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BOOKS *in* CANADA

Vol. 3, No. 4
June-July, 1974

THE
BookSTORES'
BookSTORE



MINRO'S
LATEST



LAURENCE'S LATEST



drinking in
Ray Smith's
Tavern
by (yours truly)
LAURENCE GARDNER

Atlantic
Letter
ALDEN
NOWLAN



OW BARRY
HOW BROADFOOT
FOUND

ADIAN BOOKSELLERS
CONVENTION

THREE VIEWS OF BOOKSELLERS

The book-buyer's tale

By HOWARD ENGEL

WHAT MAKES a book store a good book store? It's hard to say. Is a big book store better than a little one? An efficient one better than a clubby one? It is a subject that to champion one side over another is to invite clouts about the head. A book store is as personal as your toothbrush, and just as necessary. And, while toothbrushes tend to look alike except for unimportant details, it would be impossible to catalogue the teeming variety of book stores.

There are stores that look like the bookseller and booksellers who look like their stores. There are stores that are as dusty and as disorganized as a mediaeval scholastic cell after a purge by the Jesuits; and others, usually at airports, where books are arranged in unbroken ranks, in crisp dust jackets, and attended by sales clerks that deal in stock numbers rather than titles. There are stores where authors are warmly and frequently welcomed, and others where Shakespeare himself wouldn't be recognized if he were brought in by Milton, a seeing-eye dog and the Dionne Quintuplets.

The most famous book store I know of is Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company. She expanded her business when she published *Ulysses*, but books remained her main concern. It was Sylvia Beach's idea to set up a store selling French books in New York City. She ended up selling American and English books in Paris. Bookselling is fraught with compromise.

Her book store on the rue de l'Odeon became a meeting place for writers from all over. Here on a hypothetical summer afternoon you might find Ernest telling Morley that Scott (in the next aisle waiting for Ezra to finish a long sentence) didn't know beans about fly-casting; or, over there, Gertrude and Alice being teased by McAlmon while Buffy smiles on the sidelines. You never hear that on this very spot Hector Arlington Flett held forth with Stanley McBannister about the influence of the *imagistes*, because they just bought books, they didn't write them.



Do we have stories about Canadian book stores like the stories that Sylvia Beach tells in her memoir? Do we have places as idiosyncratic as her place, or its successors? Do we have places like the browsey cosiness of the shops on Cecil Court in London? Sure we do. When Toronto's Village Book Store moved from Gerrard up to Yorkville, the proprietor took with him a section of wall on which Milton Acorn had written his good wishes. There are dozens of stories like that, and they all come from the same font: book stores the world over are something else.

In Montreal you can see living French writers — except for Réjean Ducharme, whom no one has ever seen — going the rounds of the book stores. In Toronto too, live authors do the literary stations of the cross around Bloor and Yonge at regular intervals. Writers read.

Booksellers vary. There are the kind who remember that you once bought a book on Balkan fortifications (1805–1918) in 1956, and those who ask "Who?" when you ask for Pierre Berton. Some have all the latest hits, the top 50 on shining display; and others specialize in remainders and the otherwise out-of-print. In a country where a second edition is rarer than the first for the simple reason that few books make it into a second edition, such a bookseller is worth his weight in Russell papers.

A good book store is like a club, a pub, a post office, a village pump, a cracker barrel. It's not only where you go to buy your reading, it's a place to go to do it — although some of the younger sales staff take a dim view of the scoffing of free samples. And, incidentally, what has happened to that genus of salesperson characterized by

the habitual wearing of glasses on black string?

No two book stores are alike. Even the Tweedledum Tweedledee chain stores are different to the connoisseur who can note in this one a leaning toward American glossy, and in that a weakness for English paperbacks.

From a book store you can discover the town that supports it. A great book store indicates a great town. A mean book store, full of gilded missals and greeting cards, tells its own sad tale of woe. □

Howard Engel is the executive producer of the CBC-Radio programs Sunday Supplement and Arts in Review.

BOOKS CANADA

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The publisher's tale

By PETER MARTIN

THE WORLD HAS an unhappy habit of making us into schizophrenics. We all wear too many hats. When we're pedestrians, we hate drivers. But when we're behind the wheel we curse the walkers. We don't like it when the government takes our money, but our attitude changes when the baby-bonus cheque comes in.

