughter. They **have** just **left their** older son in a mental **hospital**. Mother and father **are** tense. The young daughter-standing **at the** window looking at the **passing** fields — **sees** two magpies. She calls out excitedly.

“We going to have **joy**. We going to **have** joy.”

He hesitated.

“Of course if **you** have two magpies in a **country** cemetery. With one bid on a **gravestone** and the other on the earth beside it — you have other possibilities.

“And if you are in this country cemetery. And see a man, **as** I did, bringing flowers to the grave of his wife. In the next scene you have that man **carrying** flowers as he goes courting his new lady friend.

“Any questions?”

There were none.

“To end this evening,” Adolphe said, “Peter and I will read you **something we** have written — so you **can see our** credentials.”

Adolphe read an amusing **account** about **his** experiences with a dating service. “All the **women they** seat were handicapped.”

And I read a 10-minute story.

That **night**, in the goosehouse, I went to bed with the samples of writing my lot had brought with them. I looked forward to **reading** their work. When I finished. I thought, what am I doing here.? The writing was amateurish. **The** prose **flat**, lifeless, and going all **over** the place. It was as if they wanted to write **and** didn't know what to write about.

WE BEGAN at eight next morning. A student would knock on the door of the **goosehouse**. It was **spartan** but clean. I would have them sit **opposite** the scrubbed wooden table. Someone had put **primroses** and violets in a glass. I asked them: why did they want to **write**? And they talked. One student (a **heavy** handsome woman from Birmingham), the oldest on the course, said she was married with two **small** children and her husband was unemployed. Another, a small lively girl from a Northern provincial **town**, said she was having **an** affair with her husband's closest friend (“**He** and his wife are constantly in **and** out of our house”) and things **were** getting **difficult**. They also told me that their Teachers Training College was **closing** at the end of the year. They were the **last** course. And **none** bad jobs to go to when they graduated.

“Our tutor has started to write a **novel**.”

“What **will** you **do**?”

They didn't know.

I went **over** their work. I showed them how to cut **un-**necessary words. And not to explain **too** much. After a few minutes they **were** able to do the revising themselves. I said their only responsibility — to **discover** their material. And gave them their **first** assignment. “Go outside. Describe something. So I can see it.”

The **last** of the seven to come to the **goosehouse** was also the **youngest** of the course, Sally. A small cheerful **blonde** girl with a lovely smile. She had a habit of **pushing** her long **hair** away from her face. She wasn't as bad as the **others** but she **still** had some way to go. And I told her this.

“What does it matter,” she said, “if **someone** is writing without a view of **getting** published. I get pleasure out of writing. I like doing it. I just want to get better. That's why I came.”

I didn't understand this. I assumed that **everyone** who writes

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wants to get published. But here was **someone** realistic enough, at so young an age. **Yet** she couldn't stop. And "either, as I **found** out, could the others.

Walking to lunch Adolphe caught up with me.

"**End of our surgeries for the day,**" he said **a little** out of breath. "I've bee" going non-stop. How did yours go?"

"**Alright,**" I said, without **his** enthusiasm. **And told him** about **Sally.**

He smiled. "**What** makes people interesting is their **dedication.**"

TOMORROW MORNING. It was Sally who came to the **goosehouse** at eight. (**The** last person yesterday was the first

'I turned my head towards Sally — her eyes **were** filled with **tears.** I went back to the moor — the car, like a toy, was now against the light green then the dark green — and talked as if nothing was happening'

person the next.) And as it was a **warm** sunny morning I **suggested** we have the **lesson** outside.

We were sitting, quite **near**, at right angles. Sally was **facing** the gardens. I was **facing** the moor. Close by, the tall **grass** and **bracken.** Then the **distances.** **Areas of water, earth, sky.** How **timeless and quiet.** I told her that I **liked** ha descriptions, **especially** the way she described **an** outcrop of granite.. "As if **a** giant toothpaste tube had bee" squeezed and the granite came out **in** layers, one on top of the other." For her **next** assignment, I said, I wanted her **to try and trap an emotion.** I was **telling her how to go about** doing thii when I noticed a **flash** of light as the **sun** caught the **windscreen** of a **car** moving on the road **across** the moor. I **turned** my head towards Sally — her eyes were filled **with** tears. I **went** back to the moor — the **car, like a** toy, was **now against the** lilt green the" the dark **green** -and talked as if nothing was happening. Sometimes I **turned my head** slightly — she was still **crying** — and continued to talk as I watched a **kestrel** hover, the" **glide,** and **turn** into the **wind** and hover **again** beating its **wings** without moving — in the wind — **and** not moving — the" still. I **cut** the half-hour short, **said** I would sw her tomorrow.

The next to **come on** the **grass** was the married woman, Mrs. **Garrens,** from **Birmingham.** I was **more** upset than I realized for I told her what happened.

"I was **sitting like this** looking at the moor and **talking** about **writing.** When, for no **reason,** Sally started to cry."

I turned to look at Mrs. **Garrens.** There were tears coming **down** her cheeks.

"Why **are you crying?**"

She lowered ha head and said quietly.

"Because of you."

I **didn't** understand. And **must** have **shown** it. For she said.

"You're on the page."

When I saw Adolphe I told hi what happened. He wasn't **surprised.**

"They are **reminding us** we **are** titers."

ADOLPHE WAS taking **me** on one of hi **favourite** walks. We passed four **students** playing croquet **on** the sunken lawn and I could **hear** the sound of wood on wood as we went down a rough path between the bracken and the gorse. Then the **small** fields. **Butterflies** were flitting around. **Small** light blue **ones**

that I hadn't seen before. A **light** blue **sea,** in front, to the horizon. This **immense** sky. And, behind, the haunch of the moor. We walked along the curving **side** of a small **potato** field. Then another **small field** where the **grass** was high, the hedgerows full of **campion,** brambles, foxgloves, and **primroses.** We **sat by a hedgerow,** took **our shirts** off, **lay** on the **grass** facing the **sun.**

"You know what **writers** have in common?" Adolphe **asked.**

I didn't answer.

"A lack of **confidence.**"

Was this true? I didn't **think** so. Not when I'm writing. It's when I **finish** something that the doubts set in.

"There **are** times," I said, "when I think the whole business is a **confidence** trick. The **last time** I walked **into a** public library it was like **going** into a cemetery. AU **those** lives. AU **those** ambitions. What does it **come** down to? A few books **on** a shelf."

I could hear a rooster crowing **from** the farm. And further, towards the cliffs, a working tractor.

"What else is **there** to do?" Adolphe **said,** his eyes **shut.**

"You married?"

"Yes."

"I was. For '27 years. We were married in a thunderstorm . . . **just after the war . . . seems like yesterday.** She now **lives** with someone in t&vision. She likes **celebrities.** People she **doesn't** know. I have a housekeeper. She **comes** twice or three times **a** week. Stays **the night.** It's the best tonic I know."

Again we were silent.

I thought, he makes too much of being **a writer.** Perhaps I did too at one time. But I had learned since not to make too **much** of anything.

"I'm **a little to the left** — not much." Adolphe said. "In the '30s I was **staying with an uncle in London.** I **WENT** to dances. Sometimes two or three **dances a night.** I would pick at a lobster. at chicken done in something. Then, in the morning, walking to **my** uncle's house, I saw men **sleeping on park** benches with newspapers **around** their feet. I thought **something** wasn't **right.**"

The sun was warm.

"Isn't this **marvellous,**" Adolphe said. **sitting up,** looking at the silent view. I watched the **shadow** of a cloud **going across** the moor. As the **cloud** moved the **light green** slowly **became** dark **green,** the" light **green.** Close to the cliffs a small **fishing** boat, its mizzen **up.** The water **white** in front and behind. **Seagulls** low **over** it and **around** its sides.

"I have led **a futile life,**" Adolphe **said.** "Perhaps **futile** is not the **right** word. But it's days **like** the days **here . . . they** are nothing in themselves. .. **but they** help to **give** stability. I always come away, fmm here, feeling refreshed."

After another **silence** I asked **him** what happened **after** his poem was in that **film.**

"A lot of people came into my **life.** They **said** they wanted to look after my interests, to **promote** me. The phone kept ringing. I was **going** out to lunches, to **dinners.** I put on weight. I read the poem throughout the **country,** in tow" halls, in **churches.** It was taught in schools. I **travelled.** In the South of France I took a villa and stocked it with drink and food. For a while I had **an** enormous amount of friends.

"A few years later I **wasn't** news anymore. **When** the money ran out I did **whatever** I could get. Then **five** years ago the poetry started **again.** It started after a woman I loved was killed **in** a car crash. I kept writing. **All** the time waiting for it to dry up. But it wouldn't **let** go. I sent the poems to the **magazines** who published me. But that was over **20** years ago. There were new editors. They **sent** than back. Sometimes they came back so fast I don't think they read them. They just looked at the name., I was old hat.

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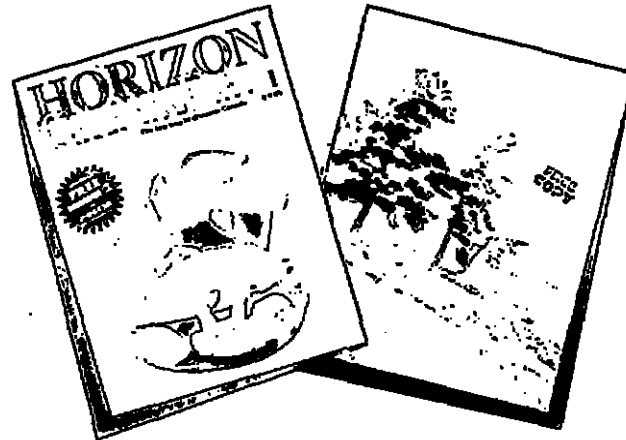
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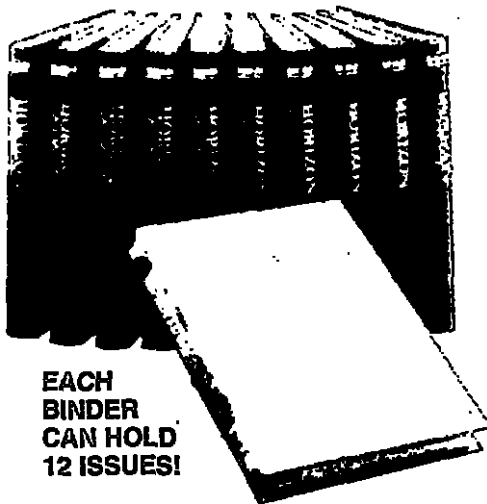
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"For a **while** I did **nothing**. When you **live** alone — there are **days** when you do **nothing**. Then I decided to **smd** them out **under another name**. They were accepted. I've **been doing** that since. I don't **write** as many as I used to. Two or three a year at the most. But **they** get published."

"What name do you use?"

"My secret. **When** I have **enough** for a book I'll **write** an **article** for a national paper and expose it all."

The sun **no** longer **warm**. We put on **our shirts** and **started** to walk back. The estate, from below, looked **like** a fairy-tale **castle**. And what we **were** doing here also **seemed make-believe**. The **students** treated us as **distinguished** writers. They **didn't** **know** about the little articles in the **provincial** papers, the **radio** scripts, the translations. And what, I wondered, **did** Adolphé do for a living?

As if **guessing** my thoughts he **said**, "You know how we're

'The sun no longer warm.
We put on our shirts and **started**
to walk back. The estate, far
below, looked like a fairy-tale castle.
And what we were doing
here also seemed make-believe'

going to end up. Don't you?" He was laughing. "On the street. Like **those** men **with** the newspapers." But he wasn't laughing when he **said** in a flat voice.. "I will probably **end** my days alone in a **rented** mom."

EARLY ON THE third morning the **light** woke me. I **got** up and **went** onto the mad. It was quiet. The smell **from** the wild flowers. And in this **light** all the **colours** looked **freshly** washed. I was singing. Sometimes the mad **went** down to a **narrow** valley with the **earth** high on **either** side. And sometimes the mad was at the very top. And I could see for miles. **Crows**, rooks, **gulls** flew slowly over. And the occasional rabbit in the bracken.

I wasn't the only one out. I saw **students**, in different parts of the moor, doing **the same thing**.

THE MORNING surgeries also **went** well. Perhaps Adolphé was **right** about futile days. I was becoming **impatient** to get back to my wife **and** to a short story I had been **trying** to **write** for **over** a year.

In the afternoon I **went** to see **Eric Symes**. He led me into a large room spotlessly **clean**. HI **ceiling**, a **wall-to-wall** purple carpet, a piano.. the wood **shining**, a comfortable **settee** and **chairs**, white walls — **paintings** on them. It looked like an **art gallery**. I **recognized** a **Soutine**, a **Terry Frost**, a **Peter Lan- yon**, **Bryan Wynter**, **Patrick Heron**. **Alan Lowndes**.

"I bought them, very cheaply, after the war. **Afraid** I'll have to sell some **this** year."

There were large **painted** dishes, with gold on the edges. **propped-up** on the ledge above the **fireplace**.

"People have **been** very kind."

While **Eric Symes** was **showing** me **around** (and asked how I liked it here, and how the **course** was **going**) I could **hear** soft **music**. A pleasant woman's **voice** was slowly **singing**

I'll close my eyes

And make believe it's you . . .

He walked stiffly on shaky legs, **leaning** on **his** cane, **into** the hall. And asked if I wanted to see **upstairs**. **More** paintings above the stairs. **And**, in mother **high** room, mother **piano** with black **and white** photographs propped up of a young **Eric**

Symes. With **Ivor Novello** . . . with **Noel Coward** . . . with others, who looked **vaguely familiar**, in **double-breasted suits** and **cigarettes** in long **cigarette** holders. There were photographs of **him** in the costume of an **Arab sheik**, a **Hussar**, and a **Foreign Legionnaire**.

I'll close my eyes

And make believe it's you . . .

He led me along the **hall** into mother large **and high** white mom. A low bed, neatly made-up, books on **wooden** shelves, **paintings** unframed on the walls. A **window** looked to the moor **and** the sm.

"**Haile Selassie** slept here.,, **Eric Symes** said. "**He** had a daughter at a school in **Penzance**. Before my **time**."

Then he led me **outside**. I could **smell** the **flowers** before we **entered** the **gardens**. And hear the wind. A **narrow** path. On **either** side walls of **green**. The path kept turning. **Blue** **flowers**, purple **and** white foxgloves, birds singling. slabs of **granite** covered in a **green** moss, fallen **flowers** on the **path** as well as on the **trees**. Clusters of **red** **hanging**, **bushes** of them. Some hung down from stalks, most **pushed** up. **Delicate** **white-pink** **flowers**, light-purple **flowers**, **splashes** of yellow on the **green**.

"I won't go through," **Eric Symes** said out of breath. "Follow the path. I'll see **you** when you **come** out."

The **path** was overhung in **places** by shrubs **and** branches of trees. I had to bend to go under. Some **branches** had **brkm** and were on the ground, a light **green** **lichen** on them.

As I continued to walk, **on** both **sides**, all **kinds** of exotic **flowers** and moss **and** **lichen**. The sound of **flying** **insects**. And **fallen** petals, **fallen** **flowers**, **decaying** leaves.

When I came out **Eric Symes** said there were 73 azaleas, 65 different **camellias**, 93 **kinds** of **rhododendrons**. And they came from **Chile**, **New Zealand**, and other far **countries**.

We **went** back the way we came and stopped **in** front of the **sunken** lawn. There **wasn't** a sound. The drop of **bracken** and **gorse**; **the** **wooden** poles **going** down with the **single** cable to the **small** **green** **fields**, the farm, and past the farm **more** **small** **fields** to the cliffs. **Then** sea and horizon. It looked so **calm**.

"There's always some battle **going** on," **Eric Symes** said. "Others **want** to change it. I'm **fighting** to keep it the same. So far I've won. But they don't **give** up. I had to **fight** developers who **want** to **build** Hotels. I had to **fight** the War **Ministry**. I **convenanted** the **land** to the National Trust. But I don't **trust** than. AU it **needs** Is some **small** war **somewhere**, with **British** interests, **and** they **will** have soldiers **and** helicopters all over the **place**. Sometimes **there** is a drought. I have to get water **from** the fire department. And **there** is always **something** going wrong . . . pipes, roofs. **ceilings**, **windows**, pumps. A bit of money comes from **these** courses. And I let it out to the **summer**. But not everyone **likes** it. They like the **scenery**. They can't stand the quiet or **being** cut off."

"What's going to happen **when** you're **no** longer here?"

"I don't know. I don't have **children**. I don't have **family**."

The effort of **walking** and **talking** had exhausted him. I thought I would **leave**.

"I read a lot," he **said**, "**Send** me **one** of your books."

ON THE LAST morning and **afternoon** both groups were **together** in the dining-room. The **students** read out **their** **assignments**. The **others** **commented** on them. Everyone was **saying** nice things. My lot wrote mostly about the different views. **Adolphé's** wrote about railway **journeys** and funerals.

In the **evening** there was a **sense** of occasion. we all washed, dressed in **clean** clothes. (We had caught the sm.) **Adolphé** looked 10 years younger. The **best** cooks were on. **Avocados** with a **French** **dressing**. Roast **chickens**, roast potatoes, a salad. Apple pie with **ice** cream. And bottles of an inexpensive **red** **wine**. Everyone seemed to be **in** a light-hearted mood (telling us how much we had helped than. how **much** they got **out**

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of the course) so I thought of **nothing when** Adolphe came up to me **with his coffee and casually said.**

"When I **walk** out of the room the **best person talking** — that's the one you select."

Minutes later he called for everybody's **attention.**

"**We** have been together for four **days** cut off from all the things we **are** used to. We have got to know each other. And we **have** got on well. **What I'm going to do is something of an experiment.** I have **tried** it before. Sometimes it works. **Sometimes** it doesn't. It depends entirely on us . . . I'm **going to go out** of the room. You select someone. **Then I come back.** And we'll see what **happens.**"

There **was** some excitement. **People were talking.** I listened.

'Some of the girls were visibly emotional. He gave them his address. (Only Mrs. Garrens and Sally asked for mine.) **He** went off with one girl — when they came back they were holding **hands**'

As Adolphe **went out** it **was** Sally whose **voice** I heard.

"Let's **pick** Sally," I **said.**

Another **student** called Adolphe back.

