

BOOKS

I C A N A D A



**KEEPING SCORE ON
GEORGE BOWERING**

Wrapping up the
fall's gift books

New poetry
by Al Purdy

Timothy Findley
on Farley Mowat

And an interview
with Katherine Govier

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Nordic journey

The popular notion of Canadian culture in Sweden is of a frontier society in which women are virtually the only creators



THE UNIVERSITY of Lund, Sweden, began in 1668. Toward the end of the 17th century Charles XI donated the King's House to the university. It is in this turreted, red brick building with its hewn wood steps that I register for the triennial conference of the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies. There will be 90 papers given during three days, ranging from "Winter Living: Humanizing Urban Life in Cold Climates" to "Logging Poetry in British Columbia." There are 250 participants. You can't miss the organizers. They're all wearing T-shirts with large, maple leaves on the front.

As I circulate at the reception that evening, shaking hands, trying to remember names, it is obvious that Canada is of intense interest to Scandinavians but also a great mystery. Canada was very popular in Sweden during the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. Swedish immigration after the turn of the century created strong personal links. Also, there were external similarities. After the conference, when I take a seven-hour train ride from Lund to Stockholm, I keep thinking that I'm in southern Manitoba. Only the signs in Swedish remind me I'm half a world away.

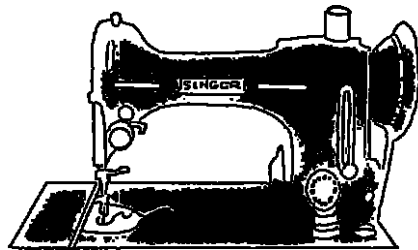
Jack London, Robert Service, and Charles O.D. Roberts created a marketplace in Sweden for what was to come. Hollywood had not yet created the fictional Wild West. (How fascinated the Swedes are by cowboys was clear in the Seattle airport, where returning Swedes were wearing cowboy hats, string ties, and cowboy boots. Just outside Stockholm at the Ytter-Enhorna church, there is a place called Fort Apache where Swedes can go to watch daily shoot-outs in a Wild West town.) While Sweden was growing more industrialized, Canada was seen as a northern frontier. Very popular books were about hunting, gold digging, and a wilderness in which Swedes worked hard and prospered while Mounties and Indians fought cold, wolves, and bears. This is the image many Swedes still have of Canada.

Within half an hour I'm asked why Canada's only important writers are women. The question is repeated a dozen times during the next three days. Audrey

Thomas (who is here), Alice Munro, Aritha van Herk, Marian Engel, Sheila Watson are all known and highly thought of. Margaret Laurence is revered, but Margaret Atwood is deified. Only Robertson Davies is mentioned as a male author whose work is of major importance. A number of times his name surfaces in connection with the Nobel Prize, but that high opinion is not universal. If one were to accept the Swedish evaluation of Canadian culture, it would be that not only are women totally in charge of it but that they are virtually the only creators of its content.

Finally the moment I've been waiting for arrives. I meet Heidi von Borne, a flamboyant, energetic woman whose life's mission is making Canadian literature known in Sweden. She knows everyone by name, knows all the facts, all the rumours, understands all the social and political implications. She is appalled that I have not written ahead so she could arrange for me to meet writers, critics, editors, and to attend the two receptions for Canadian writers being held at the Canadian embassy during the coming week. (On my last night in Stockholm, I'm sitting in the dining-room of the Lord Nelson when Greg Gatenby rushes by. I realize then that the conversation taking place at the hotel desk about someone important coming to meet Swedish writers is about Greg. He is here for one of the receptions.)

During the formal sessions Hans Nygren, editor at Prisma (they publish



Margaret Atwood), points out that the Scandinavian publication of Canadian books was very spotty until the late 1970s. In 1947 Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* was published; in 1949, Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute*; in 1956, Mordecai Richler's *The Acrobats*; in 1963, Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*. To us, these

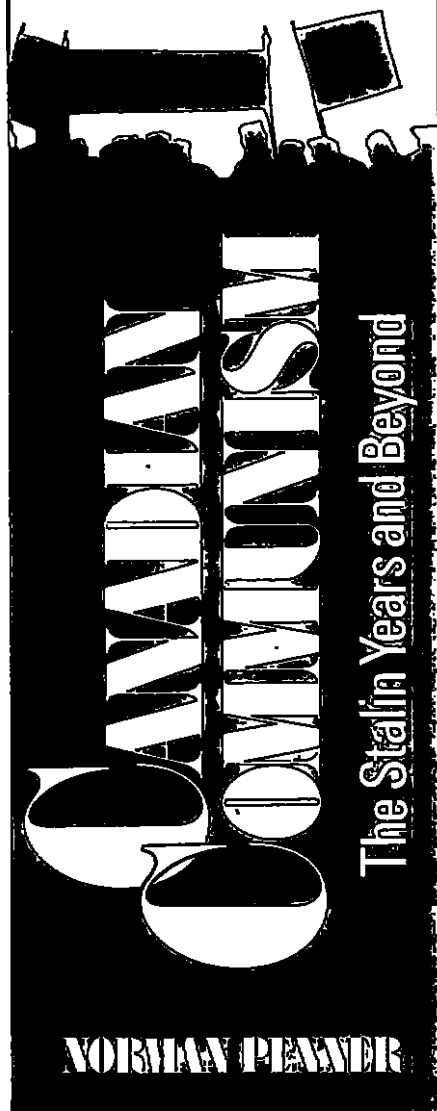
were Canadian books, but to the Swedish audience they were simply North American. There was no distinction made between Canadian and American. Finally, in 1977, Canadian writers started to describe a genuinely Canadian identity. On the practical side, the Canada Council and the Swedish State Cultural Council's assistance to translate Canadian books has made a great deal possible. In 1985 some 8,750 book titles were published in Sweden. About 2,000 were fiction and 1,250 of these were translations, so the translation market is a big one if Canadians can break into it.

Although every writer who gets translated likes to think there is some rational process behind it, the truth is that a lot of times what gets translated is a result of chance. Nygren told us that Solveig Neelinge was talking to Tillie Olsen about the problem of ageing. Olsen told Neelinge to read the best novel on the subject — *The Stone Angel*. This was easy because Solveig had an unread copy at home. About the same time, Sven Delblanc wrote an article about Margaret Laurence that created interest in her work.

Several Canadian novels have been selected for *Manadens Bok* (Book-of-the-Month) over the years: Atwood's *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, Laurence's *The Stone Angel*, Munro's *The Beggar Maid*, Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words*, Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands*, and Davies's *Deptford Trilogy*. But being selected cuts two ways. It guarantees a wide audience but has meant that the critics automatically assume the books are popular trash. Some critics have attacked Davies mercilessly.

At a round-table discussion billed as "Canadian writers on Canadian Literature Today," Heidi von Borne, the moderator, asks what the difference is between the literature of western and eastern Canada, why Canadian writers travel so much, and where is here. Barry Callaghan starts off by ignoring the first question, saying he frankly doesn't care where "here" is and attacking the Canada Council for funding travel for titers. He points out that the League of Canadian Poets has 200 members and that in his opinion there aren't that many real poets in the whole world. The result is that the

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rest of the panel is put on the defensive. Stephen Smbie tries to redirect the discussion with some gentle humour about Canadian writers not spending their time travelling but waiting in airports. The panellists, to their credit, do everything they can not to let the discussion become an incestuous conversation about Canada Council policy that no one in the audience will understand.

Supper is held En Kulturen, an outdoor museum that encompasses two blocks and 36 historic buildings. As the light fades, a reading by six Canadian writers begins in Bosebo Church. To read in this country church, built in 1652 of pine timbers and shingles, with its painted ceiling, its Biblical scenes on the walls, and its altar-piece enclosed within a magnificent baroque frame, is a privilege. Scobie and Douglas Barbour perform two sound poems. The audience is perplexed. This is a Nordic audience brought up on Saga and Edda. Kristjana Gunnars knows this, and before she reads she explains that what they've just heard is taken very seriously by some people. They're not convinced. It is like trying to sell abstract paintings to realists. The audience reacts best to David Williams's novel excerpt and Audrey Thomas's short story, largely because of the strong narrative structure of their fiction;

At the banquet to celebrate the conclusion of the conference, I feel as if I've stepped into a Hollywood set. The Swedes, determined to be memorable hosts, have chosen to hold the party in the Pillared Hall, with its portraits of royalty. The tables are lined with Swedish beer, and the waitresses see that no schnapps glass goes empty. After we've drunk our way through numerous toasts, a Swedish band begins to play.

On the last day, a group of us go to Denmark. As the ferry approaches Elsinore, the walls of solid red brick enclosing the graceful turrets of Kronberg castle rise out of the mist. Unfortunately, the guards have been on strike all summa and we cannot enter Hamlet's castle. My plans to stand on the battlements and recite "To be or not to be" come to nothing.

Because the castle is closed, we have some extra time and our guide, on impulse, decides to stop at Rungstedlund. Together, Stephen Scobie, David Williams, and I walk a muddy path past the Nightingale's bench to Karen Blixen's grave, in a grove at the foot of "Ewaldshøj," where she used to love to sit. Her grave is marked with a plain grey slab. We have come through a hectic time crammed with words and politics but now, three Canadian writers far from home, we stand in a semi-circle, silent under a gentle rain.

— W.D. VALGARDSON

Dada processing

ALAN LORD, Montreal's current Lord of Misrule, described this year's Ultimatum II at Théâtre Le Milieu as a "smorgasbord." The festival of "new literatures" featured poets, performance artists, and plain bums, leading the circuit into the Information Age.

The nine-day changing of the avant-garde was sponsored by a \$30,000 Canada Council grant, along with a \$21,000 perk from the community works program of the Ministère des affaires culturelles du Québec. An expected \$20,000 municipal subsidy did not come through. The organizers had to scrap a megaproject involving global database hook-ups with individual artists such as U.S. novelist William S. Burroughs (who intended to write a special piece for Ultimatum II), Roy Ascott in England, Bob Adrian in Austria, an electronic magazine in Canada called *Swift Current*, and institutions such as La Mamelie & Artcom in San Francisco, the Carnegie Mellon Institute, and the Massachusetts College of Art.

Opening night unrolled under the heading: "Salut Les Riches!" (Down With the Rich). Ritz types showed up, along with the creepy and the curious. Blue, orange, and purple-haired yahoos in trenchcoats made "le look dense" resemble pre-war Berlin more than post-punk Montreal.

There is no difference between the stage and the audience, averred the first act, *La Société de Conservation du Présent*. The cliché set the tone for the remainder of the festival: fuzzy. The presentation came across as a micro-minimalist Composition III lecture, enhanced by slides, synthesizer, and computer. A dull voice conjugated the name of the painter Molinari, while a blue "Ti-Pop" button appeared on the screen. One member of the trio then wiped the screen clean of words with a squeegie as a symbolic gesture.

Claude-Michel Prévost's "L'Archipel des Karmas" was a nonomatopoeic interfacing of the suicides of Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima with that of punker Sid Vi&us. Prévost was accompanied by five electric guitarists in modal tuning, while spectral images of the two victims collided on a screen.

Acts with less éclat were introduced by the bilingual *beau parleur* Jean-Luc Bonspiel. The emcee had changed into his pyjamas on stage. Using words you won't find in Spellcheck, Alan Lord then joined him to close the blowout with their "absurdist band" bearing the untranslatable name Vent du Moat Scharr.

On the second night Toronto-based artists took over. Karl Jirgens read "Uncharted Territory" in the straight old-

fashioned way. The" Eldon Garnet did an exposé for solo Macintosh computer entitled "I Shot Mussolini." The "novel" deals with a silent five-minute "re-enactment" of a crime that "ever happened." A" Italian protagonist fails to assassinate Mussolini. Snippets of text are interspersed with pixelized shots of Ronald Reagan, John Hinckley's brain compared to those of other schizophrenics, an allusion to John Lennon, and amatory pursuits of Jodie Poster coupled with images of Il Duce addressing the crowds.

Violence & the Sacred, a" electric cello player and two other musicians, tinkered for half a" hour with dials and switches on the floor and on their instruments, while phantasmagoric scenes of a funeral, cityscapes, and abstract amoebas interwove on the screen. The orchestrated chaos was as exciting as a sound check.

The Nibelungenbüro presented "Project for a" Opera of the 20th Century." Christopher Butterfield bumbled something about writing a novel counterpointed by the programmatic music of a bass and three keyboards.

Vancouver got in its screams on the third night from the varied neuroses of Ken Lester, Mecca Normal, Judy Radul, and I, Braineater. "Anglomaniacs" followed the next evening with ranters such as Rhythm Activism, Mohamad Togane, and Nick Toczek from England, who has shouted in over 5,000 prisons, schools for the handicapped, and community centres across Europe.

The fifth and sixth soirées focused on Films/Videos and the "Ultimatum Talkshow." The videos ranged in taste from Jean-Paul Curtay fellating a microphone to Allen Ginsberg intoning "Father Death Blues." Ginsberg's video showed photographs of his father merging with his past and present selves. A ferry in New York Harbour transported the poet, palms opened, toward the other shore. Very moving.

The "talkshow" brought together editors of alternative magazines. Hans-Herbert Rakel discussed the success of his *L'Oeil Rechargeable*, which enjoys a circulation of 10,000 throughout Quebec, the U.S., and Europe. Rake-I claims that "la nouvelle culture" and popularity can be fused by emphasizing graphics, a text that is not too "wide," and by dropping the notion of marginality. Sylvère Lotringer, founder of *Semiotext(e)* and professor of French literature and philosophy at Columbia University, spoke of the "explosion de pluralité." Culture is not a question of "purité"; culture just is.

The distinction between audience and stage definitely became blurred on the seventh night — because the audience consisted mainly of drunken or wired per-

formers. A besotted Denis Vanier was kicked out of theatre, only to start a free-for-all in the men's room. While the police inched their way over, a nude poet named Sansceur played with his ding-a-ling on stage, snarling lines such as "mon coeur est un grenade carmine." Later, when Paul Chamberland displayed the Statue of Liberty during his computer performance, a soused ex-girlfriend in the back seats cried out: "Aw, aw, Paul! Arrête avec ton liberté!"

There is high brow, low brow, and then there is New York Lower East Side bottomlessly bad. That element crept out on Friday night. Broadway Bob administered his "AIDS test," kissing women and me" in the audience while a photographer took souvenir shots. The sick humour crawled on and on with none-not worth a neonist nanosecond of space or attention.

What do you do for a finale? Bring in more New York dorks such as David Rattray and "Mr. Scum and Slime," John Giomo. The graying Giomo is idolized for squeaking obscenities you can find in any high-school lavatory: "I'll walk through a mile of shit to suck the last guy who fucked you." The packed house hollered for an encore, which Giomo delivered without a smile. It's not shocking, or eve" schlocking, or cute. Just sad.

Ken Decker's "Cleaning the Tools" was a wipeout too. He left the audience in an absolute zero state of nullity, having lifelessly encouraged them to participate as the "ROM kernel and audio effects generator." They were to hum along with him on cue from his "single bit processor": a flashlight. Not one photon of illumination was shed.

That applies to the whole spectacle. The technology is expensive but the art is cheap. New Literature is just the same old negativity and narcissism propped up with artificial musical and visual aids. Instead of a lectern, substitute a music stand. Mad Dog Vachon could have been squeezed into the act too. It makes a body



feel relieved to curl up quietly with a good book, and your clothes on.

If Ultimatum II accomplished anything, it succeeded in conveying just how the new tools of expression and accompanying vocabulary can be abused, instead of used, to re-humanize the word and the world.

A mouthful of microchips. The hissing of a blank screen.

— RAY FILIP

Three-day wonder

THE RULES OF the Pulp Press three-day novel contest are concise and straightforward in a way that only crackpot ideas can be. Entrants begin writing Friday at midnight on Labour Day weekend and stop wiring at 11:59 p.m. on Monday. In between the key is to persevere and just keep numbering the pages. Writers who have foolish, old-fashioned notions about revising or rewriting their work, or eve" proofreading it, need not apply.

There are probably better ways to spend the last long weekend of the summer, but I don't seem to be able to think of any. I have been entering the annual contest since 1985 when, for reasons that haven't been explained to me, my submission was chosen" as one of five runners-up. In keeping with the spirit of the event, being a runner-up apparently means nothing. I wrote to Pulp Press to inquire about consolation prizes, but I still haven't received a reply.

Last year I entered, but didn't make it past Saturday night. As luck would have it, there was a *Star Trek* festival on television. Under normal circumstances I am not a fan, but these were not normal circumstances. This year, like Bock in *The Call of the Wild*, I succumbed to a primitive, inexplicable urge to try again.

Now in its 10th year, the contest (which began as a dare among a small group of bored, drunken writers, musing about whether or not Voltaire wrote *Candide* in three days) has produced, according to Pulp's editors, "the only genuinely Canadian genre in world literary history." If they were kidding when they first made such a grandiose statement, it's not a joke any more.

Last year, the small Vancouver press received about 1,000 manuscripts from across North America as well as from England and Australia. Last fall, the 1985 winner, Marc Diamond, was interviewed on *Canada A.M.* and his novel, *Momentum*, was shortlisted for the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award and feature-film rights have been sold. "R's a trial by deadline," the editors have said, "a test of endurance, imagination and sheer gall."

Unlike my experience in the previous two contests, this year I started strong. The publishers recommend that entrants prepare a" outline beforehand, and for once I had followed their advice. By Saturday morning I had written nearly 25 pages. My story-about a young urban professional who nearly chokes to death on a chicken bone in a Chinese restaurant and as a result changes his lifestyle and founds a club for optimists and positive thinkers -was funny as well as moving, gentle as well as satirical. (At least I

remember thinking so at the time. I couldn't be we. because I didn't have time to stop and read it.) There was, however, one flaw in the plan. I hadn't been able to finish the outline.

Eventually the realization that I was writing a novel that had no ending caught up with me. By Saturday afternoon I was searching desperately for a subplot, for a minor character who could take over the story while I tried to come up with a dénouement. I even contemplated a change of genre, but the thought of transforming my Cheeveresque story into a mystery or science fiction was more than I could bear.

Nothing stops deader than a story that

is going nowhere. I continued, but my heart was no longer in it. For inspiration, I read a few chapters of John Gardner's *On Becoming a Novelist*, but it was no help: "The writer suffering from writer's block can think of good plots and characters . . . which is all a healthy writer needs, but he can't persuade himself that they're worth writing down or developing. It's all been done before. he tells himself."

Somewhere between Sunday night and Monday morning my plot began to thin to the point of anorexia, and my characters — major and minor — refused to develop or take on a life of their own. The question I kept asking myself was:

whose idea was this anyway? You might think that a person who has committed himself to doing in 72 hours what it takes serious writers months, years, sometimes a lifetime to accomplish wouldn't have time to waste on rhetorical questions. But the opposite is true: suddenly I had too much time and not nearly enough ways to kill it.

By Monday afternoon I had written 61 pages — as much as I had in 1985 — and I stopped rather than ended my narrative. There was, as it tamed out, plenty of time to watch *Star Trek*, listen to the baseball game on the radio, rearrange my sock drawer, and wait, in vain, for inspiration.

— JOEL YANOFKY

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Says who?

When reporters quote anonymous 'sources,' are they protecting useful informants or simply showing their contempt for the public?

By Bob Blackburn

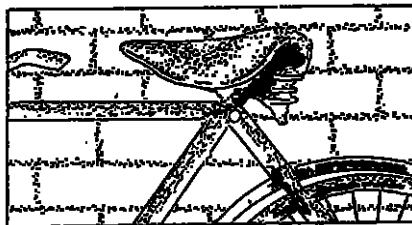
SOME TIME AGO I mentioned the insidious use of the word *sources* as a journalistic cop-out. It has spread explosively. There is nothing new about the use of the word in certain contexts. It has long been used by responsible reporters to hide the identity of useful informants, and I have no quarrel with careful use of the dodge. If a reputable journalist tells me that a source in the prime minister's office, who has asked not to be identified, has confirmed the opposition leader's statement that a cabinet shuffle is imminent, I'll pay some attention.

Some scholarly researcher, I hope, will trace the degeneration of this practice to what it has become today. In a very few years, it has become commonplace in electronic, and even print journalism, to hear or read that *sources say this* or that, with no explanation at all of who these sources might be. The word is almost always used in the plural, as if to suggest that there has been confirmation by a second unnamed source of something said by a first unnamed source, and possibly even more. The writers are assuming, perhaps correctly, that the word has acquired some magic connotation of reliability in the public mind.

This terminology, which I first noticed in the sleazier media, can now be found in major newspapers and newsmagazines, and heard a dozen times an hour on network television newscasts. I haven't seen any evidence of anyone objecting to it. I think it shows a great contempt for the

public. but, in turn, it may be contributing to an increasing public contempt for the news media. Occasionally, you will run across such phrases as *has been confirmed that . . .* and may not notice that there's no mention of who did the confirming. There are "any such tricks, but they aren't tried too often. Somehow, though, practically everyone in the business seems to feel confident of getting away with *sources say*."

BOOKS OF SYNONYMS sell well, *sources* say. They have their uses, but they are no substitute for a good dictionary. A reader has complained that it is becoming common to misuse *notorious* in place of *infamous*. A casual look at a book of synonyms, even the revered *Roget's Thesaurus*, might lead one to believe that the two words are interchangeable, and evidently a lot of writers do believe that.



Were they to consult a good dictionary, they would learn that *infamous* is invariably depreciatory, while *notorious* is not necessarily so. *Notorious* basically means well-known, according to the *OED*, which also defines *infamous* as meaning *notorious for badness of any kind*. While it would be correct to

describe someone as being notorious for his philanthropy, it might be inadvisable to do so today: however, a notorious philanderer is not quite the same thing as an infamous one. There is still a distinction worth preserving here.