As a book publisher in this country, I suffer from an advanced case of a particularly aggravated form of schizophrenia. My malady involves Canadian booksellers. They are either the bane of my existence, or the best thing since sliced bread. Or both. It all depends on whether I see them in my nine-to-five role as publisher, or in my after-hours role as browser and buyer. The same people — the booksellers — switch instantly from ogres to angels in my eyes. What is reality? I can't tell. A classic case of mental distress. Let me describe the symptoms.

When I'm a publisher, the booksellers are ferocious, predatory and intolerant. They order too few copies of my books. They want instant delivery from our warehouse. They are highly critical if our books reach them with torn jackets or bent corners. They grumble about the shipping charges we lay on them. They consistently refuse to believe me when I tell them that every new book with the PMA imprint is the greatest book ever published and a certain runaway bestseller. And if their customers aren't buying our books, they are quick to pack up the offending titles and send them back to us, to make room on their shelves for other books that people might want to buy.

But when I turn into a customer, a private citizen who likes books, suddenly these very same booksellers are transformed.

They become people who love their work and who know it's important. They display before me an enormous feast for the eye and mind, books in all shapes and sizes. When I come through their doors, they don't try to hustle a sale; they let me take as much time as I want to browse through their stock. I can handle the books, open them up; the bookseller goes to any extreme to

make sure that the books he puts on his shelf are in perfect condition — and then he lets me put my grubby fingers all over them.

What's more, if the bookseller doesn't have the book I'm looking for, no matter how obscure it is he'll try his best to track it down and order it in for me (at least that's the service I can get from owner-operated book stores and some, though not all, of the chain stores). On special orders of this kind, the bookseller provides cheerful and efficient service even though it's close to 100 per cent certain that he's going to lose money finding and selling me that book.

By now you will have realized that it isn't the booksellers who change, it's me; their behaviour is totally consistent. It is all part of a consuming commitment to their profession and to their customers. It involves long hours, enormous knowledge and a lot of hard and frequently frustrating work. It doesn't, most of the time, bring with it much in the way of financial rewards; your favourite bookseller could almost certainly make more money fixing your plumbing than he makes bringing the world's books to you.

Fortunately, though, there are some dramatic changes taking place in this country. Ten years ago you wouldn't have had much trouble counting Canada's good book stores on the fingers of one hand. Today you'll need both hands, both feet, and maybe a few extra digits to get them all. From Mariner in the east to Julian in the west, with Classics, Smiths and Coles in the middle and all over, the chains have been expanding at an explosive rate. And new, owner-operated independent stores have been opening with encouraging frequency.

However, there are still something like eight million Canadians who can't buy books in their own communities. Canadian towns and even many of our smaller cities simply don't provide enough business to enable a bookseller to pay his rent and stay off welfare. If retail booksellers in most of Canada were able to supply the local institutional market — schools and libraries — then there would be many more and better book stores in many smaller Canadian communities. As things now stand, the institutions buy direct from the publisher or, increasingly, from American-owned and often American-based wholesalers. This shouldn't be. In countries like England and Finland, to pick two of many, the institutions are supplied by local book-

sellers and as a result there are a great many more good book stores than is the case in Canada (Finland, with about a quarter of our population, has 700 good bookstores).

It will take new legislation to switch the institutional book-buying dollar from the foreign wholesaler to your local bookseller. It is, I believe, legislation well worth fighting for.

We need more of those angels in this country. And I guess I'll just have to learn to survive more ogres. □

Peter Martin is the president of Peter Martin Associates of Toronto.

The author's tale

By DONALD JACK

IT'S HARD TO write in an unprejudiced way about booksellers. They're so *dumb*. If stove manufacturers promoted their products like booksellers we'd still be roasting carcasses over

SPITS

Last year the World War I Flyers Association held their annual get-together in Victoria, in that splendidly appropriate hotel, the Empress (silvery ladies, reddish gentlemen, a violin, 'cello and piano combo playing the latest smash hits from Ivor Novello). Because the members of the association were interested in buying copies of my two books, which were about World War I flyers and their associations, their president pressed for copies to be available in a special display in the hotel during their septuagenary convention. My editor at Doubleday was delighted, and got in touch with a Victoria bookseller, who was appropriately pleased at the prospect of selling a few extra copies. Came the convention. Reminiscences about Rumpetias and Fees, No. 56, hilarious anecdotes about baulky rotaries and crash-landings in sewage farms. But no book display. The hotel knew nothing about it. As soon as everybody had gone home it was discovered that the bookseller had laid in the volumes all right, two whacking great stacks of them, but for some inscrutable bibliophobic reason had taken no further action, so that, like the two old ladies locked in the lavatory, nobody knew they were there.