He stood **in** front of **us.**

"**The brain is a generator.**" he **said.** "It **gives off** electric **waves.** We can **pick up these waves** if we **concentrate.** Now close your eyes. And concentrate **on this** one person. Put everything out of your **mind** — just concentrate **on** this one person. Say that person's **name** in your **mind.** Don't think of **anything** else. Just **concentrate . . . Concentration** is what **writing is** all about . . . Put everything out of **your mind.** Just **think** of that one person."

I looked. They **all had their eyes** closed and their heads down as if in prayer. It was **quiet.**

"Someone **is** not concentrating," Adolphe **said, his eyes** shut. I closed my eyes. "That's better," he **said.** Another **long silence.** "**It's getting . . . better.** Yes. Yes. I'm **getting something.** . . it's coming through . . . it's becoming clear . . . it's **Sally.**"

They **opened their eyes.** And looked **surprised, pleased, excited.** Adolphe **was smiling.**

"**Shall we do it again?**"

This time I picked **Jimmy** — a Scottish boy who **was in** Adolphe's **class.** **Jimmy was** sitting beside his **friend Christopher.**

Adolphe went through the **same** routine. And **when** he **finally said** **Jimmy** they were **again** surprised.

The third time he went out I **said** we will have Mrs. **Garrens.**

A student said. "You always do the **picking.** Why don't we **pick** someone?"

"It doesn't **matter who** does the **picking,**" I **said** calmly, and **asked** a student to **call** Adolphe.

After Adolphe **said** Mrs. **Garrens** the **surprise was still** there though several looked puzzled and **some suspicious.**

We had a break to fill up **with wine** or coffee. The **students** were **around** Adolphe. I **finally** got him alone. "They're **onto us.**" I **said.** "They went to **pick** the **next one.**"

"Leave it to me." And **walked** away.

"**As it is** working so well," Adolphe **said** to everyone and **smiled.** "**I'm going to ask** Peter to go out and we if it will **work with him.**"

I went out of the room and **came back.** **Following** Adolphe, I **said.** "**Everyone** concentrate." And I **saw** them close **their**

eyes and their heads **went** down. The room was **silent.** I **welted.** "I'm not **getting anything,**" I **said.** "Some **are** not concentrating." And **welted** for as long **as** I could. **Then,** quietly, **said.** "**Something** is starting." And **welted.** "Yes. **Something** is starting to come through. . . . I can't tell if it is a **man or a woman. . . .**"

I saw Christopher **getting** red in the face.

I quickly **said.** "It's **becoming** clear. It's Christopher."

Again the **mixture** of surprise and puzzlement. **Except** for **Jimmy and Christopher** who looked **sideways at one another.**

NEXT MORNING we were outside. (**Connie** had called a taxi the **night** before to **take** us to **Penzance station** at nine.) Adolphe **was** in his element. He **went around in his** black fedora and **mustard military coat** saying, "**Everything** ends too soon." Some of **the girls** were **visibly emotional.** He gave **them** his address. (Only Mrs. **Garrens** and Sally asked for mine.) He went off with one **girl** — when they **came** back they **were** holding **hands.**

The **taxi** came. We **were getting** in when **Eric Symes** appeared **walking** as **fast as** he could.

"**The phone has been cut** off."

"Why would they do that?" a student **asked.**

"Because I didn't pay **the bill.** I forgot. I forget a lot of things. Could you," he asked Adolphe, "**go to Penzance** post office and put it right?" And **Eric Symes** gave Adolphe the bill and **a cheque.** "It's **kind** of you — without the phone —"

The **taxi** began to move **along** the **drive.** Adolphe **was** smiling and **waving . . . so were the students.** "Goodbye," he **called.** "Goodbye. . . . Goodbye. . . ."

As soon as the **taxi** turned onto the road **Adolphe withdrew** into his corner, hunched over. We drove in **silence** and looked out at the **landscape.**

Some **miles** later we were **passing** a granite outcrop. It went up in horizontal layers. I could hear Adolphe **muttering** to himself. "Things have **to last, to** endure." About a **mile** later we were **driving** with the **road** on top. **The moor on both** sides of the med. And further down, to **the right, the sea and the horizon.** "**Once** we're gone we **will** be forgotten," he **said.** "It **will** be as if we have never lived."

Then **half-turning** to me. "**Why** do we go on?"

Not **waiting** for a reply. "Because I have to go and see about that telephone. You **have** to get back to your wife. And who knows what we **will have** to do tomorrow —"

A few **miles** further, **with** St. Just to the distance, he took out a folded piece of **paper** from his **coat** pocket. "A **sentimental** girl. I gave her my address. She gave me **this,**" He **passed** the paper to me without **turning** his head. It was a **short** poem called "**Volcanoes**" by one of his students. Under the title she **had** written. "**For Adolphe** — who made **things happen.**"

OUTSIDE PENZANCE station the **taxi** stopped. I got out of the **car** with my bag and went **around** to the **window** where he **was** sitting. He looked different from the person on **the moor.** A shabby **elderly man,** older than his **years,** with **bags** under his **eyes.**

"**Now that you know my tricks** the next one you'll be able to **do yourself.**"

"**Yes,**" I **said.**

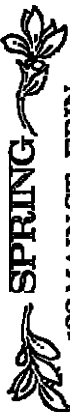
He stared back at me. It became **awkward.** We didn't know how to say goodbye.

"**The most terrible thing** that **can** happen to a **writer is success,**" he **said** in his flat voice. Then he **started to smile, his** face **changed.** "**Expect a cheque** in three or four weeks." He **waved** as the **taxi** drove away.

I walked **into Penzance** station. And the noise. . . of the **trains . . . people moving . . . the clatter** to the small cafe. . . . **Even the advertisements** seemed an **intrusion.** □

BookNews: an advertising feature

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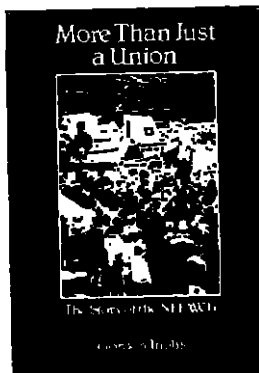
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Our life and times

Reviewing 15 years of literary history calls for solemn reflection. From the pages of *Books In Canada*, some gleanings suitable to the occasion

By Barbara Wade Rose

We were all a little feisty in those days: The first sentence of the first editorial was, "Books in Canada is a radical magazine." A sentence in the second editorial: "Books in Canada is a biased magazine."

We were also a little sensitive: Mordecai Richler's dismissal of *Books in Canada* as not up to the standards of the *New York Review of Books* invoked the reply, "Books In Canada is what it is because we know, as obviously he doesn't. that too many Canadians neither know nor care who he is."



It worked so well the last time: A 1972 review of Robertson Davies's *The Manticore* was titled "The Merlin of Massey College" — the same title used to head an interview with Master Davies the year before.

Neat trick: Freelance writer Doug Fetherling wrote a laudatory assessment of Robert Fulford's writing style in a 1974 issue, comparing him to Samuel Johnson and H.L. Mencken in the same paragraph.

Neater still: Frequent *Saturday Night* contributor Doug Fetherling explained to an irate letter-writer in a subsequent issue why he felt qualified to write a laudatory assessment of Robert Fulford's writing style.

Thanks, that's all we ever wanted to know: A lengthy 1973 review by Maritimes writer Harry Bruce of *I Chose Canada* by former Newfoundland premier Joey Smallwood was encapsulated in the title "More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About Joey."

Top marksmanship: George Woodcock's reply to a 1974 letter to the editor by Michael Sutton begins: "Mr.

The copy editor just ordered in a case of Aspirin: During the first year of *Books In Canada* Toronto poet by Nichol reviewed bii bissett's *Nobody Owns th Earth* with a poem. With lines like "print fixes a formality/which comes dangerously close to/DEFINITIVE statement what's really/fun is to sit around on a night and rap/about theory or someone else's poems [sic]/& where hes trying to arrive at." it avoided both negative comment and punctuation.

You can lead them to CanLit but you can't make them drink: Two parallel 1972 reviews of *Read Canadian* (edited by Robert Fulford, Dave Godfrey, and Abraham Rotstein) began: "Here is a book that is at least stimulating in a very basic way" (William Kilbourn) and "Although this book about Canadian books is first of all a good idea, it makes depressing reading" (Fraser Sutherland).

Perhaps a drink or two wouldn't be such a bad idea: An advertisement by

Pendragon House in the October, 1973, issue proudly announced "ALL THE BOOKS OF CANADA — On one purchase order!"

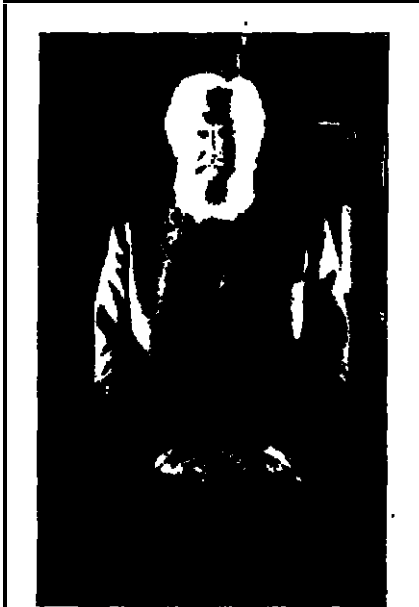


Who says we're too stuffy? "Cultural Strip-off," a review of *Great Canadian Comic Books* given front-page coverage in the summer of 1971, was accompanied by an illustration of a short-skirted damsel in distress, splay-legged before the onrushing Johnny Canuck.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN REEVES

Sutton's letter is like a salvo from an antiquated fowling piece, broad, inaccurate, and hitting home only by luck."

Nobody reads this section anyway: In the midst of the March, 1976, contributors information one entry read: "Jim Christy's one-man expedition to the Upper Amazon was abruptly terminated by hostile natives; he now is planning a longitudinal transverse of the Americas from Alaska to the Horn on a motorcycle."



What? The Merlin of Massey College? Photographer John Reeves described Robertson Davies in 1980 as "Like Faulkner, a 'good ok Southern boy' " beneath his portrait of the massa glowering in his Massey College study.

We're in the arts, not the sciences, and certainly not in mathematics: There was no volume five, number three in 1576. There were, however, two number ones — issued three months apart.

Who says we're too stuffy (part ID? A 1976 centre-page review of *Tuktoyaktuk 2-3*, by Herbert T. Schwartz, featured a line-drawing from the book that was an explicit rendering of. . . well, two Inuit in a canoe doing what Piim Berton once said being Canadian was all about. subsequent issues printed angry letters from irate librarians and one reader who called the drawing "pornographic pulke."

Tbb man does. that's who: A sad reader complained in a letter more than a year later that "With the exception of



Pin-up, profile subject and pundit: Winner of the Books in Canada Most Haunting Presence by a Canadian Author Award is Matt Cohen, the subject of three cover stories, interviews, innumerable reviews and the author of a few profiles himself, including articles about Margaret Laurence and Ann Hébert.

Hyde and seek: Winner of the Least Haunting Presence by a Canadian Author Award is thriller-writer Anthony Hyde, recipient of the largest book advance in Canadian publishing history (\$1 million from Penguin for *The Red Fox*) and (aside from a review of his book) the merest ghost of a subject in these pages.

one semi-erotic centre-page Eskimo drawing, this has turned out to be a duller, more over-written magazine than I had at first thought."

Number V on the best-seller list: An April, 1980, review of Sylvia Fraser's *The Emperor's Virgin* (with the characteristically saucy title, "Where have all deflowerers gone?") got into the spirit of things and listed the usual bibliographical information as: CCC-LXXXIV pages, \$XIV.XCV cloth (ISBN OLMXX MMMCLXXV 0). It prompted a less-than-appreciative letter from the author herself, who called the

review "a piece of mockery."

Owen's Dog. by Leon Rooke: Reviewer I.M. Owen casually mentions Leon Rooke in a review of John Metcalf's *Making It: Contemporary Canadian Stories* in January, 1983: "There's no one author I'd want to see excluded (except maybe Rooke — because I can't stand his style, not because he's American-born)." Author Leon Rooke casually mentions I.M. Owen, two months later: "Frankly, I abominate the creep's writing, and, moreover, can't stand the man himself. My hatred extends to his entire family, to the very

THE 1975 GEEGIES	
ODDS	
2-1	[Name]
5-2	[Name]
3-1	[Name]
7-2	[Name]
4-1	[Name]
9-2	[Name]
5-1	[Name]
11-2	[Name]

We'll take Moore as the long shot: The cover of the April, 1976, issue portrayed the 1975 Governor General's Awards (called the "Gee-Gees") as a racing form. Morley Callaghan's *A Fine and Private Place* was given 7-2 odds end-the prediction: "same old stride but the sentimental favourite; 24 years out of the money." Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* was listed at 3-1, and Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands*, at 5-1, was tersely dismissed as "Sired by stud horse but not up to form of '69 winner." The eventual winner — Brian Moore for *The Great Victorian Collection* — was listed at the bottom of the chart as a long shot.

Writers and their animals



Adele Wiseman



Timothy Findley



David McFadden

street on which he resides, and even to his goddamn dogs that once were so innocent and merry. I loathe him to his goddamn Socks..”

Glossary, meaning to **gloss** over: David Weinberger helpfully included a reviewer's glossary in the October, 1980, issue. It explained, among other terms, the real meaning of *Learned*: “Know-it-all”; *Deft Tone*: “Not much happens”; and *Bestseller*: “I could have written this book.”

Was it a dark year for the book industry, or what? For some dimly remembered aesthetic reason, every one of the 11 covers from the summer of 1981 to 1982 was black,



Book of the Moose Club selection: Al Purdy's account of his itinerant poetry-reading in a summer, 1980, issue included the line, “After reading eight times in three days to audiences near Sudbury, Ont., a large moose appeared at the window whenever I spoke.” Subsequent requests were received to book the moose for speaking tours.

He and the moose could exchange stories: W.P. Kinsella's complaint about accommodations for touring authors in the February, 1984, issue: “I have been frozen repeatedly, broiled on occasion, and harassed regularly by gargantuan pets and villainous children. I have taken slipcovers off furniture to use as blankets. I have been housed in a room with an unclosable door, and had to roll the bed against the door to keep a monstrous dog in the hall. Actually, the dog probably had good reason to harass me, for, judging from the amount of dog hair on the blanket, I was sleeping in his bedroom. Believe me. I earn my reading fees.”

Go to the class of the head: A toast to all the punning headlines over the last 15 years, from a review of *Kelpie's Burn* entitled “Ouija loud and clear,” a review of *Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel* called “The kitsch is in but not, the sync,” the apt “Kvetcher in the Rye” for a review of Peter C. Newman's *The Bronfman Dynasty*, and many more. Cheers! □

Then and now

Three editors of *Books in Canada*, past and present, survey the issues that marked their time in office

Vai Ciery (1971-1973):

FOR ME THE essence of excitement invariably lies in the event. And so, despite my very active involvement in the conception and infancy of *Books in Canada*, I find myself little stilled by its 15th birthday. I'll admit just to a frisson of pleasure when I find each new issue in my mail box, a sense of satisfaction that the magazine is still fulfilling its primary purpose as a bridge between writers and readers of books in Canada.

If I confess that my pleasure rarely persists through the reading of each issue, I must stress that this lapse is due far less often to disagreement with my editorial successors than to realization that they as much as I ever was are the victims of a" indifferent Canadian publishing industry.

No matter that they have established regularity of publication, greatly increased circulation and extended admirably the range of books reviewed; advertising support from publishers, most lamentably so from Canadian-owned houses, remains as paltry and sporadic as ever.

While the founding of *Books in Canada* was not based on a" assumption that the enterprise would ever return a normal profit, neither was it bawd on the expectation that it would continue to be as largely dependent on public support as it has been since its birth.

The need for a Canadian consumer magazine that both reviewed and advertised books, primarily Canadian books, emerged from a" extensive study of book promotion that I undertook for the Canadian Book Publishers' Council in 1970. Responses suggested that to a large extent the book trade and readers in Canada were motivated by magazines of that kind from the United States.

Among the recommendations in my report "Promotion and Response" was the need to set up such a magazine. Unlike my other suggestions it did not call for direct action by publishers, although it did imply that their later support would be vital. So, a few months later, I and five partners took the initiative of launching it.

Our first two major decisions, if they accelerated the publication of *Books in Canada*, also bequeathed it some of its subsequent problems. First, to bypass the difficulties of establishing and sustaining newsstand sales, we chose the option of distributing the magazine free to customers in book stores, while charging individuals and institutions a modest subscription fee for regular mailed delivery. Second, to avoid the delay, frustration, and possible defeat of trying to raise normal capital for the project, we decided to risk operating on a shoestring.

Each of the partners invested \$55, the Ontario Arts Council contributed some modest seed money: with these funds we managed to publish a" introductory Issue. A veneer of advertising, largely from publishers who were not Canadian-owned, a" encouraging influx of subscriptions, allowed us to publish sufficient issues to qualify for federal and further provincial grants. In the early days of the magazine the grants were not sufficient to pay staff and contributors more than a pittance. We were largely donating our support to a publishing industry that rarely bothered to return the favour. Nor does it even now.

While there was a logistical reason for distributing the magazine free through book stores, there was a far more important rationale that is as valid now as it was then: namely, that the prime market for books is among those identifiable as readers of books, the people who patronize book stores.

Admittedly, some readers of books do listen to radio and watch TV; and again, radio and TV promotion of certain widely popular books can transform listeners and viewers temporarily into book buyers. Government support of authors' tours "my do wonders for literary egos, but as a means of promoting the sales of most Canadian books the cost of radio and TV interviews is ludicrously excessive. Moreover, fanciers of elaborate book-promotion stunts have only to observe the protracted vicissitudes of McClelland & Stewart to understand that readers of celebrity and gossip columns are not

necessarily buyers of books either. The fact remains undeniable that only a publication such as this is, which reviews and advertises a representative range of popular and special-interest books, can encourage a reliable book-buying public.

The decision, coinciding with this anniversary issue, to sell *Books in Canada* on newsstands as well as in book stores, does not strike me as crucially important, other than in impressing a more conservative government in Ottawa that the magazine is struggling to help itself. Newsstand sales and subscriptions certainly help consumer magazines to survive, but only growth in advertising sales helps them to thrive and improve.

There is little indication that publishers, and in particular Canadian-owned houses, any longer have the will to seriously help themselves; it has been eroded by more than a decade of excessive government support. Until they realize the vital importance of a magazine such as *Books in Canada* and use it, *Book in Canada* must remain becalmed, and victimized.