Another reader objects to the use of *characterize* for *describe*, and suggests that it gained currency during the Watergate hearings and has become beloved of inquisitorial legislators. *Sources say* (hell, why should I go on typing in the names of reference hooks when I can just say, "sources say"?) that *characterize*, in one of its senses, means to describe or delineate the character or peculiar qualities of a person or thing. I think that to ask someone to *characterize* someone is to ask for something more than a mere description, and that the context will indicate whether the word is being used appropriately or pretentiously.

Many such distinctions are becoming increasingly blurred, or lost outright — if they ever existed at all. I have always valued the distinction between *imply* and *infer*. Should you choose to disagree with me, you can find ample support in the *OED*; however, my own favourite dictionary, the second edition of Webster's unabridged, offers this under *infer*: "5. Loosely and erroneously, to imply." The implication here — or such is my inference — is that some lexicographers felt this distinction to be useful and attempted to encourage it. I'm with the".

LATE BULLETIN! *Sources* say the world is flat. Better believe it! □

PROFILE

For batter or verse

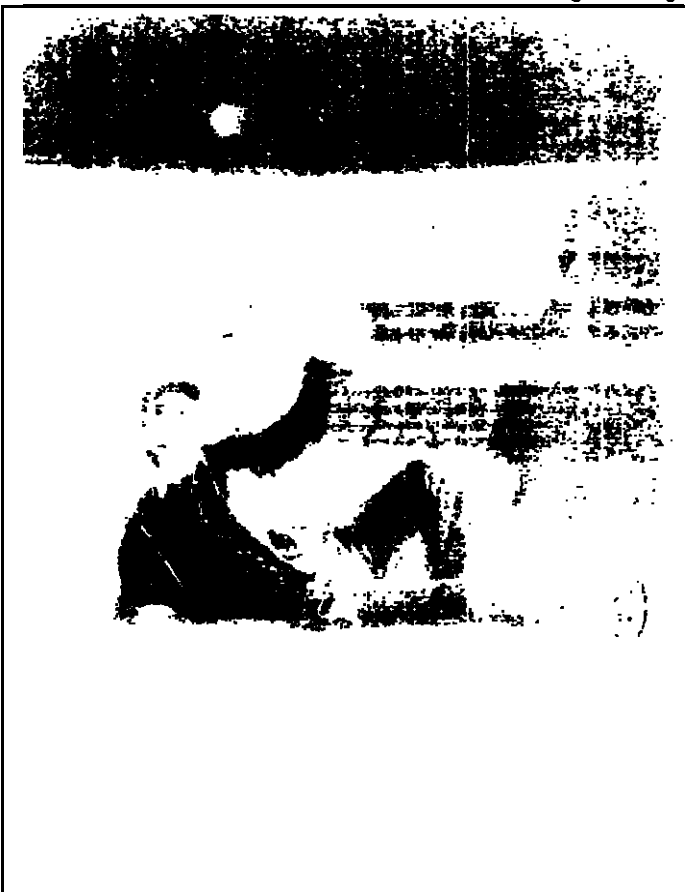
'I'm an **elitist**,' says George Bowering, who brings the same **attitude** to his writing **as** to the way he plays ball: if everybody likes it, it, can't be much good

By Alan Twigg

SHOULD THE CBC ever ask CanLit to mount its own version of *Hollywood Squares*, George Bowering would be perfect for centre square. Highly competitive, well-read, and quick-witted, Bowering is a knowledgeable and serious gamester when it comes to writing, history, and sports.

"I always wished that the Fool was my card," Bowering told Prank Davey in 1975. After 40 titles, he now finds himself the Edison of Canadian post-modernism, a writer who is celebrated and dismissed with the duplicity of the Fool. A poet, critic, teacher, humorist, theorist, novelist, and winner of two Governor General's awards (for poetry and for fiction) Bowering has most recently bridged the gap between his self-conscious brand of avant-garde historical fiction and mainstream story-telling with

George Bowering



Caprice, a fanciful "western" set in B.C.'s Okanagan Valley. Having agreed to allow his new publisher (Penguin) to put quotation marks into the text, Bowering has since watched, not without amusement, the flood of warm reviews.

"Mostly they say it's wonderful," says Bowering. "He's smartened up and decided to quit all that bullshit and write a book."

Viewed strictly from the perspective of experimental writing in Canada, George Bowering is a venerable all-star. This particular profile of Bowering, however, extends to the perspective of someone watching him from the shortstop's position on a softball diamond in Vancouver.

Over there in the first-base coaching box is the 51-year-old Simon Fraser University professor sometimes referred to as George Boring. (Bowering's squad, called the Badbacks, keep track of their batting averages throughout the season.) As one of the world's best/worst kibbitzers, Bowering broadcasts his often hostile remarks inning after inning after inning. His loud-mouth presence is ruinous to the continuity of any communal atmosphere. But nobody tells him to shut up. It is difficult to know if he is unaware, uncaring, or pleased with his impact. An overweight female member of the Badbacks steps into the batter's box and Bowering proceeds to taunt her. After each pitch — as everyone sees the discomfort of his teammate at the plate—the ever-so-witty Bowering can't resist addressing her as "Pitbull."

This is the less savoury George Bowering. Here is a voice of contempt that yearns to control the game even from the sidelines. Is this life imitating art? Readers who can't stomach Bowering's intrusive, know-it-all, post-modernist narration might conclude that it's not just a literary device.

"George is an unhappy person," says Tom Wayman, "and he often behaves in a bad way. Yet most people tolerate it. Some writers and artists think they can behave like assholes simply because they're writers and artists. They discover people will tolerate antisocial behaviour from them. What that does is suggest or perpetuate the myth that artists are a special class of people. Writers like Bowering attempt to make artists an elite, or suggest that art is the preserve of an elite."

"I'm an elitist," says Bowering, "And I don't feel bad about the pejorative coloration of that term." Mere mention of his impressive name (King/George Bowering/Towering?) is enough to get a rise out of some writers. They complain of his doctrinaire arrogance, his hip academicism, the fact that he has always been "a university writer." Bowering dismisses most of his detractors as non-serious writers. It's batting averages that count and he's keeping score. Like Dante, he believes, "poetry will deteriorate if the poetry wars aren't on." Consequently we find him making declarations such as "There is a mystique among certain minor poets about straight talk. Straight talk does not work in poetry because there are no straight lines in the universe." When the Kootenay School of Writing held a colloquium on "work poetry," Bowering couldn't resist playfully sending a letter suggesting that everyone who attended should wear hard hats.

Bowering has never responded to an uncomplimentary review, but the disdain for others remains. "I talk to ~~by~~ [Nicholl] and Frank [Davey] and Fred Wah and various people," he says, "and we're all feeling a kind of disappointment that you work for years and years and years and years to make people aware that poetry is not just an easy anecdotal expression of your life, to get people to expect it's an art. .. and then you find all these

Whereas most kids liked Joe DiMaggio, Eowering liked Ted Williams. Whereas most of his friends liked Roy Rogers, he liked Gene Autry. 'I would always deliberately do that. I still do that'

hundreds of 'po-ets' in all those Toronto magazines that are writing these one-page anecdotal poems about what my childhood with grandma was like. It's just so disappointing. It's awful.

"So give us a nice topic and we will write you a whole pile of one-page, anecdotal, self-expressive poems about it. You want wife abuse? We'll give you wife abuse. We'll give you a whole anthology of that. You want urban pollution? Piles of urban pollution. You want the lesbian experience? You can see all the anthologies coming out. The Northern experience. The Prairie experience. The Atlantic experience. There are all these high-school anthologies. You can just see it. The wife-beating experience." He laughs. "Dreadful. Dreadful."

GEORGE BOWERING was born in Penticton, B.C. in 1935. Home was the nearby town of Peachland. The Bowering family briefly

left the orchard-laden South Okanagan region to live in Greenwood, B.C. (coincidental with the internment of Japanese Canadians there), but returned to settle next to the U.S. border at Oliver. (Think of Sandy Wilson's film, *My American Cousin*, and you've got the landscape.)

Bowering can recall seeing a man on a horse near neighbouring Osoyoos and being told he was looking at the first white child born in the Okanagan. The relative newness of B.C. continuer to make a strong and important impression on him. "It has always meant a lot to me that when I lived in a town as a kid, the town didn't have any street names. There was a rumour that there were street names, but nobody knew what they were. In some plan down at the village office the streets actually had names, but there were no signs on street comers."

Bowering's father, a high-school science teacher, "was a real quiet guy, a super athlete. He was really smart, and he settled for less than he should have got. He could do anything. Everything that needed doing, he knew how to do it." Not particularly athletic as a boy ("That's why I'm playing ball now at age 65, right?"), George, like his father, became an avid scorekeeper. Like his Dad, he was hard on the hitters. In one of his early poems he refers to baseball day in Oliver as his day of worship. "I was in love with Ted Williams," he wrote in another.

Whereas most kids liked Joe DiMaggio, Bowering liked Ted Williams. Whereas most of his friends liked Roy Rogers, Bowering liked Gene Autry. "I would always deliberately do that. I still do that." This instinctive favouring of less-celebrated "alternatives" eventually led him to read the likes of Gertrude Stein and to aspire to become one of those known but "alternative" writers himself. If everybody likes something, it can't be much good. After the reception given to *Caprice this year*, Bowering immediately sat down and wrote what he calls "a really weird one."

Boating's first of many important literary friendships was with the North Okanagan's Red Lane (the poet Patrick Lane's now deceased brother). They met in Manitoba over an RCAF poker game where Bowering lost two weeks' pay in one sitting. Bowering, at 20, was a loser. He'd joined the RCAP (he first wanted to enlist in the U.S. armed forces) when a love affair soured and he had "flunked out of a college course in Victoria." The "un-Fryed end raw" writing of Lane, in addition to an introduction to happy pills to overcome his shyness, helped Bowering through his 10 months in uniform. In a memoir/essay on Lane, Bowering wrote that he is still trying to get two sides of his life together — "Red the Real, and the sophistication of Projective Verse."

Bowering began to appear in his old air-force duds around the University of British Columbia in the fall of 1957, hating already read "all the 20th-century American novels." The subsequent rise of Bowering as a protege of Warren Tallman in the so-called Black Mountain-inspired TISH movement, with Frank Davey and many others, has been well-documented. His M.A. thesis adviser was Robert Creeley, who wrote a preface to Bowering's first little Tishbook in 1963. The Poetry Wars with the likes of nationalist Robin Mathews and surrealist J. Michael Yates at Sono Nis Press were on. As Bowering spoofingly wrote of the "Brown Mountain Poets" from the Okanagan who started it all. "What started in 1961 as a small regional poetry movement is now a seemingly unstoppable raid on the Canadian poetry sensibility. ... In every way we can try to mould the poetic minds of young writers."

Bowering taught at University of Calgary, studied at University of Western Ontario, taught at Sir George Williams, and then settled at Simon Fraser University. Today he is married, with one daughter, living in the semi-posh Kerrisdale district, still moulding young minds. Jeff Derksen, a former student and coordinator of the Kootenay School of Writing, happily recalls Bowering's classes with guests such as Earle Birney and bill

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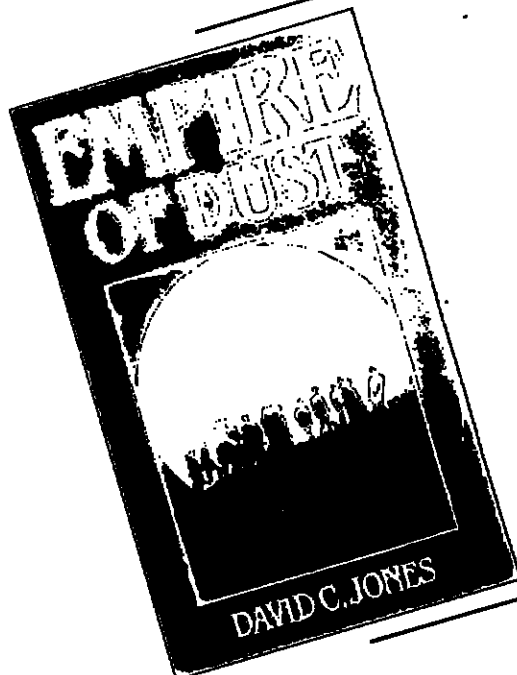


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bissett as "like a big *Tonight show*." Another ex-student, Calvin Wharton, now poetry reviewer for the Vancouver *Sun*, recalls, "He has a really aggressive approach. That turns a lot of people off who are timid about their writing. He'll take somebody's poem and rewrite it on the spot. He has a range of tolerance, but it's not as wide as some writers I know." Dennis Cooley puts it well in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*

Audrey Thomas, a friend for 26 years, suggests his outrageous behaviour is symptomatic of his upbringing. 'Males in small towns,' she says, 'reassert their masculinity by making noise'

when he writes, "His criticism, though not always fair or judicious, is often shrewd. As Bowering chooses up sides he tends to overrate authors who share his views and to undervalue those who work from other assumptions."

Of the many on Bowering's side is Audrey Thomas, a friend for 26 years. She suggests his sometimes outrageous behaviour is symptomatic of his small-town upbringing: "Males in small towns reassert their masculinity by making noise." She fondly recalls their first meeting, back when Bowering and Thomas were teaching assistants at UBC. In those days the clique-ridden university literary community tended to dismiss Thomas as a non-writing housewife hitch-hiking to school with her first baby. But Bowering was always friendly. "I heard George before I ever saw him," she says, "One day I heard this beautiful voice in a stairwell, a husky voice, and I thought to myself, 'Now that's what a West Coast voice should sound like.'"

Bowering's belief that writers should use language as an act of discovery rather than an imposition of order is firmly established. But as decades go by and Bowering's fascination with history increases ("I'll never get away from history now. Almost everything I write is history"), it is conceivable that his greatest contribution to writing will be his explorations as a founding father of B.C. Lit. Critically he has already identified "a question of home" as the most often encountered theme in British Columbia writing.

The "turnaround" book, according to Bowering, was *Autobiology*, written by hand in 1972. "I decided to write prose that was not chasing down forms of prose fiction that I had ingested," he says. With the succession of his brilliant *A Short Sod Book* in 1977 ("It's an emetic for Canadian literature"), *Burning Water* in 1980, and this year's *Caprice*, Bowering is increasingly voicing his analytical insights into West Coast history. He has a new theory: Albertans like his friend Robert Kroetsch reject history and make myth. Quebecois writers reject history and then make their own. But in B.C., where a boy could grow up not knowing the street names, history is fair game to be explored and reinvented.

"At one time history was an art," says Bowering. "Historians got deflected into thinking of history as a science, probably around 150 years ago. I think it was a lot more interesting when history was an art. The artist's main attention is to the structuring of the text. The text does not have to illustrate a line of inquiry. The text creates the direction that a line of inquiry is going to go. So your job is to see how alluring you can make it."

"So many are devoted to form as rest," Robin Blaser summarized in his dense but worthwhile introduction to *Bowering's Selected Poems: Particular Accidents*: "Bowering's work is restless." □



Canadian Writers at Work

Geoff Hancock

Features interviews between Geoff Hancock, Editor-in-Chief of *Canadian Fiction Magazine* and Atwood, Blaise, Gallant, Hodgins, Kroetsch, Mukherjee, Munro, Rooke, Rule and Skvorecky.

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Patrick Lane

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Oxford University Press

On the death of F.R. Scott, January 31, 1985

By Al Purdy

The new year continues without him
 the Ides of March will pass him by
 (no Caesar here important enough for murder)
 Easter and its calendar Christ
 crucified again on the living-mom wall
 and all the long hot dog days
 of summer with screaming small boys
tormenting thrilled small girls
 pretending boredom
 — he will be-absent then

(Now
 I hear the customary eulogies
 "invaluable man" — "outstanding accomplishments"
 "citizen of the mind's republic"
 — but I invented that last one
 and feel impatient with myself
 because I'm changing from a Scott tribute
the way it started out
 and become
 another way of saying to myself
 "I miss that man")

But the country goes on
 content with incompetent leaders
 the bland sleepwalkers
 and glib sellouts of Ottawa
 — a man of warm feeling and nobility dies
 no flags half-mast on public buildings
 citizens remain calm in non-emergencies
 for we exist in 8 special geography
 of isolation from each other
and fear of emotion
 prefer to keep a reasonable distance
 from one of our number
betraying any signs of intelligence
 — but it will not be forgiven us
 if a man like this is entirely wasted
 another leaf fallen in a maple forest
 become humus on the forest floor
and something may grow there

All **obsequies are** really personal
 good taste precludes sackcloth and ashes
 but elevators skip the 13th floor
 therefore understate the power and glory
 delete the Roncarelli case
 omit the CCP Manifesto and the like
 remember Scott at midnight in North Hatley
when I needed him and his rare
common gift of a simple kindness
yes

It will be obvious of course that
 I waver between eulogy and the personal
 and cannot escape either
 and think of Peter Dale Scott
 who cannot escape either either
 (the father like a hanging judge
 the father like a child's idol
 — and such bitterness for both)

At least a dozen Scotts exist
 — each a prosecuting attorney somewhere
fighting intolerance anti-Semitism such
 blood sports of racists
 by which we mark ourselves
 as inescapably human
 — each a defence witness as well:
include mention of that mysterious
 phrase "What's right?"
all ambiguous crap removed
what's fair and equitable for everyone.
 What's right?

Frank Scott knew

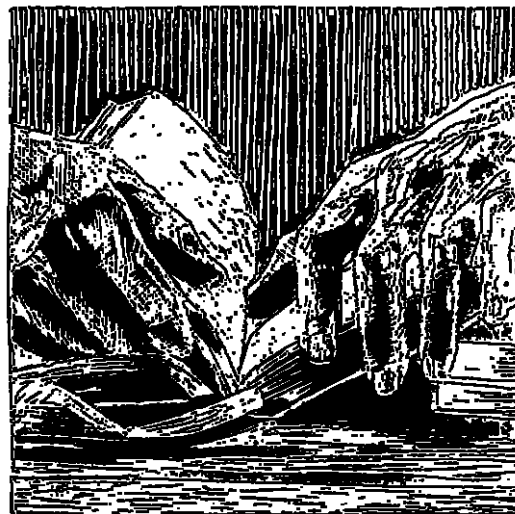


ILLUSTRATION BY MAUREEN PAXTON

Questions

What shall we say to Death
 you and I
 when time is short and breath
 scant for you and I?

How can I answer Yes or No
my dear my dear
 when we're far away from the cold
 but near to each other here?

But what shall we say to Death
when it comes night comes
 there is no cheating it unless
 we're blind and deaf and dumb?

What shall we say to Death
 with Yes defeated by No
 there's only the winter of loving left
 only the snow?

I have no answer to give you
my dear my dear
 only that I was always with you
and I am still here

Many happy returns

Wrapping up this fall's gift books: a few thoughts to help alleviate our annual orgy of giving, receiving, and sneaking hack to the exchange, department

By Paul Stuerve

IS THE SEASON to be wary, especially when choosing a book for that special or au too often not-so-special someone. Publishers who have recklessly commissioned unwieldy tomes on great moments in tiddlywinks or the illustrated history of subway tokens know that this is the time of year to trot them out, since in the weeks preceding Christmas many book buyers are smitten by that recurring plague known as the Thoughtless Present Syndrome. This short-run but totally debilitating affliction short-circuits the intelligence and loosens the purse-strings of its countless victims, leading them to purchase graphically detailed volumes of erotic art for staid elderly relatives and expensive limited editions of representational wildlife studies for punk-oriented nephews and nieces. As a partial antidote for the scourge of Thoughtless Present Syndrome, these thoughts on the season's gift books may help to alleviate some of the worst excesses occasioned by our annual orgy of giving, receiving, and sneaking hack to the returns department.

One fairly safe way of getting around the problem is to select presents you wouldn't mind receiving yourself. The *Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to Canada*, by Albert and Theresa Moritz (Oxford, \$45 cloth), is a goldmine of useful, useless, and just plain fascinating information about the associations between literature and geography, and it's going right onto the readily-at-hand section of my reference shelves. Given the peripatetic careers of many Canadian writers, this must have been an extraordinarily difficult hook to organize, but the Moritzes have solved the problem efficiently by providing an extensive grid of cross-references. They offer clear, comprehensive, and pleasantly written accounts of who did what where, enhanced by numerous photographs of the authors and places in question. Its high standards of accuracy and ample provision for both browsing and burrowing make *The Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to Canada* an essential acquisition for anyone with a more than cursory interest in the subject.

Should your potential recipient be more

visually than literarily oriented, however, you won't go too far wrong with George Swinton's *Sculpture of the Eskimo* (McClelland & Stewart, \$24.95 paper). The text proffers an intriguing discussion of the sociological factors involved in the production of Eskimo artifacts, and also allows the artists to explain their aesthetic principles in their own words. But the heart of the hook is its more than 800 photographs of representative artworks, many in colour and all displaying laudable care in their composition and reproduction. The expressive natural forms and imaginative use of materials characteristic of Eskimo sculpture are beautifully captured in a volume that will be heavily thumbed on coffee tables rather than heavily discounted on remainder tables.

If neither art nor literature seems quite the right category in which to search for that individually tailored title, you can



177 Sculpture of the Eskimo, by George Swinton

always fall back upon picture books with the appropriate regional or historical associations. One of Ontario's most distinctive areas is celebrated in Pat and Rosemary Keough's *The Ottawa Valley Portfolio* (Stoddart, \$65 cloth), which features some gorgeous colour photographs of its splendours and desolations. The Keoughs have gone somewhat against the conventional grain by depicting abandoned farmsteads and neglected land as well as the beauties of nature, and as a consequence their book impresses as an unusually honest portrait of a region often stereotyped as either an Arcadian paradise or a rural slum. Their judicious use of period paintings and drawings and a narrative that makes up in enthusiasm what it lacks in polish are useful additions to a most engaging volume.

