

## FILLING IN FOR PEARSON

MIKE II

Memoirs of **the Right Honourable**  
LESTER B. PEARSON, VOL. 2

*University of Toronto Press*  
cloth \$12.50; illustrated; 344 pages

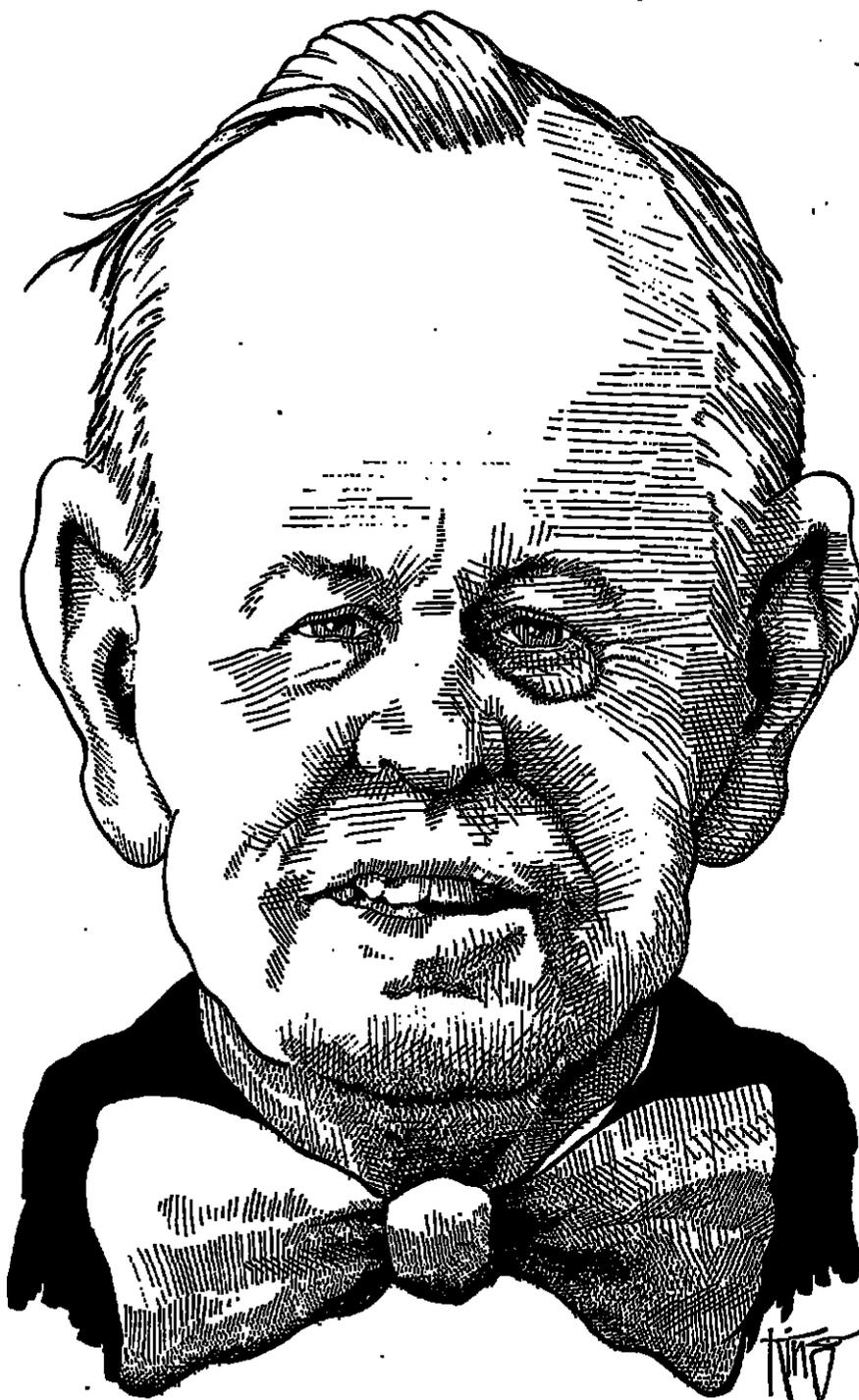
*reviewed by Roger Hall*

DURING THE AUTUMN of 1972, as Mike Pearson realized more and more the extreme gravity of his illness, he attempted to quicken the pace of the production of his memoirs. In early November, after drafting four chapters and sketching in two others, he abandoned work on his second volume and turned to the third; upon which he laboured until a few days before his death on Dec. 27.

The second volume has now been published. Pearson's research associates, John Munro and Alex Inglis (with the help and guidance of Blair Neatby, Christopher Young and Pearson's son, Geoffrey) have completed his work — retaining the first-person style and drawing relevant materials from CBC-TV transcripts (*The Tenth Decade* and *First Person Singular*), Pearson's diaries and other personal and public papers. Admittedly the result is, as Geoffrey Pearson writes in the foreword, "not the volume L.B. Pearson would have written" for he was an "inveterate reviser" of manuscripts. but a work that can still be considered principally the product of his pen.

Unhappily, the plan doesn't work particularly well. That which lifted the first volume of *Mike* cut of the ordi-

*continued on page 20*



# A (SHUDDER) BLOODY GOOD BOOK

## THE TRUE LIFE OF SWEENEY TODD

COZETTE DE CHARMOY  
Oberon Press  
cloth \$9.95; illustrated; 94 pages

reviewed by *Walter Klepac*

IT SEBMS THE English have always had an abiding affection for their eccentrics. Unlike the Americans, who traditionally tend to **favour** the underdog, **the English** have shown no reservation about extending their compassion and fond interest **not only** to the unpardonably rich but also to the **criminally** insane. Both the English tabloid press (the masses) and the majority of distinguished English murder-mystery novelists (**the upper-**

middle classes) **have** helped cultivate the native fascination for extravagant murderers, from Jack the Ripper to his various latter day **descendants**. Perhaps then, **Cozette** de Charmoy, a resident Canadian painter for the last 15 years, is merely acknowledging her English roots by recounting in her recent collage novel the extraordinary saga of the "demon barber of Fleet **Street**", Mr. Sweeney Todd.

**While** the design and layout of *The True Life of Sweeney Todd* owe much to the **popularized** versions of **McLuhanism** such as *The Medium is the Massage* and *Global Village* with their strong graphic impact, their dramatically varied type sizes and their insistence **that** visual "illustrations" can convey as much content as do words, Ms. de **Charmoy's** exquisite little book takes full advantage of its Victorian setting. The book's **successful recreation** of the values and sentiments of a past yet familiar era somehow allows us the distance from the material needed to accept the **narrator's apparent** sympathy for the hem and obvious relish in describing his grisly deeds. Indeed, there is an irresistible kind of boyish **charm** to the zest and ceaselessly inventive imagination with

which Sweeney Todd pursues **his interests** in the ladies and the **razor**. Up to a point, the anonymous narrator's **enthusiasm** is infectious: "YOU **HAVE A/WIDE/CHOICE/SWEENEY/SO MANY WAYS/TO DEVELOP/AN ART FORM**"

**Cozette** de Charmoy uses words **with** the assurance and intuitive rightness of a poet. Without them, the morbid and baroque fantasies of her collages would be **overpowering**. Her **unobstrusive narrator** is a comic invention of high order. The **narrator's** comments, **which** lace the telling of the story, range from exclamations of **almost** breathless wonder to the **non-chalant** acceptance of the extraordinary: "Sweeney Todd/discovered **insulin/and** never **said/a** word about it./ He had no/special interest/in diabetics." The story itself is the standard issue rags-to-riches melodrama common to late Victorian popular pulp fiction. The social **commentary inherent in such fiction** is present **in the True Life** in a casual, off-handed manner. **Finding themselves** suddenly orphans as **well** as penniless, Sweeney's beloved sister Beth becomes a prostitute and Sweeney is sent to live with an aunt in **America**. Sweeney **takes** up the art of throat slitting in order to **earn** some pocket money. Eventually he develops **a passion** for it.

The numerous collages in the book are a world in themselves. Ms. de **Charmoy's** artistry is **unquestionable** throughout. Given the nature of her subject matter, so, **surprisingly enough, is** her tact and tastefulness. The images are made up from copperplate **etchings** and **newspaper** lithographs of the late 19th century. The collages are an attempt to depict **visually** what could not be expressed **in words** — the **workings** of a **demented** imagination. More importantly, they allow the reader, assumed to be **normal** and sane, to confront the subconscious and unspoken in a **disturbingly** direct manner.

This **strange**, darkly handsome **Christmas** offering from Oberon Press is **definitely** not for the squeamish or faint of **heart**. To be taken (or given) **with** moderation and discretion. □

*Toronto* journalist **Walter Klepac** has a **special interest in contemporary art**.