Much as I enjoyed the adventure of launching it, I do not envy those who chart its course at present.

Douglas Marshall (1973-1980):

A SHORT BUT graceful entry in Hurlig's *Canadian Encyclopedia* describes *Books in Canada* as "a trade journal of Canadian book publishing." Trade journal? My teeth began to grind when I saw those words. They brought bitter memories of frustrations past flooding back into my mind. Don't misunderstand me. The seven or so joyous years that I directed the editorial fortunes of this magazine yielded me rewards aplenty. But they were also attended by what I see as two fundamental failures on my part. And here was fresh evidence of one of them.

More galling still, the encyclopedia entry is signed by no less a literary light than the distinguished author and critic George Woodcock. *Et tu, George?* As MC of our earliest supporters and a" unstinting contributor over the years, I would have hoped better from you. True, you go on to say that *Book in*

Canada "publishes extensive reviews of current books, together with interviews with and profiles of authors, and special columns on paperbacks, children's books and other topics." But the damage had already been done.

Trade journal, indeed! By definition, trade journals reflect the interests of the industry they serve and are addressed primarily to the persons who work in that industry. Quill and Quire is a trade journal of Canadian book publishing. And its importance to the trade can be measured by the fact that the entry on Quill and Quire in The Canadian Encyclopedia Is signed by that magazine's former editor and current publisher.

Books in Canada, in sharp contrast, was founded as a consumer magazine. It reflects the interests of the general reader, the persons who actually buy books (or at least borrow them). Persons v/ho write books, who agent them and edit them and publish them and promote them and retail them, may all be stimulated one way or another by Books in Canada. But they are not its primary audience.

Moreover, it is an independent consumer magazine. Ownership continues to be held by a small group of individuals who operate the publication on a non-profit basis. In theory a business so dependent on advertising revenue and government grants is vulnerable to in-dit pressure fmm both the private and the public sectors. In practice, however, such pressure runs counter to democratic convention and is easily resisted on the rare occasions it is hinted at.

I explained all this many times during my tenure as editor. I explained it in conversations and letters, in speeches and editorials and applications for grants. But no matter bow often the points were made, otherwise intelligent and well-informed persons continued to see the magazine as either an organ of the publishing industry or an instrument of government cultural policy.

Will Books in Canada ever resolve this identity crisis? Will Canada?

My other great failure concerned the number of libel suits served on us. The number was zero. I could not help feeling then, and fed even more strongly now, that such a dearth of litigation was embarrassing for any sdf-respecting national review of books. We must have been doing something wrong.

Admittedly, we laboured under the handicap of being essentially unsuable. For one thing, almost every word that appears in the magazine could be defended on the grounds of fair comment. For another, there was manifestly no money to be had in damages from our hand-to-mouth operation. The most

any successful plaintiff could expect was to put us out of business and wind up looking like a bully. But a few libel notices' at least we should have had, along with the odd nuisance suit. It would have helped our reputation no end.

The closest we came in my day was a cover story in the January, 1980, issue by Ottawa journalist Gerard McNeil. The article brought to tight facts hidden from the public in the case of the libel action brought against Toronto novelist Ian Adams by one Leslie James Bennett, former member of the RCMP Security Service. Adams's book, S, Portrait of a Spy, had been published by Gage three years before., had sold 15,000 copies in 40 days, and had then been consigned by Gage to cold storage with the launching of Bennett's suit. McNeil's lucid, well-documented piece showed how the novel had virtually been suppressed, and asked pointed questions about the survival of free speech in Canada.

The article eventually came to the attention of a senior editor at the Toronto Star, who showed it to the newspaper's libel lawyers. Their opinion, duly relayed to me by the friendly Star editor, was that our cover story was dangerous and probably actionable. We braced ourselves for our professional duty and waited with pride for some sort of attack fmm either Bennett or the RCMP. Sadly, our mettle was never tested.

Ah, well, Books in Canada was probably never bound for glow. The magazine's true role in the peacable, literary kingdom is merely to ruffle a few feathers when they need to be ruffled. And we did that often enough to satisfy my honour and the somewhat limited appetites for inconoclasm evinced by my co-owners. I cite three examples from the dozens I could pick:

□ A tough-minded review essay by Paul Stuewe on cultural nationalism that made a devastating case against the "Canadian" editions of Time and Reader's Digest. It was written long before Bill C-58 was introduced, at a point when most other national magazines had given up the fight and climbed into bed with Time under the blanket of the Magazine Association of Canada. It was illustrated, by the way, with a wicked caricature of Henry R. Luce by the late David Annesley.

□ A review of Peter C. Newman's The Canadian Establishment: The Great Dynasties by sociologist John Porter



(The Vertical Mosaic) that stripped the book of its pretensions and revealed its anecdotal nature. The lack of an organizing framework. Porter predicted. "will prevent Mr. Newman being considered as a serious analyst of the Canadian power structure."

□ An essay by Tom Hedley that ridiculed, frame by frame, the extraordinary thesis projected by Pierre Berton in his book Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization of our National Image. What Berton had fatuously failed to grasp, Hedley insisted, is that Hollywood is a fantasy factory cranking out products that are authentic to genres, not to historical truth. A few years later Hedley added weight to his argument by becoming a scriptwriter, going to Hollywood, and creating genre fantasies (Flashdance) of his own.

And then there was the feature report, again by Stuewe, that even ruffled my complacent feathers. We had sent him down into Ontario's Huron County on a \$49.50 expense account to find out why the school board there kept banning books. We expected a routine tub-thumper about reactionary rednecks and valiant civil libertarians. What we got was an analysis, written with cold-eyed objectivity, that told us who the book-banners were, why they thought the way they did, and how they were able to persuade well-meaning citizens to go along with their ideas.

Stuewe's report outraged many authors. Certain anti-censorship forces accused Books in Canada of treason. They demanded and got equal space to rebut his report. But in the end reasonable persons saw that Stuewe had achieved a significant breakthrough in the great censorship debate.. He had penetrated the rhetorical sound and fury to show us what made the enemy tick.

Such journalism is what consumer magazines are all about.

Michael Smith (1981-):

THOUGH MY NAME has appeared on the masthead for only half of Books in Canada's 15 years (I signed on as associate editor in January, 1979), sometimes I fed as if I had been present at the creation. Not that I suffered any of the headaches that must have attended the magazine's bii — in fact, I didn't know any of the people involved until much later. But at least I was in the neighbourhood.

At the time the magazine was founded, in the spring of 1971, I was working for the Globe and Mail, assigned to report on the plight of Canada's publishers. The cultural nationalism that had begun in the late 1960s was at its peak. (Canadian content

in television and the ownership of Canadian periodicals were two other current issues.) As things turned out, many of the problems the publishers faced then continue to plague them now.

I first heard plans for a national book review at a meeting in Ottawa between then secretary of state Gérard Pelletier and the publishers, who were desperately seeking a solution to domination of the trade by U.S.-owned firms. Val Clery, soon to become the magazine's first editor, had prepared a brief that revealed that Canadian waders, when they bought books, were motivated mainly by Time magazine, which (as one might expect) paid most of its attention to U.S. best-sellers. Clery and the publishers proposed a Canadian book review magazine to counter both Time's unwelcome influence and the neglect of Canadian books by Canada's own periodicals.

I next encountered the fledgling magazine when its founders visited the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing, which had begun its own investigation into U.S. domination of the trade. Then in May, 1971, when Books in Canada's inaugural issue appeared, I interviewed Clery and a couple of publishers and wrote a short article about it for the Globe.

It didn't seem an auspicious start. My report survived only the first edition of the paper — the one that was shipped out to the hinterland — before it was yanked by Clark Davey, the managing editor, on grounds that I was insanely giving free publicity to a potential competitor to the Globe's book pages. And some of the publishers immediately complained that the new magazine's advertising rates were too high.

There's no question, as so much government attention attests, that many of Canada's publishers were in trouble. Cultural nationalists had been outraged by the sales of Ryerson Press (publisher of Alice Munro and Al Purdy, among others) and the textbook division of W.J. Gage Ltd. to U.S.-owned firms. Then in April, amid rumours of yet another sell-out, the Ontario government had dramatically provided a loan of close to \$1-million to help save McClelland & Stewart.

Plus ça change.

That was 15 years ago. Yet not many weeks ago some cultural nationalists were again outraged when another publishing house, Prentice-Hall (not a Canadian publishing house, but a U.S.-owned subsidiary), was acquired by a U.S. conglomerate. Under the looming shadow of free trade with the United States, another communications minister (another communications minister from culturally-conscious

Quebec — though this one a Conservative) has been pondering methods to ensure the survival of the publishing trade. And only a few months ago McClelland & Stewart, still in trouble despite continuing provincial aid, finally was sold to a private investor.

In the genteel world of Canadian publishing, some values never seem to change. Fifteen years ago, Matt Cohen, who had published novels with McClelland & Stewart and House of Anansi, was considered one of the important emerging writers of what was to become the Atwood generation. Several months ago, in a promotion of Canadian writers under the age of 43, Cohen was named one of the 10 best fiction writers of the post-Atwood generation. Some generation. Cohen is 43. Margaret Atwood, one of the judges for the promotion, is 46.

But things are different today. If the climate seems much the same, the numbers have increased. In 1971 McClelland & Stewart could justly claim to be "the Canadian publishers" — there was hardly any competition. Today such other Canadian-owned houses as Macmillan, Stoddart, and Lester & Orpen Dennys rival McClelland & Stewart with dozens of Canadian titles of their own. Perhaps the small, nationalistic, "literary" houses have declined, in stridency if not in quantity, but their populist enthusiasm has been taken up by the regional publishers, particularly in the Prairies.

In addition, though foreign-owned publishers still claim a large part of the Canadian market, several are no longer satisfied simply to import titles from their parent firms. With such writers as Timothy Findley, Peter Newman, and Audrey Thomas publishing under its imprint, Penguin Canada, for instance, now competes directly with the domestic houses. Similarly, the U.S.-owned Random House recently hired Ed Carson, formerly publisher at Stoddart, specifically to develop a new line of Canadian books.

For cultural nationalists, the justice of some of this activity remains a matter for debate. Nevertheless, its most important single effect has been a wide variety of new books by and about Canadians. Fifteen years ago, when Books in Canada was founded, there was room in a single issue to review all the books that had been published in the previous month (even mom for playful attention to government publications on sexual hygiene). Not any more. Today, an average issue of the magazine carries reviews of as many as 50 Canadian books — close to 500 a year. But even with the best of intentions, we can't begin to review them all. □

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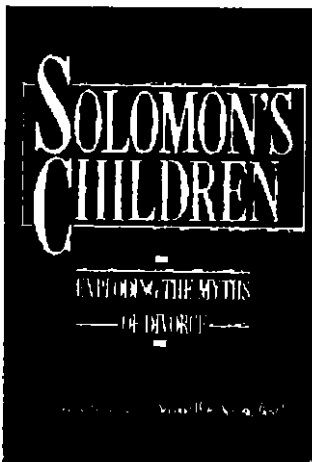
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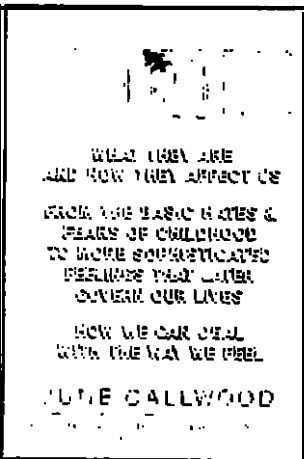
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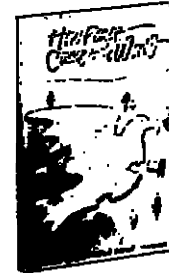
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As for them and their houses

What compels a poet to hide among a beautiful editor's underthings? It's part of one man's adventures in the jungle of Canadian publishing

By Al Purdy

WE HAVE PRAYED to them, cursed them, implored them, damned them, and — very rarely, and were probably lying — have raid we loved them. And sometimes in deep despair we have said something to this effect: "I wonder if they are human!" But necessary, yes, the middle man between writer and reader, and extracting at least a pound of flesh from both.

I was my own first publisher in Vancouver in 1944. I was still a member of the RCAF, my rank less than that of a civilian, contributing poems to U.S. magazines with titles like *The Lyric West* and *Driftwind* (the latter with wallpaper covers) and homebrew magazines like the *Canadian Forum* and *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, hob-nobbing with the Vancouver Poetry Society and itching to get into print. My book was called *The Enchanted Echo*, 64 pages of less-than-mediocre drivel, with mouldy grey or decayed green card covers. It cost me \$200 at Clarke & Stuart publishers on

Seymour Street to have 500 copies printed, although only a hundred or so were inflicted on the public. But I was ecstatic, entirely unaware of my literary incompetence.

A few years later, when the book's price had risen somewhat at Canadiana dealers by reason of less shameful later publications, I went back to Clarke & Stuart. I intended to buy up all remaining copies, sell them for exorbitant prices, and live out my life on the proceeds: raising rutabagas and chickpeas on some offshore island with a mild climate and dancing girls. Alas, my treacherous printers had needed shelf space, and thrown them all into the garbage a few days earlier.

THERE WAS A musty theological atmosphere in Lorne Pierce's office at Ryerson Press, Toronto, when I met him in the 1950s. Not surprisingly, for the commercial publisher's alter ego was "The United Church Publishing House." Pierce had written to me in Vancouver in 1954, asking for poems. Two were included in a Pierce-Carman-Rhodenizer an-

thology; then a small chapbook, *Pressed on Sand*, appeared in 1955. That year also my verse play, *A Gathering of Days*, was produced by the CBC. And this dry rustling little man, dressed all in black with pince-nez dangling, who talked like an ill-at-ease missionary to an even more uncomfortable heathen — this man was my benefactor.

My next book was another small chapbook, *Emu. Remember.* with the University of New Brunswick (Fred Cogswell was instrumental in this, but I didn't meet him until a few years later), and then back to Ryerson in 1959 for a larger chapbook, *The Crafte So Longe to Lerne* (title courtesy of Chaucer). John Colombo was an editor at Ryerson then, and used to treat me to hamburgers at Queen Street restaurants. I was nearly always broke at the time and very grateful.

By the time that second Ryerson book was published, we had begun to build a house on Roblin Lake near Ameliasburgh, Ont. My wife and I then went to Montreal to get jobs and money with which to finish it. Milton Acorn, a Maritimes poet then living in Montreal, came with me in 1960 when I returned to Roblin Lake. Milton was an ex-carpenter, and helped me with the installation of permanent rafters in the living room, while we drank homemade wild grape wine. These rafters were somewhat askew, and I had to re-install them later, with the help of a spirit level instead of alcohol.

Acorn had also published his first book himself. When he had another manuscript ready, he was too shy to send it to a publisher, so I bundled it together myself, and sent it along with a covering letter to Ryerson Press. But Lorne Pierce didn't believe there was any such person as Milton Acorn (who, admittedly is a rather improbable specimen) — he thought Acorn was a pseudonym of mine, and that I was trying to sneak another manuscript past his pince-nezed eagle eyes. He was much annoyed. Milton was then required to mail a photograph of himself to Pierce as

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proof of his corporeal existence. Milton did so, but intimated that Purdy was a pseudonym of Milton Acorn. This confused Pierce even more. But Acorn's book (*The Brain's the Target*) was finally published in 1960.

My *The Blur in Between* was accepted by Jay Macpherson in 1960, but not actually published until three years later. I" the meantime, *Poems for All the Annettes* appeared with Contact Press in 1962. It was the first book I felt comfortable with in this latest incarnation of myself (for I had been changing both personally and in my writing). Louis Dudek and Peter Miller were responsible for its appearance. I waited a year to see if the reviews were good (they were), the" submitted a new manuscript to McClelland & Stewart. Three years later *The Cariboo Horses* received the Governor General's Award.

I borrowed my brother-in-law's good suit for the awards ceremony in Ottawa. It didn't fit very well, and my shoes were too tight (I run around barefoot at Roblin Lake). Governor General Vanier spent some time explaining to me what my poems were about. I demurred tactfully, but appreciated his help. (Apparently he had read them, which was astonishing.)

At the dinner for awards winners and Canada Council notables, Jack McClelland, in his shy unassuming manner, intimated that the-awards were-not sufficiently publicized. A Canada Council officer with a French name asked me if I agreed with Jack McC. I said yes. He then told me they would make sure I "ever received another award. And I never have.

THE CENTRE of Canadian publishing is Toronto, as everyone except Vancouverites probably knows, and it takes unusual qualities of character and drive for a publisher to succeed in one of the smaller cities. Like Edmonton, for instance, and like Mel Hurtig. A strong Canadian nationalist, Hurtig ran a book store in the Alberta capital for several years, then decided to take on the giants of eastern publishing. That was I" the mid-1960s, when Clarke Irwin, Oxford, Ryerson, McClelland & Stewart, and a few others now defunct were the dominating firms.

I met Hurtig at a literary party in Edmonton in 1967. At that time I was nattering o" about U.S. takeovers and economic nationalism in Canada. A U.S. subsidiary auto plant in Canada had been forbidden to sell trucks by its parent company — either to China or Cuba, I can't remember which — and this was just the latest in a long series of U.S. put-downs of rebellion on the periphery of empire. I was sputtering in-

dignant, and could afford to be, since I was completely unimportant, with no responsibility for dealing with the American government in crunch situations.

Mel Hurtig agreed with a few of my milder fulminations, to my somewhat surprise. I proposed a book, a new anthology, in which Canadian writers would outline their frank opinions of the United States in all its aspects, with no punches pulled. But sadly, I said, no one would publish such a book. "I would," Hurtig said.

I looked at him the" for perhaps the first time. I had almost forgotten he was a publisher — although not quite. Small, dark complexioned, rather quiet, I thought then; but have since changed my mind. (Oil executives quail and legislators quake under the flail of Hurtig logic and invective.)

We worked it out together, the proposed book. Ideas — each of us would come up with one i" turn, the" another and another. Excitement grew, and adrenalin flooded the outports. "What would you call it?" Mel said. "*The New Romans*," I said, and I visualized them right in front of me, smoking cigars and farting. The new Romans, the imitation ones, who could nevertheless have taught their predecessors a great deal. Thinking of that title, happily I grew almost sober.