An attractive pictorial treatment of an equally noteworthy part of the country is on display in Mel Buschert and Robert W. Sandford's *Panorama of the Canadian Rockies* (Summerthought, \$24.95 cloth). Their vantage-point is literally panoramic, featuring three- and four-page fold-outs of lake and mountain vistas, and in a sense it's all too pretty for words: as travellers through the area have often commented, humanity seems out of place beside nature's marvels, and here the text seems similarly overwhelmed by the size and beauty of the adjacent photographic images. As an evocative souvenir of a trip through the Rockies, however, the book's undeniable visual grandeur should find many appreciative viewers.

Given the number of books based on their work, it sometimes seems as though most of the English officers stationed in 19th-century Canada spent all their free time sketching and etching. As noted in *Posted to Canada: the Watercolours of George Russell Dartnell 1835-1844*, by Honor de Pencier (Dundurn Press, \$14.95 paper), the era's interest in watercolour painting as a desirable gentlemanly skill and the topographical drawing taught to military officers combined to produce a great many competent amateur artists. The small number of colour plates — perfectly reasonable given the book's low price — doesn't offer enough evidence for an assessment of Dartnell's skills as a painter, but the numerous black-and-

white illustrations and de Pencier's well-researched historical observations make this a worthwhile contribution to our sense of a national past.

There are also a number of titles aimed at readers with special interests, of which John de Bondt's *They Don't Make 'Em Like That Any More: A Picture History of Canadian Cars 1932-47* (Oberon, 335 cloth) should do for any automobile buffs on your list. Its careful reproductions of the period's advertisements aren't greatly enhanced by the rather skimpy accompanying essay, but in purely visual terms this is a striking and eminently giveable opus.

If ties and tracks turn you on, West of the Great Divide: *An Illustrated History of the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia 1880-1986* (Sono Nis, \$39.95 cloth) impresses with both words and images. Robert D. Turner chugs ahead in clear if somewhat plodding prose that is nicely supported by lots of photographs and illustrations. and his work should particularly interest those who found Pierre Berton's CPR books excessively melodramatic.

Those aspiring to cordon buku status should be pleased with *The Natural Cuisine of Georges Blanc* (Stoddart, \$60 cloth), in which the renowned French chef presents some of his most successful recipes in abundantly illustrated fashion. Although not for the novice, cooks with lots of time, plenty of patience, and a soupçon of élan will find many stimulating challenges in Blanc's idiomatic versions of the nouvelle cuisine.



From *West of the Great Divide*, by Robert D. Turner

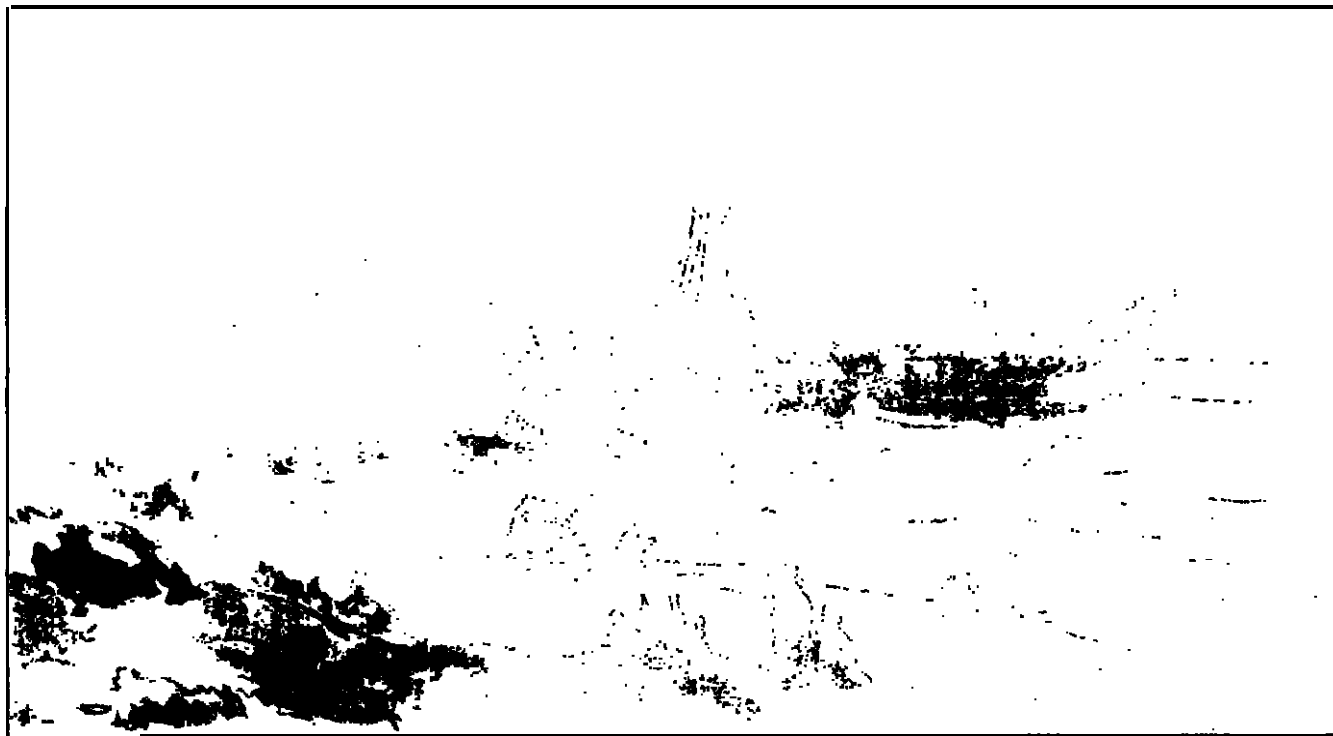
Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without an Andrew Wyeth title in hook-store windows, and this year there are two handsome additions to his extensive bibliography. The promotional drums are being beaten most loudly for John Wilmerding's *Andrew Wyeth: The Helga Pictures* (Prentice-Hall, \$60 cloth), wherein a series previously exhibited only piecemeal is for the first time displayed in full. Speaking as a non-convert to Wyeth-mania, I must confess that these all-too-realistic portraits of one of the artist's neighbours evoked only a strong desire to look at almost anything else, but fans of his earnestly elegiac Americana

will presumably warm to them.

An American Vision: Three Generations of Wyeth Art (Little, Brown, \$59.95 cloth) is a collection of copiously illustrated essays about and by the triumvirate of N.C., Andrew, and James Wyeth, and it offers a wider and somewhat more interesting range of material. Although Andrew's son James hasn't yet escaped from his father's influence, Andrew's father N.C. was a superior illustrator whose work still graces reprints of classics such as *Treasure Island* and *The Lust of the Mohicans*. The book will be a necessary acquisition for anyone keen on filling in the perspectives of Andrew Wyeth's career, although those of us immune to such enthusiasms may prefer to treat "Wyeth art" as a question meriting the answer "No, it's not."

Some more specialized releases on aspects of Canadian art also deserve to be noticed, and of those, **Town: Works on Paper 1952-1987** (Canadian High Commission/Dundurn Press, 89.95 paper), is perhaps the best value. David Burnett introduces them with a knowledgeable essay that disappoints only in its mangling of Nathalie Sarraute's name, and the reproduction of Harold Town's work are both numerous and numinous.

Two entries in the University of British Columbia Press's "Museum Notes" series provide new, and to some extent inter-related, examinations of the interplay between Indian and European traditions: Marjorie M. Halpin's *Jack Shadbolt and the Coastal Indian Image* (\$15.95



From *Posted to Canada: the Watercolours of George Russell Dartnell*, by Honor de Pencier

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— *Booklist*, *Sci-Fi*, *TV*, *Sci-Fi*, *Leopard*

Stoddart

paper) establishes the growing importance of Indian motifs in his recent paintings, and Karen Duffek's *Bill Reid: Beyond the Essential Form* (\$12.95 paper) is a ground-breaking artistic biography of a notable Haida creator. Both are extensively illustrated and supported by the relevant scholarly apparatus.

Scholars will be the primary market for European and American **Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts 1300-1800**, edited by Myron Laskin Jr. and Michael Pantazzi (National Gallery of Canada, \$130 cloth), a two-volume boxed set that catalogues the National Gallery's holdings in the indicated areas. Each work is exhaustively documented; artists receive brief biographies, and eight separate indexes provide ready access to this massive compilation of information.

A concluding potpourri of photography books offers something for just about everyone. Eve Arnold's *Marilyn Monroe: An Appreciation* (Penguin, \$40 cloth) contains an intermittently interesting essay on Monroe's turbulent career, but the candid images of Monroe at work and play are what will keep it on best-seller lists. *Life: The First Fifty Years 1936-1986*, edited by Philip B. Kunhardt Jr. (Little, Brown, \$35 paper), will also stir the memory of anyone who remembers its original appearances, although the small size of most of the photographic reproductions and some unimaginative layout seriously detract from what should have been a much better book.

Preferers of foreign climes will get off the beaten track with Kevin Sinclair's *The Forgotten Tribes of China* (Cupress, \$23.95 cloth), an exploration of China's ethnic dii that depicts exotic and largely unfamiliar milieus with an experienced photo-journalist's finesse. Juhan Kuus's photographs of *South Africa in Black and White* (Cupress, \$24.95 paper) convey a powerful impression of a nation fractured by constant violence, and might be exactly the right — if not necessarily welcome — gift for anyone who still thinks that sooth Africa is just your normal everyday country undergoing a few healthy growing pains.

Those requiring a more picture-postcard view of things, however, had best receive something like *The British Isles*, edited by Philip Clucas Msiad (Penguin, \$35.00 cloth), where several hundred large-scale glossies add up to an extraordinarily tedious book. Whether it be charmingly sleepy villages or the stately homes of the nobility, *The British Isles* leaves no hoary cliché unrepresented, while blithely ignoring the sobering realities of unemployment, depleted housing, and declining standards of both living and general civility. If you simply must have a copy, check out your local second-

hand book store any time after **Boxing Day**: bibliophiles unlucky enough to receive gifts from victims of Thoughtless Present Syndrome know just what to do with books that convey only a season's greetings. □

REVIEW

Hyping the good fight

By Desmond Morton

The Great War of Words: British, American, and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933, by Peter Buitenhuis, University of British Columbia Press, illustrated, 218 pages, \$27.00 cloth (ISBN 0 7748 0270 7).

ON SEPTEMBER 2, 1914, C.P.G. Masterman summoned 25 of Britain's leading literary figures to his offices in Wellington House and enrolled them in one of the most successful operations of the First World War. At a time when famous writers enjoyed enormous status as opinion leaders, enlisting H.G. Wells, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, O.K. Chesterton, and a host of luminaries, including the expatriate Canadian, Sir Gilbert Parker, was a coup that made up for the weakness of the British Army and the deficiencies of British generals.

With meagre exceptions — Bertrand Russell throughout the war and George Bernard Shaw until an inspired staff officer included him in a tour of the trenches — Britain's intellectuals and a surprising number of their American counterparts threw their talents and their intellects into the war effort, embracing an unexamined doctrine of German guilt and savagery, suppressing doubts about British military and political competence, and achieving, at whatever damage to their literary reputations and peace of mind, both of the objectives of Masterman's propaganda operation. American opinion was unquestionably swayed to the Allied side, and British public opinion was preserved from a thoroughly understandable defeatism;

Beyond a glimpse at the war novels of Charles Gordon ("Ralph Connor"), Peter Buitenhuis has almost nothing to say about Canadian wartime writing, but two Canadians play major roles in his story. It was Parker, dispatched at once to New York, who oversaw the brilliant British propaganda operation in the United States. Working so dietly that even in 1917 Washington was unaware of his role, Parker created a contact list of

13,000 influential Americans and targeted them for books, letters, and pamphlets promoting the British cause. The Germans undoubtedly helped by sinking the *Lusitania* and shooting Edith Cavell. So did a host of eager Anglophiles, from Teddy Roosevelt and Henry James to Booth Tarkington and Edith Wharton.

The other Canadian was Max Aitken, the self-made millionaire and newspaper publisher whose Toryism combined with contempt for the British establishment. Unlike the British authors who dutifully worshipped at the shrine of General Headquarters and suppressed what little they knew of the horror of the trenches, Aitken used his status as official Canadian Eyewitness to collect information that might undermine the generals, even if its distribution was largely limited to London salons. In the end, frustrated by censors and undermined by the removal of his patron, Sir Sam Hughes, Aitken turned to bigger game, helping to topple the decent, drunken Asquith and promoting his fellow parvenu, Lloyd George, as the Welsh wizard who would win the war.

The new regime destroyed the Masterman organization by yielding to the clamour that Britain was neglecting the field of propaganda. The invisibility that was the secret of Masterman's s-s was his downfall but, fortunately for Britain, only after American entry in the war had become inevitable. On both sides of the Atlantic, a crude, brash, journalistic style took over, headed by the aggressive George Creel in Washington and by Max Aitken, now Lord Beaverbrook, who created a new Ministry of Information in 1918 as headquarters for British opinion-moulding at home and abroad.

Buitenhuis describes these events and the literary works that accompanied them with admirable clarity and unconcealed dismay. He can understand why Rudyard Kipling, H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, and Ford Madox Hueffer would lend their pens to patriotism, but he has no doubt that the work debased their talent and their character. Posterity having



decided that Belgian atrocities did not really exist, how could great literary minds accept and amplify them? Even worse, why did British writers protect the "paper curtain" that denied the British people any understanding of the horror of the Western Front? His answer was provided at the time by Bertrand Russell:

"Allegiance to country has swept away allegiance to truth."

Buitenhuis's problem, common among literary people and their critics, is to assume that writers have some special sensibility and some clearer vision of the truth. Indeed that was precisely the illusion Masterman's organization exploited when it discreetly mobilized its famous authors and the respected publishing houses that printed their propaganda. Yet one might also argue that the authors gave British people what they wanted to believe. If Arnold Bennett or Hilaire Belloc or Ian Hay said nothing about the horror and human degradation of the Western Front, what about the message carried to England daily by the thousands of soldiers going home on leave? The evidence of their letters and memoirs is that soldiers found no interest in their true experiences. In return, they seldom chose to share their nightmares with civilians.

Buitenhuis makes the point when he tells of Arthur Machen, accidental inventor of the "Angel of Mons" myth. Machen's fictional hero remembers a motto from a vegetarian restaurant, uses it to summon St. George at an hour of peril and is saved when arrows from ghostly bowmen strike 10,000 Germans dead. Deluged with appeals, mainly from parish magazines, to reprint the story, Machen insisted that it was an invention, but his protests were denounced as callous. In a pamphlet, Harold Begbie maintained he had heard the story from a Red Cross lady who had it from a nurse who had it from a wounded lance corporal. Another nurse, Phyllis Campbell, had heard it from two soldiers who recognized St. George: his face was "on every quid they'd ever had." Buitenhuis is shocked that A.J.P. Taylor, the historian, could regard this fiction as being "more or less reliably" observed. Taylor's characteristic irony has sometimes posed a problem for the literal-minded.

Propagandists gave people what they wanted. Writers, great or small, became propagandists because they had enlisted in a cause, whether with the big battalions or, like Bertrand Russell, with the small. W.B. Yeats showed more than poetic wisdom when Edith Wharton corralled him and other luminaries in a collection of largely dubious gems entitled *The Book of Refugees*:

*I think it better that at times like these
We poets keep our mouths shut, for in truth
We have no gift to set a statesman right:
He's had enough of meddling who can please
A young girl in the indolence of her youth
Or an old man upon a winter's night. □*

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Queen of the apes

Rejected by humans, Dian Fossey turned her affections to an **impassioned** attachment to animals, which led **eventually** to her death

By **Timothy Findley**

Virunga: The Passion of Dian Fossey, by **Farley Mowat, McClelland & Stewart**, illustrated, 380 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6677 5).

THERE ARE THREE good reasons to buy this book. One, you have "ever heard of Dian Fossey — and more's the pity. Two, you **know** who she was and you want to pay **your** respects. Three, **Virunga: The Passion of Dian Fossey** is the most gripping biography written this season, bar none.

The passion of the title — which here means **martyrdom** — is the **passion** of a controversial woman **who** was as **much** hated openly as **she** was secretly loved. On the one hand, Louis **Leakey**, the renowned **palaeontologist**, declared his love for Dian Fossey **with** rubles, kisses, and intellectual devotion: on the other, someone-not yet identified-declared his hatred for her by cleaving her head with a" axe.

Fossey **was** a" ethologist; she studied the **behaviour at first** of humans and later of the larger apes. In 1966 she went into the Rwanda District of the Congo, where she devoted all that **remained** of her life to the study of a **small** band of gorillas living in the region of the **Virungas**, a range of dead volcanoes rising above the rain forest. This, **however**, is rather like **saying** — in a nutshell — that **Hamlet** went into mourning for his murdered father and devoted all that **remained** of his life to the study of a small band of **courtiers** living in the **Elsinore** region of Denmark. If Hamlet merits **amplification**, so indeed does **Dian Fossey**.

Fossey's life was remarkable from **beginning** to end. It started with her parents' divorce and ended with her own murder. **Her father** was an alcoholic, but from the **evidence** on hand he had more than a few **endearing qualities**, and his **daughter** remained loyal to him and loving **until his death**. **Her mother**, on the other hand, was a cool, fastidious lady who took as her second husband a cool, fastidious "gentleman" with all the **attendant pretensions**. Dian spent a good deal of her younger **life** being told how **awkward**, graceless, and unrepresentable she **was**. As a consequence, she spent the **larger** part of her childhood alone. The

reader is repeatedly struck by the **loneliness** of **Dian's** world and a strong impression that **an** artist, **an** actor, or a writer will surely emerge when this childhood ends.

Drive" **away** by people and **lacking** the presence of the father she loved, **Dian** turned her affections to a" impassioned **attachment to animals** and a" almost fatal **attraction** to older men. **Leakey was in his 70s**, for instance, when **their** affair was at its height, while **Dian was** in her early **30s**. And **Leakey**, though perhaps the best known, was by no **means** the **only father-figure lover in Fossey's** life.

Late in **her** teens, **Dian** decided she **would become** a veterinarian. This did not, however, **work out**. **Nor did her** early attempts at **being** a zoologist. Her graduate degrees, both **M.A.** and **Ph.D.**, **came long** after she had begun her **field work** in Africa.

Fossey **was** plagued with allergies. On **her** initial foray into the Congo she carried 40 pounds of prescribed and over-the-counter medications for **everything** from asthma to hives. She **also** had **incipient** tuberculosis. Worse, she was **accident-prone**; she broke more bones in the course of her adult **life** than a human body giver the **appearance** of **containing**. She **could** not get out of a" automobile, **climb a staircase**, or cross a courtyard without ending up **face** down on **bleeding** hands and knees. Knives on **the** far sides of **kitchens** reached out to cut **her**; **matches in someone else's pocket** burned her fingers. Often (and **thank** God for it) these incidents are funny in the telling, even wildly so. But a" **aura** of disaster surrounds **Dian Fossey**; **you** see it hovering over all the chapters of this book.

If **Fossey** had been" the **leading figure** in a work of **fiction**, the writer would **automatically** have to be credited with **genius**. She is both a" open wound and a sealed enigma. She has a" **intensified** sense of **sexual** aggression, and yet she walks away from **the men** with whom she falls in **love**, as if they had **suddenly** burst into flame at her approach. Not often, but once or twice, she veers away from her love of older **men** toward the sexual attraction of the very young **men** who come from **England** and **the U.S.** to work

at her side. As time **progresses**, she loves **less often** and **hates more** — and the same is **true** when it **comes** to how she is perceived by others. Fossey **could** never be **ignored** or shrugged off. Her **name**, once **known**, **could** not be forgotten. She was loved or she was hated.

The whole question of **Fossey's** black-and-white **relationships** with others **was** predicated on the **principles** for which she stood. There **were no grey areas** in any aspect of her **life** — physical, **spiritual**, or intellectual. Her enemies **were** bureaucrats, politicians, soldiers, policemen, **game** wardens, and poachers. Sometimes her enemies were other **scientists**. Often they **were** just the gentle herders whose cattle competed for the highland meadows where **Fossey's** beloved **gorillas** ranged. One **thing was** clear: the gorilla population was **in decline** and **only Fossey** could **save** them. **Ultimately** the **victim** of a **killer**, **she** had been, in her time, perfectly **willing** to become a **killer** herself in **defence** of her apes. Her tenderness was tenacious and beguiling, but her anger was sensational.

While in the **Virungas** Fossey **fell** — perhaps for the only time in her **life** — utterly in love. This was the **love** she held for the creatures who shared **her** life and to whom all her waning, **often** broke" **energies** were devoted. Her **acceptance** of these **gorillas** as **her** equals **prompted** their acceptance of her.

Fossey believed with a **passion** only saints can muster in the rightness of her vision. Above all else, she believed **in** life's **sanctity**, whether it be **housed** in **dogs** or humans, insects or **gorillas**. The horrors perpetrated by the **human race** or" **other forms of life** have **never** received more graphic **evidence** than **Farley Mowat** lays before us through **the eyes** of **Dian Fossey**. It is terrible. It terrifies. It saddens, it enrages.

Here, **in** closing, I most **commit** an unpardonable sin; I **must** mention a book of my **own**. But I do so **trusting** that **everyone** — including **Farley Mowat** — will understand the motive. It is **unavoidable**.