OLD CURIOSITIES

Some booksellers haven't even the savvy to display their wares in the proper ambience, the surroundings that have helped to sell books for centuries. Their bookstores are clean, bright, orderly and hygienic. As if they were selling Weetabix or Yucca Dew, for gosh sakes. Haven't they noticed that clients for new and second-hand hard-cover books, the casual purchaser, dedicated browser and compulsive book collector alike, are profoundly uneasy in the midst of the salubrious and the orderly? Like the posthole beetle, the genuine book buyer is content only amongst gloom, rot and clutter. He should not be bathed in light or wooed with colour. He should *never* have enough room to swing a catalogue. He should be constricted, restricted, cold-shouldered and poorly illuminated, at least until he finally emerges into the light of common day, preferably with slightly grubby hands. That's why Britnell's is successful, while that new bookshop a few blocks south, with its spacious, clean and skimpy stock, will never make it, unless they add a few other lines, like loveaids, or see-through pants for climate-conscious streakers. (I don't wish to suggest that Britnell's, my favorite bookshop, is sordid; but it *is* jammed, especially when there's nobody in it.)

\$\$!\$!

There are, of course, variations. Cole's stores are brilliant and colourful, but they are successful not because of this but in spite of it. The supermarket atmosphere is compensated for by the sheer avoirdupois of literature. Fifty tons per 100 square feet less and Coles would have to go back to sporting goods.

SPENDTHRIFTINESS

However, it seems to me that Coles are pricing themselves out of the hard-cover market, that is, I'm not buying there any more — I used to buy a lot of Coles books when they were 22, 77, and 99 cents. At 99 cents one could afford to throw out unsatisfactory purchases.

(.....)

My Friend Jan Dukszta was aghast when I confessed to throwing out books. He said he wouldn't even dream of throwing out his collection of Government White Papers. As a result he will soon need a shovel to get into his apartment. The last time I was there he was wondering if he should put up

bookshelves on the *other* side of his corridor as well, until it occurred to him that to get to his sitting room (standing room, actually, because of all the books) he would have to travel sideways on a skate board.

SKIP THIS NEXT BIT

You'll note that I'm doing my best not to moan about my own personal frustrations with booksellers, such as seeing downtown Simpson's selling my books in modest but steady quantities, and then seeing them shipped back to the publisher to make way for still newer novels that will probably in their turn be prematurely replaced. I realize that booksellers have a perfect right not to make money if they don't want to. However, I must be careful not to be fair about this. My trouble is I usually appreciate so many sides to the question that the question ends up like something created by laser holography. I recognize, for instance, that a major problem is

space

Books flutter from the publishers in prodigious flocks; and unless their starlings instantly turn into best-selling *rara avis*, must be rapidly dislodged from the shelves if the bookshops are not to become so packed that even Dr. Dukszta can't get in. But I can't see why booksellers don't retain the works that show signs of life when kicked, and cut down still further on those 30,048 titles that the English-language publishers issue each year. The bookseller can't possibly do justice to them all. He should specialize. If I were running a book store I would start by eliminating art books. I hate art books. Yes, a greater selectivity seems the answer — provided, of course, that mine are among the ones that are selected.

BOOKSELLERS I HAVE KNOWN AND HATED

—1—

This one is in the business because he wanted to sell something, anything. But there was no room locally for another outlet for unisex clothing or antique TV cabinets. So now he offers mouldy sets of Thackeray, back numbers of *Eyeful*, *Dugs*, *Flush*, *Thrill*,

continued on page 47

SUMMER READING

THE LIVELY SPIRITS OF PROVENCE

BY JAMIE BROWN

A young Canadian couple are gradually accepted by the colorful inhabitants of a small French village as the "grosse" of Brown's future wife becomes increasingly obvious and they battle international bureaucracy to wed before the baby's birth. \$7.25

SOMEBODY ELSE'S SUMMER

BY TED WOOD

A well-reviewed book of short stories focussing on family love and relationships as affected by problems like alcoholism, unemployment and retardation. \$6.75