After the book came out in 1968, Mel sent me on a promotion tour across the country. He phoned me after one television interview, urging that a strong line be take" o" behalf of the book. I think he wanted me to shake my fist in the interviewer's face. And in New York o" William Buckley's television show, with Dennis Lee and Larry Zolf, I froze completely and couldn't say a word. Dennis was a little better, but Zolf did most of the talking and acquitted himself like the pro he was. Even the planted trained seals in Buckley's audience applauded.

On another TV show next day, I resolved to stop being a mild-mannered and sweet-tempered Canadian. I jumped right i" with both feet, claimed that both the U.S. and Soviet Union were the greatest dangers to peace in the world, both had halitosis to the rest of the world, and economic nationalism was the U.S. agency of foreign conquest. I challenged William Shatner, a Canadian actor also on the show, to refute my views (and "either of us asked for the other's autograph).

Later that afternoon I took a cassette tape to a high-rise apartment where a lady interviewer awaited. After five minutes of talk, she claimed I had insulted her country, placed her hand over her heart, and ejected me. I left without protest, but back on the street indigna-

tion was born in my breast: that damn cassette tape was mine and Linda whatever-her-name-was had kept it.

I went back to the high-rise, took an elevator to the top floor, walked up another flight to the grey-painted lobby, knocked on a metal-covered door, and waited. A disembodied voice spoke beyond the door. I explained my mission; she said, "Walt just a minute." I waited 10. The disembodied voice spoke again, handing me back the tape through a crack in the door and not letting me see her face. She had erased all my immortal words, I found out later. That may have been just as well: as a TV and radio performer I would starve to death.

But *The New Romans* did fairly well. It sold some 25,000 copies in Canada, in the U.S. maybe three and a half. My wife and I travelled to Greece and Turkey on the proceeds. I remember sitting in an Athens bistro writing a poem and drinking Botry's brandy and thinking: "The U.S. of A. is paying for this drink." And I was happy.

IN 1970 I came back from Europe with the idea for another book of poems, new and old love poems. Irving Layton had edited a similar book a couple of years before. *Love Where the Nights An*

Long, with Harold Town drawings. That book was a compendium of other people's work, which sold like crazy; mine would contain only Purdy. Also, I hoped, Harold Town's drawings. And its resulting burgeoning sales would keep me in beer for a week or two.

I got in touch with Jack McClelland and broached the idea. His reply indicated that Harold Town might be interested, so I sent them the manuscript. Shortly after which three, sophisticates from the big city descended on my simple country abode: Jack McC., Harold Town, and the beautiful editor, Anna Szigethy (now Porter).

First there was a long pause, during which we tried to read each other's minds. Then Jack McC. said, "Your poems are hard-boiled. We had expected them to be romantic."

Now my wife has the same complaint about me, but I hadn't expected a male publisher to feel that way. "Unromantic?" I said. (And Lawrence of Arabia galloped his pure white Barbary steed through my left ventricle, dismounting in a cloud of golden sand. Fifty mounted horsemen in the Red Desert draw swords and swear fealty to their peerless leader.) "Romantic?" I said.

"No, hard-boiled," Jack McC. said. Harold Town nodded agreement.

"You're just not romantic," he said with a kind look, and drew his cloak closer around him.

It took me weeks to regain composure after this bitter pill. In the meantime I worked on the book that had been proposed instead of my love poems collection (which actually did get published, and was called *Love in a Burning Building*). This new book was to be an anthology of "Best poems in Canada," edited by me, and accompanied by Harold Town's drawings.

Time passed. I worked on the poem-selection and a long academic intro. Then it came to my cars, via the electronic wild grape vine, that the "best poems" anthology was being delayed. Something had gone badly wrong. I suspected the reason for this, but couldn't be sure. Therefore I made the long trip from my simple country abode to request an audience with Jack McC. and ask him what was what or not.

Yes, he told me gravely, something unforeseen had happened: there was a small objection from Harold Town about the contract terms. Which bewildered me: there was no contract. I had taken it for granted there would be a 50:50 split between Town and myself. I was wrong. Town wanted 75 per cent of whatever royalties accrued from the

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book. Jack McC. supported him in this demand, saying that Tow" did most of the work anyway.

My feelings were hurt. Jack McC. was my publisher as well as Town's, even if Town and McClelland were close friends, as they were. I felt hard done by, even betrayed. And this despite the hard knowledge that no poetry anthology sells worth a damn anyway: a rat and a mouse would starve on the proceeds. Well, Town had better have some other sources of income. Since his 75-per-cent demand was made several months after the book's inception — and no prior agreement had been reached regarding royalties — I refused.

The Town/Purdy book aborted. Somebody gave me the name of a lawyer, one possessing some literary knowledge. He took on this rather trivial case, apparently because he was familiar with my books. My lawyer had lunch with Jack McClelland a couple of times. The figure named to reimburse me for my arduous labours was \$500. I refused it and asked for a thousand. Then I got in touch with Michael Macklem at Oberon Press to arrange for publication of any future books I might write.

However, after another lunch with my legal battalions, Jack McC. settled. And he did so with some grace — at least his face showed no resentment or embarrassment at our next meeting. But I am embarrassed, because I can't remember my lawyer's name. He didn't charge me for his services. I had never heard of such a thing before in all recorded human history, a lawyer who didn't bill his client. He probably doesn't remember my name either.

There was one aftermath of the affair: Harold Tow" portraits of poets, originally slated for the non-published anthology, are still floating around in the shape of posters. They are, I think, quite striking, one of Irving Layton, in which he looks exactly like the former Israeli prime minister; Golda Meir, I admire especially.

In 1969 I had edited Milton Acorn's selected poems, *I've Tasted My Blood*, and the anthology *Fifteen Winds* for Ryerson Press. By that time Lorne Pierce had been succeeded as managing editor by the Rev. John Webster Grant. For more than a year I had been gathering poems from writers under age 30, to be published as *Storm Warning* by Ryerson, but in 1970 Ryerson sold out to McGraw-Hill, an American branch-plant publisher. No contract had been signed with Ryerson for *Storm Warning*.

After the sale to McGraw-Hill, I visited the Ryerson offices for discussions about the book. I felt confused about the change of ownership. There

would have been no objection on my part to publishing a book with McGraw-Hill or any other American publisher in the United States itself: but with a U.S. publisher in Canada, that was a different kettle of linotype. Nevertheless, I signed a Ryerson contract after some urging by the editorial staff.

Then I started to worry about it, chewing that contract in my mind like a dog with a bone. After a few days of cogitation, it seemed to me that publishing with McGraw-Hill was just another item in the long record of Canadian sell-outs to the U.S. "But you signed a contract; the legal staff in my head told me sternly. I know. I know, but it's not right to go with a U.S. publisher, I rebutted. It's not right to break a contract either, and you could go to prison for it. That last scarcely veiled threat decided me: I would not publish with McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

After I went to see Jack McClelland and told him the story, things seemed to move at a faster pace. The light of battle gleamed in his eyes. Decisions were made swiftly; people rushed in and out of his office. It was out of my hands by then, with Jack stage-managing the whole affair.

At the Toronto *Star* I talked to Peter Newman, then editor-in-chief, and briefly to a *Star* reporter. When the story appeared that Purdy refused to publish with an American branch-plant, command decisions were called for.

Jack McC. decided that I should go underground, disappear for the rest of the day. I was infected by all this cloak-and-dagger stuff; minions of McGraw-Hill or rival publishers might be on my trail. I felt self-important and amused at the same time.

I was spirited away, like ZOO pounds of thistledown, to (the beautiful editor) Anna Szigethy's apartment. She remained on duty at McStew. My instructions were to avoid being seen at windows, and not to answer the door in case unfriendly eyes had noticed my entrance.

In the bedroom I drifted into uneasy sleep, then awoke to hear noises I couldn't identify, which seemed to be in the apartment itself. Take no chances, I thought, and dived into the bedroom closet, closing the door behind me, and remained there in the darkness quivering nervously. Somebody was definitely in the apartment, and I wondered who — reporters, McGraw-Hill lawyers with writs of *habeas corpus*, bailiffs with leg-irons and handcuffs? But they never found me — crouched among Anna Szigethy's underthings.

It was a teapot tempest, of course. I think McGraw-Hill had no intention of taking me to court over breaking my Ryerson contract. The publicity would

have been bad for them. The incident died down, and *Storm Warning* was published with McClelland & Stewart in due course. It sold fairly well, perhaps aided by this brief furor, as Jack McC. had suspected it might. However, compared to the previous Purdy-edited Ryerson anthology, *Fifteen Winds*, which now belonged to McGraw-Hill, sales were only moderate. *Fifteen Winds* has sold at least 500 copies a year for 15 years. I wonder what sales secrets they borrowed from Nostradamus.

SEVERAL SMALLER publishers have also done books of mine: Black Moss, Paget Press, Quadrant Editions, Blackfish Press, and The Crossing Press in the United States. The editor-publishers of these presses offer an interesting contrast to their counterparts in the larger and more professional outfits. Their enthusiasm is like bubbling champagne; their eyes gleam at the thought of a publishing coup. Often they work at something else to support the drug habit of publishing books.

Some operate on a frayed shoestring, subsidized by the Canada Council. Others, like Ala" Safarik of Blackfish Press, take pride in getting by without grants. The aristocratic Peter Brown of Paget Press publishes art editions, and subsidizes them with other work. Marty Gervais of Black Moss is the eternal amateur, and also a writer of note.

Andrew Wheatley of Quadrant previously operated a book store in Montreal. He vanished several months ago, owing money and books to a long list of titers, among them Mavis Gallant, Julie Charm", George Galt, myself, and several others. Rumour has it that Wheatley is regrouping his forces beyond the Rockies, perhaps in Vancouver, from whence he plans to rally forth and astound the publishing world.

It is noteworthy — at least to me — that only one of the five publishers mentioned has ever sent me a financial statement and royalty report.

Publishers — with one exception — are fascinating people. I am a soft touch for their blandishments, for their charm and panache. Jack McC. is, of course, the most prominent, and also the most personally attractive. And I certainly do miss sitting across a table from him once a year, trying to figure out what he's thinking, interior lucubrations reflected hardly at all on exterior integument. And Peter Brown of Paget Press has charm and enthusiasm that are infectious. One gets carried away by them, along bypaths of publishing romance, into dead-end alleys and non-profit cul de sacs. I love them, all but one, and I see them in both dreams and nightmares. □

A life of passion

Gregarious to the end, Elizabeth Smart (1918-1996) led a Bohemian life that had already come to include an enormous quantity of psychic pain

By John Goddard

ELIZABETH SMART was a spirited, unconventional woman with a prodigious capacity for love and pain, twin themes of her succinct, lyrical writings. By the time she died in London at age 13, her face bore the ravages of a life intensely lived, but people who knew her thought of her as youthful.

She was gregarious to the end, living a Bohemian life in a stone cottage in Suffolk with her rumpled clothes, unruly garden, and collection of 5,000 books. She made frequent trips to London, popping in at the French House pub in Soho, dining out with friends, and sleeping on the much at her youngest son's flat. She did there suddenly after breakfast on March 4, of a heart attack.

Her contribution to Canadian literature was singular if meagre: two slim

novels, some poetry, and a collection of short prose. A volume of journals, *Necessary Secrets*, is to be published soon by Deneau. Her plots were thin, her story lines vague, but she had an unerring ear for syntax and internal rhyme, enabling her to write phrases like: "the bland sand of Brackley Beach." She took astonishing leaps in metaphor. She once wrote of a desire to put feelings of love in a safe place, "into a nest . . . as far away and as glossed over by history as the Red Indian's right to be free."

She wrote lines of rare tenderness: "Under the waterfall he surprised me bathing and gave me what I could no more refuse than the earth can refuse the rain." And she had a witty sense of juxtaposition, as when she interspersed questions from a belligerent U.S. border guard with lines from the *Song of Solomon*: "What relation is this man to you? (My beloved is mine and I am his: he feedeth among the lies.)"

Smart was born into Ottawa high society on Jan. 27, 1913, the second of four children, three girls and a boy. She knew Mike Pearson as a young man, Frank Scott, Eugene Forsey, and Graham Spry. Her father was a pioneering patent-and-trade lawyer and her mother an engaging hostess, perpetually throwing lively parties for the diplomatic crowd.

But Smart regarded her mother as bossy, domineering, and tradition-bound, a stifler of Smart's ambition to go to university and pursue a career. The mother-daughter reckoning was drawn-out and bitter. In her early 20s, Smart fled Ottawa for New York, Mexico, and California, had an affair with a French woman, and wrote a prose piece about it called "Dii a Grave and Let Us Bury Our Mother."

Smart then got involved with the English poet George Barker, who was married; the three of them were among the first people to live communally at Bii Sur, California. Pregnant with Barker's child, Smart moved into a former school house in Pender Harbour, on the B.C. coast north of Vancouver. There she wrote her classic novel, *By*

Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept, based on her involvement with Barker.

She finished the book in 1941, but it wasn't published until 1945 — in England, after she moved there. When an Ottawa book store imported six copies, her mother bought them and burned them, using her connections in high places to prevent more copies from entering the country. None were available in Canada until 1975.

Critics refer to the book as "poetic prose," but Smart disliked the term. "It gives the wrong impression," she said in a 1982 interview. "It sounds all lah-dee-dab." She preferred to think of her writing as "concentrated" or "distilled" prose, and compared it to dehydrated soup: "You get all the substance without the water."

Smart went on to have three more children by Barker, although she and he never lived together. She interrupted her literary career to write for women's magazines, raise the children, and put them all through private schools, while Barker shirked his paternal responsibilities by courting the Muse. After also raising two grandchildren, she published a second slim novel in 1978, *The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals*, detailing the anguish of a mother of four children abandoned by her lover.

By then, she had accumulated an enormous quantity of psychic pain — from her mother, from Barker, from the strain of single parenthood. She could still be fun, generous, interested in new people, but she would sometimes grow sullen late in the evening. She cried out regularly in her sleep, awakening house guests in adjoining rooms — an unsettling experience for anyone staying there for the first time.

In the fall of 1982, she fulfilled a long-held desire to return to Canada, becoming writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta in Edmonton for a year, then moving to Toronto for a few months. But she found fellow Canadians too earnest for her taste, too easily shocked by her immoderate drinking, and she returned to her cottage in Suffolk. □

Elizabeth Smart



CRITICAL NOTICES

BELLES LETTRES

Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence, by Helen M. Buss, **English** Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 88 pages, \$6.50 paper (ISBN 0 920604 21 8).

By Sylvia M. Brown

A RECENT ADDITION to a series of more than 30 treatises on major authors, this compact work attempts to make even Margaret Laurence's most subtle and unconscious meanings clear. Buss succeeds in providing insight — rare in Laurence criticism — into the importance of female contacts in her characters' growth. She shows us Hagar, in *The Stone Angel*, finally allowing "other women to touch her life in a sacramental as well as a psychological sense." We explore the "iconography of the Demeter-Kore relationship" that furnishes the mythic structure for "the sanctity of the mother-daughter relationship" most apparent in *The Fire-Dwellers* between Stacey and Katie. Rachel's domineering yet socially powerless mother in *A Jest of God* is her worst enemy because May Cameron has defined herself and the role her daughters should assume "in accordance with a male concept of female psychology." Much c&temporary analysis would fall into the "blame-the-mother" syndrome. but Buss looks on Rachel's struggle to escape her mother's hold as a greater need to escape the confinement of acceptable roles imposed on women by a male dominated society.

Laurence's more articulated characters in her two *kunstlerromans*, *Vanessa and Morag*, each commence their search for a powerful female figure through writing about "the lives of the victims of the patriarchal world." *Motherless Morag*, in *The Diviners*, is especially fit, through her experience of loss, for a quest into the unconscious. Her conversation and writing is a continual "redefinition or recreation of language... beyond denotative and conventional meanings of words" as she tries to find her lost heritage in a "strong, purposeful vision of motherhood." The ultimate resolution of this epic is a much wider, all-

encompassing one, for Buss claims Laurence generously "attempts to rescue the paternal historical heritage" and integrates what is valuable in the patriarchal past through the "acceptance of positive mate figures such as Christie., Jules and Dan McRaith."

Though some skepticism sinks in about the use of Jungian "types" (which often strikes feminists as reductionist and dictated by yet another male expert), this minute textual criticism convincingly argues that the daughter must become the mother in order to grow responsible and womanly. Laurence's works indicate that the forgotten "mother" language expressing the instinctive Ems principle will have to be relearned before the repressive Logos principle of ideological language destroys the world. The exegesis of Rachel's blessing, "God's pity on God" is telling — according to Buss this is the "matriarchal God who gives pity to the patriarchal God." Buss sees Laurence as holding a paradigmatic position for many Canadian women writing about women today, and sees her work as the archetype of the "growing need to connect with ancient female principles." Her new work of scholarship thoroughly explains why. □

FICTION

A Dialogue with Masks, by Mary Melfi, Mosaic Press, 114 pages, \$8.93 paper (ISBN 0 88962 300 7).

By Allan Weiss

IN HER FIRST work of long fiction, Melfi explores the same themes that preoccupied her published poetry and short fiction: the difficulties besetting male-female relationships and the shortcomings of marriage as an institution. Like *A Queen Is Holding a Mummified Cat* (1982) and *A Bride in Three Acts* (1983), *A Dialogue with Masks* portrays the interaction of men and women as a power struggle, and marriage. Melfi suggests, encourages husband; and wived to see each other as possessions rather than as individuals.

The book is structured as a dialogue between two figures (they could hardly be called "characters"), one male and one female, who discuss and debate their emotional- and sexual relationships. Melfi particularizes her speakers only to the extent of portraying them as a married couple who have rented a lakeside cottage to reinvigorate their marriage.

Ultimately, however, they are designed to be spokespersons for the two sides in the Battle of the Sexes. As the title suggests, the speakers are "masks," personae who verbalize the opposites that dash at-all levels of the work: male/female, life/death, fantasy/reality, mythic/mundane.

Melfi's work is self-consciously "experimental," and the result is both intriguing and unsatisfying. Melfi's themes are all too familiar, having been worked to death by feminist writers for decades, and the speakers seldom engage the reader on more than an intellectual level. As a work of fiction. *A Dialogue with Masks* is flawed; as a creative approach to somewhat stale material, it is a worthy effort. □

The Green Tomato Years, by Gloria Kupchinko Frolick, Williams-Wallace, 142 pages, 516.93 cloth (ISBN 0 88795 042 1) and \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88795 044 2).