# OUT OF GAS

## ULTIMATUM

RICHARD ROHMER; *Clarke Irwin*;  
cloth \$7.25; 227 pages

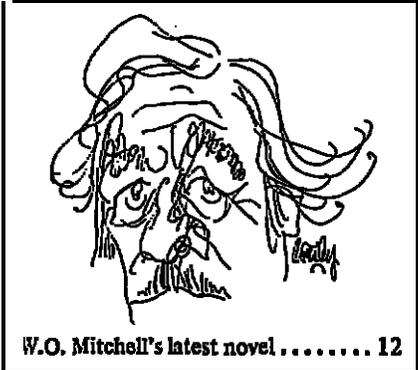
reviewed by Douglas Marshall

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**THIS IS A political tract** seductively packaged as **an Arthur Hailey thriller**. On one level, the level of getting the reader to turn **the page**, it's pretty **exciting** stuff. Juvenile, yes. But no **more so than** the average **Hailey** effort and a lot **less** contrived. **The writing** is spare, the **structure** tight. The action unwinds in neatly **intercut scenes like the well-made film** or **W drama** it **will undoubtedly** become.

Aside from the traditional **ingredients** of the **thriller** - power, speed, danger, the tick of the clock **running out** - **Rohmer** throws some **bonus tidbits** into **his pseudo-potboiler**. We're **given** a brisk **historical** survey of **Canada's northern policy** (or non-policy) during the past 25 years. There is **plenty** of technological **detail, complete** with maps **and diagrams, concerning** the logistics of the High Arctic oil **and gas** play. And the plot is driven forward by **auxiliary** bursts of patriotic pride - the **gallant Maple Leaf** flag, snapping defiantly in the teeth of a whole diplomatic **gale** - **calculated** to moisten the eye of all but the most **cynical citizen**.

Oh **yes**, the plot. The time is 1980. One morning the President of the United States (who is **modelled** on John **Connally**) **phones** up the Prime Minister of Canada (who is **modelled** on a Grit **campaign** manager's dream of a candidate - a Westerner with Pearson's moral authority, Trudeau's style and Dick **Daring's** guts) and gives Parliament 33 **hours** to (a) settle the question of **aboriginal rights**, (b) grant **the U.S.** all **the Arctic Island gas** it wants, and (c) **allow the Americans free access across Canadian territory** to move the **gas out**. The reason for the ultimatum: the U.S. is facing a **critical** fuel shortage **and is** fed up with Canada's continued inability to come up with a coherent **policy on energy resources**. The **force** backing it up: **massive** economic sanctions.

So far, 50 credible. Indeed, **events** seem to have anticipated **Rohmer** by about seven years. The U.S. already faces a **critical energy** shortage this winter **and** Canada still hasn't formulated anything faintly resembling **a long-term** national energy policy. **Does that mean**, as the dust-jacket **suggests**, that fantasy might soon become fact?

**Hardly**. For one **thing, Rohmer's** plot **presupposes** that **the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline** is **nearing completion**. (In a rather ragged **subplot**, it keeps **being** blown up by discontented native peoples.) But **the pipeline** is still a blueprint. The way things stand now, the proven **reserves** of Arctic **gas are** out of everybody's reach - **no** matter how desperate the **fuel** shortage becomes. Another point: **Nixon** is not **Connally and Connally** is not the President. Nor is he now likely to be. Although Nixon may **just** be crazy enough to start issuing **ultimatums** to **friendly neighbours** (his **recent hair-raising decision** to put the U.S. forces on a global **alert indicates** anything **is possible**), there is not the slightest **chance** he could get away with it. It would unite the world against **him** and finally **divide** his own **country** beyond repair. In the atmosphere of **post-Watergate** Washington, no major Canada-U.S. energy confrontation is at all probable before 1977. So **we** have a period of **grace** in which we must **organize** ourselves, which is the message Rohmer is trying to put across.

Rohmer is a **respected** expert on the **potential** of the **North** and a persuasive advocate for a more **imaginative** and determined **approach** to northern **development**. Unlike **Hailey**, he had no need to **accumulate** a mountain of **research** on his subject **Most** of the facts and **figures were** already in his **head** and **the book** radiates **an intensity** of purpose **Hailey** could **never** muster. Given Canada's **official** vacillation and **general** apathy con-

cerning the Arctic energy situation, a thriller was perhaps the best vehicle for presenting his case.

But ultimately the rhetorical device takes over from the argument and runs away with the game. For nine-tenths of the book, as the diplomatic chess match is played out, Rohmer depicts a Canada reacting to pressure with uncharacteristic unity, efficiency and strength of conviction. Then, in a surprise ending, he presents a Canada behaving with equally uncharacteristic pusillanimity.

For the average reader, who knows that Canada is neither black nor white but a good old compromising grey like most countries, the ending serves mainly to expose the hidden flaw running through the whole book. His argument is sound. The danger he is warning about is real enough. What we can't believe in is ourselves as he sees us.0



# ONTOLOGY IN ONTARIO

## THE PEACOCK PAPERS

LEO SIMPSON  
MacMillan of Canada  
cloth \$6.95; 226 pages

reviewed by Chris Scott

"WHERE THE Greeks had modesty," wrote Thomas Love Peacock in 1831, "we have cant; where they had poetry, we have cant; where they had patriotism, we have cant; where they had anything that exalts, delights, or adorns humanity we have nothing but cant, cant, cent!"

Peacock is writ large in Leo Simpson's new novel. Not only is the genial animadverter a character in the book but its sixth chapter is written by him, metempsychotically no doubt.

The range and tenor of Simpson-Peacock's interests are more defined

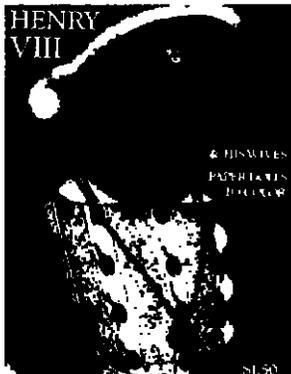
than in *Arkwright*, their first literary incarnation. The locale this time is Bradfarrow, southeastern Ontario (pop. 48,000); the hero, Jeffrey Anchyr, a cattle-feed salesman afflicted with ulcers and ennui. Bradfarrow, however, has been selected as the site for two experiments. The first is the shrinkage of the town library, an electronic microminiaturization of the printed word to be conducted by Dr. Harrison Boyce, a media pundit given to such utterances as, "linear fragmentation is the assembly-line of the mind".

Armageddon is the second experiment to which Bradfarrow is subjected — Armageddon with a whimper not a bang. One Friday afternoon, Jeffrey Anchyr meets an angel in a bar (who has not?) and receives this apocalyptic message: "We've run this play long enough, so we're closing her up. It's the end of the world." It is easy to be snobbish about angels. A quick check with Gustav Davidson's *A Dictionary of Angels* assured me that Bunty Oakes, for so he is called, is as Canadian as maple syrup, a fan of the

A Christmas treat for the young at heart

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**Montreal Habs and the Hamilton Ticats.**

The townsfolk are unaware of their fate, and for a time things move along as usual. There is no fire and brimstone, only a number of "relocations" including John Harrington, inventor of the water closet; Arthur Hemshaw, balloonist; and Miss Krista St. John, "the notorious virgin of New Orleans". Krista's father has fitted her with a chastity belt made of an unknown fabric that accommodates the needs of nature while denying those of passion. "It's alive or something," Bunty tells Jeffrey, "it acts with her body." Around her neck, Krista wears a pendant with a dial. If the right sequence is dialled, the garment is supposed to come off and Jeffrey's attempts to succeed where scientists and angels have failed constitutes an engaging diversion to readers satiated with excessive literary concupiscence.

The main plot line is in the efforts of the relocated Thomas Love Peacock to frustrate the McLuhanatic schemes of Dr. Royce. Allegorically, the struggle represents the clash between the stately assumptions of classical humanism and the *demier cri* of a philistine technology. It would be unfair to reveal the outcome here, but Simpson must be congratulated for his refusal to moralize. In a novel which — at its best — is a delightful satirical fantasy.

As a whole the narrative is framed by two disembodied speakers, TV viewers who are never identified. I found the device superfluous, as if Simpson were attempting to say: "This is the vacuum, the noise of silence. How dull! How dreary!"

Simpson is at his wisest and wittiest in the sixth chapter, "Dogmatic Manor". As well as its Peacockian style and form, both serving the purposes of ironic detachment, the chapter is reminiscent of Swift — not yet the Swift of *Gulliver's Travels* but certainly the author of *A Tale of a Tub*. The subject is the disintegration of contemporary intellectual life into mutually exclusive dogmas. Gathered at Dogmatic Manor are "Mr. Apely Heritage, the human zoologist; Mr. Relapsus, the scandalous novelist; Mr. Tactor, the touch-and-feel grouper; Dr. Harrison Royce, the mediamaniac; and

Mr. Chirm, the student incendiary". To the disputants there can be no exchange of views, let alone an agreement to disagree, and the art of conversation is reduced to the level of self-serving monologues.

Closer to home is the portrait of Jonathan Farrow, the proprietor of Dogmatic Manor. He is "a thin and burning gentleman of some forty-five or fifty years"; a writer of "opaque philosophical verse". Farrow judges a poem according to the number of pine bees and canoes it contains. He has bought shares in several periodicals and has actually founded his own small publishing company to issue his works. Their publication is never in doubt, "although at infrequent times, when his critical sensibilities had been honed by the winy morning air, he might delicately convert a semi-colon to a colon, or edit out a comma".

The charm of such whimsical sonorities does not conceal their essential wickedness.