THE INDOMITABLE LADY DOCTORS

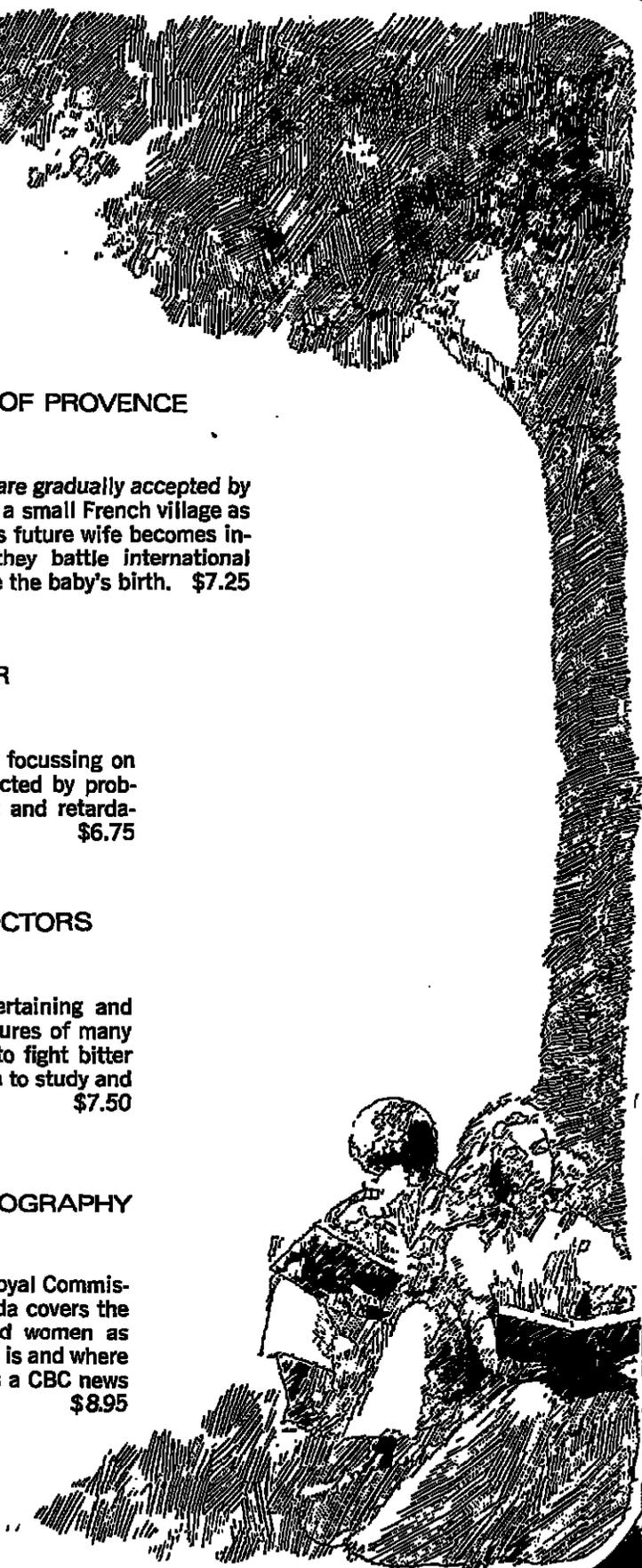
BY CARLOTTA HACKER

In a lively book which is both entertaining and shocking Ms. Hacker tells the adventures of many unsung Canadian heroines who had to fight bitter male opposition in their determination to study and practise medicine in Canada. \$7.50

ANNE FRANCIS: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY FLORENCE BIRD, CC, LL.D.

The Life story of the Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada covers the passing of a generation of pampered women as Florence Bird struggles to find who she is and where she is going. Her earlier career was as a CBC news commentator, Anne Francis. \$8.95



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GUNN MYTHS

The Diviners, by Margaret Laurence, McClelland & Stewart, 382 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By DAVID HELWIG

IN THE 10 OR so years since *The Stone Angel* was published, it has been generally recognized as a novel of classic stature. This recognition makes it hard to realize that after four novels, including *The Stone Angel*, and several other books, Margaret Laurence is still, in terms of a normal writing career, a young writer. Even a pessimist could hardly predict less than another 15 years of important work.

It's fitting that her new novel is a combination of endings and beginnings. "The river," says its first sentence, "flowed both ways."

The Diviners is the story of Morag Gunn, who was, she says, born bloody minded. At the beginning of the book, Morag is a woman in her late 40s, a writer, living beside a river in southeastern Ontario, worried about her 18-year-old daughter. The structure of the book is roughly like that of *The Stone Angel*, with two narrative lines going forward, one of the present events, the other a chronological sequence of memories. The artifice of this structure is made deliberately clear, with the memories placed in separate sections, each section given its own heading and narrated in the present tense. The past is a perpetual present.