By Anneli Pekkonen

"LIKE TOMATOES that are picked, due to early autumn frosts, when they are still green, many, too many, of the young people who grew up in Western Canada during the Depression never reached their full potential." With these words, Frolick introduces her first collection of short stories, a series of vignettes about the Ukrainian community in Alberta during the 1930s. Unlike Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness*, where each newcomer is alone in hi collision with North American culture, Frolick's stories are an evocation of a tightly-knit society. These people may be in a strange land but they keep their balance by hanging on to each other. Clashes between the Anglo-Canadian order and the Ukrainians tend to take the form of patronizing assumption on one hand and resignation on the other. Overt hostility would be too easy to confront and overcome.

one piece that examines this issue — and the best story in this fine book — is "Summer of '38." While their father is away, the 11-year-old narrator and her sister Kristina are sent for the summer to the Mission House run by two earnest United Church women. Miss Case and Miss Holly set the girls to work and draw polite but firm boundaries between themselves and their charges. As the ladies hasten to inform one set of callers, "those two little foreign girls are only staying with us for the summer" — im-

NOTE

Particularly positive critical notices are marked at the end with a star. ☆

plying that they are less of a concern than the British families on relief that are the usual recipients of their charity. The girls overhear this (they are not allowed to stay in the parlour they have spent the afternoon cleaning for these visitors) and the narrator is deeply upset: "In the darkness of our dorm, Kristina did her best to comfort me, patting my back, and talking to me in a tow soothing voice." The girls are forced to rely on themselves for comfort in this marvellous study of the way attitudes are formed and propagated.

The common theme in these stories is solidarity. Neighbours may tiff or disapprove, but they do not hesitate to run to each other for help or gossip. This does not mean that the book is an ethnic Cranford or Thrush Grange. The dark side of life in a small town, especially in matters sexual, is always present. The troubled girl who has a half-Japanese baby, a lovers' suicide, the psychotic son of the town's first family, a woman dyed of an abortion performed, by a farmer's wife are all there to trouble Sandy Lake's serenity. So is the bard work and the monotony. So is the love and the strength of the group.

Frolick's debut is impressive. Each one of these stories is rich enough to be expanded into a longer work without sacrificing interest or action. They left me wanting more. ☆

Intimate Fragments: An Irreverent Chronicle of Early Halifax, edited by Robert B. Kroll, Nimbus, 135 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 920852 42 4).

By Sparling Mills

THIS IS A mystery book in the sense that the reader never knows for sure if it is factual or a hoax. In other words, it is an ingenious conception. And "conception" is an excellent choice of word because of the almost continuous womanizing in its pages. "The Judge," whose notebooks and letters these fragments are supposed to be, goes whoring and drinking at night and is an exemplary citizen during the day. He does reveal sensitivity toward the innocence of a teenage girl whom he saves from ravishment. Unfortunately, from his standpoint, her mother is so grateful that she tries to end his bachelorhood (which he cherishes before anything).

These fragments date from Jan. 1, 1776, to Jan. 30, 1835. The location is Halifax. The "editor," Robert E. Kroll, claims in his foreword that "While searching wills probated in Nova Scotia in 1835, I discovered that of the Judge." After years of search, Kroll found these fragments at Yale University. He asserts that the Judge's "private writings are

honest reflections of himself and the times in which he lived."

There are two important clues to this book: first, Kroll's quotation of Coleridge about his dream of paradise and returning with a rose; second, the initial fragment, which reads, "I am a shadow in another man's dream. Other voices fill my mouth, other passions my heart, other thoughts my mind." Kroll has dreamt he is "the Judge," and the rose is a splash of red on the cover. □

ON STAGE

The **Canadian Dramatist, Volume One**. Politics and the Playwright: George Ryga, by Christopher Innes, Simon & Pierre, 130 pages, \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88924 151 1).

By Jason Sherman

THE EDITOR OF the Canadian Dramatist series provides its first volume, a long-overdue study of George Ryga, whose alienation from mainstream theatre is shown to be less of an ostracization than a conscious, sometimes paranoid refusal to embrace the same middle-class morality and aesthetics Ryga so despises. Christopher Innes writes of Ryga with an understanding that relies as much upon sympathetic readings as it does upon slightly antagonistic arguments. He uses Ryga and Ryga's work as points for general discussions of such subjects as the political playwright and Canadian myth-makers — background material that, taken together, places Ryga in something of a void: a writer who wants to create images for a (multi-cultured) society that can hardly be expected to identify with those images.

Innes embraces the role of the "objective" critic, refusing to allow any apparent personal biases to inform his study. But with almost every protracted discussion of Ryga's major work come notes of dissatisfaction with the playwright's dramaturgical skills, be it stilted or



obscure dialogue, implausible characters, or confusing structure and story-line — problems that are not merely limited to early versions of the works in question.

Innes, who combines wit, intellect, and persuasive power with a deceptively simple ability to conflate the widest



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CONGRATULATIONS

range of cultural referents into a specific sentence of universal importance, seems to appreciate Ryga more for his unswerving Political commitment than for his skills of craft.

But then the whole book is a question of balance. of choosing just the right work or biographical detail. Innes had to choose from a wealth of material in several disciplines. His process of elimination has served him well: this book, like so many of the plays Innes discusses, ends without really ending, and it is this sort of self-perpetuating criticism that can make for an important series of studies. □

THE PAST

Forgotten Soldiers, by Fred Gaffen, Theytus Books, illustrated, 152 pages, 819.95 paper (ISBN 0 919441 10 6).

By Roy MacLaren

THIS BOOK DOES somewhat the same thing for Canada's native peoples as Roy Ito's *We Went to War* recently did for Japanese Canadians. Although less systematic and comprehensive than Ito's book (presumably the result of limited funds), it does succeed in conveying something of the bravery and achievements of Indians and Métis in the Canadian forces overseas during two world wars.

Gaffen offers brief accounts of the service of individual soldiers, frequently relying upon citations for medals. This contributes to the episodic and even fragmentary nature of the book. Yet tucked away in these ultra-biographical accounts are some rogues as well as heroes — and some quite unexpected participants in the First World War. (One U.S. black, weary of the racial prejudice in his homeland, managed to pass himself off as a Canadian Indian and apparently served overseas with some distinction.)

For the most part, the service of Indians in all three armed forces was not only notable in itself (ranging in the Second World War from Hong Kong to Italy), but it also offers a brief comment on the difficult postwar adaptation to a civilian life where prejudice was still rampant. Also included is an even briefer comparison with the wartime experiences of New Zealand Maoris, Australian aborigines, and U.S. Indians. This is a modest hook, too limited to do justice to its subject, especially the social implications, but it is at least a beginning for a more complete account of the volunteer service of those native peoples who, like the Japanese Canadians, had little enough reason to risk their lives for Canada. □

POETRY

Blind Painting, by Robert Melançon, translated from the French by Phillip Stratford, Véhicule Press. 109 pages, 38.95 paper (ISBN 0 919890 67 9).

By Paul Stuewe

THE FRENCH/ENGLISH text of *Blind Painting* is a revised edition of *Peinture aveugle*, for which Robert Melançon won the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1979. Like many Québécois writers, he has been strongly influenced by the French nouveau roman school's emphasis upon sense perception rather than intellectual association as the basis for literary creation. Thus these short, precise poems record Melançon's immediate apprehensions of a reality where individual details are far sharper than broad outlines or general patterns: what the reader sees unquestionably is, for the writer, in an existential sense fundamentally different from the could-have-beens, should-bes or looked-likes of other modes of expression.

At his bat, he makes extremely effective use of this rigorous aesthetic. Where many poets now operate as gossip columnists for the cultured reader, assiduously stringing together brief references to shared concepts and mutually valued objects, Melançon insists that we look closely at a few things and try to see them clearly. The consequences can be as enlightening and invigorating as the shimmering perfection of "Summer":

*Sun bends down
lilacs stirred by wind:
each leaf holds up
the whole sky. A warbler,
brief fruit, shakes loose
a rush of blue.*

This serenity is achieved through Melançon's acceptance of other as well as self in a world where he "belonged/and desired to belong only to the possible" ("*Blind Painting IV*"), and in which the poet must refuse to destroy the "strange designs" that seem to "persist despite/our fragile wisdom" ("*Blind Painting V*"). As exemplified in the majority of the poems presented here, this demanding regimen enables Melançon to break through to levels of contemplative insight seldom encountered in any contemporary writing.

There are pitfalls inherent in this approach as well, of course, since contemplative insight can easily turn into a much more sterile variety of analytical passivity. At times, Melançon's language is simply too prosaic to convey the intensity of his passions, and he occasionally indulges in over-extended metaphors that run against the grain of

his essentially naturalistic poetic practice. But such lapses from grace are infrequent blemishes upon a very impressive collection of poetry, which Philip Stratford's self-effacingly literal translation brings to us with a minimum of linguistic barriers. □

The **Weight of Oranges**, by Anne Michaels, coach House Press, 56 pages, \$7.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910 318 6).

By Louise Longo

ANNE MICHAELS makes an impressive debut in her first book of poetry. Her work is well-crafted and emotionally resonant and studded with gems, such as one from "Memoriam": "The dead leave us starving with mouths full of love." Her themes of love, loss, and the human struggle are almost standard poetic fare, but what she makes of them certainly is not. This, also from "Memoriam":

*Memory insists with its sea voice,
muttering from its bone cave.
Memory wraps us
like the shell wraps the sea
Nothing to carry,
some stones to fill our pockets,
to give weight to what we have.*

There is more than a tinge of mortality to these poems, but Michaels's superb use of language and her emotionally-weighted insight keep them from stumbling into the morbid. This is from the title poem:

*Sometimes I'm certain those who are
happy
know one thing more than us . . . or one
thing less.*

*The only book I'd write again
is our bodies closing together.
That's the language that stuns,
scars, breathes into you.
Naked, we had voices!*

In the last section of the book, Michaels explores themes of sexuality and creativity through one particular and shaping friendship. In the long poem "Words for the Body," the two friends, one a writer and the other a musician, decide that "music is memory, the way a word is the memory of its meaning." The poem then explores not only the demands of making art but also the price it exacts:

*In a voice that came from the highway
you described the blackness where
music waits,
tormenting until you draw it out,
a redemption.
Then the fear of forgetting notes
disappears, the fingers have a memory
of their own.*

*You spoke of a kind of hunger
that makes pleasure perfect.
Then you said how it was to be opened
and tasted by a hall full of people.*

She closes the poem by drawing together the parallel worlds of music and "the sentence."

Michaels's imagery is well sustained throughout the work. Although it is often dazzling, it also always serves the deeper intent of each poem. Michaels certainly knows what she is doing here, and in doing it has given us an uncommonly good first book. ★

Woman in the Woods, by Joy Kogawa, Mosaic Press, 80 pages, 88.95 paper (ISBN 0 88962 294 9).

By Frank Manley

DESPITE THE imagery suggested by the title of this, the fourth book of poetry from Joy Kogawa, the poet's vision is obscured neither by forest nor trees: the insight found here is enlightening. Ostensibly about the "plight (and flight) of a woman and child," *Woman in the Woods* encompasses many aspects of life — it is poetry that reaches out.

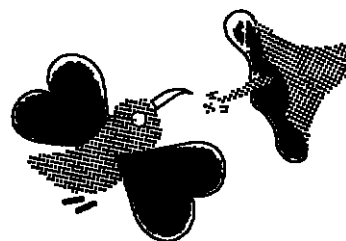
The book begins with an axiom in "Bird Song!" — "Plunged from our nests/ in the late spring/and ordered to fly/ or die we are/weaned to the air" — and ends neatly with a hymn to faith in "Water Song":

*who once on singing
water walked
on water still
walks he
in atmosphere
so dense in miracle
we here find fins
for diving
for flying*

The poetry contained by these two poems is the elliptical journey of Kogawa's dramatic persona through experiences ranging from the epic to the whimsical.

Perhaps the most engaging virtue of this collection is the passion for life that Kogawa has, especially when much in the world offends the poet's sensibility. Take, for example, her satire in "Last Day" — "That day . . . in the elevator/ no-one tried to be unusually friendly" — or in "Experiment," where a researcher tortures animals to gain respectability: "He publishes his article/in *Psychology Today*/and makes an addition/to his curriculum vitae." In "Give Us This Day" (perhaps the best poem here) Kogawa finds in Shadrach — an opponent of Nebuchadnezzar, in the *Book of Daniel* — a symbol for faith in an age of alienation: "Shadrach's angel will find us/in the heart's fiery places." This motif is prominent in other poems such as "Here We are a Point of Sanity": "Oh leap down leap down/to the thirst/to the flame." Kogawa often uses fire and colour (green) to suggest regeneration and hope.

SATISFY!

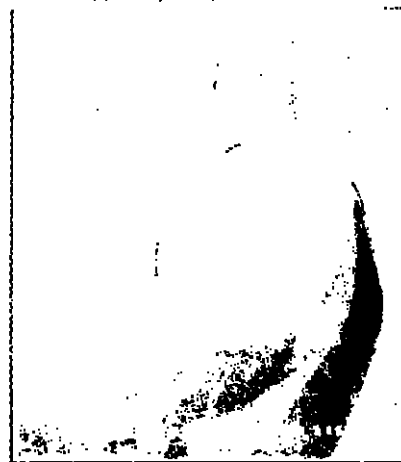


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Central to Kogawa's skill is her ability to say volumes with only a few words (a refreshing alternative to the verbosity of many of her contemporaries). In "One Night's Standing," the lover departs "leaving her to journey/with one sense less/towards senselessness." Kogawa's careful diction binds the images together, giving each poem a reflexive mystique that encourages multiple readings. ☆

SACRED & SECULAR

The Morality of the Market: Religious and Economic Perspectives, edited by Walter Block, Geoffrey Brennan, and Kenneth Elzinga, The Fraser Institute, 601 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 88975 074 2).

By Cyril Strom

TROUBLED BY the belief that the ecclesiastical establishment has arrived at a "left of centre, anti-market orientation," Vancouver's conservative Fraser Institute held a symposium on the issue in 1982. The organizers asked whether anything inherent in the teachings of the major Western religions disposes them against *laissez-faire* capitalism, and whether political and socio-economic positions can properly be derived from religious doctrine at all; they invited a group of mostly liberal theologians and mostly conservative economists to present papers and written comments, and to discuss them.

Discreet hosts always banish talk of religion and politics from the dinner table. The sharp and contentious tone of much of the debate here, in contrast to that at many learned conferences, will remind the reader why.

The conferees find it difficult to address in a systematic way the conference's questions, as posed. The problem is partly one of definition. The organizing concept "internalist/externalist," introduced here to distinguish explanations for a given political position that rely on religious dogma alone from those that look elsewhere (to the sociology of the clergy, for example) serves neither the conferees nor the editors well. The two terms are used by the participants throughout, but seldom with much confidence. No one actually identifies any such internalist explanation, the theologians claiming, unexceptionally, that their values simply illuminate economic and political debate.

Too often the issue becomes resolved into the questioning of the competence in formal economics of the religious spokesmen. A more pertinent and generous approach prevails, however, when the discussion turns to the problem of value-free analysis in general and the

right of economists themselves to speak on social issues. The participants collaborate effectively in discussing the concept of economic justice and its theoretical and practical limitations.

The papers and discussions range widely. Especially good are the contributions of philosopher and divine Murdoch McLean and the economists Milton and David Friedman, who take the discussion sessions in hand when necessary. Praise is also due the editors for their fair-mindedness; on the other hand, they have allowed an impermissible number of misspellings and other lapses. Nonetheless, they have every right to boast a unique collection of papers and commentary on a provocative topic. □

SCIENCE & NATURE

Seal Wars! An American Viewpoint, by Janice Scott Henke, Breakwater Books, 211 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919519 61 X) and \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 919519 63 6).

By Claire Brownscombe

HENKE, A CULTURAL anthropologist and licensed New York State wildlife rehabilitator married to a conservation officer, offers a unique perspective on the Canadian seal hunt.

Animal welfare groups have waged an intense war of protest against the seal slaughter, but there is another side to the story. The Canadian seal hunt is well regulated and well supervised. The animals are killed humanely in that clubbing renders a seal pup unconscious. Seals shed copious tears as a natural physiological process, not because of grief over a dead pup.

Whether they be Inuit or Newfoundlanders, sealers and their livelihood are of major importance, a fact seldom stressed by popular environmentalists. Henke questions the right of one culture to judge another whose expectations and lifestyle are different.

Seal Wars offers some insight into the work of professional biologists, their findings, and the problem of maintaining adequate numbers for independent species in a constantly changing environment. More specific scientific information to offset the sensational misinformation spread by the protest movement would, perhaps, have made this book still more effective. Material in the lengthy chapter "The Seal Saviours" might have been condensed and some repetition avoided if the animal welfare societies, their distortions and sometimes shoddy tactics had been discussed in general rather than in particular.

Conservation is necessary, but there are many factors to be considered. In *Seal Wars* Janice Scott Henke strongly

suggests the need for a more critical approach to the activities of societies for animal welfare such as Greenpeace. Perhaps we should pour the cooling waters of reason and moderation on the often hotly emotional issue of the Canadian seal harvest. □

SPORTS & ADVENTURE

Dangerous Waters: One Man's Search for Adventure, by David Philpott, McClelland & Stewart, 179 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6998 7).

By John Greenwood

IN THE SPRING of 1979 David Philpott set out alone in a 30-foot sailboat to circumnavigate the globe. The 53-year-old Toronto developer was about halfway across the South Atlantic when a ripped sail put an end to the trip and very nearly his life as well. That was his first experience of ocean sailing. Philpott is an able man, and his account of the voyage is compelling, particularly because he goes to some lengths to shed light on his reasons for undertaking the mammoth expedition.

Sailing around the world, he explains, is not strange behaviour for someone who has achieved as much as he has. In the business world he rose quickly; before he was 40 he had been involved in some of the largest building projects in North America, and by his early 50s he ran a successful development company of his own. But still looking for contests, he got on his 10-speed in 1977 and pedalled from Toronto to Florida in 17 days. The following year he rode his bike across the country.

The ocean voyage, Philpott says, was just the next step. Always thorough and systematic, he limits his account mostly to what he sees and does, so after a while the trip does seem like a list of weather conditions punctuated by "equipment failures." But the situations he describes are often extreme, and when he has to spend whole days tied to a bunk during his first Atlantic gale, it's not difficult to imagine, even from his inventory of events, the size of the waves. Interesting things are always happening: once his boat is occupied by a flock of fearless and constantly defecating seabirds, and for a time he drifts in the Doldrums. And the tale becomes properly gripping when Philpott's boat is wrecked in a terrible storm and he is left to drift toward the iceflows of the Antarctic.