"It is hard not to write satire," said Juvenal, and given the characters in this book one has to agree. Their folly is beyond the correction of mortals, but if the true aim of satire is ridicule rather than correction then *The Peacock Papers* hits the mark exactly. □

*Toronto author Chris Scott is currently working on a novel about Giordano Bruno, the Italian neoPlatonist who was burned at the stake in 1600.*

## SOUL KUNG FU

L'ARCHE JOURNAL

JAMES CLARKE  
Griffin House  
cloth \$4.95; 146 pages

reviewed by Kelly Wilde

THE QUESTION will not quit: Why does unearned suffering exist? Or, in the more positive vein, what can its value be? From the masochistic view of pain as punishment we progress to the cozier view of "redemptive suffering", wherein others' unearned pain exists to set our consciences ablaze

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and reinforce our faith in the "intrinsic nobility" of man.

But above the choir's chant and our whistling in the dark one hears the shutters creak and the cool cruel assassin's voice: There is no point in pain, only the smug satisfaction that isn't ours. Intrinsic nobility? Bah!

A Cobourg lawyer named James Clarke spent 10 months at L'Arche, Jean Vanier's commune for mentally retarded men, and took the Two Voices on. *L'Arche Journal* is as much a spiritual quest as it is a description of place. Considerable editing must have played in whittling down a 10-month journal into this slender work. What emerges is more home slide-show than L'Arche journal or soul kung fu.

Too many slides concern common colds, flat tires, domestic trivia and countryside asides, all enthusiastically explained. One admires the sense of adventure but yearns for more colourful, revealing or informative slides. Not that he isn't honest; his self-image never precludes the compulsion to confess his inability to feel, his doubts about what he does feel, his beatings of the boys. But telling the terrible truth is merely a bottom rung on the way to building a better truth.

Clarke seems not to have been involved with the men on a truly meaningful level. After 10 months he still refers to them as "boys", with nicknames such as Mr. Handshake. Also, regarding the Christian approach, it is no more possible to love the retarded than it is to love the Blacks or Jews. If one claims to love them, chances are he loves them because they're retarded — and that is the Second Voice pantomiming the First.

A clear picture of L'Arche, as promised in the title, is never really attempted. The spiritual angst — the core of the book — is less a one alarm tire than a common cold, treated with sanctimonious quotes and pipe-in-mouth profundities. When a young girl dies in a car crash, Pere Thomas is blithely quoted: "Christ must have loved Gabrielle deeply to call her to Him now".

The Second Voice begins to swell. □

Montreal poet Kelly Wilde worked for two years with the retarded in Aurora, Ont., as a music therapist.

# ARMS OF CRUPP

## THE LEISURE RIOTS

ERIC KOCH  
Tundra  
cloth \$7.50; 219 pages

reviewed by Elizabeth Brady

ERIC KOCH's first novel, *The French Kiss*, was heralded by one critic as "Canada's entry into the field of the international avant-garde novel". If in his second novel, *The Leisure Riots*, Koch violates any novelistic convention, it is only the King's famous dictum to the White Rabbit: "Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop". The novel begins in the future — it begins, that is, at the end.

Friedrich Bierbaum, the narrator, has just been dismissed as President of CRUPP (Center for Research on Urban Policy and Planning), America's most influential think tank. So influential is CRUPP that its relations with the White House have become the subject of a Senate investigation. Sitting in lonely exile at Habitat on St. Helen's Island, Bierbaum writes his memoirs (as he fondly recalls Napoleon engaged in the same pursuit in St. Helena).

But Bierbaum's real historical counterpart is Herman Göring, whom he served as an administrative assistant in Nazi Germany. Göring, he reflects, was a voluptuary, a man of genuine *joie de vivre* who loved the power he wielded. Unlike Göring, though, Bierbaum is not corrupt: he is a model bureaucrat-apolitical, amoral, and opportunistic.

Eric Koch himself has had ample time and opportunity to reflect on totalitarian government and on bureaucracy. Of German-Jewish origin, he left Nazi Germany in 1935, only to be subsequently interned as an alien in England and Canada. He's been with the CBC since 1944, serving for the past two years as Director of the corporation's English service in Montreal.

In this novel Koch brings the fruits of these reflections to bear on some of the major problems afflicting contemporary American society — cor-

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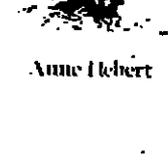
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ruption in l&b places, the incestuous marriage of big business and politics, the phenomenon of mass media persuasion and so on. But the real target of his attack is the Protestant work ethic. Koch's America is in the throes of "leisure riots" — well-orchestrated acts of ostensibly random vandalism designed to subvert leisure-time activities; riots engineered by affluent but underemployed Middle Americans. Because the President of the country sees these incidents as determining the outcome of his impending campaign for re-election, he commissions CRUPP to solve the problem, not of rising unemployment (that's insoluble), but of the electorate's awareness of it.

This, then, is the crucial test put to the think tank, and the entire plot centres around the various ethically dubious strategies employed by CRUPP in its increasingly frenetic efforts to cope. There are genuinely funny moments in the novel when Koch stops straining for the trenchant wit too obviously beyond his comic means and relaxes into the send-up of the

pre-Watergate morality he knows so well. It's not inconceivable, for example, that the following words (Bierbaum's) could issue from Tricky Dick's mouth any day now: "As Bismarck used to say, politics is the art of the possible? arid I did everything possible to help my old friends, and thereby — nobody can deny it — I helped America."

The book's humour resides in local moments like this but falls on the broader plane. The fault doesn't lie in Koch's subject matter, which is centrally relevant, but in the overall structure. One senses in his choice of a future tie-slot a deliberate avoidance of the kind of historical analogy he used to such good effect in *The French Kiss*. In that book the sustained parallel between the Second Empire under Napoleon III and de Gaulle's Fifth Republic provided a sharp focus for the narrator's satiric analysis of political history.

In the present novel much of the comic potential is dissipated because the action lacks any similar illuminating reference. *The Leisure Riots* is

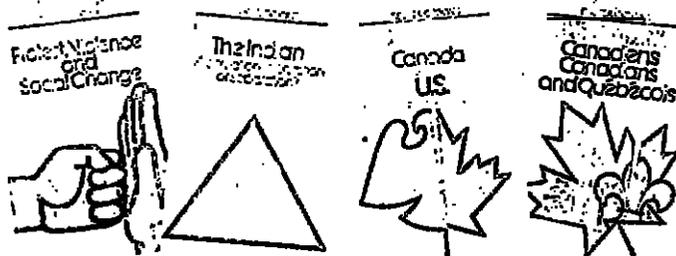
aimed not at satirizing specific abuses or people within the system, but at more general tendencies within Middle America. While Bierbaum is clearly intended to function as a shabby caricature of Göring, the implied parallel between Hitler's Germany and late 1970s America is too vague to be really supportive of the theme in any pervasive manner. And surely this rather shop-worn parallel is much more limiting as a mine of comic exploration and characterization than Koch's previous choice.

Bierbaum is proud of his classical education and much given to Latin-dropping. At one humiliating point when he is in bed with his mistress and discovers his "toggle-switch" to be inoperative, Ovid rises to the occasion: *Ut desint vires, tamen est laudanda voluntas*, meaning that even if there is a lack of potency, the will is laudable." A painful commentary on the distance between Koch's own comic conception and its (for the most part) unfunny execution. □.

Elizabeth Brady writes frequently for CBC Radio.

## CANADA: ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Editors: R. P. Bowles, J. L. Hanley, B. W. Hodgins, W. N. MacKenzie, G. A. Rawlyk



*CANADA: ISSUES AND OPTIONS* is a unique series of paperbacks designed for history and social science courses at the grade 10-12 level. Each volume provides a thematic treatment of a main stream Canadian issue in both its historical and contemporary context. A rich selection of primary and secondary source materials confronts the student with a clash of opinions and options in the issue. The arrangement of the material and focusing questions encourage the reader to draw his own conclusions and reasoned attitudes regarding the particular issue being examined.

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reviewed by Isaac Bickerstaff

Through neglect Mr. Gypsum's nose became worse and worse, till it burned like fire. At last he got alarmed, and applied to an old lady in our town, noted for curing cancers. But, after using for a long time, to no purpose, a poultice of cowdung soaked in cold water, he found out by mere accident, that holding the afflicted member over a glass of spirits, gave him instant relief; and now, as one glass has not the same effect twice, he will never get over the expense of keeping it easy.

— Thomas McCulloch, *The Stepsure Letters*

"Well, I went to see him the other day at Mrs. Lecain's boarding-house, and says I, "Billings, you have a nice location here." "A plaguy sight too nice," said he. "Marm Lecain makes such an eternal touse about her carpets, that I have to go along that everlasting long entry, and down both staircases, to the street door to spit; and it keeps all the gentlemen a-running with their mouths full all day."

— Thomas C. Haliburton, *The Clockmaker*

IN THE overheated, smarmy spirit of the Christmas mason, Reader, I proffer as a gift the pair of comical passages that squat over this review like suffering trenchermen after a feast of greasy roast goose, mulled cranberry juice, and several wide wedges of mince meat pie. In return, I ask for nothing but a modicum of attention to the matter underfoot.

\*\*\*

*The Canadian Settler's Guide,*  
Catherine Parr Traill,

Introduction: Clara Thomas;  
247 pages, \$2.15.

Winter *Studies and Summer*  
*Rambles in Canada,*

Anna Brownell Jameson,  
Introduction: Clara Thomas;  
173 pages, 31.73.