In **Nor** *Wanted on the Voyage*, a **novel** about the sailing of the great Ark and those who fall to get on board, Noah's wife attempts to save the **life**, during the

flood, of a chimpanzee — an ape child named Lotte. **She** falls, of course, to save Lotte because Noah, being a **man** of God, will have **none** of this "ape nonsense" perpetrated aboard the Ark. But the pertinent point — in the **light** of Dii Fossey — is not what happens to Lotte but the perception of Lotte's character i" the eye-3 of countless readers. I cannot begin to say how many letters, how many confrontations I have had from and with people who would **not acknowledge** — who refused to accept — Lotte's being an ape. They all insisted Lotte was "retarded" or "mongoloid": "Apelike, yes. But not an ape!" You see. Lotte had human parents.

Not wanted on the voyage.

Neither was Dian Fossey.

But there are some who will never forget Fossey's presence among us. Farley Mowat has done her great honour. I thank him for that. In my view, you could do no better than to read this book and honour Dian Fossey too. □

REVIEW

Second-class delivery

By Norman Sigurdson

Post Mortem: Why Canada's Mail Won't Move. by David Stewart-Patterson, Macmillan, 367 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9504 2).

WHAT WILL ROGERS once said about the weather now probably holds true about Canada Post as well: everyone complains about the post office but nobody does anything about it. That, at least, seems to be the message contained in this chronicle of the postal system's woes over the past two decades. David Stewart-Patterson, a reporter for the *Globe and Mail's Report on Business*, describes "Canada's love-hate relationship with its post office" and in the process delineates the reasons why Canada Post appears destined to remain mired in confusion.

Stewart-Patterson tells the postal system's sorry tale through anecdotal portraits of some of the key players in the drama. Among them are Michael Warren, the first president of the new crown corporation; Jii Corkery, the man he replaced; and Jean-Claude Parrot, the inside postal workers' union boss who declares, "I will never trust management."

Stewart-Patterson divides his story into four sections, dealing with the managers, the workers, the politicians, and the corporation. It soon becomes clear that the first three groups are in direct competition over the future of the fourth category

and that their goals are by no means compatible. "For the past two decades," he writes, "the post office has been a makeshift raft on a stormy sea of politics, blown this way and that by blasts of hot air from the House of Commons." Meanwhile, "workers and managers earnestly try to paddle the raft where they want to go, sending it spinning in circles within circles."

The biggest culprits, in the author's eyes, are the politicians, who should keep their hands off the post office. For years Parliament kept postal rates deliberately low to please voters, resulting in chronic deficits, and when the post office was made a crown corporation in 1981 the politicians gave the new managers vague and conflicting directions. Then too, there is patronage. The post office is, to be sure, a veritable orchard of patronage plums ripe for the picking, and politicians cannot resist the temptation.

The unions do not come off well in Stewart-Patterson's analysis either. The 1965 strike was precipitated, the unions contend, by "years of intolerable working conditions set within an environment rampant with patronage and nepotism." Stewart-Patterson says that it drove the moderates out of the union leadership, and that the militants now in control cannot see past their own narrow self-interest.

Stewart-Patterson sees little hope for compromise from any of the three sides of Canada Post's eternal triangle. In a concluding chapter he reviews some of the suggestions for solving the postal mess put forward by a myriad of royal commissions, consultants, and task forces over the years, and ventures a few of his own as well.

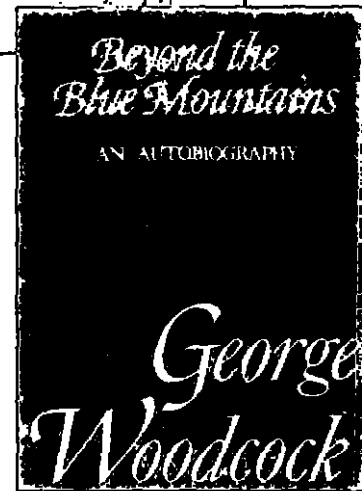
To begin with, he says, the post office must decide whether it is to be a business or a service. This boils down to the question of whether or not Canada Post should operate at a deficit. In Britain, the post office became efficient and profitable by "requiring customers to dig a good deal deeper into their pockets." But, as a former postmaster-general, Jean-Pierre Côté, points out, the post office's biggest customers are businesses; if the post office runs at a loss business and Industry are being subsidized by the ordinary taxpayer.

Obviously, these basic decisions are bound to change as new governments with differing policies come and go. "As long as politicians have direct access to postal decision-making," he writes, "there can be no consistent path for the post office." But he does not see privatization as a solution. No private company has the expertise to do Canada Post's enormous job, and selling the post office outright would only trade a government monopoly for a private one. Break-

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an Autobiography, Part II

by George Woodcock



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ing up the monopoly and opening up competition would only mean the end of service on unprofitable routes, which the government would then have to serve without the profitable routes to subsidize them.

In the end, it does not seem likely that Canada Post will be able to pull itself out of the quagmire of patronage, low morale, and union strife without a major cathartic upheaval. Stewart-Patterson leaves the reader with the ominous musings of a former senior official at the post office whose stock answer to anyone who asks him what is needed to sort out Canada's mail service is "six months of civil war." □

REVIEW

A life of crime

By Jack Batten

Greenspan: The Case for the Defence, by Edward L. Greenspan and George Jonas, Macmillan, 465 pages, \$26.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9495 X).

READING EDDIE GREENSPAN'S memoir of his legal life beats studying the criminal law course in first year at law school. I should know. I've done both. Greenspan's book is far livelier than Criminal Law 1 and just about as thorough and informative. He draws on two sources for his authority. One is his own experience: as a criminal lawyer, he's participated in dozens of cases that have offered sensational drama or trail-blazing pieces of law or both. The second is his scholarship: for years, Greenspan has edited Canadian case reports for his profession and delivered papers and speeches on fine legal points.

All of which — trial experience and a brain for the law — doesn't make Greenspan unique. But there's another quality that he boasts, and it's this extra that gives his book its liveliness. In fact, if Greenspan lacked the quality I'm talking about — let's call it celebrity — no publisher would have given him a hefty advance to write his memoirs.

Consider that Greenspan is just 43 years old. Consider that he's the first Canadian lawyer who has ever turned out a autobiography. And consider that he is far from being the only Canadian criminal lawyer, past or present, whose career has been decorated with thrilling trials and brilliant legal arguments. By way of comparison, hardly a word, autobiographical or otherwise, has been written about Arthur Martin, who was arguably the most accomplished criminal

lawyer to practise at the bar of Canada. Or note that at Greenspan's age the best all-round Canadian litigation lawyer, John Robinette, had just begun to acquire a reputation outside the legal profession, and that his reputation arose from a case — the steamy Evelyn Dick trial — that was a anomaly for a counsel who found criminal law a tad dull.

So how come a Eddie Greenspan book? Why, of all lawyers, his life story? What are the reasons, justifications, and appeals of *Greenspan: The Case for the Defence*?

For starters, Greenspan is not the shrinking violet in public that all earlier and most current trial lawyers have shown themselves to be. John Robinette, as I learned in writing the biography of that great and wonderful man, looks on public discussion of his cases as too much like blowing his own horn. NM Greenspan. He regards it almost as part of his duty as a counsel to wise up the public to what has gone on in the criminal courts where he's argued cases. In the book, he doesn't mind taking a whack at such things as the effect of feminism on the trial process (negative) and the police use of an informer's testimony against accused persons (also negative). And to underline his points, he spins engrossing little tales from his own courtroom experience.

Then there's the Greenspan wit. Most criminal lawyers are funny guys who make hilarious stories out of their adventures in court. But Greenspan's the master. His one-liners are the stuff of Johnny Carson and, as he demonstrates in the book, he knows how to construct a story in ways that combine laughs and instruction in about equal degrees.

And finally there is Greenspan's understanding of language. In court, his cross-examinations and his final addresses to judges and juries are models of brevity and clarity. He talks the way all courtroom lawyers are supposed to but few actually do. And the same style-sharp, succinct — comes through on the printed page. To be sure, it's George Jonas who deserves a tip of the hat in this department. It was undoubtedly Jonas, Greenspan's collaborator, who organized the book and put the words on paper. And it's a tribute to the excellence of his talents that the voice that echoes out of the book is pure Greenspan.

The voice is at its most compelling in Jonas-Greenspan's last chapter, which tells the tale of the Gordon Allen case. No frills, no lessons, no instruction. Just straight courtroom thrills. A lawyer named Lorenz is murdered in a Toronto subway parking lot. His wife and her lover, Allen, are charged. Greenspan defends Allen. The crown has a reasonably strong circumstantial case. At the last minute, Allen's co-accused, the

widow of **Lorenz** and the lover of **Allen**, becomes a **crown witness** and testifies **against Greenspan's** client. It's a story right out of **Perry Mason** with **Greenspan** in the **Mason role** right down to the **dynamite finale**. It's terrific **courtroom theatrics**. Terrific reading. Terrific **Greenspan**. □

REVIEW

Mixed doubles

By Tarry **Goldie**

Memory Board, by Jane Rule, Mao millan, 336 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 7715 9529 8).

THE "SERIOUS" contemporary **novel** often seems obsessed with the game. A book by **Salman Rushdie** swarms in **metafiction**, as **narrator/author/character buzz(es)** in various directions, **flying off whenever** a reader gets too dose. Yet there are times when this glorious play might **also** become a denial of the humanity most readers seek in a **novel**. The fictive reverberations of Margaret Laurence's **The Diviners** are cranky and **mechanical**, perhaps eve" irritating, but **Morag Gunn** is a character **who** draws empathetic responses from the least responsive reader.

Jane Rule's **Memory Board** creates **similar emotions**, although in very different ways. David Crown and his twin sister **Diana** were devoted to each other until David got married. David's wife **Patricia** was so offended by Diana's **lesbianism** that she cut off **all** contact. For 40 years David saw Diia **once a year**, on their birthday. Now Patricia is dead and David is **making** tentative attempts to regain his closeness with Diana.

The novel is presented very simply, **all** in the **immediate** past, with the exception of brief reflections on earlier events. The narration is similarly **straightforward**, a **third-person** representation of the points of view of Diana and David.

This might seem **awfully old-fashioned**, but the very traditional **form** seems perfect for the "on-traditional subject. Rule's concern is the human response to the complexities of the world, as show" in the split between two who **on the surface seem** the perfect complement. The accepting liberal **wishes** for all people to get along, **but when** the tines are drawn he succumbs to reactionary **pressure**. The **individual** radical should see the liberal as her support, but her **constant** opposition to the reactionary world has led her to create barriers to **protect** herself fmm enemies and friends.

In the middle of the conflict are David's **children** and grandchildren. **living** various versions of the bourgeois dream **and** accepting the revelation of their Aunt Diana in various ways. Mary, her mother's daughter, sees Diana as a lesbian. Laura, her father's **daughter**, tries to see Diana **as** her father's **closest** friend.

The nuances of **all** this are constantly **being worked out**. David's **occupation** of radio announcer, reading someone else's words, underscores his life in a role written by **Patricia**. Even his **own** sexuality seems decided elsewhere. He **might** have **been** homosexual had Patricia **not** come along. Diana was **lesbian** by her own choice.

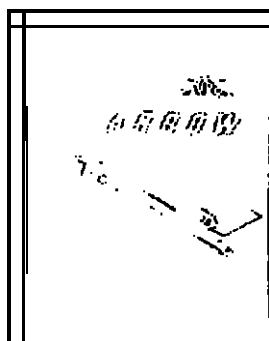
David has lost his Patricia, but Diana still has **her** lifelong lover Constance. Yet **while** Constance is **very** much alive, her memory has died. The title of the novel refers to a slate on which Diana lists the day's activities, to be **crossed off** as she **accomplishes them**. Otherwise Constance is **likely to return** to bed after breakfast.

David's **quests** are **internal** and even indulgent: he is looking for **some** lost core of **self**. Diana's **are external** and absolutely practical: she feels no need to find herself, but her life is devoted to **finding Constance**, **either at the most** literal level, when **Constance** wanders off, or simply

trying to pinpoint the varying loci of Constance's mind. Before, Diana had **resolutely allowed** Constance the wide sexual **freedom** she **desired**. Now she must lock Constance in the house for her **own protection**. **Constance's name is ironic** yet not, always yet never there..

Memory Board at times wears its purpose somewhat heavily. Diana's **lesbianism** and David's pacifism are political issues but individual and **human**. By contrast, when it develops that a **minor** character has AIDS, the **novel** becomes too much a statement of rather **than about** something: Yet this is also an example of the novel's fearless assertion of **contemporaneity**. There is no **question** of period when a text refers to suitcase bombs to Japan and to a" Ontario Liberal **government fighting** with federal Tories. This novel searches not for timeless immortality but for **immediate** connection.

Yet it might he sufficiently **successful** in the **now** to last **long** after David Peter- so" or **Brian Mulroney**. Rule's **exploration** of the **Crown twins' memory** hoards is always enhanced by the realism of the dialogue and by the stylized **and**, yet appropriately **aphoristic** way she **presents** her characters' psychological **reflections**. When **Constance cries**, Diana **recognizes** the impossibility of **finding** the **stimulus**:



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"Whatever sorrow this was, its name was locked out of reach somewhere in the storehouse of Constance's memory, out of which only emotions could sometimes escape. ..."

There is a basic rule among sophisticated book reviewers not to advise to

"read this book." but I am breaking it in the best interests of all concerned. For this novel avoids the sophistry that often lurks behind sophistication. It is a finely tuned exploration of humankind in the bourgeois Canadian world in which we live. This is a novel for anyone who has

failed to understand a sibling, for anyone confused by his/her own ambivalent sexuality or that of others, for anyone confused by the presence or absence of memory, for anyone confused by his/her own aging. As an amateur bibliotherapist I prescribe for you this book. □

FEATURE REVIEW

Against the stream

Reuben Slonim's only sin was that he followed the dictates of his fierce conscience instead of the 'neatness and order' of Orthodox Judaism

By Morris Wolfe

To *Kill a Rabbi*, by Reuben Slonim. ECW Press. 354 pages, 522.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920763 99 5).

IF REUBEN SLONIM were a controversial, literate politician, his memoirs would have been much sought after. Publishers would have competed to get him into print. Unfortunately, Slonim is not a politician; he's a rabbi—a controversial, literate rabbi. Twenty publishers, made nervous, one has to assume, by his criticisms of Canada's Jewish community, rejected this important and courageous document. Can anyone imagine a publisher turning down a politician's memoir on the grounds that it's "highly subjective"? Yet that's precisely what Lester & Orpen Dennys told Slonim.

Slonim's original intent was to fictionalize his story. Certainly there's no doubt as one reads *To Kill a Rabbi* (a title that makes the book sound like a mystery) that he has both the eye and mind of a satirical novelist. Moose Clarfield's mouth, he tells us, "was shaped in a permanent pucker because of all the backsides he had kissed to get ahead." Yiddid Axler "excelled in one respect. He could not talk for two minutes without going off into smut." But Slonim couldn't make the book work as an autobiographical novel, and decided to turn it into a memoir instead. At first I assumed that the acmes he uses were pseudonyms, but the photo section revealed otherwise. Libel lawyers will undoubtedly receive a lot of inquiries about this book.

Reuben Slonim was born in Winnipeg in 1914 and was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in 1937. That year he became Canada's first Canadian-born rabbi when he was hired by Toronto's McCaul Street Synagogue. Almost from the beginning, the dictates of his fierce conscience led him into battles with his congregation. The Bible, he thought, was not a divine text but one written over many years by men trying to understand the meaning of life. Slonim

longed to believe in the "warm coziness" and personal God of Orthodox Judaism, but couldn't. It seemed to him that the passion of the Orthodox "for neatness and order" far exceeded their capacity for "reason and pity." He came to abhor orthodoxy of all kinds. "Nobody possesses the truth," he writes. "We are all seeking it."

From the beginning, he opposed the segregation of women in his congregation. He wanted women to be counted in the *minyan* (quorum of 10) and to be permitted to read from the *Torah*. When his congregants buzzed about the width of Slonim's prayer shawl (too narrow) and his choice of places to eat (too broad), he preached that gossip is the "uglification" of others. When he conducted Passover services for Jewish airmen during the Second World War, he told them that when Hitler was defeated, they would have to find compassion for the German people. The military forbade Slonim from visiting the base again. When the war was over, he agreed with survivors of the Holocaust that Jews must never forget what had happened, but went on to argue that never to forgive could only lead to a hardening of Jewish hearts. Forgiveness, he believes, is central to Jewish ethics. "If one believes in the redeemability of human beings, no one may be excluded."

Central to Slonim's philosophy is the importance of fully granting others their otherness, as taught by Martin Buber in *I and Thou*. For example, Slonim never doubted that Israel's Declaration of Independence, which speaks of "developing the land for the good of all its inhabitants" and of maintaining "complete equality of social and political rights for all its citizens, without distinction of creed, race or sex," referred to Jews and Arabs alike. Over the years, as Middle East correspondent for the Toronto *Telegram* and from his pulpit, Slonim hammered away at this point. He castigated Israel's educational system for

separating Arab and Jewish children. "Why," he asked, "are Arab children required to study Hebrew but Jewish children free from the compulsion to study Arabic?"

Slonim stressed that Jews and Palestinian Arabs have similar aspirations:

In the period of struggle before 1948 Jews insisted on four basic premises: that there was a Jewish people; that it had a right to self-determination, political independence and eventually statehood; that its representative was the World Zionist Congress; and that the international community must recognize these claims. The Palestinians stand on parallel demands: that they constitute an identifiable people; that they are entitled to political sovereignty and an independent state; that they are represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization; and that these claims can become effective only in an international context. The similitude of the two sets of claims is uncanny. The language in which they are couched in official statements is almost identical. Yet many Jews cannot find it in their hearts to grant to Palestinians what they have claimed for themselves.

Jews responded to Slonim with catcalls and death threats.

We are all the heroes of our own life stories and, as this memoir reveals, Reuben Slonim is no exception. Still, he is able to poke fun at himself — at his love of the theatrical, for instance. More important, he tells with shame of his having succumbed to ambition in urging the amalgamation of the McCaul Street and University Avenue synagogues. "I wanted a large congregation," he writes, "perhaps the largest in Canada, so that I might have power . . . to stand up to my adversaries who had plagued me for years."

When I asked Slonim in an interview where he found the courage for his many unpopular stands, he said it had nothing to do with courage. If he hadn't spoken out, he wouldn't have been able to sleep at night. To those who argue that it's wrong for him to wash Jewry's "dirty

lines" in public, end that he merely provides anti-Semites with more ammunition, he replies: "History tells me that controversy did not undermine either Judaism or the Jewish people; only fanaticism and indifference did."

If Slonim were an American or an Israeli, he would have had little difficulty finding a publisher and a" audience for his book. Jews in the U.S. and Israel are more open to controversy than are Jew in Canada. ECW is to be congratulated for finding the courage to publish this remarkable book. It deserves wide readership. □

REVIEW

Composting the past

By George Woodcock

Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume I: From the Beginning to 1800, edited by R. Cole Harris, University of Toronto Press, illustrated, 216 pages, \$95.00 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2495 5).

HISTORY LIVES in the interval between time and space, which is why from the beginning it has been linked to the making of "laps. The first of all the great historians, Hecataeus Of Miletos, wrote in the sixth century B.C. his *Periegesis*, a historico-geographical description of the known world from which his successor Herodotus took much of the content of his *Histories*. But Hecataeus was not content only to write a pioneer work in the new art of prose. He also made a great map to illustrate his discoveries to his friends and fellow citizens. He recognized the importance of concentrating historical events and geographical data into easily assimilable visual symbols.

Atlases, those anthologies of maps, had the same kind of origin. The first of them, which gave its name to the whole succession, was the great collection Gerardus Mercator put together in the late 16th century; it was published in London under the title *Atlas, or a Geographic Description of the World*. Mercator saw the Titan Atlas, represented as bearing the heavens on his shoulders to prevent them from crushing the earth, as a symbol of the study of events in the cosmos and of earth.

Like Hecataeus, Mercator mixed history with geography, recognizing that the earth is most interesting as a stage for events in human history. The first section of his atlas was a chronology of events from the creation up to 1568 (the year before publication). Mercator then reproduced the maps of the ancient

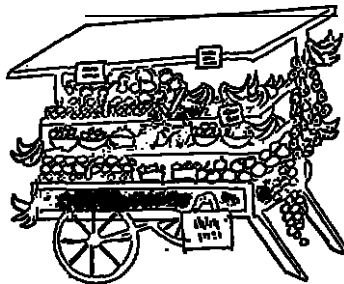
Alexandrian geographer Ptolemy, with corrections and a commentary, and only afterwards did he issue his modern maps of Europe, embodying the knowledge of his own age of explorations and expanding knowledge.

The first volume of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* is very much in this great humanist tradition, which saw the earth as the home of mankind and related geography to the development of human societies. Covering the period from prehistoric times to 1800, it is the excellent beginning of a" ambitious work in three volumes; the second will cover the 19th century, and the third will address the 20th.

This is not the first *Historical Atlas of Canada*. The same title was used for an atlas published by the Geographical Branch of the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys in 1927. Another, *A Historical Atlas of Canada*, was sponsored by the Canadian Historical Association, put together by D.G.G. Kerr, and published by Thomas Nelson in 1960. Having the kind of mind that reaches concepts through visualization, I have been potting it to constant use over the past quarter of a century.

But Kerr's atlas is a modest affair in comparison with the present volume, which merits consideration in the company of such major ventures as the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, and what we must see — now that it is virtually complete — as the remarkable achievement of the 19-volume cumulative history of Canada, the Canadian Centenary series. "In 120 pages of modest format Kerr's atlas encapsulated the whole history of Canada. The first volume of the new *Historical Atlas of Canada* contains 200 pages of large format (too big for most bookshelves), and its successors will obviously be no less lavish in size or content.