As an account of a modern shipwreck the story is remarkable. Clearly Philpott is not a writer by trade — his style is arid rather than imaginative — but beneath the details of the voyage he dutifully notes, the sheer magnitude of his experience is manifest. □

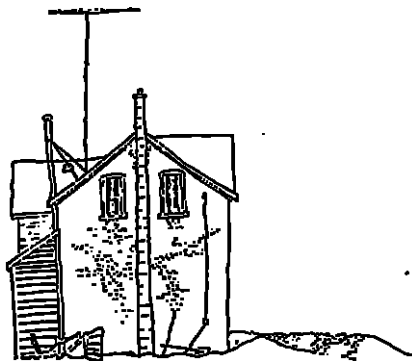
Hello Canada! The **Life and Times of Foster Hewitt**, by **Scott Young**, Seal Books. 216 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 770 42100 8).

By Grant Shilling

"HE SHOOTS — he scores!" No other introduction is necessary. Young's book provides the details beyond the introduction. It's a book that is heavy on the hockey-related details and light on personal revelations. As it should be. For Hewitt was *Hockey Night in Canada* for more than 50 years.

Young writes in a simple but not simplistic style and portrays Hewitt as hard-working, innovative, and dedicated. In the early '20s Hewitt was a reporter with the *Toronto Star*, which owned one of the first radio stations in Toronto. Thirteen days after the Star's first broadcast Hewitt was appointed editor of the "Radio Department." He was 19 years old.

In the early summer of 1931 Conn Smythe's Maple Leaf Gardens was being built. Smythe, a big believer in the power of radio, told Hewitt to decide where he felt the broadcast booth should be located and to tell the architect. Hewitt spent three hours walking up and down the stairs of a 12-story Eaton's building on Albert Street. On each floor Hewitt would stop and look out the windows on the street below. Using this method he determined that on the fifth floor, 56 feet above the street, he found



his best view. The broadcast booth, "the gondola," would be 56 feet above the ice surface.

Although Hewitt's relationship with Conn Smythe was solid, relations with Harold Ballard were shaky. Hewitt resented Ballard's wholesale wrecking of the gondola during renovations of the Gardens, believing it should have been presented to the Hockey Hall of Fame. The final blow came when CKFH ("F.H."), the radio station of the Leafs, lost its broadcasting rights when Ballard's financial demands became exorbitant.

When in 1971 Hewitt sold his 12,000

shares of Maple Leaf Gardens stock he rolled it into shares of Baton Broadcasting, one of many investments that made Hewitt very wealthy at the time of his death. In his later years, he lost much interest in hockey, feeling that expansion had diluted the quality of the game. His last great broadcasting moment came in 1972 with the first Canada-Russia series. It was only appropriate that Foster Hewitt should be there, and Scott Young captures the moment wonderfully. ★

TEACHING & LEARNING

Why It's Hard to Fire Johnny's Teacher: the Status of Tenured Teachers in Manitoba and Canada, by Michael Czuboka, Communigraphics, 314 pages, \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0 920073 02 6).

By Ann Lukits

KASTURAN KAUSHAL burned her students' final exam papers. Teacher Michael Kopchuk was not "sufficiently fluent" in French. Vice-principal Albert Baldwin telephoned a false bomb threat to Swan River Junior High. And another teacher, Harvey Wheaton, called his superior a "pompous ass" and suggested that he "screw himself" and words to that effect.

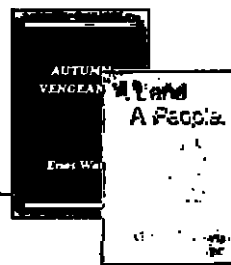
These are only a few of the incidents that prompted school boards in Manitoba to try to "fire Johnny's teacher" during the past two decades. But not every attempt at dismissal was successful: Baldwin was only demoted for his bomb threat, while Kopchuk, despite his impeccable teaching record, lost his job because he could not teach in French.

In this informative, highly readable, and often entertaining book, Michael Czuboka, superintendent of Manitoba's Agassiz School Division, explores the thorny issue of "teacher tenure" and the seemingly widespread assumption that teachers can't be fired. He pays special attention to the word "tenure" and shows, through a detailed analysis of arbitration hearings and court cases, how its meaning has changed over the years. The vast number of hearings, which comprise the bulk of the book, should convince the most skeptical critics of the education system that school boards can and sometimes do fire teachers.

Still, Czuboka demonstrates how difficult it can be to dismiss an incompetent teacher — and conversely, how good teachers are often victims of incompetent school boards. Although his study focuses on Manitoba, he also surveys the legislation governing tenure in other provinces. The highly publicized dismissal of former Alberta teacher

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James Keegstra is one of a number of tenure cases discussed.

Johnny's Teacher is flawed by a number of typographical errors and a format that resembles a teacher-training manual. Despite his admitted "administrative prejudices," however, Czuboka displays unusual sympathy for all parties involved in teacher firings. Says Czuboka: "Tenure cases are like divorce proceedings, inasmuch as everyone's 'dirty laundry' is washed in public. Even the 'winning' side loses something in the process." □

WORK & WORKERS

Working Lives, by the Working Lives Collective, New Star, illustrated, 211 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919573 48 7) and \$15.95 paper (ISBN 0 919573 49 5).

By Grant Shilling

THIS BOOK, published in celebration of Vancouver's centennial, is divided into three main sections: working, living, and organizing. Each section is equally thorough. Complete with vivid historical photographs, the book makes for an attractive package. However, the narrative drags. The problem lies in the overt political orientation of the writing. There is a fine line between saluting working lives and making a political statement. When terms such as "imperialist," "capital gains — we lose," and "fight for social justice" are used with great frequency it is apparent that the line is crossed. To the left.

B.C. politics can be defined in one word: polarity. The emergence of a middle-ground party has yet to manifest itself, and in the land of the red scare the Social Credit party has held on to power for the last 10 years. Militancy in reaction to heavy-handed trimming by the Socreds has characterized the labour movement in B.C.

Fifty authors have contributed under the banner of the Working Lives Collective. A certain amount of group-think has taken place in the writing of the book. Give this group its due, however. Although the book was published with the assistance of the Centennial Commission, the authors were brave enough if not to bite the hand that feeds them, at least to nibble on it. In this the year of Expo 86, *Working Lives* is a reaction to much of the Expo propaganda.

In the book's introduction, Allen Seager refers to the "labour-hating faction of the ruling Social Credit coalition." He goes on to state that "Expo throws into bold relief important contemporary issues, particularly the looming problem of reduced living standards and structural unemployment caused by the 'technological revolution'

under unplanned capitalism." His introduction sets the tone for the book.

Working Lives is at its best when providing a portrait of B.C.'s fascinating labour history unclouded by political dogma. But politics and labour are inseparable in B.C., and this book makes that painfully clear. □

WORLD AFFAIRS

Jamaica Under Manley: Dilemmas of Socialism and Democracy, by Michael Kaufman, Between the Lines, 282 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919946 58 5) and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 919946 59 3).

By Matthew Behrens

YORK UNIVERSITY professor Michael Kaufman is a superb researcher and a keen political analyst, but those two talents alone are not enough in this book, which examines the eight years of People's National Party (PNP) rule and the dilemmas that brought an end to the Manley government.

With the rumblings in Haiti and the reopening of wounds in Grenada, Kaufman's book is a timely study of non-revolutionary change in the Caribbean. However, the text is uneven, jumping from the dry and factual to the colloquial. With the latter, Kaufman abandons his rigidity and touches the reader with an ingratiating style, but then seems unsure of his analysis and cuts back to straight facts and figures.

At the root of Kaufman's study is a simple conclusion: the problem of socialism in a nation like Jamaica is not so much predicated upon internal elements (though his fine historical accounts and detailed description of



class and ethnicity point to possible roadblocks) as from elements outside. The U.S. saw Manley as the threat of a good example and, during a period when colonial governments fell in Grenada and Nicaragua, it did not want to "lose" a major bauxite exporter in Jamaica.

Kaufman's story of dependence and underdevelopment is archetypal of most nations currently suffering the woes of debt and economic crisis. Perhaps the conclusion one draws about this book is similar to the fate Kaufman ascribes to Manley himself: not defeat, just periodic setbacks. □

Lost horizons

By George Galt

Away from Home: Canadian Writers in Exotic Places, edited by Kildare Dobbs, Deneau, 354 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88879 119 4).

FOR A GOOD travel writer, distance makes the eye grow keener. Removed from home, and culturally alienated from the foreign territory he is passing through, the traveller can comment on both home and abroad with freed and sharpened perceptions. In his essay on Paris, included in this anthology of travel writing, Mordecai Richler wrote:

Canada is a
Armstrong passed me a note. "A Presbyterian twat."

Unsubtle, to say the least, but also the typical posture of literary North Americans in Europe. Abroad you find good sex, good wine, better books, more exciting cities, more sophisticated people. So goes the myth, not as powerful now as it was 30 years ago. In some ways our culture has overtaken it.

Travel writing by Canadians was a rare genre until recently, and even now is not much practised. Western literature may begin with poetry, if we place Homer at the dawn of recorded words. But the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were oral creations, and it is doubtful whether "Homer" was a single voice. Western literature as we know and read it can just as credibly be said to begin much later, in the classical period. And perhaps the greatest prose work of that age was a travel book, masquerading as history, written by Herodotus.

The tradition, then, is long and rich, but it has tended to be continued by confident and imperial cultures. A culture that has profound doubts about itself, or strong isolationist leanings, will have fewer reasons to take on the world, even through literature. Good travel writing is one index of a literature's breadth, as well as its international strength. Fifty years ago what Canadian writer would have wanted to compete with D.H. Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia* or Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana*? The most admired travel writers of any age, like V.S. Naipaul and Lawrence Durrell in ours, have been among the most admired on any scale. With a few notable exceptions, like Morley Callaghan, Canadian writers did not achieve international stature until well after the

Second World War. For the most part, our writers were confined to Canadian subjects until they could match wits and styles with the best writers anywhere.

First you grow up. Then you leave home. Kildare Dobbs tries to explain this phenomenon in two sentences in his introduction. "In pioneering times Canadians were too busy exploring our own vast territory to think much about travel beyond our borders. Later they began to look outward." True as far as it goes, but I think Dobbs, a well regarded essayist, has missed an opportunity to make some incisive comments on the Canadian experience. His short introduction is unambitious and not very informative.

A more apt title for this collection might be *Adrift*. There appears to be a lot of flotsam, if not jetsam, here. The editor casts a very wide net, offering "a selection of travel writing by English-speaking Canadians from the 1840s to the present day." His catch includes some fine and delicate fish, but also some old rubber boots, and a couple of specimens that do not really originate in Canadian waters, unless you draw a very generous fishing boundary. Was Sir Edward Belcher, whose visit to Fiji is excerpted here, a Canadian travel writer? He was born in Halifax in 1799,

but I see nothing in his observations that would not have been written by a British sea captain. Sir George Simpson, born in Scotland in 1787, is included by virtue of his residency in Canada and close association with the Hudson's Bay Company. But since he identifies himself several times through this piece as an Englishman abroad, I haven't any idea why Dobbs sees him as a Canadian traveller.

Simpson's piece on Siberia is among the more compelling extracts in this collection. It might have a place here, I think, if Dobbs had drawn the reader's attention to the fact that even if early British colonists in Canada called themselves Canadian, abroad they quickly reverted to their native loyalties. Simpson, I imagine, may have seen Canada as the British equivalent to Siberia, simply a northern extension of Scotland, and any anthology of early British travel writing would no doubt welcome him. A Canadian writer he was not, though insights into the development of Canada's self-image might be gained by comparing his book with similar works of a later date.

Dobbs cautions readers against judging this book on what has been left out. I agree with him. I did wonder why Farley Mowat's *Sibir* was not tapped instead of

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Simpson's, and the selection would have been stronger with a Mavis Gallant piece and something from Margaret Laurence's African travel book. But many other excellent writers are in: Morley Callaghan and John Glassco with bits from their Paris books; Charles Ritchie on London; Norman Levine on Cornwall; Dobbs himself with an elegant essay on Morocco; George Woodcock on the South Seas; and Clark Blaise and Bharati Mukherjee with an extract from their husband-and-wife book on Calcutta.

As Dobbs points out, this anthology is the first of its kind, and no one should carp because a favourite book or essay has been excluded. Most of our best literary travellers make an appearance. The selection turns up some curiosities too, like the excerpts from *I Brought the Ages Home* by C.T. Currelly, a Canadian archaeologist who travelled in Egypt in 1901. Few readers under 40 will have heard of him or his book, published in 1956. It's a worthwhile discovery.

Dobbs has also included some magazine and newspaper pieces by lesser writers, and a terrible clunker from James de Mille's 1860 publication *The Dodge Club*. In most countries de Mille — to my taste no more than a fluent hack — would have been forgotten by now, but we are so anxious to show that 19th-century Canadians could string words together and spell that we keep him alive. Only one of the periodical pieces, a hilarious essay by Garry Marchant on his year with the Buenos Aires *Herald*, comes close to the quality of prose and perception in the book excerpts. Travel books, which spring out of total immersion in and concentrated observation of a foreign culture for many weeks or months, bear little relation to travel articles (no matter how well written), which are the product of a short jaunt as a tourist. I think they sit awkwardly side by side.

A word about the look of this book. In the table of contents John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse* are not mentioned, though they are excerpted in the text. That is the first of an appalling array of typos and other technical gaffes. Running the eyes through *Away From Home* is like driving fast over a street with speed bumps. It's constantly jarring and makes you want to go somewhere else, even when you're enjoying the scenery. There were lots of sentences like this. At one point I started counting typos, but gave up when I reached 50. With so many foreign place-names and foreign-language words, it was hard to tell where the misspellings were. Clearly the publisher did not do his part in seeing this book through production.

For me, it has a slapdash Third-World look — poetic justice, I suppose. Speaking of justice, I'll give the penultimate word to Dobbs: "The editor has had to work to the maxim, 'If you can't be just [*sic*], be arbitrary.'" Someone must have thought he was instructing the typesetters. □

REVIEW

Writers out of residence

By I.M. Owen

Resident Alien, by Clark Blaise, Penguin, 196 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 14 008234 4).

Another Country: Writings by and About Henry Kreisel, edited by Shirley Neuman, NeWest Press, 362 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920316 87 5) and \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 920316 85 9).

The Light in the Piazza, by Elizabeth Spencer, Penguin, 233 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 14 008712 5).

I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT that the most expressive lines in the "Canadian Boat Song" published anonymously in 1829 are not the much-quoted ones about the lone shieling but the refrain:

*Fair are these meads, these hoary woods
are grand,*

But we are exiles from our fathers' land.

(Or words to that effect; there doesn't seem to be a book in my house that contains the poem.) Not just from *our* land, you see: from *our fathers' land*. That's been characteristic of English Canadians from the beginning — not of French Canadians, whose fathers' land disowned them in 1763 and turned altogether alien to them three decades later. But other Canadians remain exiles — from the Thirteen Colonies, the British Isles, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and beyond. (And then there are the Indians, who are exiles *in* their fathers' land; but that's another story.)

So, no matter how Canadian we are and feel, we are in some sense resident aliens; no matter how firmly attached to the fair meads and hoary woods (and I wouldn't live anywhere else), we still define ourselves — and each other — partly in terms of our ancestral homelands.

The definition of Clark Blaise is more complex than most. As he says, he is "the only Canadian writer born in Fargo, North Dakota" — of an English-Canadian mother and a French-Canadian father. Constantly moving in

the footsteps of his restless salesman father, he spent his childhood in the Deep South of the 1940s and his adolescence in the Pittsburgh of the 1950s. In the 1960s he married a Brahman and settled in Montreal. Now he lives — where? On page three of his new book he dates the introduction from Iowa City, last October; but on page i the publisher says he's at Columbia. The ambiguities continue.

Nearly all Blaise's published fiction consists of variations on the theme of his confused identity. *Lusts*, the second of his two novels, is a partial exception to this. But the new book returns to the main theme, stating it precisely in its title, *Resident Alien*, and in two directly autobiographical essays, "The Voice of Unhousement" and "Memories of Unhousement." In between come four stories so closely linked that together they make a novella.

The hero is called, this time, Phil Porter, né Carrier. He has much the same family background as the author, and as Frankie Thibidault in *A North American Education* and David Greenwood (né Boisvert) in *Lunar Attractions*, but unlike them is taken back to Montreal from Pittsburgh at the age of 12 and is educated in French there before returning to the States and reverting to the name of Porter. In middle age he writes a successful autobiography, which is translated into French; so that he goes to Montreal to promote the French edition — and, as it turns out, to have a gratifying and highly symbolic affair with his translator and a deathbed reconciliation with his father, Réjean Carrier, who is known in the hospital as Reggie, *l'américain*.

The whole sequence is rich in symbolism that is fully integrated into the narrative, not stuck on like ornament. I'm inclined to think this is Blaise's best work. It was a good idea to set the two fragments of autobiography beside it. I'd have liked it better still if we could have had the whole autobiography. But we must submit to being tantalized.

Like Clark Blaise, Henry Kreisel has published only two novels and a small number of short stories; but because these have been spread over a much longer period he isn't as well known as Blaise, and not nearly as well known as he ought to be. So *Another Country*, a grab-bag of a book partly by and partly about him, is very welcome.

Kreisel is another special case of the Canadian as exile, a representative of a distinguished group of people whose presence among us we owe in equal parts to Hitler and to the British bureaucracy. In 1940 Canada had agreed to take over from the British a certain number of prisoners of war. But, things being as

they were at the time, not many prisoners had been taken, so Britain made up for the shortfall by shipping over a number of interned "enemy aliens," who of course were mostly anti-Nazi refugees. Among them was the 18-year-old Heinrich Kreisel, who had escaped from Vienna four months after the Anschluss.

Kreisel had known no English before 1938, but almost immediately after his arrival in England he decided not only that he would be a writer, but that he would be a writer in English. As soon as he was interned he started a diary in his new language, and kept it up until shortly before his release in 1941. It is reproduced in full in this book, together with several short stories and poems he also wrote at the time.