McClelland & Stewart should consider issuing in a single volume a selection of the NCL's introductory essays, themselves introduced, one would hope, by the general editor of the

series, Malcolm Ross. A few of the introductions are a delight to read, most offer intelligent insights, explanations, perspectives and perceptions concerning the literature they describe. For anyone wishing to check on the received opinion about Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese*, for instance, without having to mot around the shelves in search of the NCL edition, such a reference work would be extremely valuable.

Two of the most readable selections in this "New Canadian Fryebrary" would be Clam Thomas' introductions to the volumes presently under review. Ms. Thomas, who also wrote introductory material for the NCL edition of Catherine Parr Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*, contrives always to be pleasantly informative and never pedantic. Her sympathetic treatment of the characters and accomplishments of Catherine Parr Traill and Anna Brownell Jameson effectively dispels any prejudice the reader might have against encountering authors decidedly not of our time.

Catherine Traill, who Ms. Thomas identifies as "a classic figure in our background, one of the most competent and attractive of those who endured and prevailed", compiled *The Canadian Settler's Guide in 1854* in order to provide a sorely needed "Manual of Canadian housewifery" for the wives and daughters of small farmers, labourers and mechanics.

Anna Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* is a personal account of the author's stay in Upper Canada from December 1836, to late August or early September 1837, before her return to the more congenial civilization afforded by the salons of Europe. Though she has none of Traill's compassion. Jameson's knack for locating the grotesque par-

continued on page 22

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# SOCIAL NOTICES

## CANADIANS AND THEIR SOCIETY

ALAN SKEOCH and TONY SMITH  
paper \$4.95; illustrated; 229 pages

## QUEBEC

ARTHUR TARDIF and CHIC HARRIS  
Hounslow Press  
cloth \$6.95; illustrated; unpaginated

reviewed by Nigel Spencer

IN THE PAST few years, Toronto has become a sort of penny arcade of new teaching techniques. Novel forms of audio-visual bombardment and even new taste sensations (uh, no . . . that's a coffee commercial), abound. A few are successful. many are not; but most fall into a fascinating and ambiguous

middle range called "qualified success".

One of the most ambitious (yet uncertain) and powerful (though flawed) is *Canadians and Their Society* by Alan Skeoch and Tony Smith. Instead of trying to dazzle us with the short-term effect of clever art work, they make effective use of the book format by choosing literate and challenging texts by, about, and for Canadians, and then placing them side-by-side for perspective, contrast and even provocation.

The emphasis is on a fresh approach to the social sciences, and one has the impression that its main audience are high school students -although much of the material aims far over their heads. However, despite a sometimes awkward lack of focus, it is a stimulating and exciting book for almost any one who wants to flex his brain.

Three limitations should be mentioned. First, the adventurous and playful note on which the book begins is not really sustained. Instead of developing into a mosaic of creative and unusual texts, it lapses too often

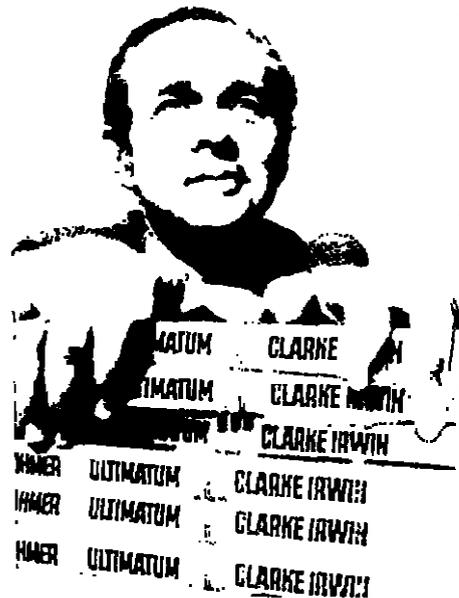
into conventional anthology. This is disappointing, because the authors themselves suggest a far more fearless and expansive approach that could, and should; have been taken. Second, nearly all the texts cited are printed in Toronto; whether this is a malady of the book or of Canadian publishing in general. I leave to you. Third, its outlook is predominantly WASP-Southern Ontario. Texts on Quebec and Maritime culture, for example, are pedestrian and shallow compared with the rest of the book. The Quebec selections take an unenlightening look at "the family", rural communities, Duplessis, Vallieres, and Gagnon. Given the material available, the authors seem to have scraped the bottom of the barrel on purpose.

Provided you overlook the book's geographic and cultural bias, it is still a lively experience and a source that keeps tugging you back.

Quite different but even more vague in its conception is *Quebec, a collection* of photographs by veterans Jordan "Chic" Harris and Arthur Tardif.

# ULTIMATUM

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"The ultimate outcome of Canada's reluctance to respond to America's voracious appetite for energy.. " Financial Post.

Clarke Irwin The National Publishers

The photos range from the impressive to the thoroughly banal; but most succeed in revealing the almost unreal beauty and humour that surrounds people in their day-today lives. What is more, they do it unobtrusively and with respect for the subject. The same cannot be said for John Robert Colombo's bilingual captions, which are thoroughly unnecessary and annoying. They serve no function except to give distracting and irrelevant detail and spell out exactly what we have seen for ourselves.

At \$6.95 the book is worthwhile. It's far less pretentious than more exorbitant collections, and quite powerful in a special way — if you ignore the captions. □

*Nigel Spencer is a journalist, translator, teacher and actor from Montreal.*

## VERY LIKE A WHALE

### SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION

WILSON BRYAN KEY; Introduction  
by MARSHALL McLUHAN  
Prentice-Hall  
cloth \$7.95; 206 pages

reviewed by Richard Lubbock

THE MOST SUBTLE and diabolical plot ever conceived against humanity is working away this moment to corrupt and enslave your mind, according to Professor Wilson Bryan Key in his book *Subliminal Seduction*:

Every person reading this book has been victimized and manipulated by the use of subliminal stimuli directed into his unconscious mind by the mass merchandisers of media.

These malignant stimuli are to be feared all the more because they are invisible: one chapter in the book is headed 'It's what you don't see that sells you'.

Luckily for the fate of civilization, Dr. Key is one of those rare beings blessed with the talent for seeing things that aren't there, and he's willing to share his gift with the reader. Training begins with a Gilbey's London Dry Gin ad:

There is . . . far more to the gin ad than meets the conscious eye . . . Let your eyes concentrate momentarily upon the thin ice-cube from the top. Without stretching your imagination beyond reasonable limits, can you see an E formed in the cubs?

Well, to be quite frank, no.

Some interpret the letter at first as an F. But hypothetically for the moment consider the letter an E. Do not read further until the E is established clearly in your mind.

Sorry Professor, but we've only got to page four, and my imagination is already stretched beyond reasonable limits. Unless I'm excused from seeing your E, I'll never finish the book.'

Ignoring all protests, Pmf. Key 'plods doggedly forward with his demonstration, until he has convinced himself (and presumably some readers) that there is SEX in the gin glass:

You have just consciously perceived your first subliminal SEX. There will be many others.

Naturally. As Hamlet showed Polonius, once you start seeing camels in the clouds you can see anything, including whales and weasels. Thus it is with Prof. Key. Why, he even sees the word SEX hidden in *Playboy* centre-folds. What!?! SEX in *Playboy*?!?! Unthinkable!!

But these examples are typical of Key's brand of evidence and "proof", which is that of the stage hypnotist: bold assertions of contrafactual sensory propositions. Once a suggestible reader assents to seeing SEX in the gin glass, he becomes as putty in the master-hallucinator's hands.

Come to think of it, Key's portrait on the dust-jacket does remind me of a stage hypnotist, and this surely explains how Marshall McLuhan was induced to write an Introduction to the book.

With his zonked-out readers safely under the 'fluence, Key leads them through a thrilling cloud-cuckoo-land of delusions and fantasy. By page 193 he is so sure of his powers that he can confidently suggest that schizophrenics may be right after all; "Those 'Voices' May Really Exist," he intones.

Unlike Nader, who has contacts in industry with outraged employees willing to produce hard evidence. Key seems to have avoided advertising people, and relies instead on information leaked by his own inner muse.

One good reason to bother with this drivel is that Key is suffering from

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a classic case of "Reinforced Dogmatism", a serious philosophical disorder first identified by Sir Karl Popper. Reinforced dogmatism are systems of belief so constructed that they perfectly resist all rational or experimental criticism.

*Subliminal Seduction* is exactly that sort of impregnable nonsense. If you share Key's idiotic visions, then he must be right. If you deny them then either (a) you've been brainwashed, or (b) you're an agent of the dastardly advertising conspiracy. Thus, the subliminal seduction hypothesis can never be refuted, and that way lies madness, as Key himself concedes:

For centuries throughout most of Western civilization, the general criterion or definition of sanity has been an individual's ability to discriminate between reality and illusion.

The Professor himself says it, and any reader of this ludicrous book who happens upon that definition will feel inclined to suspect the author of self-confessed insanity. □

Richard Lubbock is a Toronto writer, broadcaster, and dedicated anti-dogmatist.