The *Historical Atlas of Canada* is admirably inter-disciplinary, with



historians, geographers, historical geographers, archaeologists, and palaeontologists working together to coordinate the time of history and the space of geography. Its editor, R. Cole Harris, a professor of geography, has crossed the frontier into history in his book *The*

Seigneurial System in Early Canada, and such well-known historians as W.J. Eccles and Conrad Heidenreich mingle, for example, with J.H. McAndrews, an expert on ancient pollen deposits.

The volume is dedicated to the memory of Harold Adams Innis and Andrew Hall Clark. It extends both Clark's pioneer work in Canadian historical geography (which was directed particularly toward the Atlantic region) and the peculiarly appropriate combination of economics and communications by which Innis elucidated Canada's special mixture of brief historical time and what Mackenzie King described as "too much geography" — a superabundance of slowly inhabited space.

The book is divided into six broad sections dealing with prehistory, the Atlantic realm, inland expansion, the St. Lawrence settlements, the Northwest, and Canada in 1800. These are introduced by lengthy historical essays, which constitute a very good basic geo-history of Canada before the arrival of Europeans and during their first phase of penetration. Within the sections maps and charts with explanatory notes and incidental drawings show the development of technology, the movements of peoples, the availability of resources, the patterns of trading.

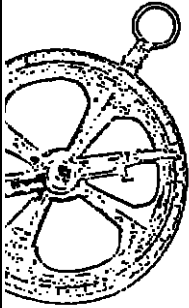
I have no idea what the editors intend to do when they reach the age of photography, but in this volume they seem to acknowledge that, in dealing at least in part with an era of good draftsmanship and fine engraving, it is appropriate to be content with the techniques of the time. There are reproductions of drawings by early topographers like Thomas Davies, fragments of early maps, and line drawings of stone implements and pioneer dwellings, but there are no such jarring modernisms as photographs of surviving old buildings in the settings of today.

History is an equivocal discipline, for Clio — its muse — has her feet in the special sciences and her head in the arts. She depends for her survival on a constant diet of data, hardly factual if possible and softly conjectural if not; but she flowers through the historical myths that the Gibbons or-in Canadian terms — the Creightons create to give the data a structure of meaning. Books like the *Historical Atlas of Canada* stand at a kind of creative middle point, composting the blossoms. They justify themselves by processing facts into evocative visual images through which even dull statistics become the material for imaginative conjecture and generalization. And in this sense they serve not only as basic reference works for the students of history, but also as inspirational source books for those who, as historians or journalists, or even novelists or poets, take the past as their domain. □

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CHAMPLAIN

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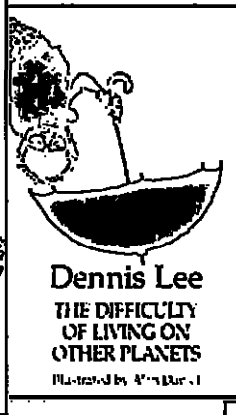
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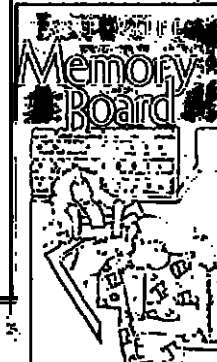
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Charlie Farquharson

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The case for the defence

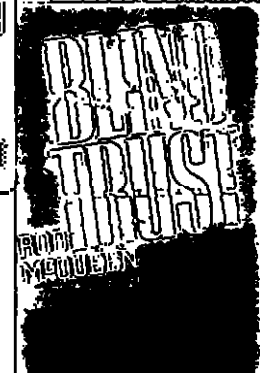


GORDON SINCLAIR

A LIFE...
AND THEN SOME
Scott Young



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BRIEF REVIEWS

BELLES-LETTRES

Private and Fictionalized Words: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s, by Coral Ann Howells, Methuen, 229 pages, \$18.95 paper (ISBN 0 416 37650 9).

CORAL ANN HOWELLS, an Australian who teaches Canadian literature at the University of Reading, England, brings a unique perspective to the work of 11 writers, including Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, and Marie-Claire Blais. These women, she argues, have won recognition abroad because their use of language and narrative form has produced a distinctive literature. As in all feminine literary traditions, they must write their way out of silence and a marginalized perspective, and this search for visibility and identity, Howells says, parallels the Canadian search for a cultural self-image. Their stories "could provide models for the story of Canada's national identity."

Howells is sensitive to the historical and contemporary position of women writers both in Canada and abroad, and feminist and nationalist ideology figure significantly in her analysis, but she doesn't discuss these issues at length. Her main focus is the writers and their works. She establishes no fixed definitions of either Canadianness or women's writing, celebrating instead these writers' diversity. It's nice to hear that from a non-Canadian.

— MARGARET MCGRAW

FICTION

Gabriel's Lament, by Paul Bailey, Jonathan Cape (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 331 pages, \$29.50 cloth (ISBN 0 224403823 5).

SHORT-LISTED. ALONG with Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies, for the 1986 Booker Prize, the English writer Paul Bailey had already won the So-t Maugham Award, the EM. Forster Travel Award, and the George Orwell Memorial Prize. The inclusion of *Gabriel's Lament*, Bailey's fifth fiction, on the Booker list is not surprising, for the judges have frequently shown a predilection for the unusual. The 1984 selection of Anita Brooker's grey little Hotel *du Lac* was less typical than that of 1985, Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, a choice that just may have been influenced by her Maori blood.

Gabriel's Lament is certainly unusual, a mixture of the solidly realistic and the

fantastic, bristling with suggestions and puzzles often left partially or wholly unsolved. Why did Bailey give his central character the name of the Elizabethan Gabriel Harvey, the associate of Edmund Spenser? What is the relation between Oswald Harvey, Gabriel's father, and Oswald Bailey, Paul's father? Is the relation between this lamenting Gabriel and the Biblical Gabriel, "the bringer of good hope," merely ironic? How far can he continue the stated relation between Gabriel and John Keats? (I pass over the reference to Peter Pan)

At the centre as narrator is Gabriel, "trying to make sense of his life," masochistically dwelling on and yet struggling to free himself from his two obsessions, that for his father, inescapably, often loathsomely present, and that for his mother, his "Mummy," physically absent. Like so many of Bailey's characters, Gabriel lingers on the periphery of existence, isolated. Nevertheless, crowding in on him in different parts of London, where he lives and slaves at menial jobs, and, after the accidental success of his book on itinerant preachers and its Hollywood filming, in the weird academic outpost of Sorg, Minnesota, is a succession of bizarre eccentrics. These varied, often sordid materials are so deftly compressed that the reader, gripped by Bailey's intensity, comes to share his concern and compassion for his characters. He is made to see and, above all, to hear them; for Bailey's sensitive ear catches and his dialogue records the distinctive shades of voices in different localities and different generations. *Gabriel's Lament*, always compassionate, is a strange, often puzzling mixture of realistic fact, fantasy, and comic irony. Its consideration for the Booker award is quite understandable.

— RUPERT SCHIEDER

Homecoming, by Veronica Ross, Oberon Press, 93 pages, \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 655 0).

ST. GENEVIEVE, the setting for these seven stories, is a Nova Scotia town bound by "rules that shaped not only behaviour but thought as well."

In "Homecoming" Jay returns from Toronto to his father's death-bed, His sister's small rebellion consists of smoking, although pregnant, five cigarettes a day. As the story unfolds, Jay catalogues childhood oppression, ending with his flight, 12 years earlier. The story approaches sentimentality with an appar-

ent reconciliation, but Ross pulls back and reveals the greater oppression of unanswerable forgiveness.

Less successful is "God's Blessings," where Jacob is unemployed and Nancy Marie learns the illusions and frustrations of paid work. The characters rarely rise above what they mean, and some lines occur exactly where expected: "Slut, he said." When they discover their shared dream of owning land is less powerful than the reality of their children, the reader feels dismissed.

"The Last Day of the Circus" suggests melodrama after the opening, "There is a payment for choices and actions." Lisa at 14 (with "a secret lipstick and padded bra") plans to run away to Mississippi with Fernando, a circus performer. The focus shifts and tightens, however, and the conclusion is a deeply felt distrust of the complicity in families.

"The Byes of the Whore" begins as a history of Clifford and Ardith told in a dead-pan style that approaches parody when Clifford sets himself loose in Toronto. Clifford seems predictable and contemptible until Ross bums him, and the reader, with the corrosive nature of infidelity.

Much of the stories' power comes from an earnest use of language, with lyrical passages subtly placed where they, but not their effects, go unnoticed. The unnecessary narrative voice in "Images" slows the developing tone, but the story recovers admirably

— D. FRENCH

Le poison dans l'eau, by Chrystine Brouillet, Denoel/Lacombe, 207 pages (ISBN 2 89085 017 X).

SUEURS FROIDES is probably the most highly regarded collection of detective fiction in French. To be chosen by its editor, Michel Bernard, is similar to winning the genre's most important award. Chrystine Brouillet, a Quebec writer whose work has not yet been translated into English, has had her third novel published in Bernard's series. Brouillet is the first Canadian writer to be granted this distinction, and it is well-deserved.

The title is a play on words: *Poisson* is "fish"; *poison* is "poison." The literal translation is therefore "Poison in the Water." In spite of the title, there is no certainty as to whether Julie-Anna, drowned in a pond on a Quebecois summer, has been poisoned. Two people claim to have committed the murder, acting alone: Julie-Anne's husband

Mathieu and his sister Emma, each boasting of the mime in an incestuous correspondence that echoes Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. But was it murder? Julie-Anne's sister Flore believes it was, and takes her suspicions (and the incriminating letters) to inspector Maud Graham. Graham can find no proof of either Mathieu or Emma's guilt, and begins to suspect Flore's motives. Through a whole school of red herrings, Inspector Graham at last snares the truth.

The story is both ingenious and well-written, though at times the author's Fondness For puns distracts from the tightness of the plot. Curiously, in spite of the blurb at the back of the book ("A rarely used setting: Canada"), the world of Julie-Anne and her family is unfamiliar. It has an almost deliberate universality, a lack of local colour, which readers seldom miss, but which in this case would have added to a more intimate knowledge of the characters. Nothing, not even the Food Brouillet's characters eat (and certainly not the wine they drink - but who can blame them) is Canadian, and any jocular, any Quebecois expressions one would expect them to "see, have been" meticulously avoided.

But this is a minor quibble. *Le poison dans l'eau* stands on its own merits as a thoroughly good thriller, and the device the plot hinges on is worthy of any of the best writers in the field.

— ALBERTO MANGUEL

The Port Dalhousie Stories, by Dennis Tourbin, Coach House Press, 176 pages, \$12.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910 313 5).

THE BACK OF *The Port Dalhousie Stories* has an illustration of two young men sitting at a table. One, head down, is apparently passed out. The other is vomiting copiously. Call this Truth in Advertising.

The Port Dalhousie Stories is not, in fact, a collection of stories. This reversal of expectations is the most amusing feature of the book, which is also not a novel. This is a collection of ill-shaped anecdotes delivered in a relentlessly self-indulgent style, to wit: "[Huey Forest] even told me that Jane Butler had hair on her chest and that she Fatted when Larry Forgo was about to kiss her good night after walking her home from a dance!! Can you imagine that??? Jane Butler of all people!! FARTING!!!"

The jacket blurb refers to "the rowing sensibilities of a teenaged boy."

Early on, the narrator informs us, "I really like [Port Dalhousie] and I'm going to tell you why." The next paragraph, without noticeable interruption, begins, "As I was saying..." The suggestion that time might not be continuous is ex-

plained, perhaps, by the availability of two different audio cassettes of excerpts from the book. Images loom large of buttons marked Fast Forward and Erase. The cassettes, however, may lack the dedication page of the book, with its 91 citations including: Dick Clark, old Pepsi bottles, Wingy (just back from California), end every player on the Toronto Maple Leafs, old and new.

Jane Butler is not mentioned.

The book is illustrated. Drawings including ones captioned "The American girls actually fucked" and "I've seen Paul's balls" — are by John Boyle.

Dennis Tourbin was born in 1946.

— D. FRENCH

Telling the Tale, by Robin Skelton, Porcupine's Quill, 166 pages, 39.95 paper (ISBN 0 88984 100 4).

The Parrot Who Could, by Robin Skelton, Sono Nis Press, 164 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 919203 73 6).

ROBIN SKELTON, the Irish-Canadian poet, anthologist, and essayist, has two new books of short stories on offer this season. Or, more precisely, he has one new one and one nearly new one. The new one is *The Parrot Who Could*, his second collection, and the nearly new one is *Telling the Tale*, a collection of 24 stories, one-third of which are taken from *The Man Who Sang in His Sleep*, Skelton's first book of stories, published in 1984 but now out of print.

Skelton has long had an interest in the occult, and all of the stories in *Telling the Tale* deal in one way or another with the supernatural. They are not exactly ghost stories, although ghosts do figure in one or two of them; rather they are stories of ordinary people who suddenly come up against strange occurrences for which there is no rational explanation.

Doppelgängers, possession, telekinesis — these are some of the unaccustomed happenings that plague the characters in *Telling the Tale*. A house-sitter finds that the owner's stuffed dog has animate properties, a newlywed man sings opera solos in his sleep, a man has "his Funny bone knocked out of true" so that he laughs at the tragic and cries over the comic in life.

Some of the tales are quite chilling, others are hilariously absurd, with a hint of Italo Calvino about them. They all follow the same general pattern though, so a certain sameness begins to creep in. All are first-person narratives and all end with a wry twist that reveals the story in a new light.

The stories in *The Parrot Who Could* follow this pattern as well, but usually without the paranormal paraphernalia and with more mixed results. Again, they are

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all first-person narratives — usually someone describing a strange incident from his life over a glass of beer in a bar — and again each has an 0. Henry-style ending. There are some truly wonderful stories here, in all senses of the word, but too many of the others have endings that seem contrived, and a few can be anticipated so far in advance that they can not be counted as surprises.

— NORMAN SIGURDSON

MIXED MEDIA

This Won't Hurt a Bit!, by Vicki Gabereau. Collins. 249 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 217753 6).

OUCH! This Won't Hurt a Bit! reads like a marathon cab ride with 62 assorted celebrities in the backseat: with “cocky, streetwise” Vicki Gabereau at the wheel, you wonder when it’s all going to end, and why you’ve paid for the trip. Pass the Aspirins, please.

You might wonder about her choice of vehicle. Does a large collection of interviews really constitute a book? On average, each personality receives roughly three pages of “revealing insight” (in the parlance of the front book flap). While a three-page analysis may be adequate for Do” Cherry, such scanty treatment does a disservice to the likes of Clement Freud and the late Elizabeth Smart. Better 20 good interviews than 60 snippets of chat.

There is another problem, which for want of a better term can be labelled the “cuteness factor.” When Jerzy Kosinski is teased about his clothing, or when Joseph Heller is told he sounds like Bennett Cerf and looks like Paul Newman, can you really blame either for being annoyed? When Leonard Cohen is asked, “Oh, Leonard, what does it all mean?” one half-heatedly hopes he’ll utter a mumbled expletive in reply. A thin line divides the “folksy” approach from sophomoric folly; too often Gabereau crosses it.

A final tip at the end of the ride: the transcripts of most CBC interviews are available, in their entirety, for a nominal fee. Inquire, and save your fare for another day.

— TIM CHAMBERLAIN

Gordon Sinclair: **A Life... And Then Some**, by Scott Young, Macmillan, 275 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 07715 9518 2).

FOR DECADES, it seems, Gordon Sinclair was king of Toronto radio and famous right across the country. Just a few years after his death in 1984, it’s hard to remember just how big he was. Scott Young’s affectionate but frank biography brings it all back, and puts Sine in perspective.

Sinclair spun a good many yams over the years, and Young puts many of these straight, dispels others, and reveals the darker sides of his subject. Irascible but lovable to a vast and loyal audience, in private Sinclair suffered. He was frequently depressed and dourly unhappy most of the time. The story of Sinclair’s unhappy marriage, often tense family life, and his many extramarital relationships is told with openness, sensitivity, and sadness.

Young brings his considerable instincts as a journalist to bear on Sinclair’s long professional career, as he rode three waves in modern media history. As a globetrotting reporter for the Toronto Star in the 1930s, he filed dating, exotic adventures: it was swift, breezy, popular journalism, the stuff readers wanted so they could forget bad times. During the war Sinclair stumbled into radio, and the airwaves took to his personable style: so began a 40-year association with CFRB, that venerable, if tottering, dowager of Toronto radio. In the late ’50s he tried television and was a” instant and then durable hit on Front Page Challenge.

Sinclair succeeded in all three media brilliantly; it is as if each, progressively more intimate and personal, drew o” his man-in-the-street populism, gruff personality, and journalistic flair. In recounting this special chemistry, Young is at his best. Light but reflective, this is a smooth, eminently readable popular biography, a happy match of author and subject.

— B.K. ADAMS

POETRY

Behind the Orchestra, by Renato Trujillo, Fiddlehead Poetry Books/Goose Lane Editions, 87 pages. \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 86492 053 9).

“POETRY IS NOT taking your clothes off: it’s taking your skin off,” says Renato Trujillo i” his first collection of English poems, *Behind the Orchestra*. Trujillo is an autodidact, a self-taught writer who has paid enough dues to cover the expenses of Canadian hacks who travel to Latin America in search of suffering.

Born in Chile, the 45-year-old Trujillo writes with the wisdom of experience. His work is free of political posturing. Youth has the answers; with maturity come more questions. The interrogative mood pervades many of his poems. In “Chile Song,” the precarious balance between freedom and violence is symbolized by a “Long sharp sword of earth and hope. . . / Are you about to stab the continent? / Or are you waving the tip of your dagger in mid-air where the world is attached by a string?”

The most terrifying force is the-y within. I” “When I Was The General,”

his self-image is destroyed when he “fired well into the mirror/where my face goes up in smoke.”

Considering that English is his second language, Trujillo has to be admired for his often graceful verse, as in “Sometimes”: “If she is cooking/I like to see her whole/face/disappear in a cloud/of fragrance: thyme/basil, parsley,/the forests of France. . . If she is thinking of me,/I like to see her fingers/run softly



down/her cheeks/as if the trace of my hand/stayed engrained on her ski”.

“Ode to a Scarf.” about his father, rings with Ivricism in the Spanish tradition: “A brimless hat/which even the strongest of winds/will not blow away./A bat inside which/my name. same as his name/resounds/like a relentless and polished/hammer/made of Southern wood.”

The second half of the book consists of “anti-poems” in the European satirical style of Nicanor Parra, Jacques Prévert, and Blaise Cendrars. His sense of humour and dramatic irony mix into surrealistic situations. In “Official Translations,” he writes: “The woman who is on the cross/has been asking for water/for a long time. She has also/demanded better salaries/for the miners in the mines/and a new budget/for blue-collar workers. a freeze/ on prices of items manufactured/in the country/and also/someone to pull her skirt down.”

Behind the Orchestra is an encouraging book to read with its up-front honesty devoid of stagy effects. For a “skinned” poet, Renato Trujillo delivers a lot of meat.

— RAY FILIP

POLITICS & POLITICOS

Uneasy Lies the Head: **The Truth About Canada's Crow” Corporations**, by Welter Stewart, Collins, 272 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 217737 9).

THERE’S NO INHERENT reason why government organizations should be worse managed the” privately owned ones; there is a strong likelihood that big organizations will be worse managed than small ones, but eve” that isn’t inevitable. I used to visit England a lot in the days when telephones came under the General Post Office and always found it instructive that the same large institution ran the best postal system and one of the worst telephone systems in the world. The

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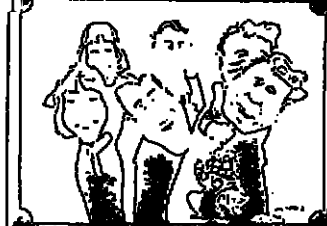
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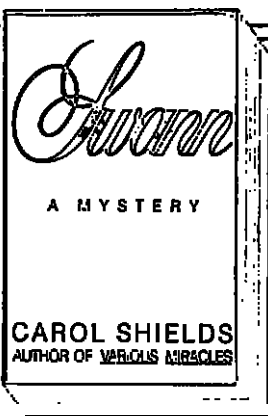
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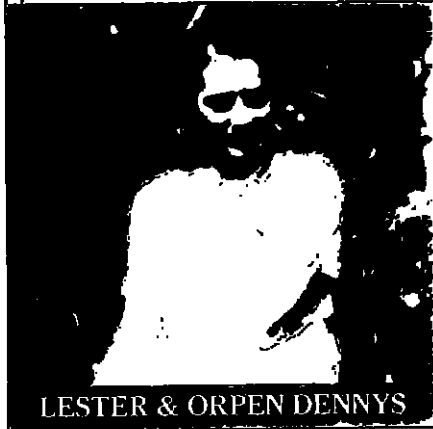
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sequel is instructive too: the word from Britain is that under the privately owned and phenomenally profitable British Telecom the telephone system is worse than ever, as well as costlier to the user.

The two biggest corporations in Canada, other than banks and trust companies, are Ontario Hydro and Hydro-Québec; in fact, of the 15 biggest, eight are crown corporations, four provincial and four federal. It's often said that the enormous part played by public enterprise in our economy is a long-standing and basic element of Canadian society, one of those characteristics that distinguish us from the Americans and are therefore to be cherished. Walter Stewart shows that this isn't so: the great proliferation of crown corporations is relatively recent. He also shows that the really enduring tradition, set by Macdonald and the CPR, is that governments provide private enterprise with money and the entrepreneurs make off with it. The famous names of Clairtone, Bricklin, and Come-by-Chance bear witness to this.

Stewart's book is a valuable record of a few moderate successes and many hair-raising horror stories. At the end he proposes a series of sensible steps toward a solution — which do not include Thatcherite wholesale privatization. I wish he or an editor had curbed his incessant facetiousness; the stories he tells are quite funny enough without it. If I may conclude with the one obvious joke he fails to make, they show that we have a very mixed economy indeed.