The book also includes a very interesting essay of Kreisel's called "Language and Identity," in which he talks about this decision. A fellow-internee told him about Joseph Conrad, who at once became one of his heroes though he couldn't get hold of any of his books. As a matter of fact, Kreisel's mastery of English is much greater than Conrad's. It's interesting to compare writers who have made such a change. Like many other people lately, I have been looking at Isak Dinesen again. Her English is highly inaccurate but graceful. Conrad's is accurate but terribly ponderous. Kreisel's is flawless. Perhaps that just proves that being a professor of English is more helpful in this matter than being a coffee-planter or a sea-captain.

There's a vast amount and variety of material in *Another Country*, including several scholarly essays on Kreisel, some illuminating — especially two by Michael Greenstein — some less so, such as one called "Henry Kreisel: A Canadian Exile Writer?" (Answer, 10 pages later: yes.) But what I really want to say about the book is that it sent me back to Kreisel's two novels after many years. I was astonished yet again at the excellence of *The Rich Man*. Was there ever a more accomplished first novel? In *The Betrayal*, it still seems to me that discussion of the fascinating moral dilemma it poses rather overpowers its novelistic qualities.

Yet another displaced person is Elizabeth Spencer, who came to Montreal from Mississippi by way of Italy. In *The Light in the Piazza* Penguin has collected three of her Italian stories. It makes a good supplement to the 1981 Doubleday volume *The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer*, because for some reason that book didn't include what is the title story here, and because the third story here, "The Cousins," has been written since. They are both Spencer at her best, I think.

"The Light in the Piazza" is about an American mother visiting Florence with her retarded 26-year-old daughter, and dealing in her own way with the situation that arises when a young Florentine falls in love with the daughter and is determined to marry her. "The Cousins" describes the European tour of five young Alabamans, as recalled by two of them when they meet in Florence 30 years later. Both stories are subtle and complex, their ambiguities heightened by the cool clarity of the prose.

The novella "Knights and Dragons," which is the centrepiece of the book, is by another Elizabeth Spencer, a verbose and turgid writer, whose style is as heavily scented as the Mississippi springs she describes in other stories, and who likes to end episodes or stories with solemnly symbolic codas:

She was of those whom life had held a captive, and in freeing herself she had met dissolution, and was a friend now to any landscape, a companion to cloud and sky.

It's this Spencer who at such solemn moments trips over her own syntax — "those whom life had held a captive," did you notice? — and in the description of Venice from which the title is taken can write "St. George slew the dragon on every passing well"; in fact the wells in Venice are as stationary as wells anywhere else.

Reviewing *The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer* in *Saturday Night* in 1981, I said that "Knights and Dragons" was "almost entirely deplorable." Well, I was younger then. Rereading it this time, and forgetting that I'd said that, I quite enjoyed it. But even in my new maturity I can still deplore that it wasn't written in the elegantly simple prose of the other — the real — Elizabeth Spencer. □

REVIEW

Keeping chaff from the sprouts

By Mary Ainslie Smith

Michele Landsberg's *Guide to Children's Books*, Penguin, 272 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 14 007136 9).

MICHELE LANDSBERG remembers being transformed as she grew up by the power of books. Her childhood in the Toronto of the 1940s was sheltered and ordinary, but books provided her with "other lives" full of stimulation, adventure, and romance. They had a permanent ef-

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fect on her life, and her love of children's literature stayed with her into adulthood. **Michele Landsberg's Guide to Children's Books** is a product of this love and enthusiasm, as well as of Landsberg's experience as a writer, a critic of children's books, and a parent.

The guide is no mere listing of favourite books. Landsberg uses it to state a number of strong opinions and passionate beliefs. Foremost is her feeling that children who do not know the pleasures of reading are children deprived. Books can bring joy and stability to children's lives and provide deeper and truer perceptions of the world than the flickering images and shallow plots of television. Wise and caring parents — and other adults involved with children — have the responsibility to understand what their children are reading and, without censoring or proselytizing, offer ranges of choices and act as guides toward healthy and rewarding literature. Landsberg makes it clear that adults who fail to do this are depriving not only their children but also themselves of a shared pleasure.

Since reading has the power to shape children's perceptions of the world around them, Landsberg argues that books can be a potent tool in making these perceptions as humane and balanc-

ed as possible. Her guide attempts to provide equal discussions of books showing boys and girls in active, central roles. Such books can help combat conventional gender stereotyping, something that Landsberg believes can be even more devastating for boys than for girls.

She deals with racial stereotypes in children's books and, although strongly against censorship and the idea of a "sterilized literature" free of any sexist or racist references, advocates basic common sense where adults have a choice of books, for instance for classroom use.

She speaks strongly against "bibliotherapy," finding repugnant the idea that a child, suffering from pain, such as that caused by a death or a family break-up, will feel better for being given a book, like a dose of medicine, about some other child with the same problems. Good books can offer comfort or escape, but not in any facile way.

The guide is arranged thematically. Landsberg deals fit with books for very young children and beginning readers and then with major themes in children's literature, such as the quest for identity, fantasy, time-travel, and growing up. She discusses her favourite books in each category, pointing out

their strengths, and also takes time to consider those that she feels are bad and false, even damaging to their readers. Some of her opinions are expected; others are a bit surprising. She inveighs against "commodity" books — "those based on cartoon, toy or film characters, with sentiments and vocabulary vilely calculated by market survey" — that take up warehouse and shelf space driving worthy children's books out of print.

She detests Judy Blume, the phenomenally successful U.S. author whose paperbacks have sold nearly 30 million copies. Landsberg objects not to Blume's frankness of language — although many parents are upset by that — but to her "bland and unquestioning acceptance of majority values, of conformity, consumerism, materialism, unbounded narcissism" and to her "flat, sloppy, ungrammatical, inexpressive speech."

Landsberg feels that Robert Cormier, another, widely read U.S. author of "problem" novels for young adults, produces books full of "hysterical violence" and "sweeping revulsion." She also makes a very convincing case that Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, a favourite with many children and adults, is sadistic, racist, and "tinged by an unadmitted

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animosity toward modern children."

Other popular authors have saving graces but do not escape all critical barbs. Among Canadian writers, she admires Dennis Lee for his "inspired word play" in *Alligator Pie*, but thinks that his preoccupation with various smelly parts of the body in his later volumes of children's verse is playing for cheap thrills. Mordecai Richler's *Jamb Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* appeals to her as a story in which children get the better of unjust adults, but it contains "an overload of belaboured jokes, cliché and sagging plot lines" and "moments of embarrassing sentimentality and falseness." Kevin Major's use of Newfoundland dialect and humour helps to make his novel *Far From Shore* believable and sympathetic, but in his subsequent book, *Thirty-Six Exposures*, his "hard-nosed 'realism' about Newfoundland speech patterns... undercuts the supposed humanity of his characters."

Landsberg is aware that her views on some books will spark controversy and that some people will take personally her attacks on books they have enjoyed reading. But she feels that children's literature is important enough for us to state and argue our views and to scrutinize our tastes and judgements.

Overall, the tone of the guide is positive, affirming the large number of enjoyable children's books. Following the text is a section Landsberg calls "A Treasury of Children's Books," approximately 350 titles, with capsule plot summaries, arranged by age categories. Most of these are British or American, with a few translations from other countries. About 15 per cent are books by Canadians. Landsberg acknowledges the need for children's reading material to reflect their national culture, but contends that Canadian children's literature is still developing and lacks the history and depth of U.S. and British children's literature. Most of the Canadian books she has included in her treasury hold their own among the "representative best works from the English-speaking world."

Landsberg's list is a good one, full of intriguing recommendations. It would perhaps be more useful if it contained a bit more bibliographic information. She provides both hardcover and paperback publishers for all books and tells, to the best of her current information, whether they are out of print. The date of first publication and the number of pages, if included, might have helped adults to decide which books they most went to seek out.

The treasury is provided with an index to all authors, illustrators, and titles listed. It would have been much more

valuable if the time and trouble could have been taken to expend it to cover the books and authors mentioned in the text as well. It is frustrating to read a synopsis of a book in the treasury, remember that Landsberg discusses that book much more thoroughly in one of his chapters, but have to search to find the exact page.

Landsberg's guide is undeniably a valuable aid to adults, but it will probably generate some guilt as well. Even the most caring parents with the highest ideals find themselves succumbing to complacency and consumerism occasionally. Of course children should read good books, just as they should eat properly; still, pop and potato chips, television and comic books sometimes slip into their lives. But forget the guilt! Landsberg's book offers positive and refreshingly suggestions for ways to encourage children to enjoy a richer and more nourishing reading diet. □

REVIEW

Home from the wars

By Roy MacLaren

The *Veterans' Years*, by Barry Broadfoot, Douglas & McIntyre, 249 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 473 X).

Fragments of *War: Stories from Survivors of World War II*, by Joyce Hibbert, Dundurn Press, illustrated, 267 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919670 95 4) and \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 919670 94 6).

The *Sky's No Limit*, by Raymond Munro, Key Porter, illustrated, 320 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919493 69 6).

FOR THOSE WHO like oral history, Barry Broadfoot serves it up well. His selection of colourful detail and lively recollection is almost unerring. Passage after passage and anecdote upon anecdote help to bring to life the immediate postwar years, as veterans and their spouses and families recount their difficulties and successes in adapting to the uncertainties of civilian life after as much as six years in the dangers and discipline of the armed forces.

The Veterans' Years is a worthy successor to Broadfoot's *Ten Last Years* and *Six War Years* and his other oral histories. It is perhaps to cavil to note that there is little here that resembles the more comprehensive analysis offered of the national postwar experience in Jean Bruce's recent *After the War*. Certainly for those who seek entertainment and

lively insights into a massive and largely successful social adaptation, Broadfoot, himself a veteran, offers an abundance. As one of the veterans notes, those who returned to Canada to attend universities, to marry or to attempt to restore a marriage, to search for housing, to begin businesses or to take up jobs were the same generation who have determined to a great degree what Canada is today. How they got started, sometimes successfully, sometimes only haltingly, is set forth in *The Veterans' Years* with imagination, wit, clear recollection, and good humour.

Oral history of a rather more haphazard variety is provided by Joyce Hibbert in her *Fragments of War: Stories from Survivors of World War II*. Her anthology of 30 varied wartime experiences, none more than a few pages long, is uneven. Some of these unpretentious recollections (divided among the three services) are of high adventure, others rather pedestrian. Some are exotic, some close to home. They range from the recollections of a merchant seaman torpedoed off Malaya to a "Ising sister in Berlin, from a Ferry Command pilot to Hong Kong prisoners, from a Polish officer in Italy to a Russian emigré in the Calgary Highlanders. AU are drawn from personal accounts

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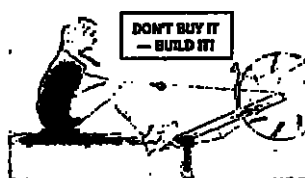
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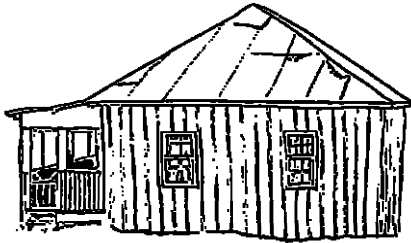
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on the **extermination** of the **Beothuk** Indians. Instead, what we have is a quasi-scientific but immensely **interesting** study of six of the best-known multiple murderers whose bloody trail across the U.S. covers the period from the **1950s** to the 1970s.

Although modestly claiming that the **purpose** of his study is to **penetrate** into the "**soul**" of his subjects, **Leyton** had



no personal contact with them. His primary **source** of information was popular books and scholarly articles. This **somewhat precarious** foundation for social research is justified by an apocryphal anecdote **concerning James Frazer**, the author of *The Golden Bough*, a study of primitive mythology. When asked if he had **actually met** a primitive, Sir James is **reputed** to have answered "Certainly **not!**"

Apart from a nagging **concern** about the methodological **weakness** in this **kind of study**, which will, no doubt, infuriate professional criminologists, the **detailed** information about the backgrounds, **personalities**, criminal acts, and motives of multiple murderers **serves** to illuminate a much neglected **field** of study. And, fortunately, **except** for a tendency to embellish his narrative with gruesome **details** of rape, **strangling**, **knifing**, **decapitation**, and **dismemberment**, **Leyton** has a vigorous and **entertaining** style of writing that **many academics** will **envy** and deplore.

Except for its shock value, what **purpose** is **served** by learning that one of the victims, who was shot in the abdomen, had his "belly button" blown out? **Even** more **puzzling**, in a t-ambling account of the notorious Starkweather killings, **Leyton** concludes with details of an **execution** that could have **been** written by **Micky Spillane**: "The switch which **sent 2200** volts coursing through **his** body was pulled three **times**: the **first** shock stunned him, the **second** rendered him unconscious, and the **third** stopped his heart."

At the heart of *Hunting Humans* is the thesis that, owing to prevailing **socio-economic** and cultural conditions in the U.S., multiple **murder** has become "a virulent social epidemic of the **1980s.**" **Leyton** claims that these **horrendous murders** cannot be explained in terms of "insanity" or as "**genetic freakishness.**" Far from being an aber-

ration, **Leyton** **argues** that the multiple **murderer** is essentially a product of his time.

In what follows, I shall show that the **pre-industrial** multiple **killer** was an **aristocrat** who preyed on his **peasants**; that the **industrial era** produced a new kind of killer, most commonly a new bourgeois who preyed upon **prostitutes**, homeless boys and house-maids; and in the mature industrial **era**, he is most often a **failed bourgeois** who stalks **university women** and **other middle-class** figures. Thus for **each historical** epoch, both the **social origins** of the killers and the characteristics of their **victims** are **highly predictable**: they are thus very much men of their time.

Although by no **means** original, this **essentially neo-Marxist analysis of crime** is **intellectually challenging.** But moving the **argument** from rhetoric to **research** is **difficult.** As **Leyton** has discovered, reliable criminal statistics are **scarce**, **making** it virtually impossible for him to demonstrate the existence of an "epidemic" of multiple murders. At a **higher** level of abstraction, his notion that the **modern** multiple **murderer** tends to kill "**up-scale**" is equally unconvincing. This is **especially** so in relation to **Albert DeSalvo**, the Boston Strangler, and **David Richard Bercowitz**, the Son of Sam. The murderous **rampages** of both **were** conducted in an exceedingly random fashion.

This controversial book should be avoided by readers who have no stomach for the **agonizing** screams of **rape** victims and a **veritable flood** of blood and **guts.** On the other hand, **afficionados of murder literature** who, for example, **enjoyed** Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* will probably find similar satisfaction in *Hunting Humans*. □

REVIEW

The five apostles

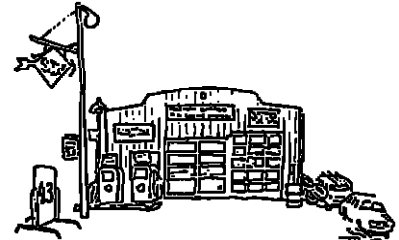
By **Patricia Morley**

The Montreal Story Tellers: Memoirs, Photographs, Critical Essays, edited by J.R. (Tim) **Struthers**, Véhicule Press. \$26.00 cloth (ISBN 0 919890 59 8) and \$14.00 paper (ISBN 0 919890 58 X).

THE FIVE PROSE writers who **performed** as a group in Montreal in the **early 1970s** were **held** together by **male camaraderie**, touch football, and a love of style. The volume **commemorating their five years together** is chatty, witty, and (at times) exasperating. If **some** of the critical

claims seem grandiloquent, the personal **memoirs** are **refreshingly candid.**

The idea to **form such a group** came from **John Metcalf**, who **approached Hugh Hood** late in 1970. Soon after, the two met with **Clark Blaise**, **Ray Smith**, and **Raymond Fraser** (the **latter** both from the **Maritimes**). The group of friends **read** for the first time in February, 1971. Hood's contacts with the Catholic School Commission of Montreal resulted in the majority of their readings being in Catholic high schools to **an audience ill-suited to the** ir-r-t prose of the two Rays. Money



was the prime mover. Why should **poets** have all the action? The **story-tellers** chortled at the prospect of muscling in and **copping some** of the loot: "Give **them** prose, give them characters, **stories**, give them life," **Smith** **urges.**

All **five** had written about Montreal, and believed that students **would** be pleased to **discover** that writers **were** flesh and blood; that **they were** (in the words of **several** of the **group**) "**in** the phone book." As **Blaise** observes, it was **an idea whose time had come.** The **group** **read** in **high schools**, **community colleges**, **libraries**, **book stores**, and (very occasionally) **universities.**

Hood and **Metcalf** **emphasize** that the group was not a **literary** movement. **They** held **no literary** principles in common, although all cared about **writing** and **admired** good style. At the time, **all** were **devoted** to Canadian literature and Canadian **writing** as a means (not to **mince** words) of promoting themselves. **Metcalf**, who grows **more** testy with **age**, would hardly pass as a nationalist, yet **he** considered the **group** as a "missionary" **project** in the **1970s**: "To read Canadian **matter** and talk of Canadian **concerns** was **then** rather like **carrying** the Word to **people** who ate grubs and **worshipped** **aeroplanes.**" **Blaise** sees the group as having **succeeded** "in stuffing Canadian **literature** into **most crannies** in the **curriculum.**"

The personal essays and memoirs by the **story-tellers** **form** the heart of the volume, although they account for only **one-third** of its **length.** Anyone **interested** in the work of any one of the **five** will want to read his **essay here.** Most acknowledge that the readings **were** part of their maturation and that the styles of the other writers acted on **them** as in-

fluences in varying ways. Metcalf and Hood each give detailed comments on their own literary methods and those of the others in the group. As Metcalf puts it, "We grew together. ... Four of us, at least, were writers obsessed by the idea of excellence, crazy about craft."

Odd man out was Raymond Fraser — poet, story-teller and editor — whose garish material was strongly influenced by the fact that he had survived for some time by writing for tabloids like *Midnight*. Blaise parodies his stories as being "in the Maritime tall tale genre touched with a bit of the Montreal macabre: DAD RAPES INFANT SON: SERVES HIM FOR DINNER." Fraser, whose piece is called "The Guy in the Wings with his Pint," describes himself as being very conscious that he was not an English teacher, like

the others: "None of them was a poet or practising drunk."

The group broke up in the spring of 1976. Some of the writers were leaving Montreal: others, including Hood, had doubts about writing stories designed to be read aloud. Metcalf felt discouraged that the literary landscape had not changed, "the earth had not moved." Blaise felt the time for public readings had passed.