# GRANDE PRAIRIE ILLUSION

## THE VANISHING POINT

W.O. MITCHELL  
Macmillan of Canada  
cloth \$9.95: 393 pages

reviewed by Tony Kilgallin

LONG BEFORE Brook Taylor coined "vanishing point" in 1715, the representation of three-dimensional objects in spatial recession on a two-dimensional surface created illusions of verisimilitude. Art Bed to achieve visual truth. Mitchell's novel employs the vanishing point (VP) to fake spatial and temporal recessions to the mirrored reflections of Carlyle Sinclair, 36-year-old widower, "teacher: agent-judge-nurse-police-agriculturalist" to 25 Indian families

on the 25,000-acre reserve of Paradise Valley (PV) in the foothills of the Rockies. Time present seems to be 1959, but time passed stretches from Carlyle's infant consciousness of magnifying his penis 10 times with a magic lantern up to final concentricity with Victoria Rider (VR), the Indian student he has nurtured through adolescence, yet not prevented from pregnancy through prostitution. VR is the predominant VP, and VIP in PV, and Carlyle's controlling goal, but she's hardly more real than his dead wife Grace and their stillborn daughter, both dismissed so abruptly as to dismiss credibility completely. Similarly, VR says so little she seems scarcely more than a Beatrician VP awaiting an all too mathematically predictable conclusion.

With characterization as two-dimensional as the Page, the novel's real accomplishment is a series of stichomythic incidents each stuffed with fresh visceral sensations, and three-dimensional objectivity. The olfactory, acoustic, visual and tactile parts far excel the excremental whole: "They accompanied birth, love, age, death. A performing art maybe. Have to be." Evocative pointillism tenders superfluous a theme as dated as Gilbert Parker's *Translations of a Savage* or Fred Bodsworth's *The Strange One*. Like Allen Fry's *How A People Die*, *Come A Long Journey*, and Ryga's *Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, the interface of Indian and white is so stereotypically true as to become cliché. Whites resemble their Methodist Glass, mirrors for catching "Vanishing Savages" 111 Archie Nicotine, Gloria Catface, Esau Rider and Wilfrid Tail-feather. They're a long way from Catherine Tekakwitha, but Mitchell's excellent ear for dialogue does populate a credible radioplay inside the oversized frame of the novel.

In McLuhan's *Through the Vanishing Point* the painting becomes a mirror with the psychological vanishing point in the viewer. In *The Vanishing Point* central perspective succeeds only when the viewer-reader realizes that illusion is the best that could be managed. □

Tony Kilgallin is the author of *Lowry: a critical study of Malcolm Lowry recently published by Press Porcépic*.

# MORE THAN YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT JOEY

## I CHOSE CANADA

JOSEPH R. "JOEY" SMALLWOOD  
Macmillan of Canada  
cloth \$13.95: illustrated; 666 pages

reviewed by Harry Bruce

TO PARAPHRASE one of Joey Smallwood's own dear and distant friends, Richard M. Nixon, I want to make one thing perfectly clear to the people of Canada. I did read this book. Yes, I want to make that one thing perfectly clear; first, because a lot of people suspect book reviewers really don't read the books they're so keen to slice up in print; second, because anyone else who's tried to march through all 600 pages of *I Chose Canada* will know that the temptation to skip whole chapters must have been truly stupendous; and, third, I guess, because reading it all was a major personal triumph of duty over inclination. Among what must be hundreds of wonderful and even awe-struck things that Smallwood has to say about himself in *I Chose Canada* there's this statement: "I was perhaps the first hog-miser in Newfoundland to put in a system for boiling ail swill." The book needs the same system.

Smallwood is a great one for lists. He fattens his book with a list of wars; a list of revolutions; a list of revolutionary leaders, and their ages at the historic moment of his own birth (Christmas Eve, 1900); a list of 234 of his own forebears whose important distinction was that they lived to be 80 or older; a list of 304 surnames "of my blood relations"; a separate list, 94 names long, "of my blood relations who have made something a little mote than usual of their lives"; a final list of world-famous people Smallwood has met, just in case there were

names he forgot to drop **in** the body of the book; a list of 110 companies that Joey tried to inspire to settle in Newfoundland; and, in Chapter 12 (\*Dreams That Didn't Come True"), a coy Ust of 23 "failures of which I am most conscious". The **lists** of surnames alone should guarantee **terrific** sales among everyone **who** loves to see his name in print.

The "**failures**" list reads as though, near the last moment, somebody at Macmillan of Canada, had said: "Mr. **Smallwood**, we're aware of your truly remarkable achievements of course and, as you know, that's why we're so **anxious** to **publish** your book; but don't you think that perhaps the whole thing would be more, **well, credible**, if you **were** to acknowledge somewhere that, once **in** a while, you made what some **people** anyway might regard as the **teensiest** little mistake?"

Maybe this did not happen but, if it **did**, **Smallwood** would instantly have understood **the** reasoning. Admitting your mistakes **proves** you're only human, and no one ever understood its politic+ **value** better than **Smallwood** did. Sure, he'd say, to the people of Newfoundland, I've just made a **terrible** mistake, and I'm bound to make more. A terrible, terrible mistake. But just remember, I made that mistake for you. You were on my mind when I made that terrible mistake.

So, we find these 23 "failures"; **but** you cannot avoid. **believing** that, deep down, **Smallwood** knows that, beside the grandeur of his achievement, they are insignificant. **They're** scarcely failures at all. **They're** just **loveable** little **plans** he never managed to **pull off**. **Such** endearing failures: **the** failure to build "the longest lover's lane in the world"; the failure to duplicate in Newfoundland the German town of **Rothenburg**, which is "**quaint** beyond words"; the failure to recreate a **400-year-old** Newfoundland **fishing** settlement; the failure of assorted efforts to lure industry to Newfoundland. **And so on**. **Good** failures of a man whose heart was invariably **in** the right place. †

Anyway, I thought I'd provide, in **Smallwood** style, a **list** of the what's wrong with his book:

1. Its **method** of composition was arrogant. **Smallwood's** amazing oratorical talents are as powerful today as

**they ever were** — I know, because he captivated me for hours during a private interview last summer-but he seems to have assumed that good books are little more than dictation in print. He **tells** us **in** *I Chose Canada* that since childhood he has had "an unqualified, unwavering, **unquestioned** **confidence** in myself, my potential and my destiny, at all times and seasons, whether I should be rich or poor., high **or** low, pragmatically **successful** or a failure ... I **have** noticed throughout my **life** that I **have** never even **momentarily** lost **faith** In myself ..."

I think it was exactly this confidence that inspired him to **think** that, in **five** months of steady dictation to a couple of secretaries in Clearwater, Florida, he could "write" a terrific book. The **trouble** is, good writers do lose faith in themselves from time to time. Maybe they even learn something that's related to humility.



2. It is excessively egocentric. It may **well** be the most egocentric book since *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (1957). It would, of course, be absurd to expect from **Smallwood** a **modest** book; and, in places, *I Chose Canada* is so blatant in its expression of **Smallwood's** satisfaction with himself that it comes close to having a naive charm. But not very close. The earliest parts of the book, about his childhood, are an interesting contribution to the **social** history of impoverished Newfoundland a generation or two ago but, even here, **Smallwood's** fatal assumption that **virtually** everything that ever crossed his mind **must** "automatically **fascinate** the whole world **begins** to betray him:

As he stood watching me work one day, he enquire.3 if I would like to have a piece of blueberry pie. Them wasn't anything in the world at that moment that I wanted more., but some perverse instinct — perhaps a kind of foolish pride — prompted me to say no thanks and to persist in my refusal as he pressed the invitation. I was disgusted with myself and am disgusted to this day for refusing the slice of blueberry pie.

In the end, **this** apparent assumption that no detail of **Smallwood's** life and thought is too insignificant to leave out, and the **relentlessness** of the self-admiration. become more numbing than **irritating**.

3. Its **preoccupation** with family is boring. The book cannot make up its mind whether it's a family tree. **or** a self-serving political history of the times in Newfoundland. **Smallwood** has long been rightly **proud** of his **amazing** physical energy and, **in** **this** **book**, he's poured so much of it **into** researching his forebears for centuries **into** the past that even lie suggests "some 'readers' might want to skip right by the entire **19-page** chapter entitled "The Part That's Underground". **They** certainly **will**. **His** point in listing forebears who lived 80 years or longer seems to be a part of his open and slightly morbid interest in his own **chances** of living, if not **forever**, at least for a great many years to come. The book is dedicated to **Smallwoods** from **his** two **great-grandchildren** all the way back to his great-great-great grandfathers, "all of them covering a, span of **273** years". The dedication is a **clear** tip-off about just **how** much **Smallwoodiana** the **determined** reader will **soon** have to endure.

4. It's too polite. **Smallwood** lived through some of the dirtiest, most ingenious, hilarious and Byzantine election campaigns, political **dogfights** and **backroom** intrigues in the **modern** history of the country and, **though** he gives tedious documentation of **his** own public **skills** and **triumphs** in assorted battles, the reader keeps waiting for him to dump all over his enemies with juicy inside information and **anecdotes** that **he** **alone** might be **willing** to tell. This stuff never really comes out, or not much of it anyway, and **you** wish he had half the **instinct** to settle old scores of, say, **Judy LaMarsh**. He fails, **in** an **uncharacter-**

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istic way, to make news. This may very well be because, as Smallwood is fond of saying himself, he has never held grudges. That's probably to his credit as a man and politician; for his readers, however, it's a disappointment. Political books of this length should break more dirty secrets than I Chose Canada does.