— I.M. OWEN

REPORTAGE

Out of Iran: A Woman's Escape from the Ayatollahs, by Sousan Azadi with Angela Ferrante, Irwin, 327 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7725 1667 7).

SOUSAN AZADI is the pseudonym of a former member of the westernized Iranian elite, and this is the story of her life before, during, and after the fundamentalist Islamic revolution there. Anyone looking for elucidation of the political and religious roots of that cataclysm will probably be disappointed, but, as the book's subtitle indicates, this is merely one individual's story, and it does provide interesting glimpses of the vanished world of traditional privilege into which Azadi was born, as well as the entrepreneurial ostentation into which she (briefly) married.

Since she claims descent from the pre-Pahlevi dynasty, she had no exaggerated respect for the late Shah and his entourage, although her first husband's new wealth as a construction magnate apparently came, at least indirectly, from royal patronage. Her account leads inexorably

from this pre-déluge opulence, through the defiant, clandestine high jinks of her set in the revolution's early days, to the nerve-racking games of hide-and-seek she was eventually forced to play with the new regime's morality squads and their ubiquitous informers.

Widowed, and at odds with her husband's fundamentalist family over his will and the custody of her young son, she managed to bluff and wheedle her way out of a medieval prison for wayward women, where one of her peasant cell-mates was destined to be executed, after giving birth, for the crime of having been raped. Finally, Azadi underwent appalling hardship, physical and psychological, to escape on horseback with her son through Kurdish rebel territory to Turkey.

Despite the book's often pedestrian style, and its ultimately rather unsympathetic heroine, it is impossible not to be caught up in the sheer drama of Azadi's tale and impressed by her transformation from an impulsive Persian deb to the steely, resourceful, and daring woman she had to become to ensure her own, and her son's, survival.

— ANNE DENOON

Maple Leaf Rag: Travels Across Canada, by Stephen Brook, Collins, 310 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 217887 7).

"HOW DO PEOPLE support themselves here?" asks Stephen Brook, British author of *Maple Leaf Rag*. The local pub owner answers: "Well, everyone's a carpenter. And the rest are either retired or unemployed — those are the two major occupations on Gabriola."

Anyone who has spent time on Gabriola Island, B.C., will recognize the inherent truth in this exchange. Brook exhibits a keen eye for detail throughout his travels in Canada, and his observations are cogent and accurate. But the most delightful aspect of *Maple Leaf Rag* is that Brook is willing to risk well-argued opinions on many Canadian issues, such as free trade, native self-government, and Quebec's language laws. In the cultural domain, he takes a stab at an artistic association that many consider sacred: "I had spent much time gazing at the canvases of the country's best-known and most revered painters, the Group of Seven. I did not like what I saw." Yikes!

Brook displays the confidence of an iconoclast, and doesn't pull his punches even at the cost of slightly bruising the national ego: "There is a bovine quality to Canada that at times I found acutely depressing. Cosy, acquiescent, quick to complain but slow to act, Canada can seem somnolent, as though sedated by the awesomeness of its landscape." Yet he

does show an appreciation of Canada, sometimes at **the most** surprising times. While visiting Winnipeg, he **ventures** on a **riverboat** cruise: "... the cupolas of **the** Greek Orthodox church **rose** behind the **trees**, and the sky was subtitled by the red and blue "eon of another local landmark, the **Carling O'Keefe** brewery. **This Caribbean** cruise through the cold waters of Manitoba was anomalous but **not** absurd. "... Perhaps this, a Caribbean theme cruise on the Red River, **best** illustrates the Canadian mosaic as encountered by Brook on his **cross-country** journey. — **TIM CHAMBERLAIN**

SOCIETY

Hell's Angels: Taking Care of Business, by Yves Lavigne, Deneau, illustrated, 344 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88879 162 3).

THIS **ACCOUNT OF the activities** of the Hell's Angels across **North America**, complete with grisly pictures and shocking anecdotes, **should** have been the long awaited journalistic book on criminal bikers in North America. Hitherto, we have had only Cecil Kirby's account of his years with the **Satan's Choice** (in his 1986 book, **written with veteran U.S. journalist Tom Renner, Mafia Assassin**) and Hunter **Thompson's** various **rumina-**

tions on the Hell's Angels.

But this book is **not** the **definitive** book on the bikers. It is, unfortunately, a book where style often **overwhelms** substance. In fact, **it** is written in a **vulgar, pretentious** style full of gratuitous and strained sexual **metaphors that frequently become** the content. For example, here is how **Yves Lavigne**, a **Globe and Mail** reporter, describes **attempts to fight** the growing power of the bikers: "**Fighting** the Hell's Angels is like trying to rid yourself of a dose of the dap — **you** can use copious **amounts of penicillin but you won't** shake it unless you **also** stop **fucking** the bitch who **gives** it to you." The shock value here **outweighs** the effectiveness of the **analogy**.

In a chapter **frivolously** entitled "**Pussy Galore**," **Lavigne adopts** the bikers' **view** of women: "Women take up with the Hell's **Angels** for the same reason **flies** are **attracted to shit: some are hungry, some** need a warm place to **stay**, others fed safe in the crowd. ... **Horny** bitches want endless **cock** every way it comes. ..." Throughout this chapter, **Lavigne** apparently **tries** to shock, but only succeeds in **enraging**. **Women are treated as mere sex objects** by the bikers and the reporter. The chapter ends with an **authorial observation** all too **typical of Lavigne's insensitivity**: "The Hell's **Angels, though they abuse their women, are never hard up for**

good looking pussy. They always find another hole to till the gap."

Lavigne's deliberately outrageous, **impressionistic**, pseudo-beat style may draw a **cult** following from certain **elements of the counter-culture** crowd, but it will not succeed on its journalistic merits. To "see the author's word, if all the shit could be edited **out**, this book **might** become a useful and informative **exposé** on the Hell's **Angels**, their allies, and the **threat** they pose to society. As **it** stands, **Hell's Angels: Taking Care of Business** raises **more** questions **than** it answers.

— **JAMES R. DUBRO**

TECHNOLOGY

The Discovery of the Titanic, by Dr. Robert D. Ballard, Penguin, ill&t&d, **230 pages**, \$39.95 cloth (ISBN 0 670 81917 4).

THE **JACKET OF** this book sports a painting of the **Titanic's majestic** bow, eerily washed by the **light** of a **robot** submersible. **This mixture** of mystery and high-tech wizardry is **the** perfect metaphor for **The Discovery of the Titanic**, Robert Ballard's record of his 1985 expedition to the doomed **lii's icy grave**.

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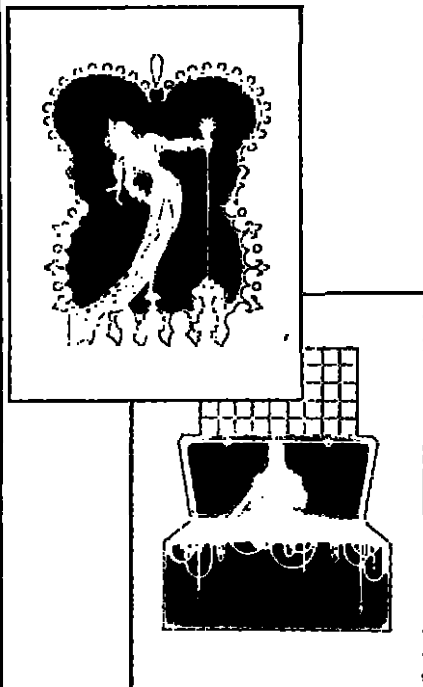
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with disaster and tragedy. While no **exception**, Ballard's is no armchair ramble. **Instead**, we're **thrown** into a world of high adventure and marine geology. Happy schoolboys, **Ballard** and his colleagues revel in the **technological gimmickry** and make no apologies for the scientific **showmanship** of their expedition.

The Discovery of the Titanic is a crowded and **very busy** book. The text is **detailed but crisp**. Above all, this is a rich and varied **photographic extravaganza**. There are lots of ghostly black-and-white stills of the *Titanic*, **glimpes** into the life of the rich and famous on that ill-fated voyage. There is **stunning** photography of the dives to the **ocean floor** and of the *Titanic's* broken skeleton. Wonderfully detailed, and imaginative diagrams and artwork further **buttress** the text. A **final** section neatly juxtaposes the *Titanic* as it was in 1912 and as it rests now.

It is an unbeatable story. There is plenty to grab the most casual browser, and more than enough to satiate those otherwise normal souls obsessed by the *Titanic's* voyage. —B.K. ADAMS

REVIEW

The impossible dream

By Terry Goldie

A Dream Like Mine, by M.T. Kelly. Stoddart, 160 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 2161 4).

SOME TIME AGO, M.T. Kelly's name began to appear on reviews of various books about Indians. His persona was quite **consistent**: someone of liberal **sympathies** concerned with accuracy. Often the review was accompanied by the **comment** that Kelly was working on a novel about native people. A *Dream Like Mine* provides an interesting example of what happens when a **white author** obsessed with "getting it **right**" tries to write right himself. Can it be done?

Judging from this work, it can't, but not for **want** of trying. A *Dream Like Mine* exhibits signs of being the most ardent attempt ever in **white** Canadian **fiction** at defeating both the racist and the romantic, those tendencies that cloud all of us **when** we try to come to terms with native peoples.

The **plot** of the novel is very simple. A journalist with a long-standing **interest** in natives goes north to **participate** in a sweat ceremony. He is kidnapped by Arthur, a visiting **Métis**, and taken on a journey with the real focus of Arthur's attack, Bud, a **polluting industrialist**.

The essential **statement** of the book is about the liberal concerns of the **journalist** and the violence of Arthur. The **journalist constantly** recites the past iniquities by whites **throughout** the Americas. Lo see if justification can be found for the **apparently psychopathic** revenge inflicted by Arthur.

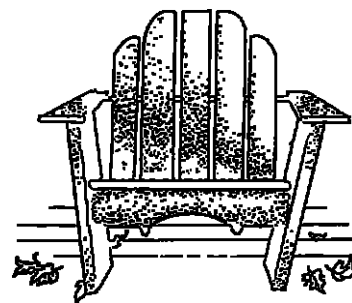
It seems like a worthy **consideration**, of the sort posed by Che **Guevara** when he said. "There are no **innocent** bystanders in a war of revolution." But in the process of exploring the **unanswerableness** of the problem, Kelly falls into **the same** traps that seem to **ensnare all** narratives about Indians.

The basic pattern of the "Indian novel" follows a white in **search** of personal or national identity who **turns** to native peoples for assistance, whether because of some holistic mysticism that is **attributed** to them or because they are **the** truly indigenous peoples. **His/her** interaction with them takes the form of a journey into the wilderness, **often** with a subplot that emphasizes **Indian association** with and **white** alienation from the land.

In this process, **certain** qualities and abilities are shown to be **intrinsic parts** of native peoples. Sexuality and violence are often in the foreground, as is mysticism, which usually is **presented** in connection with a deep understanding **gained through** oral tradition, acclaimed as far superior to the superficialities **provided by writing**.

Most contemporary works are very positive about these elements of **Indian-ness**, unlike many 19th-century texts, which considered them to reveal the inferiority of such primitive peoples. Instead, the **contemporary** shows them to be an ideal vision, that "dream like mine."

Kelly's *Dream* might be read as a **comment** on how the inadequacy of the **narrator's nativist** desires leads hi into a nightmare, but the **verdict can't** be so simple. The journalist reflects on the absurdity of many of these romantic concepts and then the novel uses them, **apparently** unself-consciously. On encountering **Wilf**, an old **Ojibway**, the narrator laments the stereotype of the wise old **man of the tribe**, fount of oral tradition. Guess **what Wilf turns** out to be?



The novel avoids the sexual stereotype — no Indian maidens **floating through** — but Arthur's violence is **as forceful, if not as graphic**, as that in Thomas **Keneally's** Australian novel, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. **Like Keneally**, Kelly shows native violence to be a **response to** white genocide.

Another element the **Canadian** novel shares with the Australian is **the representation of the native** as remnant of the past. **Wilf seems to be a "true" Indian**, but even he decries the inadequacy of his life in comparison with that of his father. Arthur, a **former alcoholic**, sees himself **as an avenger, but as a Métis he also could be a psychotic** mutant of miscegenation, not an **extension** of the heroic Indian of past **warpaths** but an example of the **decadent present**. **Neither he nor the narrator reflects on this**, however — unlike Jimmie Blacksmith, **who believes that the evil that drives him might be his white blood**.

In any case, the narrator, **having entered the wilderness of the native and communed with his violence**, eventually **returns to civilization**. Like the similarly unnamed **narrator of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing***, who laps the essence through **the aura of Indian rock paintings**, he is by no means completely whole **but is much closer than the blindly unreceptive hunters encountered in both novels**.

A Dream Like Mine has the feeling of

a & biography. **Not that Kelly shares the experiences of his narrator**, but that he shares his confusion **at how to recognize the evils of white history and yet not turn to absurd romanticism**. At how to support native **claims** for redress and yet not accept the possible **corollary** of violent attacks on individual whites. At how to create a story in which **the characters represent Indianness** and yet reject the usual representations of Indians.

A worthy fight, **which Kelly fails to win**, though I suspect victory will **dude other battlers as well**. **Keneally's** novel is no doubt a much deeper version of the struggle, but Kelly's compares well with most other works, such as Philip **Kreiner's *A People Like Us In a Place Like This***, and is far superior to many, such as Susan **Musgrave's *The Charcoal Burners***. But the final word is still **very far away**.

The title of *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* **lays claims to a novel that recreates oral tradition**. The title of *A Dream Like Mine* **seems to hope for a mystical insight**, like **Wilf's** dreams in the novel. Perhaps such **claims** need to recall some **history**. Our ancestors thought they had taken over the Indian land, and **now we find they didn't quite make it**. Our novelists show that a **friendly expropriation of the Indian spirit** isn't that easy either. □

REVIEW

Father Nature

By Ma y di Michele

Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change, edited by Michael Kaufman, Oxford. 322 pages, \$17.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540534 X).

IN *THE INTRODUCTION* to this collection of essays **Michael Kaufman makes an important distinction between sex**, which is genetic — that is, male and female — and gender, which is socially constructed — that is, masculine and feminine. Too often we equate **sex and gender**. We too often assume that gender, **like sex**, is a biological imperative.

Perhaps **the kind of person who best illustrates the results of the confusion of sexual identity with gender identity is the transsexual**. The *Oxford American Dictionary* defines a transsexual as: (1) a person who emotionally **feels himself or herself to be a member of the opposite sex**; (2) a person who has had surgery and hormone treatment to change sex. Transsexuals **seem to me to be victims of a culture that polarizes gender differences to such an extent that nobody, no man,**

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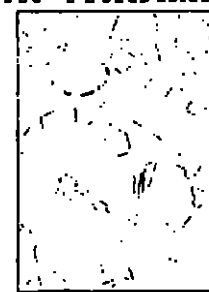
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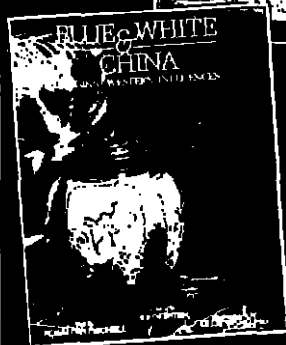


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no woman, is allowed the full range of human potential. They are living proof that personality and sex are not equivalent. Yet because transsexuals are convinced that culture denies the distinction between sex and gender, they are forced through its logic to the absurd conclusion that they are female souls trapped in male bodies or vice versa.

We'd rather believe that we evolved from different species than that we are persons whose secondary and sexual organs are either male or female. Me" have denied their connection to nature, which has been designated as feminine throughout our intellectual traditions. As if men existed outside of nature. As if they did' not also live in a body. The patriarch is a Darth Vader who has replaced his vulnerable parts through technology. Yet men are influenced by the physicality they deny. Men too often govern by their genitals. A good example of this is cited in the essay "The Cult of Masculinity," by Michael S. Kimmel, who quotes Lyndon Johnson after the bombings of North Vietnam: "I didn't just screw Ho Chi Minh. I cut his pecker off."

AU the men writing in this book seem to agree that aggressive masculinity is a problem for our species and our world. These essays point out how often the language of militarism is couched in sexual terms. Herman Kahn of the U.S. Strategic Air Command coined a word, *wargasm*, for all-out nuclear war, that "orgastic spasm of destruction," which Brian Baslea in "Patriarchy, Scientists, and Nuclear Warriors" calls the most obscene word in the English language. And this is a probable end for us all, *wargasm*, if we continue to deny that nature and the feminine are an essential part of us all. □

REVIEW

Tribal injustice

By John Goddard

White Tribe Dreaming: Apartheid's Bitter Roots, by Marq de Villiers, Macmillan, 420 pages, \$26.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9530 1).

ON A RISE outside Bloemfontein, South Africa, stands a simple stone obelisk known as the Women's Monument. It is dedicated to the more than 27,000 Afrikaner women and children said to have died in British concentration camps during the Boer War of 1899-1902, and Marq de Villiers remembers standing before it as a schoolboy once a year to pay tribute. The memorial service was

suffocatingly dull, but de Villiers says he understood in his guts the stone's warning that "outsiders . . . will always do you harm," and that "tight solidarity" is required of Afrikaners in response.

De Villiers, an eighth-generation Afrikaner, attempts to break with that solidarity in *White Tribe Dreaming*. He is editor now of *Toronto Life*, an accomplished journalist who takes an unflinching look at the Afrikaner people and gives the world plenty of reason to hold them in low regard, apart from their oppression of South Africa's black majority.

He traces the origins of the Afrikaner spirit to early Dutch and French settlers, who began to move inland from the coast in the mid-1700s to become illiterate, inbred, and cantankerous. A German traveller among them in the 1790s reported they had no taverns, played no sports, and held no festivals; their chief amusement was to congregate around a table and sing psalms. Most believed the world to be flat. Their constant push for isolation came not out of a dream for a new society, but out of a hatred of strangers and an insistence, even after Abolition, on engaging slaves to do all the work. The *laager*, or circling of the wagons against enemies and wild animals, began as a practical necessity for migrating settlers; it evolved into a collective state of mind.

De Villiers's book is mainly a history of South Africa aimed at revealing the origins of apartheid. It is a timely study, providing valuable background to today's newscasts, but it suffers from his inability to create a sense of place, or breathe life into characters, or bring out drama in events. De Villiers adds a personal dimension by working his ancestors into the story, but they don't come alive either, and sometimes only interrupt the flow. The closest brush the family had with great makers of history seems to be the time his grandfather gave bully beef and biscuits to Winston Churchill, when Churchill was a war correspondent taken prisoner by the Boas.

The "white tribe" of the title refers to an argument de Villiers puts forward that anyone wanting to understand Afrikaners should no longer think of them as European colonists but as indigenous Africans behaving tribally in an age-old competition for land and resources. The argument is more a catchy idea than an anthropological thesis, and it's one that is bound to offend Afrikaners, for the suggestion that they have descended into tribalism, and black tribes, for the suggestion that all tribes are paranoid, xenophobic, and imperialistic. The "dreaming" of the title appears to be a whimsical afterthought, for in the text de Villiers argues that Afrikaners are not dreamers, but brutes. □

REVIEW

A change of climate

By Alberto Manguel

A Shapely Fire: **Changing the Literary Landscape**, edited by Cyril Dabydeen, Mosaic Press, 175 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88962 345 7) and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88962 344 9).

LITERATURE, NOT GEOGRAPHY, determines a country's landscape. Geography may insist that the landscape of Canada consists of mountains, lakes, vast empty frozen spaces, and a string of cities huddled up near the U.S. border, but literature places these props against a historical backdrop that ranges from Presbyterian graveyards to foggy Czech streets. Literature revises the clichés of geography, the postcard truth of Canada, and constantly enriches the land with new and foreign memories. After Timothy Findley, the First World War is a Canadian war; after George Faludy, Josef Skvorecky, and Brian Moore's most recent novel, the fate of Eastern Europe is also the fate of Canada; after Bharati Mukherjee and Rohinton Mistry, India is also a Canadian setting.

Either as the playground of northerners (witness Susan Swan's early stories and plays such as *Theatre Passe Muraille's O.D. on Paradise*) or, more powerfully, as the remembered country in the work of writers who have emigrated here, the vast conglomerate of islands, with different languages, histories, and futures, that we call the Caribbean is today as much a part of Canada's literary geography as the Yukon. In fact, there has probably been more written in Canada, in the past few years, about



Jamaica (for instance) than about Whitehorse.

Cyril Dabydeen's anthology, *A Shapely Fire*, is strong evidence of this. As Dabydeen says in his introduction, there have been several such anthologies in the past decade, two of which deserve to be men-

tioned: *Canada Is Us Now* (NC Press, 1976) and *Other Voices* (Williams-Wallace, 1986). A *Shapely Fire*, however, surpasses both in the quality of its selections.

Dabydeen points out that "writing, of course, is a significant part of Caribbean heritage; since the 1950s the region's authors have steadily been making a name for themselves in the United Kingdom and elsewhere; the imaginative vigour has since grown by leaps and bounds, and authors like the Naipauls, Derek Walcott, and B.R. Braithwaite are now respected world-wide." Dabydeen does not attempt to define this writing, a task that would seem impossible. The diversity of voice, theme, and world view exemplified by the ubiquitous V.S. Naipaul and his lesser-read brother, the far better writer, Shiva Naipaul, would invalidate any attempt to blanket their work. And that in Trinidadian writing alone. Once we begin to explore the literatures of the other islands, the futility of the attempt becomes dear.