Critical pieces, most of them brief, make up the balance of the book. Lawrence Garber, writing on Ray Smith, places his work in the tradition of existentialist fiction and absurdist drama. (Are satire, parody, and a basic irreverence sufficient qualities to place a writer with Camus, Genet, and Beckett?) Louis MacKendrick's piece is

a workmanlike comparison of the two Rays. Barry Cameron approaches Blaise through biographical criticism, while Michael Darling places him in the literary tradition of alienation. Kent Thompson profiles John Metcalf while cheerfully admitting that biography is "something of a fiction." more interpretation than data. Dennis Duffy turns a summer trip from Toronto to Morrisburg into an appreciation of Hood's fiction, while Lawrence Mathews examines Hood's moral imagination and treatment of evil.

Among the critics only Keith Garebian looks at the group as a group. Like Garber he allows Smith's bold claims to foreign models to typify the inspiration behind the group: Borges, Barth, Vonnegut, Nabokov. Garebian calls them

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"dinosaur slayers — the dinosaurs being the antiquated conventions that Roy Smith found massively predictable and lumbering in fiction." More realistic-

ally, **Garebian** ends by calling them "a serendipitous group."

Editor **Tim Struthers** includes a checklist of works by the Montreal Story

Tellers, to 1984. Sam Tata's photographs of the members of the group, alone and together, add considerably to the book's attractiveness. □

INTERVIEW

Sandra Birdsell

'People may think I'm wishy-washy because I don't take stands on issues. I refuse to, because I can see both sides of issues all the time'

By Nancy **Russell**

BORN IN Morris, Man., in 1943, Sandra **Birdsell** writes evocative, accomplished short stories that are grounded in the small-town prairie landscape. Her stories have appeared in such journals as **Grain, NeWest Review**, and the **Capilano Review** and have been published in two collections, **Night Travellers** (Turnstone Press, 1982) and **Ladies of the House** (1984). Recently judged by the 45 **Below** panel to be one of the 10 best young fiction writers in Canada, **Birdsell** now lives in Winnipeg, where she was interviewed by Nancy **Russell**:

Books in Canada: **How did you begin writing?**

Sandra Birdsell: I guess I've always been a writer and I didn't know it. I always kept journals and wrote things in scribbles. But it was a normal process, a normal part of my life, and so I didn't see it as being unusual. It never crossed my mind that other people didn't write. Writing as a means of working through

Sandra Birdsell



problems for me, for therapeutic reasons, has always been a type of daily life. When I started to give shape to that writing is a different matter. I can clearly pinpoint that. It would probably be around 1976, when my father died. I was very close to him, and I recorded a great deal about him at that time. It was a long, long process, his dying, about six months — it was very painful. And when I lost him finally, I had this great desire to get some things down. I felt I'd lost a lot of his stories, and I wish now that I'd asked him to tell me more of them.

BIC: *Why were you so drawn to the short story?*

Birdsell: Probably, because I didn't have a whole lot of time. I had three children at home, and I worked in many, many full- and part-time jobs, so I could only snatch an hour or two at a time. I did attempt a novel, and wrote it six or seven times. I found that sometimes I'd have to go back and rewrite a whole chapter before I could move forward. With a short story, I only have to do the last few pages to get back into it.

BIC: *How do you feel about the female characters in Night Travellers and Ladies of the House? You seem to sympathize with them on the one hand, but at the same time you also seem to be able to see how they are being repressed. You sympathize with them, but you are realistic about the dilemmas they face.*

Birdsell: From the very first time I started writing short stories, I realized that I couldn't or didn't want my prejudices or my moral beliefs or lack of them imposed at any point on any of my characters. I always wanted to stand back from them, and let them be who they were. A lot of people may think I'm a wishy-washy person, because I don't take stands on issues. I refuse to. That's because I can see both sides of issues all the time. I can see why a woman is a proliferator, or see why she isn't.

BIC: *In "The Bird Dance" in Night Travellers Lureen and Larry's marriage is falling apart. She sees that she wants to escape, but she doesn't know how.*

You really seem to have captured the dilemma — the not being able to escape.

Birdsell: That was what always bothered me about the very first works I read by women. Often they would just leap over the process. One day the woman would be here, and the next moment she was there. Whether she was in a family or left the family to realize her potential and become who she wanted to become — the process of becoming was missing. And I always felt cheated. I always wanted to know, was there any struggle, was there any ambivalence, was there any going back and forth for a time? How did she make a living? Those sorts of things were missing.

BIC: *In a recent interview in Arts Manitoba you talk about women lacking self-confidence when they go to write.*

Birdsell: I don't know if it's particularly in writing, or if it's in anything where a woman tries to excel. I think that women don't have that same kind of confidence, or maybe we just don't put up the same façade. Maybe the sense of lack of self-confidence isn't as buried, as hidden as in men. I think lack of self-confidence is very strong in my life as a writer. I haven't travelled around the world in a sailing ship. I have stayed home. What a dull and boring view. It's when you lack confidence that your vision or your experiences don't seem the least bit interesting to anybody else. But it's reading other women writers that makes you think, well of course it's interesting.

BIC: *What do you think about comparisons of yourself to Alice Munro?*

Birdsell: There's no comparison as far as I'm concerned. She's a totally different kind of writer. I think the only comparison is that a lot of times we're both writing rural stories, and we're writing about women. I think my way of telling a story is different from hers. My stories — maybe because I'm such a new writer — the form and shape is visible at times. You look at hers, and they just run off the page. You can't find the structure or the shape of it, but the story's there, and it just keeps coming back and back and

back to you as you think about it.

BiC: What about your position as a "Western writer"?

Birdsell: I don't even think about that. My work has been accepted so widely across Canada. It's not like I'm being read just in Alberta or Saskatchewan or Manitoba. I don't think my writing has any Western flavour at all.

BiC: You commented once that you felt being brought up on the prairies taught you to pay more attention to details, because it's such an open space.

Birdsell: I think that wherever a writer grows up influences her writing. I just happened to grow up on the prairies. I love the prairies very much. Sometimes there's not very much to see until you get down close to it and then you see the pebble in the pool or you see the little harebells. Little tiny pretty things. Whereas in B.C., it hits you in the face

all the time, and you can't appreciate it.

BiC: Have you ever felt drawn to write out of a specific Western environment?

Birdsell: With these stories, I just had to write out of the particular environment that the characters were living in. If I went to live in another province or another country for a year or two years, it's quite possible I would write out of that landscape or environment. It just happens that I've lived here all my life. And I think that's what other people are doing too. Like writers in Saskatchewan — they're not writing a Saskatchewan story. they're writing out of their own place.

BE: Would you like to go away to some other place, and write in another environment?

Birdsell: Yes, I'd like to live in another country for a year or two. That's one of my goals. Not because I need to do it for

my writing, but because I need to do it for me as a person.

BiC: Do you think your writing would change?

Birdsell: It might. I don't know. I'd like to go and find out. □

LETTERS

Fighting words

IN HIS REVIEW of my book, *Sir Arthur Currie* (December), Desmond Morton does not dispute my contention, which is the thrust of the book, that Currie was the greatest — indeed, the only great — soldier that Canada has ever produced. Instead, he nit-picks about Currie's popularity with the troops, his demobilization plans, and his misuse of regimental funds.

Of what relevancy is Currie's popularity? The Duke of Wellington was not popular with his men — admired and respected, even feared, but not liked. So what? Certainly, there is no question that Currie was unpopular with some of his troops, especially the conscripts who served overseas in 1918. But for every complaint that Morton can produce, I can produce one attesting to his popularity. It is interesting, for example, that Morton quotes W.D.B. Kerr's observation that Currie was a "regular Paul Pry" for snooping through soldiers' haversacks. Yet Kerr also wrote: "In so far as Currie was known to all, opinion was rather favourable to him." Morton prefers the negative aspect, which says much about Morton.

It would take too much space to refute in detail Morton's ridiculous assertions about demobilization. However, I will state categorically that it was a triumph, both for Currie and the Canadian Corps.

And, finally, there is the matter of Currie's "scandal." Even here, Morton's facts are not quite right. Currie, at the behest of his regimental officers, deposited a total of \$32,000 in government cheques to his personal account — not an uncommon action in the militia in those days, which Morton knows. All but \$8,300 was used for regimental purposes: the rest Currie fraudulently used to avoid personal bankruptcy in August, 1914. He repaid it three years later — not because he had forgotten about it, as Morton suggests, but because Sir Sam Hughes, the minister of militia and defence, through an intermediary, told him not to worry about it. Currie, in fact, repaid the regiment \$10,883.34 — surely an odd example of "theft." Moreover, Morton

CANWIT NO. 111

REMEMBER THE innocent time when that other Expo dared call itself "Man and His World"? Oh my. These days we must witness such uncomfortable spectacles as the National Museum of Man's awkward attempts to purge its name of sexism. (We're not sure why just "National Museum" won't do.) And think for a moment about such terms as man's best friend, manpower, manholes.. man's inhumanity to man, and (God help us) the Son of Man. At the risk of provoking — yet again — the wrath of Linguistic feminists, we'll pay a special anniversary prize of \$50 for the list of well-known masculine terms rendered into the most cumbersome non-sexist language. Deadline: August 1. Address: CanWit No. 111, Books in Canada, 366 Adelaide Street East. Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 109

CAN IT BE that Alberta is the last frontier of English usage? (Has anyone told Bob Blackburn?) Whatever the reason, as the entries below indicate, by far the largest number of mangled rules of grammar came from contestants in the West. Nevertheless, central Canada once again prevails. The winner is Alec McEwen of Ottawa for a list of grammatical perversities that includes:

- Avoid redundant language by confining your statements to the true facts.
- Mixed metaphors are nothing but red herrings that cloud the issue.
- Hopefully you will never employ an adverb to qualify a sentence.
- Between you and I, few people under-

stand the subjective case.

- By the skilful use of hyperbole you can have the audience literally glued to their seats.
- The ability to refrain from modifying absolute words is very unique.
- Only a miniscule number of spelling errors will be tolerated.

Honourable mentions:

- Never use a preposition to end a sentence with.
- Avoid excessive use of exclamation marks!
- The adverb will hopefully follow its verb.
- Superlatives should be used comparatively sparingly.
- If you have nothing to say, say it quickly.
- Avoid meretricious sesquipedalianism.

— Barry Baldwin, Calgary

- The ancient spelling rule of "i" before "e" except after "c" will always reign.

— Barrie Wells, Edmonton

- Why try to write a masterpiece if you cannot correctly spell, the most prevalent, of words. And howls your punctuation. That, too should be flaw-less.

— E.E. Murphy, Halifax

- Pronouns must agree in number with what it refers to.
- The combining of subject and predicate must make sense together.
- Avoid clichés like the plague!

— Lee McLeod, Calgary

- Avoid the double that, unless you find that that is unavoidable.

— Robert Schmiel, Calgary

seems to think that he blew the whistle on Carrie's indiscretion in 1979. I have news for him. *Hush*, a Toronto scandal rag, plastered it all over its front page on Oct. 13, 1934, scooping Morton by a mere 45 years. some cover-up.

Daniel Cl. Dancocks
Calgary

Desmond Morton replies: Sir Arthur Currie was a fine soldier and a very interesting person. The limits of Dancocks's tiresome hagiography are underlined by his rejoinder. The details of Carrie's fraudulent conversion do not have to be gleaned from an old issue of *Hush*; they are available in the Public Archives of Canada. We are urged to accept Dancocks's assertion that Carrie's demobilization plan was "a triumph." The evidence of a sad succession of demobilization riots, five dead soldiers, and a dismal series of courts martial tells me otherwise.

Dancocks has managed the remarkable feat of rendering a fascinating story boring. I thought that it might have been an accident: apparently it was on purpose.

NOT QUITE ALL CONTRARY TO the contributors' note (January-February) connected with my interview of George Faludy, I have not just recently translated the complete poems of Federico Garcia Lorca. Rather, I just finished the first translation into English of his *Libra de poemas*, his very first book of poems to have been published in his lifetime.

Jacqueline d'Amboise
Lennoxville, Que.

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THROUGH A PRISM DARKLY

IT IS NOT my custom to reach for credit, but I want to keep the record straight of literary enterprises that I am proud to have been associated with. I therefore write to correct the misstatement in Geoff Hancock's interview with Robert Harlow (March) that in 1959 "Harlow joined Earle Birney and others to start the literary magazine *Prism International*." Harlow had no role in starting that journal, which came into existence in 1984 because of initiatives taken by Birney and myself. Nor was Birney involved in starting its forerunner, *Prism*, whose first issue appeared in 1959. That magazine was born largely through the efforts of Jan de Bruyn, who was its first editor, and myself, the first chairman of a Board of Directors that included Harlow as a member.

Jacob Zilber
Department of Creative Writing
University of British Columbia
Vancouver

RECOMMENDED

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

FICTION

Queen of the Headaches, by Sharon Butala, Coteau Books. Though a few of these 14 stories are perhaps too freighted with meaning, together their clipped, methodical prose manages to evoke the very texture of the prairies and the people who live there.

NON-FICTION

The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple, by Anne Hart. Dodd. Mead (McClelland & Stewart). A biography of a fictional character is a novel idea that Hart, a librarian at Memorial University, carries out brilliantly. Her portrait of Agatha Christie's remarkable sleuth is as shrewd as the subject it celebrates.

POETRY

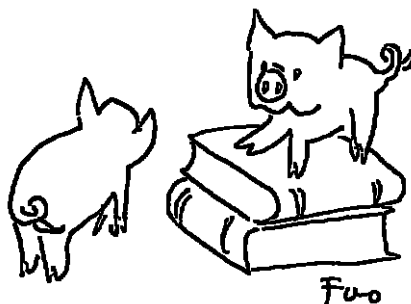
Paper Roses, by Rachel Korn, translated from the Yiddish by Seymour Levitan, Aya Press. Korn's decision to write in Yiddish and her death in 1982 make it likely that

this book will be overlooked. That would be a shame, for she was an extraordinary poet of lyric grief, and *Paper Roses* contains an amazing number of fine poems.

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:

- The Anarchist Papers, edited by Dimitrios I. Rousopoulos, Black Rose Books.
- Beyond Happiness: The Intimate Memoirs of Billy Lee Belle, by Peter McGehee, Stubble Jumper Press.
- Canadian Selection: Books and Periodicals for Libraries (2nd edition), compiled by Mavis Carlow, U of T Press.
- Careers in Music: A Guide for Canadian Students, edited by Thomas Green, Frederick Harris Music.
- The Centre, by Barry McKinnon, Line.
- Cocksure, by Mordcael Richler, New Canadian Library (M & S).
- The Collected Poems of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, edited by Desmond Pacey, Wombat Press.
- Compendium, by Carolyn Zonailo, The Heron Press.
- Conspiracy to Murder: The Helmut Burbaum Trial, by Heather Bird, Key Porter.
- Cry to the Night Wind, by T.H. Smith, Viking Kestrel.
- The During Game, by Kit Pearson, Viking Kestrel.
- A Day to Remember: Wedding Guide for the Bride and Groom, Fenn.
- The Deep End, by Joy Fielding, Doubleday.
- Economic Sex, by Ali-Janna Whyte, Coach House.
- Emotions, by June Callwood, Doubleday.
- Familiar Faces, Private Grievs, by Susan Ioannou, Wordwrights Canada.
- The Foot Doctor, by Glenn Copeland, Macmillan.
- The Gourmet Barbecue, by Pip Bloomfield et al., Key Porter.
- Gumboots & Blink, by David Phillips, Tallow/Gorse.
- The Hand of Robin Squires, by Joan Clark, Penguin.
- How to Be a Great MC, by Alex Makr, Hurlig.
- Hunting Dinosaurs in the Bad Lands of the Red Deer River, by Charles Hazellus Sternberg, NeWest Press.
- Illustrated News: Juliana Horatia Ewing's Canadian Pictures 1867-1869, by Donna McDonald, Dundurn Press.
- It Seems Like Only Yesterday, by Philip Smith, M & S.
- Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang, by Mordcael Richler, Seal.
- Landladies: Selected Poems, 1975-1985, by Don Coles, M & S.
- The Limits of the City, by Murray Bookchin, Black Rose Books.
- Lives of Short Duration, by David Adams Richards, New Canadian Library (M & S).
- The Lost Tribe, by Don Austin, Pulp Press.
- Lunatic Villas, by Marian Engel, New Canadian Library (M & S).
- Matt & Jenny in Old Vancouver, by Terry Stafford, Children's Studio Books.
- Matters of the Heart, by Charlotte Vale Allen, Berkley (U.S.).
- Me a Len: Life in the Halliburton Bush, 1900-1940, by Richard Pope, Dundurn Press.
- Music Directory Canada '86, CM Books.
- The Next Best Thing, by John Rakston Saul, Collins.
- Northern Development: The Canadian Dilemma, by Robert Page, M & S.
- Now You Are Wise, by D.K. Flindlay, PMF Publishing.
- Ontario 1610-1985: A Political and Economic History, by Randall White, Dundurn Press.
- The Phoenix, by Gordon Rodgers, Creative Publishers.
- A Population of One, by Constance Berezford-Howe, New Canadian Library (M & S).
- Public Money, Private Greed: The Greymac Seaway and Crown Trusts Affair, by Terence Corcoran and Laura Reid, Totem.
- The Ross Farm Story, by J. Lynton Mardia, Nova Scotia Museum.
- Sink the Ralabowl! An enquiry into the 'Greenpeace Affair', by John Dyson, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Canada.
- Smart Cooking, by Anne Lindsay, Macmillan.
- Socialist Studies 2: A Canadian Annual, Society for Socialist Studies, University of Manitoba.
- Specks, by Michael McClure, Talonbooks.
- The Tempest: Essays and Short Stories, by Michael M.J. Shore, Editions Naaman.
- "They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood, by Ruth Roach Pierson, M & S.
- Thoughts/Sketches, by Barry McKinnon, Tallow/Gorse.
- The Township of Time, by Charles Bruce, New Canadian Library (M & S).
- T.S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism, by P.S. Sri, UBC Press.
- Turning the Tiller: The U.S. and Latin America, by Noam Chomsky, Black Rose Books.
- Under the Shadow of the Wings: The Poems of Sonny Ezra, by Tom Osborne, Pulp Press.
- Visions of Falah: An Anthology of Reflections, by William G.D. Sykes, Eden Press.
- Voyage of the Iceberg, by Richard Brown, Lorimer.
- Wild Gardening: Strategies and Procedures Using Native Plantings, by Richard L. Austin, Prentice-Hall.
- Wintergarden, by Robert Allen, Quadrant (1984).



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