Smallwood plans to write more books, a book a year for the rest of what promises to be a long life, a definitive history of Newfoundland that will, in some way, guarantee his immortal fame more surely than any of his political achievements could. Since it is almost impossible to spend time with him and not wish him well in everything he undertakes, the contrast between his literary ambitions

and his literary style is curiously sad.

A lot of history students will have to read I Chose Canada, and maybe it's no worse than some of the other stuff they must absorb. A lot of Newfoundlanders will gobble it up because, despite its flaws, it is about them; it is Joey's account of everything important that's been going on in their intimate society for several decades. Joey may have chosen Canada but he wrote a book for Newfoundlanders; and this is appropriate. There's no real reason to doubt that, in his own mind and in his own ways, just about every public action he's taken over the past quarter-century was for them. □

*Harry Bruce, a contributing editor to Maclean's, is based in Halifax.*

## NOBODY LIKES A SMARTASS

### DANCE OF THE DIALECTIC

LARRY ZOLF; James Lewis & Samuel  
cloth \$9. paper \$2.95; 120 pages

*reviewed by Peter Reilly*

LARRY ZOLF is a baffling and complex man and it is, therefore, no surprise to find his book baffling at some times and complex always.

And it is fascinating to conclude, after at least two readings of the book — a third is necessary for anyone other than veteran paparazzi — that he's found the handle to the Trudeau Lyceum door in the depression-nurtured theorizing of Leibel Basman, onetime neighbourhood philosopher-in-residence at North Winnipeg, Man.

Mr. Basman, a Marxist and a close friend of Zolf's father, was once overheard by Zolf to say that Marx has stood Hegel upon his head, by which he apparently meant that the Hegelian theory that ideas shaped man's environment were precisely opposite to fact, that is, that events foredestined ideas.

Trudeau, says Zolf, was, in 1968 at least, Hegelian, and he had a lot of good background to justify attachment to that school. He believed, in full accord with the fat, middle-aged and horny cartoon he's seen recently in Playboy chasing his nubile secre-

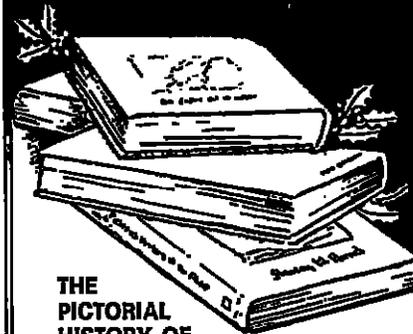
tary, that there is no escaping an idea whose time has come.

Now, having identified the Prime Minister of Canada with a German philosopher, Zolf really goes into his number: he ties him up with a Greek. Trudeau was Platonic in his political approach; he yearned for dominance of the Just Man and the Just Society. He also believed (in fact, he was truly wedded to Platonic theory) that true justice lay more secure in the bosom of the State than in the identity of individuals, which might help to explain October, 1970.

However, the author, having led us into this trap, is kind enough to take us out again. It's all a load of crap, is what he really says. There is no way of knowing what is going to happen, there is little certainty that we can know what is now happening, and there is a terrifying certainty that we will never know why what does happen ever happened at all.

But he leads us in on page one and doesn't take us out again until page 112, and in between is what it really says on the cover: a personal tour de

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*force*. You don't define a *tour de force* in terms of good, indifferent or bad, and particularly not a *personal tour de force*, so I will not attempt to evaluate the book, except to say that if you know Zolf, and you like Zolf, you will like the book. If you don't know him or you don't like him, you will hate the book.

Zolf, given the proper quality of company, the sufficient supply of liquid refreshment and a breath-pause in anyone else's conversation, will usually be persuaded to tell about how he, as a lad, used to be chased home every afternoon by a gang of rough-necks whose chief motivation appeared to be juvenile anti-semitism. One particularly bad day, when his adrenalin supply hadn't been enough to put him more than a couple of yards ahead of his young Cossack pursuers, he burst through his front door, slammed it in their faces, turned to his mother and panted, "Say, Ma, who was this guy Christ and what did we do to him, anyway?"

That anecdote probably explains why his fight-or-flight instincts are so

well developed, and why he left Ottawa in such precipitate fashion, without even bidding goodbye to me, one of his oldest colleagues: he knew he couldn't hang around after publication day.

It would also go a long way toward an explanation of his truly racist theories about his fellow French Canadians: the chief among them, in ironic terms at least, being the idea that they weren't to be blamed if they cooperated with an undemocratic (Duplessis) government; the simple creatures just didn't understand the meaning of democracy.

And that, of course, takes you even further along the road to understanding October 1970. Hundreds of innocent people were slung into the pokey without the protection of *habeas corpus*; without the right to call a lawyer or their families; without even the dignity of knowing that a charge had been laid against them and what it was; and it was all for their own good. As long as we're on this derivative course, give a little attention to what Socrates, Plato's teacher, has

to say about vibes in Book 2 of *The Republic*:

*we must set up a censorship over the fable-makers, and approve any good fable they make, and disapprove the bad; those which are approved we will persuade the mothers and nurses to tell the children, and to mould the souls of the children by the fabler even more carefully than the bodies by their hands. Most of those they tell now must be thrown away.*

Is the rationale behind Information Canada lurking in Plato's *Republic*? Did our Prime Minister really become addled by too much education, and is Platonic theory the reason he hates the press gallery? It's all heady stuff, and the impulse to find justification behind every ancient philosophic maxim for the incomprehensible workings of the Canadian government in the 1970s grows a little stronger with every page of *Dance of the Dialectic*. Zolf is fairly hypnotic.

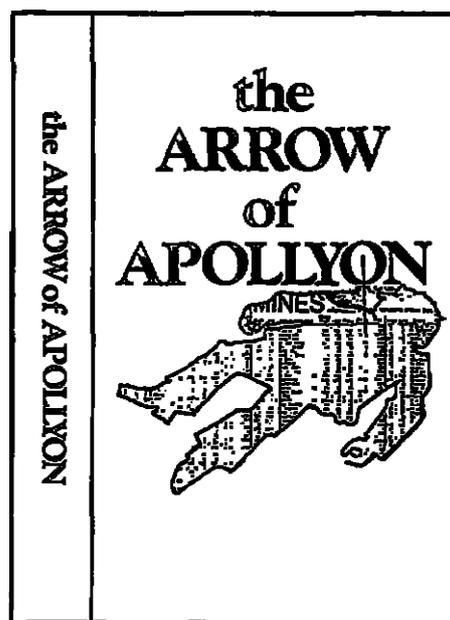
*Dance of the Dialectic* is altogether too knowing, not only about the politicians but about the press gallery, and if there is one thing Zolf has learned in his young life, it is that

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"THE ARROW OF APOLLYON"

by LLEW DEVINE

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nobody likes a **smartass**. If he hadn't **flown** out of Ottawa, he'd have had to **run**. □

*Peter Reilly, journalist and former CBC producer, is the Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament for Ottawa west.*

## OLD AND NEW TRIPS

### COPPERMINE DON GUTTERIDGE

*Oberon Press  
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### FOUR MONTREAL POETS

*PETER VAN TOORN,  
MARC PLOURDE, ARTY GOLD and  
RICHARD SOMMER  
Fiddlehead Poetry Books*

*reviewed by Nigel Spencer*

**COPPERMINE?** YES, of course. . . . A river. In B.C., I **think**. That **is as** much as **I, or** 'for that matter most Eastern Canadians, know about it; but Don Gutteridge understands. All that **is** grand and important about the word, **name, river, experience** and **country, he** communicates **with** amazing skill and feeling.

There is no self-doubting "introduction", "preface" or "appendix"; just a few spare entries from a **diary** to serve as a skeleton for this near-epic poem. Mr. **Hearne, Chief Matonabee** and **some** others set out on the third and successful attempt **to** reach the mouth of the **Coppermine in** 1768. That's it. The **rest is** 3 poetry of **freshness, compassion, toughness** and **detail** — as cold and stark as snow, as warm **and rich** as the coppery flesh **of the** invaded land.

The book, like the country, spreads out **with** ease and **defiance**:

*Space is still,  
nothing can fill it  
no\* even  
moving*

Bewildered by excess of space, light and cold, the **mind** seeks refuge **in** paradox:

*On the white  
eye of the spectrum  
the mind refracts*

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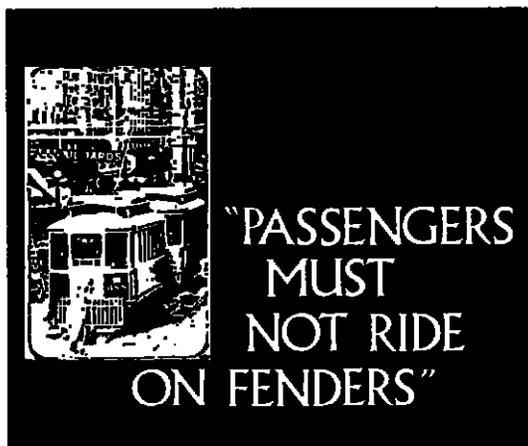
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Available in November. Price Approx. \$10.00



by

Mike Filey

Richard Howard

Helmut Weyerstrahls

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*Surreal  
is become the  
music of belief*

It is Gutteridge's clear conception of what he sees and feels, and his sometimes matter-of-fact reporting that lends such power to his story:

*Young squaw  
in labour, hauling a  
90-pound sledge  
(no food for days)  
harness creases  
her shoulder with welts,  
with braces of  
permanent blood;  
below the foetus  
hungering for birth  
traces seams of  
permanent pain  
on her body.*

*They abandon her  
to the blizzard.*

The richness, confidence and drive of Coppermine are a sign of Gutteridge's freedom, a part of the "survival" theme that few Canadian writers are willing to explore.