Curiously enough, Dabydeen's book — consisting of stories, poems, and one play — proves that a certain similarity does become apparent when these writers come to share a common ground. Perhaps it is Canada's historical barrenness, its fairly tedious history of treaties and agreements, that provokes in the newcomer a sense of daring, a wish to speak out, to break "the silence of these wide open spaces" that, in a vaster context, frightened Blaise Pascal.

The short-story section in *A Shapely Fire* is irreproachable, combining well-known names with undeservedly neglected ones. Clearest and most original among these voices are two: Austin Clarke ("his place in Canadian literature," says Dabydeen, "is well-established and needs no recounting") and Gerard Etienne.

Clarke, born in Barbados in 1932, is represented by "Give It a Shot," a story from *When Women Rule*. As are most of the stories in *A Shapely Fire*, "Give It a Shot" is the description of a conflict, in this case between a bureaucrat of Scottish descent and a Jamaican immigrant. But their bloodlines are almost aleatory: what matters is the kind of characters they are, and how they try to find in those bloodlines reasons for their petty and intimate tragedies.

Etienne, who emigrated from Haiti and now lives in Moncton, N.B., writes in French. From his novel *Une femme muette* ("A Dumb Woman") Dabydeen has selected the first chapter, in which a woman goes from voodoo rites to the rites of a modern hospital. The conflict is described with intelligence and elegance, shifting easily from one mythology to another. Some of the merit of this text must surely be due to the translator.

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whose name, alas, is not acknowledged.

The poetry section is less unanimously successful. The selected poems vary enormously, from the very accomplished to the jingles. Claire K. Harris, Abdur-Rahman Slade Hopkinson, Anthony Phelps (the latter in a superb translation by Colette Pratt) are extraordinary. The quality of an anthology can be measured by what it reveals; if that is the case, my enjoyment of *A Shapely Fire* owes much to the revelation of these three distinguished poets.

The stories, poems, and Roderick Walcott's short and powerful play, *Cul-de-Sac*, included in this volume prove beyond doubt (if proof was still necessary) that the Caribbean literary contribution to Canada has been both strong and fruitful. The subtitle Dabydeen has chosen for his anthology, *Changing the Literary Landscape*, is confirmed by the texts themselves. To the eclectic backgrounds that have appeared in whatever it is we call "Canadian literature," the Caribbean writers have added a world of islands, immigrant sensibilities, racial questions, and colonial politics that has already left its mark on the Canadian imagination and, we hope, has succeeded in making Canada more universal. □

REVIEW

Between haven and hell

By Howard Adelman

Haven's Gate: Canada's Immigration Fiasco, by Victor Malarek, Macmillan. 256 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9497 6).

Double Standard: *The Secret History of Canadian Immigration*, by Reg Whitaker, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 320 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88619 172 6).

CANADA HAS PROVIDED a haven for a half-million refugees since the Second World War as well as for millions of immigrants. But for many, the process of getting here, or of obtaining landed-immigrant status once they have arrived, has been hell. Those are the lucky ones. For them, hell was a transition period and not a permanent state.

This summer the House of Commons was recalled to deal with the "emergency" of refugee arrivals following the landing of 174 Sikhs on the shores of Nova Scotia Bill C-84, legislation to deter the spontaneous arrivals of refugee claimants into Canada, was rammed through Parliament after a committee heard expert witnesses and concerned groups denounce the proposed legislation

as ill-considered, poorly drafted, unworkable, Draconian, and probably in breach of our Charter of Rights. The Senate now is holding up passage of that bill just as the government is pressing passage of Bill C-55, legislation reforming the refugee determination process, which also has been denounced by the non-government organizations concerned with refugees.

These two timely hooks throw light on the issues and document the darkness underlying them. Victor Malarek's journalistic indictment provides accessible and needed background to the government's bungling on immigration and refugee policy. Reg Whitaker's scholarly book is a detailed account, going back to the Second World War, of the bias and incompetence of the security services as they affect immigration.

For Malarek, a central concern is racism. For Whitaker, the continuing theme is the bogey of anti-communism. In both accounts, a bumbling bureaucracy and poor political leadership create a disastrous combination.

There is nothing more fundamental than a society's principles sad policies to determine who can and who cannot become its members. In Canada, those policies have, for much of our history, been dominated by narrow self-interest, exploitation, and racism; less often, fairness, generosity, and humanitarianism have been the dominant elements guiding our decision-makers.

With the country's birth rate declining, now is the time when the need to maintain and expand our population should combine with humanitarianism to determine our immigration and refugee policy. But Malarek contends that political incompetence, widespread public racism, and the determination of civil servants to control the levers of decision making have turned immigration policy into a public farce for Canadians and a personal tragedy for would-be immigrants and refugees.

Malarek draws attention to the report of an audit team that found the department of immigration lacking in controls, direction, and common standards. It reveals unsatisfactory service, obsolete technology, and a distribution of personnel bearing no relation to the geographical areas from which immigrants and refugees come. Behind the chaos are politicians who dither and pontificate, promise and fail to produce. They introduce legislation ostensibly to prevent "queue jumping," while in reality they reward the queue-jumpers and place obstacles in the way of legitimate refugees. Afghans, for instance, who make up almost half the world's refugee population, get virtually no access to the system, while people who claim to be entrepreneurs and investors get preferen-

tial treatment, at much greater administrative cost, without any check on whether they carry out their promises.

Malarek reveals confidential documents that make it apparent that administrative measures were introduced to deter Guatemalans and Salvadoreans from making refugee claims while the government allowed illegitimate Portuguese claimants to clog the system. He recounts the story of Beatriz Barrios Marroquin, a 26-year-old Guatemalan law student and mother of two boys, who was one of the lucky ones selected to come to Canada. She was abducted, disfigured, and killed before she received her exit documents.

Reg Whitaker's introduction to his book, *Double Standard*, begins with the

same tragic tale. He uses it to set off his major theme, implying that the tragic delay was not just a matter of bureaucratic incompetence, as Malarek suggests, but has much deeper, more sinister roots: Canadian links with other, right-wing security services. His thoroughly documented account gives support to speculation that it was the delay for security checks and documentation that tipped off the right-wing death squads that mutilated and murdered Marroquin. By contrast, one of Harold Ballard's hockey players was speedily snatched from Czechoslovakia, clearly an oppressive regime, but not one riddled with death squads.

For Whitaker, "the national security state, as it emerged in Cold War Canada,

found its fullest expression in its activities in immigration and citizenship, where entire groups of people could be walled off from the benefits of the normal restraints that liberal democracy exercises upon those wielding power, where natural justice and procedural fairness were mocked by arbitrary power, and where the state could pursue its discretionary course in dark and silent corridors unlit by publicity and unchecked by criticism."

This is the common theme of both books — not bureaucratic bias, not public racism, not political incompetence, but the proliferation of rules and guidelines that prevent accountability and institutionalize arbitrary power. Refugees, immigrants, and the people of Canada are the losers. □

FIRST NOVELS

Local heroes

In two new novels the setting makes up for the shortcomings of the plot, but a third is best left to connoisseurs of cliché

By Janice Kulyk Keefer

RUSSELL McRAB is not a writer; Going to the Dogs (Viking/Penguin, 252 pages, \$19.95 cloth), is not a novel, nor even a narrative, but rather slabs of earnest but un-inspired expository prose relieved by unconvincing dialogue. This book has all the intellectual and formal qualities of a pot of porridge: the story of brainy, superstud Billy Mackenzie's rebellion against and eventual escape from Nugget, the dreariest of northern mining towns, plays scratchy second fiddle to McRae's ranting against the North American educational system and his celebrating of the joys of dope.

But worse, by far, are the atrocities he commits with the language. Connoisseurs of cliché and collectors of dead metaphor will be enraptured by passages such as the following:

Under the hypnotic spell of his mother's vitriolic tongue, Billy had been innocently conscripted into her sour and angry world, and in that world Alex Mackenzie was the archcriminal and the favourite target. . . Never was she more rancidly entertaining or more irresistibly hilarious than in her murderously accurate takeoffs of Alex Mackenzie. She relished above all else describing what a hopeless rap, what a gullible flunky, what a boring drip her husband was. The job she did on him was beyond mere callous mimicry. It was an act of vivisection, pornographic in the clinical purity of its exposures, from which Billy Mackenzie's father emerged

as sexless, mindless, gutless, and virtually pointless — the quintessential asshole.

Not just the mind but the ear boggles.

In comparison with *Going to the Dogs*, David Thompson's thriller, *Broke* English (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 256 pages, \$19.95 cloth), seems mistitled. Thompson is no *Le Carré*, it's true, but the man can string his sentences together, has an astute ear for dialect as well as dialogue, and is able to construct a competent narrative. More important, he conveys to the reader the hell that is Belfast



— the routine brutality and undiminishable suffering that daily life in Northern Ireland entails. His success in creating a persuasive context for his novel makes up for the unconvincing premise of the plot: that the entire family of the Prince of Wales make a tour of Northern Ireland

and *Eire*, with Charles and heir targeted for assassination by a combination of Prows, IRA turncoats, and a couple of Brits for good measure.

Thompson is less skilful at creating characters — his hem Martin Burke and the requisite love interest, Meagan, are wooden indeed. We can believe neither Burke's transformation from gung-ho to burnt-out terrorist "or his sodden emotional expenditure on Meagan, simply because Thompson hasn't bothered to make either part of his narrative — they are simply *données* thrown to us in the same way Belfast slang and military acronyms are pitched into the text. One can remedy the reader's ignorance about *gits, geas, and gos* with a glossary, but one can't do quite the same thing with underdeveloped and thus unconvincing characters. Yet despite these shortcomings, *Broken English* proves engrossing reading, if not a satisfying novel.

K.G.B. Konkel's *The Glorious East Wind* (Random House, 320 pages, \$21.95 cloth) is also a thriller. As with *Broken English*, many of its merits derive from the care with which a convincing setting is developed: the real hero of the novel is Hong Kong itself, which Konkel graphically shows to be the best and worst of cities.

Konkel's prose is often hackneyed, and his plot suffers from an excess of complications and characters, yet one of the compensations of this novel is the persistence and skill with which it frustrates

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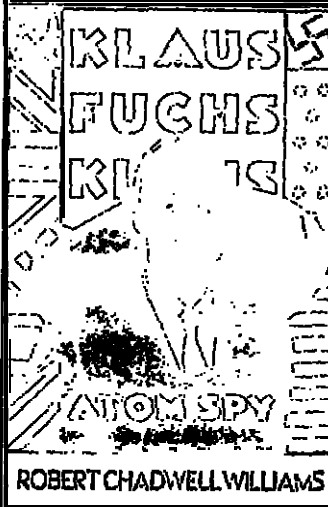


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our expectations. The reader is given no one white knight or deep-dyed villain to deal with; instead we have a host of variously flawed or only partially effective heroes and an entire cast of villains ranging from the egregiously brutish to the intricately civilized. And whereas *Broken English* strains credibility by

letting its hem get almost everything he wants at the end, *The Glorious East Wind* (despite a cast of corpses that makes Act V of *Hamlet* look like *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*) shows how it is the way of the world for the corrupt to prosper and the virtuous to lose their illusions, if not their very lives.

The Glorious East Wind is by no means a marvel, and yet several of Konkel's characters — most notably the decent, doomed police commissioner, John Cleve, and the impeccably evil Lee Shiu Shing — make it worthwhile to thread the novel's labyrinthine plot. No doubt it will make a crackerjack movie. □

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Peter panned

Supposedly a celebration of 'the wisdom of J.M. Barrie,' a new book turns the joyous freedom of the Neverland into a grim metaphor for death

By Mary Ainslie Smith

A NUMBER OF titles in the children's sections of Canadian book stores this season are not intended primarily for children. Most children will not find them even slightly interesting. But because they are packaged to look like children's gift books and because there isn't any other category to place them in, they will be in the children's section. And because they have been designed to catch the eye of adult browsers, they will likely enjoy successful sales.

Perhaps the strangest example this year of an adult book riding a popular children's vehicle is *The Eternal Peter Pan* (Tundra, 48 pages, \$29.95 cloth), which is the cover informs us, "the wisdom of J.M. Barrie illustrated by Susan Hudson." It is 50 years since the death of Barrie, the strange, mother-ridden little Scot who, to entertain some young friends, created stories of Peter Pan, the magic boy who lived in Kensington Gardens with the fairies.

At the time, Barrie was making a name for himself in London as a popular writer and dramatist. A stage version of *Peter Pan* was first performed in 1904, and although some critics were scornful of it, notably Max Beerbohm and G.B. Shaw, it was immediately and immensely popular with young audiences. Barrie reworked and revised his play until a printed version was finally published in 1923. His story-book, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, was published in 1906, followed in 1911 by *Peter and Wendy*.

This book, in various editions, illustrated by such artists as Edmund Blampied, has always been a British classic, enjoying the same popularity as the play. In North America, the story tends to be equated with Mary Martin and the stage musical or, ultimate indignity, with Walt Disney's animated film. This season, the Shaw Festival presented to North American audiences an "adult" version

of the play, closer to Barrie's original. Tundra launched *The Eternal Peter Pan* at the play's opening night at the Shaw.

The book contains 20 coloured line drawings and etchings by Hudson, a Mont&I artist, accompanied by brief excerpts from *Peter and Wendy*, sources for her inspiration. The illustrations are intriguing and multi-layered. Outlines of faces and figures are in the foreground while the contents of minds, memories, and dreams crowd the rest of the page. A long time can be spent over each illustration studying and deciphering the symbolism, relating each part of each picture to the Peter Pan story. But Hudson's colours are sombre and overall her illustrations seem grim and analytical rather than joyous and creative.

Many of the accompanying excerpts from Barrie's text strike the modern reader not as "wisdom" but as shallow sentiment or preciousness. "To die will be an awfully big adventure." "No one



ever gets over the first unfairness." "He was never more sinister than when he was most polite, which is probably the truest test of breeding."

On this anniversary of Barrie's death much is being made, it seems, of the interpretation of *Peter Pan* as a story about

death, about the Neverland as a child's idea of heaven. For "flying" read "dying." In *The Eternal Peter Pan*, this tone is set by Ebbitt Cutler's interesting but somewhat overblown introduction: "*Peter Pan* is the *Hamlet* of children's literature, its greatest single creation. . . . Both are studies in death." But it seems simplistic to reduce the story of Peter Pan to one conceit.

The story still has great appeal, dated as much of its language and many of its concepts certainly are. If has this appeal surely because it is a story not just about dying but also about freedom, glorious freedom and independence from any possibility of adult control and restriction. But the children, although they escape for a little while to the Neverland, must return to the world of adults. Ultimately they choose to return. Only Peter does not. He remains a wonderful, romantic figure because only he, paying the price of loneliness, stays free. Hudson, although probing and presenting all the complex layers that form the free world and the restrictive world, has missed the sense of joyous freedom that pervades the Peter Pan story and has allowed it to live on.

Also featuring contemporary illustrations of a classic is Quebec artist Gilles Tibo's interpretation of Edgar Allan Poe's short Gothic ballad, *Annabel Lee* (Tundra, 24 pages, \$19.95 cloth). Whatever one may think of Poe's macabre tastes, this poem of love, death, and desolate loneliness provides a wonderful subject for Tibo's art.

He has chosen the Gaspé to represent Poe's "kingdom by the sea." The narrator is a young boy from a fishing village who shares the joys of exploring the seashore with a girl, *Annabel Lee*, who may or may not be an imaginary companion. They pick wildflowers, dig dams, scamper through tidal pools, until their happiness becomes too great and heaven causes a wind to blow out of a cloud

"killing and chilling" **Annabel Lea**. The **last three** pictures show the **boy** alone, **mourning** and remembering, while the **night sky illuminates** a wild and lonely sea.

Tibo uses airbrush technique to great effect, creating a combination of **smoothness that seems to glow** with inner lilt and surreal **grainy** textures. In **one illustration**, the **softly coloured figures** of the boy and girl **are** in the foreground while behind them **rises a grey, mysterious village over a harbour filled** with small boats moored on **shining** water. In **another**, the "ghostly **galleon**" that **comes to claim** the body of **Annabel Lee** **towers in stark** whiteness over the famous **Percé** rock, an image that fixes itself in the mind.

In A Halifax ABC (**Tundra**, 30 pages, \$14.95 cloth) another Canadian artist,

Gordon **Roache**, **explores** and interprets his home territory. He takes us **through** Halifax from A (anchor) to Z (mom) in a series of vibrant, energetic **paintings**. The skyline, the parks, the **harbour**, the **neighbourhoods of the city are explored**, but **most important** are the people who **fill** these **paintings**, particularly the children, eating fries from a chip wagon, **tobogganing down Citadel Hill**, **crowding** a boat for a **harbour tour** or comparing the results of a fishing expedition.

Murphy the Wonder Dog (Mosaic, 36 pages, \$9.95 cloth) is a piece of whimsy created by artist **Harold Town**. Murphy sits, small, brown, outlined in black, usually in a lower **corner** in this **series** of pictures, observing the **phenomena in the world around him**. **Among other things**, Murphy the **wonder dog** **observes** the **first** walking **mushroom**, the **first** swimming

rock and the **first** "floating **jube jube**." In the **last** picture, Murphy observes "that the **tomb of the unknown dog**" — a **giant fire hydrant** — "is in **questionable taste**." **These** observations will probably mean little to the literal-minded.

An art book that does manage to balance a good **story** with beautiful **illustrations** — a book that many children will like very much — is **The Enchanted Tapestry**, a **Chinese folktale retold** by Robert D. San **Souci**, illustrated by **Laszlo Gal** (**Groundwood**, 30 pages, \$14.95 cloth). The **story** has many elements of universal **folktales**: three brothers (the **older** two selfish and lazy, the **youngest** one faithful and brave.), a perilous journey, a beautiful lady, a happy ending. **These** combine with an **exotic setting**, **ancient China**, to give a good mixture of the familiar and the mysterious.

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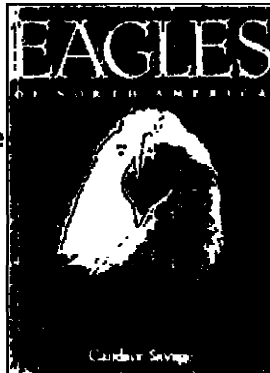


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Gal's technique **seems** particularly appropriate to this story. His artwork, a **combination of watercolour washes, gouache, and coloured pencil**, unfolds like a "intricate and **delicately** textured tapestry. It **seems** fitting that at the end of the story the enchanted tapestry **enlarges** until it becomes a real world itself, a world that **rewards** good and **excludes** evil.

Another **kind of book will** be Found in the children's section this season, those that **will** be bought **and** mad by adults For use with children. One is **How to Make Pop-ups**, by Joan Irvine, illustrated by Barbara Reid (Kids Can, 93 pages, \$9.95 paper), **which** starts with simple pop-up cards using Folded paper strips and triangles and progresses to the **construction** of much more complicated changing

circles, sliding strips, and pull-tabs to be used to **make complete pop-up** books. With clear, **straightforward** instructions and helpful illustrations, **this** book should provide Fun for **children eager** to try out some **new, creative** ideas.

Let's Celebrate! by Caroline Parry (Kids Can, 256 pages, \$24.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper) collects more than 250 special days celebrated across Canada by people **of** different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Parry takes us through the seasons, giving information about such **familiar holidays** as **Christmas** and **Halloween** and also **introducing** many not so well-known **celebrations**, such as the Japanese **Spring Festival**. Sri Lankan **New Year**, **Arbour Day**, the Iroquois **Strawberry Festival**, the Canadian **National Frog Jumping Championships**,

and the **Vasaloppet**. **Black-and-white illustrations and sidebars containing suggestions** For activities and extra hits of **information** (how to make **snowsnake** tracks, a recipe For **wassail punch**) add to the book's interest.

The Polka Dot Door Activity Book, by Catherine Ripley (Stoddart, 96 pages, 98.95 paper), is meant to be used in conjunction with the popular TV Ontario **series** For **pre-school** and early primary children. Some **of the** suggested activities would probably be Fun — **making** music with **water-filled** bottles, **For example**, and experimenting with **colours**. But the **design of this** book is **so** unattractive, with lines and dots (polka dots?) crowded all over the pages and **smudgy, unpleasant colours**, that adults and **children** will both **likely** be put right off. □

INTERVIEW

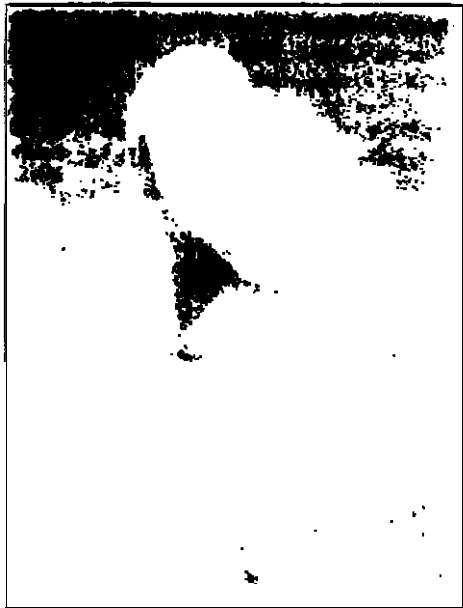
Katherine Govier

If this were Europe, there would be 10 countries between Ontario and Alberta. That's a long way to go, and it's a big gap in a cultural way'

By Brent Ledger

KATHERINE GOVIER'S first book of short stories, *Fables of Brunswick Avenue* (Penguin, 1985), established her as a **chronicler** of contemporary mores in Toronto's artsy Annex district. But in her **fiction** Govier also repeatedly returns to the West, in her 1979 novel, *Random Descent* (Macmillan), and most recently in *Between Me* (Penguin). Set in Calgary, it tells the parallel stories of Suzanne Vail, a university professor caught between two men, and Rosalie New Grass, an Indian

Katherine Govier



woman raped and murdered in 1889. Born in Edmonton in 1948 and a graduate of the University of Alberta and York University, Govier recently returned to Toronto after a year in London, England. She was interviewed by Brent Ledger:

Books in Canada: *Recently there was a parody of your work in The Bumper Book. What did you think of it?*

Katherine Govier: I was completely mystified. I could see what the parody was parodying. It was a kind of writing that is concerned with labels. I call it a kind of American writing, where everybody is not just wearing shoes, they're wearing Guccis. But I don't write that way.

BiC: *The parody labelled you as a "lifestyle journalist," and in the Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories your work is described as being mostly about "young urban professionals." There seems to be a current of critic&m that says you're a "yuppie" writer.*

Govier: I wrote all those stories before there even were such things as yuppies. I consider my characters, especially in *Brunswick Avenue*, to be fairly downmarket Wasps. Brunswick Avenue is a yuppie place now, but it wasn't when I wrote those stories.

I think Canada is maybe unique in that if you have done other kinds of writing there is a desire to belittle you. We've had a more academic stream in our writers than we've had a journalistic stream. In

other countries there's a lot more crossover between journalism and what you'd call serious fiction. In the States there's Joan Didion. In England virtually all writers appear in the daily newspapers and magazines. But here you're tainted by journalism.

BiC: *You've done a lot of freelance journalism.*

Govier: I Found it a very convenient way to finance my fiction writing, and I also think I learned a lot doing it. I learned how to listen to voices and really get dialogue down. I learned how to finish pieces off, and how something changes when it appears in print. You need that experience of seeing it in print to see how you would revise.

BiC: *The two main female characters in your new book, Suzanne and Gemma, also appear in one of your stories. Was the book inspired by the characters?*

Govier: No. I wouldn't say it was inspired by those characters, but I've had those characters with me for a while. I wrote the story "Going to Europe" — Suzanne and Gemma went to Europe together — and I think almost simultaneously with writing that story I started the novel. I started this novel a long, long time ago.

BiC: *Where did the book come from?*

Govier: About six years ago, on one of my many trips back to Calgary, I went into the city library, as is my habit, and I found this Rosalie New Grass story. I'd been looking for a way to "reinvent the west," as Suzanne calls her course, and

that particular story just seemed to me to hold some kind of symbolic umbrella over that city. That's partly where the book came from, and at the same time it came from this desire to look at certain kinds of choices that women make and why they make them.

BiC: In that sense the book seems rather pessimistic, because the title refers to Suzanne, who's in between men in an emotional sense but also somehow under the control of men — even the liberated woman who teaches at universities.

Govier: I don't know whether I'd call that pessimistic or realistic. I think the title works two ways. One is simply what Murphy [the journalist who narrates the story of the murder] says: "Why should this story concern you? This is something that happened between me." It's about how the responsibility became a sort of clubby thing: We can't punish any man for this, for no one is truly guilty of this — it is a thing that happened between men. That's to a large extent the way Calgary runs, or probably Toronto runs. The title is about that, and it's also about the casual, sort of ironic statement that a woman can make: "What are you doing now?" "I'm between me." Like between jobs.

BiC: What about Gemma and her band of gold-diggers? I suppose it's a comment on some of the aberrant directions the women's movement has taken.

Govier: I'm always being called post-feminist. She's a bit of a post-feminist. She's funny, and she's not stupid, and she takes the edge off the others. It's a bit difficult to argue with her brand of pragmatism. I think that's one of the things that happens to movements as people pick up various parts of them and use them to their own advantage. There used to be a thing in the late '70s where me" would become avowed feminists because they thought they could get into bed with women that way. It's not terribly different — the Gemmas of this world. **BE:** Was the opening chapter, which describes the rape and murder of Rosalie New Grass, hard to write? It's painful to read.

Govier: No, that was easy to write. That was the first bit I wrote, and I wrote it almost exactly the way it is. I could see it very clearly—these things reverberate for me. I do have a kind of awful fascination with this sort of violent murder, especially of women. I hate gruesome movies, I hate blood, and I hate the exploitation of murders, especially sex-linked murders. But I think we have a very false idea that those things happen way over there and we live our safe and respectable life way over here. "People we know don't do those things."

BiC: You said a couple of years ago that you were writing a novel that mediates be-

tween your western self and the self that "feels like a refugee in Toronto." Do you feel you've succeeded?

Govier: Someone asked me the other day, "Where are you from now?" I lived for 22 years in Alberta, and I've lived here for 16 years. Four of those years I've lived outside the country. Where am I from? I don't think I'm from anywhere. You know, if this were Europe there would be 10 countries between here and Alberta. That's a long way to go, and it's a big gap in a cultural way. So I suppose it's inevitable that I would be constantly reaching back to those days. Last year, for instance, when I was sitting in England, I kept wanting to write stories about Edmonton in 1970. I don't think that mediation is ever going to be completed.

BE: You've got a fascination with the past.

Govier: I do. I'm a frustrated historian. It's like a travel bug. I think the past is very much in everything we do, because I see it as a layer beneath the surface. I find it impossible to look at a person right now and think that's all there is and not start searching back through the detritus to find out what went before. □

LETTERS

For the sake of Clarity

AS PUBLISHERS of Diana G. Collier's *The Invisible Woman of Washington*, we are naturally disappointed to see a predominantly negative view of a work we believe to be of strong artistic and social merit appear in *Books in Canada* (August-September). We do recognize, however, that persons give" the position of critic have a right to express their viewpoint — whatever might be the extent of their background or depth of their judgment.

What we cannot accept is the caption on the column, "Why do manifestly bad writers feel compelled to toss off a book as if it were a sweater on a hot day? Worse, why do publishers print them?" While this was excerpted from the review of a book other than our own, when used as a caption for the column, it smeared all four books under review equally.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the publication of a first novel is a very sensitive issue for the small publisher, who is at risk financially and otherwise, as well as for the fledgling author, who may well have devoted years of serious effort to the work. While criticism of the authors was requested, unsolicited criticism of the publishers was irregular and irresponsible.

First novels are the necessary route by

which all literary culture must pass. Surely "quality control," if this is the excuse, can be adequately handled by astute observations within the review itself, without gratuitous slaughter being wreaked in the captions. The cruel blanket condemnation of four first novelists and their publishers by the caption of Janice Kulyk Keefer's cob"" is glib, arrogant, and without consideration for its negative impact on future literary publication in Canada.

Surely a" apology is in order.

Annette Gordon
Editorial Committee
Clarity Press
Ottawa

WIN SOME, LOSE SOME MORE

L.R. WRIGHT was not the first Canadian to get a" Edgar and "either was L.A. Morse (letter August-September). Before Barbara Amiel gets to you, I'd better point out that she and George Jonas won a" Edgar in 1977 for the brilliant *By Persons Unknown*. I realize it was for non-fiction; however, non-fiction is often stranger than fiction!

Now of course if we include ex-Canadians, Margaret Millar was the first to win an Edgar in 1956 for *Best in View*.

Morse may still be shaking his head.

Jack Jensen
Toronto

PHIL HALL writes, in your October *Field Notes*, of Trinity College School: "Private. Catholic. Boys. Archibald Lampman went there."

Lampman. Son of an Anglican clergyman. Trinity. Anglican too.

Victoria Ellison
Clandeboye, Ont.

RECOMMENDED

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

FICTION

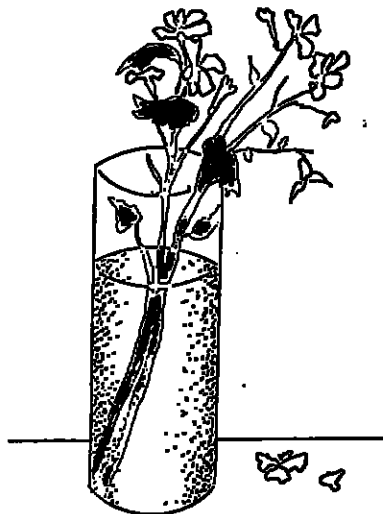
Swahn: *A Mystery*, by Carol Shields. Stoddart. Shields's fifth novel is less a whodunit than a search for the solution to the mystery of art, its miraculous birth and fragile existence. Her answers are as elusive as butterflies, but her wicked, lightly satirical restatement of the question makes for fascinating reading.

NON-FICTION

No Kidding: Inside the World of Teenage Girls, by Myrna Kostash, McClelland & Stewart. Based on her personal observation of 50 girls in Edmonton, Vancouver, and Toronto, Kostash's lively, insightful book is long on the substance of her subjects' lives and short (thank heavens) on sociological pontificating.

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:

- Abramam, by Colin Browne, Brick Books.
 Act of God, by Charles Tompkins, General.
 And the House Sank Like a Ship in the Long Prairie Grass, by Linda Fears, CLA.
 Being Frequent Conversations with Women, by Daphne Morrison, New Star Books.
 East Hillier, Trails in Western Newfoundland, by Keith Nicol, Breakwater.
 The Blue House, by Lesley McAllister, Aya Press.
 Blue Sides: The Autobiography of a Canadian Spitfire Pilot in World War II, by Bill Olmsted, Stoddart.
 Bohunk Road, by Hope Morris, River City Press.
 Budgeting for Children's Services, by Callie Israel, CLA.
 Canada Year Book 1935, edited by Alice Guay and Borgay Person, Statistics Canada.
 Canadian Children's Annual 12, edited by Brian Cross, Overlea House.
 Canadian Films for Children and Young Adults, CLA.
 The Canadian Political Tradition, edited by R.S. Blair and J.T. McLeod, Methuen.
 Chamon Dada, by Tristan Tzara, translated by Lee Harwood, Coach House.
 Children of Byzantium, by Katherine Vlasie, Cormorant Books.
 Children of the Shroud, by Garfield Reeves-Stevens, Doubleday.
 Citizen and Soldier: The Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Howard Graham, M & S.
 Christmas Adventures in the Gold Trade, by Ken Lefoll, Key Porter Books.
 Courage in the Storm, by Thomas H. Raddall, illustrated by Are Gjeddal, Pottersfield Press.
 Dawson's the Government of Canada, 6th edition, edited by Norman Ward, U of T Press.
 Dear Eric: Springtime, by Kevin Major, Doubleday.
 Diary of Dazire, by Judith Fitzgerald, Black Moss.
 The Doll, by Cora Taylor, Western Producer Prairie Books.
 Detroit: Incarcerated in Italy, 1940-1945, by Salim Diamond, Mosaic Press.
 Eden Poems, by Maggie Helwig, Oberon.
 European and American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts: Volume 1, 1300-1600, edited by Myron Laskin Jr. and Michael Ponzatti, National Gallery of Canada.
 Everyday Lava: A Survival Guide for Canadians, by Jack Batten and Marjorie Harris, Key Porter.
 Experimental Psychology, by Siu L. How, Detselig.
 Explore Macchia, by Susan Fryke, photography by G.W. Campbell, Boston Mills.
 Fall of an Arrow, by Murray Peden, Stoddart.
 Family Nights, by Fran Papworth, illustrated by Lorna Chavira, Family High Publishing.
 Five New Facts About Gloucester, by Hugh Hood, Black Moss Press.
 Fleeing the Lamb: The Inside Story of the Vancouver Stock Exchange, by David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, Douglas & McIntyre.
 Gift Angel, by Aldrie Thomson, Stoddart.
 The Green Gables Detectives, by Eric Wilson, Collins.
 The Hearts and Lives of Men, by Fay Weldon, Stoddart.
 Hedley: Twenty Years, by Dan Diamond and Lew Stubbs, Doubleday.
 A Hug for the Apostle, by Laurie Dennett, Macmillan.
 Hungarian-Canadian Literature, by George Bizray, U of T Press.
 If I Were Prime Minister, Introduction by Mel Hurtig, Hurtig Publishers.



CANWIT NO. 124

RI N M U R
 B A L O N E Y

LONG-TIME READERS of this space will recognize the above as what the late Robert Zend termed a "drop poem," in which the letters of people's names are divided into two lines in order to comment on their personalities. Contestants are invited to compose similar comments, positive or negative, on well-known Canadians, living or dead. The prize is a *Books in Canada* sweat-shirt. Deadline: January 1. Address: CanWit No. 124, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 122

OUR REQUEST for acronyms à la WASPs and DINKS provoked a smattering of rude initials. The winner is E. Bonkalo of Sudbury, Ont., whose list includes:

UFOS: Unmarried Female Orgasm Seekers
 WOMB: Widows' Organized Maternity Branch

AIDS: Adulterous Individuals' Dating Service

Honourable mention:

ORGASM: Organizations Rehabilitating Gays and Sado-Masochists

— Barry Baldwin, Calgary

SOLUTION TO CANLIT ACGROSTIC NO. 9

Fir, hemlock and cedar — some of them two or three hundred years old — still crowd the forest, with willow, aspen and alder marching beside the streams. It is still possible to look in any direction and not see even a curl of smoke; to live . . . without sight or sound of a human being.

— Gilean Douglas, *River for My Sidewalk* (Sono Nis)

- Introduction to the Economics of Canadian Education, by Donald M. Richards and Eugene W. Ratsoy, Detselig.
 Justice Delayed: Nazi War Criminals in Canada, by David Matas with Susan Charendoff, Sunnerhill Press.
 The Last White Man in Panama, by William Gough, Viking/Penguin.
 Linda Frum's Guide to Canadian Universities, Key Porter.
 Looking at the Body, by David Suzuki, Stoddart.
 A Loving Legacy: Recipes and Memories from Yesterday and Today, for Tomorrow, by Eleanor Thomson, Butter-nut Press.
 Love, Cellulose and the Inner Marriage, by John P. Dourley, Inner City Books.
 Ludwig Zeller: A Celebration, Mosaic Press.
 Macroeconomic theories of controversial postkeynesianism, by M. Lavoie, University of Ottawa.
 The Man in the Mirror, by Carole Jerome, Key Porter.
 Metamorphosis: Stages in a Life, by David Suzuki, Stoddart.
 Moby Jane, by Gerry Gilbert, Coach House.
 Menela's Mother Said NO!, by Shirley Day, Black Moss.
 The New Power Skating, by John Wild, Prentice-Hall.
 NeWest Plays by Women, edited by Diane Bessal and Don Kerr, NeWest Press.
 No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States and the Origins of North American Air Defence, 1945-1958, Joseph T. Jockel, UBC Press.
 No Easy Answers: The Trial and Conviction of Bruce Curtis, by David Hayes, Penguin Books.
 Not Noir: Poems, by Kate Van Dusen, Coach House.
 Old Whores: More Adult Cartoons, by Terry Mosher, M & S.
 On Power and Ideology, by Noam Chomsky, Black Rose Books.
 Once There Was a Man, by Vladimir Jovicic, M & S.
 The Ph.D. Trap, by Wilfred Cude, Medicine Label Press.
 Podboraki, by Steve Podboraki with Gerald Donaldson, M & S.
 Poems Released on a Nuclear Wind, by Allan Cooper, Pottersfield Press.
 Pre-School Storytimes, by Ken Roberts, CLA.
 Professional Child and Youth Care: The Canadian Perspective, edited by Carey Denholm et al., UBC Press.
 Providing Land and Resources for Aboriginal Peoples, by Bradford W. Morse, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations.
 Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction: 1905-1980, by Terrence Craig, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
 Rick Hansen: Man in Motion, by Rick Hansen and Jim Taylor, Douglas & McIntyre.
 Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, by Rudyard Kipling, illustrated by Mait Gould, Oxford.
 Rochdale: The Runaway College, by David Sharpe; Anansi.
 Rumours of Glory: Saskatchewan and the Thatcher Years, by Dale Elser, Hurtig.
 The Savage Blood, by Norma West Linder, River City Press.
 Shoeked and Appalled, edited by Jack Kapica, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
 673 Ways to Save Money, by Janet Arnett, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
 The Silent World, by Jacques Cousteau with Frederick Dumes, Western Producer Prairie Books.
 Silver Threads: Critical Reflections on Growing Old, by Daris Marshall, between the lines.
 Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes, by John G. Reid, Nimbus Publishing.
 Slim Deception Fat Reflection: One Woman's Struggle with Bullimia, by Deborah Yelneck, Kindred Press.

- So This is Africa, by Betty Kigour, Detselig.
 Stung: The Incredible Obsession of Brian Mofohy, by Gary Ross, Stoddart.
 They Don't Make 'Em Like That Any More, by John de Bondt, Oberon.
 This One's on Me: The Sixth Volume of the Bandy Papers, by Donald Jack, Doubleday.
 Time for Tots, by Virginia Van Vliet, CLA.
 Touching: Body Therapy and Depth Psychology, by Deldon Anne McNeeley, Inner City Books.
 Tuppence Ha'penny Is a Nickel, by Francis X Atherton, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
 Weweworld: An Epic Adventure of the Imagination, by Clive Barker, Collins.
 Winning the Radar War: A Memoir, by Jack Nissen with A.W. Cockerill, Macmillan.
 Writing: An Informal Anecdotal Guide to the Secrets of Crafting and Selling Non-fiction, by Adrian Waller, M & S.
 The Year of Fears, by David Watmough, Mosaic Press.

CLASSIFIED

Classified rates: \$8 per line (40 characters to the line). Deadline: first of the month for issues dated following month. Address: Books in Canada Classified, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9. Phone: (416) 363-5426.

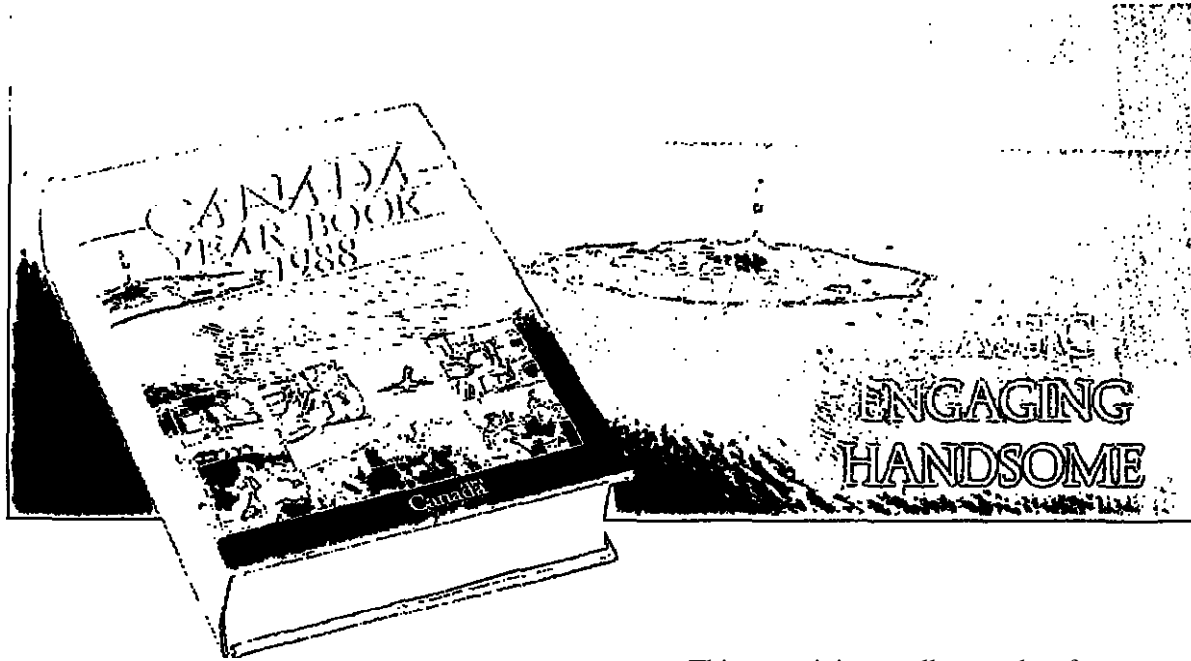
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FOR A BIOGRAPHY of Margaret Laurence I seek copies of letters etc. from her. L.H: Powers, Dept. of English, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA 48109.

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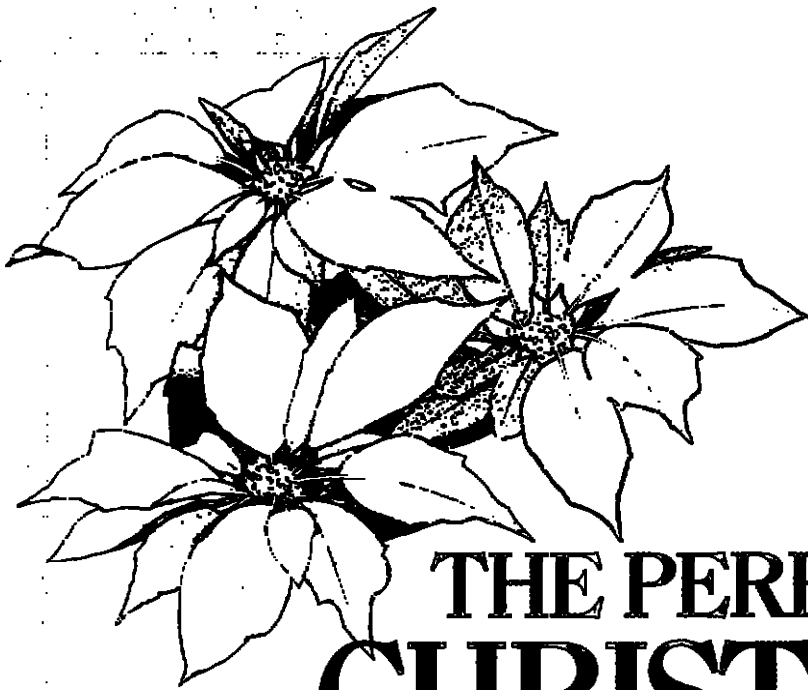
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