Peter Van Toorn reflects some of the same feelings and love of paradox about the countryside — this time, north of Superior. Here, however, the poet intrudes a little more, allowing his city background to filter things

slightly. In fact, the more introverted and minute of Van Toorn's pieces are the weakest, because he speaks for his subjects, rather than through them. Nevertheless, he shows a subtlety of feeling and clarity of style that makes all his work worth reading.

One can only wish that editor David Solway had given as much space to his remaining three writers — Marc Plourde, Arty Gold and Richard Sommer. *Four Montreal Poets* reminds us once again that English-language poetry in the city did not end with A.M. Klein, Leonard Cohen and Irving Layton. The younger men have, in fact, an extroverted and dramatic viewpoint that distinguishes them from their counterparts in Toronto or Vancouver.

Marc Plourde can give us affecting portraits that don't need to be larded with imposed "significance":

*First contact*

*several times  
her fingers pass over  
then settle gently  
along the white cup  
as if a butterfly  
resting on eggshell*

*that might suddenly break  
letting warm coffee  
down her dress*

Art Gold is also at his best when focussed on a single image:

*The Space Around the Poem  
I want to make the space around the  
poem  
real. Solid as the air about kilos of  
cotton  
or the air things fall between.  
My muse must be a neighbour with  
a street address. Others may see  
enough  
silhouette sexily bending by a drawn  
curtain.  
It is late for them though, I may visit  
her  
whenever I am able/ she awaits for  
me only.  
My muse invisible except when her  
giving  
to me is apparent for others to see.  
There can be no jealousy with a  
poem so well defined. Not a  
shaky idiom I have picked up / not  
a coincidence that I dwell there,  
not a thing easily undone. So red in  
fact  
a rent is paid.*

Probably the best of these poets is Richard Sommer, who moves freely from playful irony and well-timed repetition ("Honey", "The Comers of the Mouth", "Sex" and "The Man

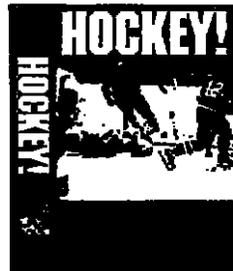
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Who Calls Himself") to laconic vignettes:

**Concentration**

We waited all summer in a midwest town  
for her to die, and she died anyway.  
Her span of attention shortened toward death:  
In June we read Emerson's essays to her,  
by August even haiku were too long-winded  
to hold her, and the week before she died  
"love" was the only word she answered to.  
I forget how many times she answered it.  
She answered it many times.

NIGEL SPENCER

# MORE CAN LITTER

## WRITERS OF THE PRAIRIES

Edited by DONALD G. Stephens  
Canadian Literature Series  
University of British Columbia Press  
Paper \$5.50; 208 pages

reviewed by Michael Sutton

IN ACADEMIC circles, the irreverent and disreputable short form "Can. lit." has two different, but interconnected meanings. Its general the argot, Can. lit. refers to the larger body of Canadian literature. More specifically the term refers to the University of British Columbia-based journal *Canadian Literature*.

When *Canadian Literature* first surfaced in 1958 under George Woodcock's continuing competent editorial scrutiny, the journal was welcome as the only periodical that exclusively considered Canadian literature as a serious national literature. *Canadian*



*Literature* was, after all, the first and then the only critical literary journal in which academic critics could exchange their views and tights with an audience of their colleagues.

But 15 years later, even with the encouraging revival of interest in Canadian studies, one wonders whether the requirements of university teaching warrant the issuing of this anthology of reprints of critical articles on the subject of Prairie fiction. Though the editor Donald Stephens cunningly justifies *Writers of the Prairies* with the inclusion of four previously unpublished articles by Clara Thomas, Hélène Rosenthal, Morton L. Rosenthal and Marguerite Primau, the volume remains a course textbook composed of articles already available and only sparingly emended. Even if one agrees with the suggestion made by Reginald Watters at this year's Learned Societies Conference in Kingston that anthologies are often necessitated by the fact that a body of literature has not previously appeared under one cover, one would be stretching the point in defending *Writers of the Prairies*.

The format of the book is that of the journal from which the majority of selections have been drawn; it is large, and one fears it is a costly indulgence executed at the expense of students. The volume contains no index, cross-referenced or otherwise, and does not include a bibliography of primary or secondary material — a grievous failing if the book is to be seriously considered as a valuable teaching instrument. Missing also is any attempt to describe just what constitutes Prairie fiction or sets it apart, saving a" applied regional rehash of A.J.M. Smith's remark that nature severely impinges upon the sensibilities of Canada's authors.

Heavily influenced' by A.J.M. Smith's critical theory that Canadian literature has benefitted historically by adapting the cultural influences to which Canada has been subject, *Canadian Literature* has consistently reflected liberal ideology and advocated Smith's notion of detached eclecticism in its selection of articles. Its general *Writers of the Prairies* reflects this influence and the endemic inability of critics of Canadian literature to come

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to grips with their subject in a **comprehensive way**. And if the subject is to be known outside the **small academic circles of aficionados**, then **efforts** in the areas historical and **bibliographical comprehensiveness will** have to be made **in** order to broaden the base of knowledge of Canadian **literature**. Such processing of the **raw material** of the profession may be

**painful and tedious**, but it is necessary before **any** further excursions into the **Cloudcuckooland** of critical theory can prove truly **profitable**. □

*Michael Sutton, who has taught extension courses in Canadian literature, is a graduate student at the University of Toronto. His field: Medieval Studies.*

the international statesman. During his tenure at External, Canada reached the apogee of her influence as an international peacemaker and **it** seemed, for a time, that the country might have a new destiny as a global **go-between**. Pearson did much to fashion and **maintain this** impression and his personal analysis of the political background, **especially** as it modified **Canadian** relations with Britain and the **United States**, would have **proved** invaluable. The theme is touched upon hem but no amount of **culling** from **diaries, letters or** scripts can ever attempt to challenge **the insights and reflections** stored in Pearson's memory. **Memoirs** without the **memorialist** have obvious limitations.

The divisions in *Mike II* — delineating Pearson's presence — are obvious ones. His **hand** is most evident throughout the **first** chapter, a **candid appraisal** of his **relationship** with politics and politicians. It emerges that **Pearson was** at best **an uncertain** student of political **technique** but he **soon** learned 'the role. both in his

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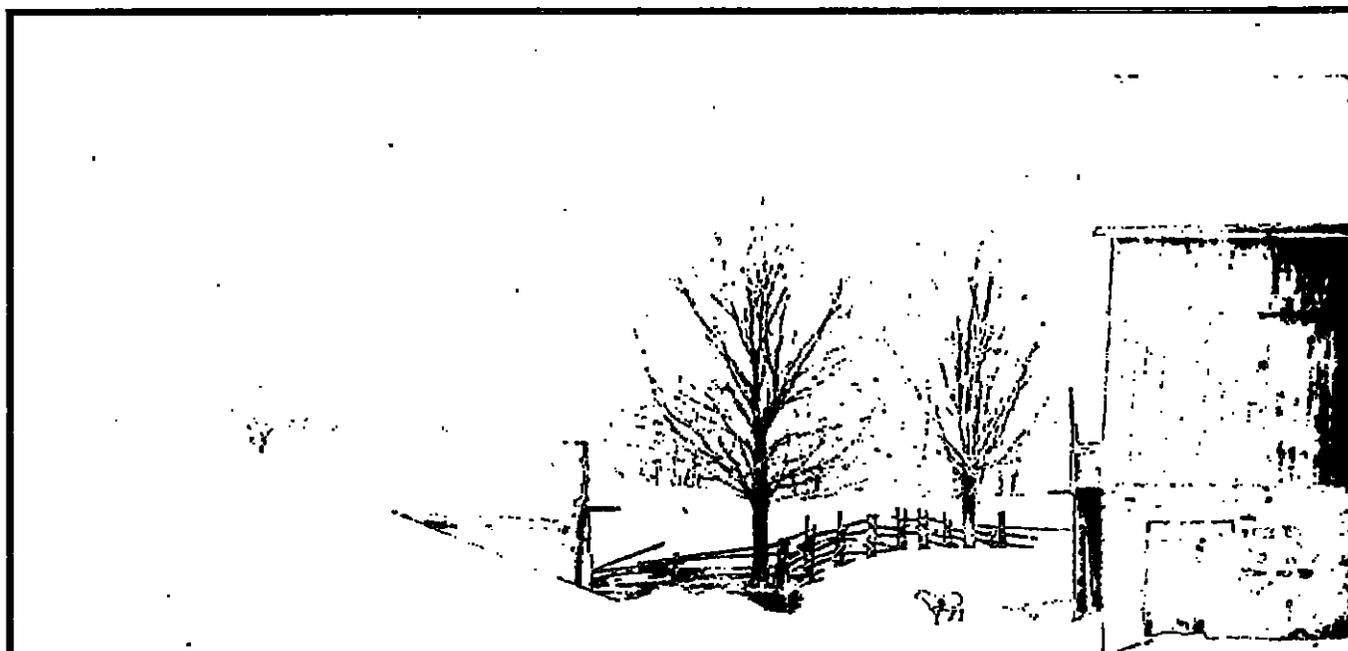
## FILLING IN FOR PEARSON *continued from page one*

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nary was the **unique amalgam** of the author's **spritely** style, his self-effacing **humour** and his strong feeling for timely anecdote. One **never** learns much of public events **from** memoirs. Frequently, by the time they are **written**, the record has become **well** known; **more** frequently, fresh **material** when it **is** presented is too much of an apologia or a distortion to be of interest. Pearson's earlier **remiscences** suffered slightly in this **regard** but **since** they dealt with a public **servant** rather **than** a **politician**, they

still provided an unusually penetrating personal **insight** into **the** structure and functioning of Canada's international relations. In short, Pearson's obvious talent was a superior ability to give **faceless** bureaucracy more of a human countenance.

*Mike II* deals with the years from September, 1948, to June, 1957, when Pearson was Secretary of **State** for **External** Affairs. **The** transition from diplomat to politician was for him a happy and exciting one **and** shaped (a **first** for Canada) that **rarified** entity,



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# Canada du temps qui passe



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constituency (Algonia East) and in the Cabinet. In chapters two, three and four, dealing with international security and NATO, his personality, when it show itself, seems muted. As the discussion turns to the New Commonwealth in chapter five, and in other chapters dealing with the United Nations, Korea, Soviet affairs and finally Palestine, Suez and the Nobel Prize, he is seen acting only as a stiff and awkward bridge uniting one official document with another. Winston Churchill wrote much of his account of the World War Two by bridging letters and documents; but throughout it one felt the unifying push of his personality. *Mike II* has no such salvation.

The volume might have been rescued had the memoirs contained generous amounts of new knowledge. True, some fresh materials do emerge (especially concerning Canadian involvement in Korea) but most of the information about the Commonwealth and particularly Canada's role at the United Nations and in Suez is conventional. And Pearson's encounter with Khrushchev and Bulganin is not of much significance except in the 'measurement of personality, when it must be admitted that the portrait of Crimean eating and drinking bouts is hilarious.

One cannot fault the effort, sincerity and attention to accuracy demonstrated by the editors and advisors in the production of this volume. Doubtless it is true that a more sober, harder-working Mike Pearson is suggested than emerged from the first volume. *Mike III*, dealing with his years as Leader of the Opposition and then Prime Minister (1958-1968), appears an inevitability. There is much merit in the notion of finishing an important task once it has been begun. Nevertheless when the finishing process renders the achievement colourless and fails to provide substantial new information or re-work accepted opinion, than one questions the whole value of the exercise. Perhaps a more satisfactory plan for *Mike III* would be to publish Pearson's diary, extensively edited and footnoted to provide this greater dimension. □

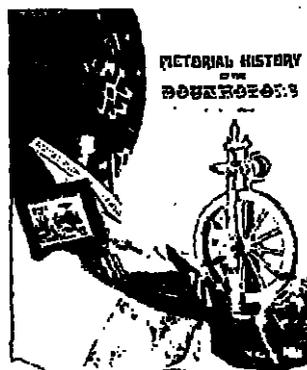
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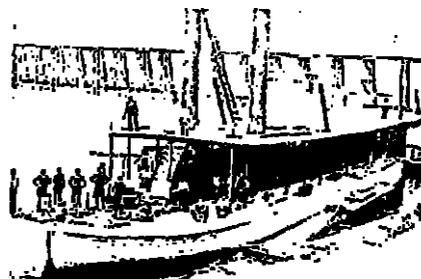
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ticular and her Bertonesque passion for research together result in a travelogue jam-packed with delightful detail:

While I was reading, the mail-coach between Hamilton and Toronto drove up to the door; and because you shall understand what sort of a thing a Canadian mail is, and there-upon sympathize in my irrepressible wonder and amazement, I must sketch it for you. It was a heavy wooden edifice, about the size and form of an old-lashed lord mayor's coach, placed on runners, and raised about a foot from the ground; the whole was painted of a bright red, and long icicles hung from the roof. This monstrous machine disgorged from its portal eight men-creatures, all enveloped in bear-skins and shaggy dreadnoughts, and pea-jackets, and fur-caps down upon their noses, looking like a procession of bears on their hind-legs, tumbling out of a showman's caravan. They proved, however, when undisguised, to be gentlemen, most of them going up to Toronto to attend their duties in the House of Assembly.

\* \* \*

*Peace Shall Destroy Many*,  
Rudy Henry Wiebe,  
Introduction: J. M. Robinson;  
240 pages, \$2.35.

*The Rich Man*.  
Henry Kreisel,  
Introduction: John Stedmond;  
208 pages, \$2.35.

*The Betrayal*,  
Henry Kreisel,  
Introduction: S. Warhaft;  
219 pages, \$2.50.

J.M. Robin's introduction to *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, Rudy Wiebe's first novel, concludes with the sentence: "It is to be expected that this author will gain increasing attention." An identical tone of ennui and academic fastidiousness informs the rest of the introduction as well, so that you are almost persuaded not to bother with Wiebe's novel at all. Fortunately for the "New Canadian Fryebury", a selection (rather than a collection) of NCL critical introductions, Robinson's can be omitted. Wiebe's story of a small group of Mennonites in Saskatchewan during World War II and of the struggles of conscience suffered by Thorn Wiens, the youthful protagonist, does have the occasional awkward passage. Never-

theless, the novel is certainly interesting enough to make me want to read his subsequent works, *First and Vital Candle* (1966), *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), and a fourth novel which I believe is to appear shortly.

Henry Kreisel's *The Rich Men*, another first novel, is one of the NCL's best offerings. In it, Jacob Grossman, a middle-aged Jewish tailor, travels from his modest home in Toronto back to Vienna in order to visit his elderly mother. It is 1935. Fascism and fear waltz sphetedly along the banks of the blue Danube and Grossman, no hero, cuts a forlorn figure in his rich man's white suit when his relatives discover that he has no wherewithal with which to alleviate their poverty or stave off their doom.

Kreisel's second novel, *The Betrayal*, first published in 1964, is, quite simply, entirely disappointing.

\* \* \*

*The Seats of the Mighty*,  
Gilbert Parker.  
Introduction: Elizabeth Waterston;  
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*Delight*,  
 Mazo de la Roche,  
 Introduction: Desmond Pacey;  
 174 pages, \$1.95.

*The Harbormaster*,  
 Theodore Goodridge Roberta,  
 Introduction: Desmond Pacey;  
 165 pages, \$1.95.

As the introductions to **these** three pot-boilers demonstrate, your **average** academic, still under the **gun** of "publish or **perish**", is not above applying the same **critical** methods (thou& not the same **critical** standards) to *Huckleberry Hound* that he applies to *Huckleberry Finn*

*The Seats of the Mighty*, a historical novel set in Quebec City during the **seige** of 1757-59; *Delight*, in which saucy **Delight Mainprize** succeeds in **preventing** her precious tea set from being **broken** and the author demonstrates how, **even in** 1925, a variety of sexual acts **can** be **depicted** as if innocently: and *The Harbormaster*, a salty tale of **blackguard** piracy and high **romance** set in 19th-century New-

foundland; none of the **three** can be recommended with any real enthusiasm, even for **casual reading**.

*The Stepsure Letters*,  
 Thomas McCulloch,  
 Introduction: H. Northrop Frye;  
 159 pages, \$1.75.

*The Clockmaker*,  
 Thomas C. Haliburton,  
 Introduction: Robert L. McDougall;  
 165 pages. \$1.50

McCulloch's *The Stepsure Letters*. **first** published in 1821 in the pages of the *Acadian Recorder*, and Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*, "or The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick of **Slickville**", which **first** appeared between hard-covers in 1836 (and by 1971 was in its eighth NCL reprint). **are both** satires of **the very highest (and disgustingly lowest) order**. As Northrop Frye suggests: "It was, of course, inevitable that Haliburton's more brilliant and **highly coloured satire** should have pushed McCulloch's **into obscurity**."

However, as Frye also **insists**: "Yet McCulloch grows on one, in a way that Haliburton does not."

Obviously, the only answer is to read both as a huge dose of cynical tonic **against** the most **distasteful** practices of the **festive** season. □

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# Merry Christmas to you, and you, and you, and you, and you



(Top row, left-right) Mind's I, Jack Shadbolt / Wake of the Great Sealers, Farley Mowat with David Blackwood / Pellon, Germain Lefebvre / Painters in a New Land, Michael Bell / Cars of Canada, Hugh Durnford and Glenn Baechler (Middle row) Bloomsday, Saul Field & Morton P. Levitt / Contemporary Canadian Painters, William Withmw / The Barn: A Vanishing Landmark in North America, Eric Arthur and Dudley Witney (Bottom row) A Time to Dream, National Film Board of Canada for Information Canada The Colour of Canada, Hugh MacLennan/ Sculpture of the Eskimo, George Swinton.

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