Morag Gunn is a big, strong-minded woman, a native of Manawaka, that mythical Manitoba town. Her parents die when she is five years old, and she is taken in by Christie Logan, the town garbage collector, called locally the Scavenger. Christie and his wife Prin are brilliant creations, with all the richness that has characterized the best of Margaret Laurence's work. Christie's stories, his vituperation, his odd and quirky humanity, all come together to create a character marvellous and memorable. He and Prin are outcasts, and living with them, Morag feels herself to be one of the dispossessed. Her real parents exist only as a fantasy of goodness and comfort. Her foster mother is fat and weakminded; her foster father is the eccentric master of the local dump, the Nuisance Grounds, a man who is perversely proud to carry

the weight of what people wish to exclude from their lives.

The symbolic structure of the book is intricate, Morag living out in her own life the dispossession of her Scottish ancestors just as Skinner Tonnerre, her half-breed friend lives out the dispossession of his people. Morag marries an English university professor, but Skinner Tonnerre is the father of her only child.

The book, especially the flashback sections, is filled with scenes that are solid and living. From the anger of Morag's childhood to the awkward sexual contacts of her solitary life in Vancouver, it is finely imagined. A scene in which Morag, sexually intense and unsatisfied, finds herself involved with a psychopath, remains vivid in my mind. The description of Morag raising her daughter alone has the same strength.

The novel does have weaknesses, usually when parts of it seem willed rather than fully imagined. The narrative of the present doesn't always involve the reader. The themes and characters seem too much a sort of report on the contemporary world, without the imaginative chemistry that makes fact into truth.

My other reservation about the book has to do with the ending and raises more interesting questions. The book's resolution seems to me too conscious, a resolution that takes place at the level of will rather than imaginative necessity; but it's fascinating at the same time, for it attempts to resolve not only this book but the whole history of Manawaka. The knife and plaid pin that figure in *The Stone Angel* through the character of John Shipley, return here. At the end of the book, Morag's daughter Pique, part French, part Cree, part Highland Scotch, owns the knife of Lazarus Tonnerre and is promised the inheritance of the plaid pin that John Shipley has been given by his mother, the pin that contains the rousing motto, *Gainsay Who Dare*. She is the inheritor of all the tribes of dispossessed, a hope for the future. As I say, this ending seems to me abstract, willed, but it is interesting that Margaret Laurence is attempting to resolve the history of Manawaka, perhaps to end the chronicle of Manawaka that has gone on, directly or tangentially, through five books; and if the ending lacks conviction, it may be partly because Margaret Laurence has convinced us throughout the books that the river flows both ways, and that no endings are possible.

Reading *The Diviners* I was struck by a strange parallel between the place of the book in Margaret Laurence's career and the place within Mordecai Richler's career of *Saint Urbain's Horseman*. Both books are in some way homecoming books, books that dramatize some of the feelings that led to a permanent move back to Canada. Both are intricate, ambitious books blending a reporter's concern with the problems of life here and now with a sense of the need for meaningful fantasies, for myths. Both return to characters found in the authors' best books, Richler's *Duddy Kravitz* and Laurence's *Stone Angel*. Both attempt to make peace with a community that has been loved and hated.

So *The Diviners* is a kind of ending, but it also contains, in its presentation of the sexual and emotional conflicts of the mature Morag Gunn, material that is largely new in Margaret Laurence's work. Scenes such as those with the psychopath, those at the breakup of Morag's marriage, those involving the meeting of Morag, her lover and the lover's wife, are a new departure. Margaret Laurence has written brilliantly in the past, but that doesn't mean that we can even now guess all the kinds of stories she has to tell. □

NEL MEZZO DEL CAMMIN...

Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You ... Thirteen Stories, by Alice Munro, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 256 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By NANCY NAGLIN

AS CHILDREN we are an audience for the stories grandmothers and maiden aunts tell again and again. By the time we're old enough to be curious about the facts, the maiden aunts are too advanced in senility and the grandmothers too recently dead to get our half-truths into focus. We are left well into adulthood with garbled, half-remembered impressions and the memories of grandmothers, family intrigues and childhood confusions become all the things we feel we have to tell somebody before we die.

Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You ... is Alice Munro's own

Anansi

They Won't Demolish Me!

by Roch Carrier

By one of Quebec's best-known novelists, author of the LA GUERRE trilogy, this funny, angry story tells of one man's battle with Progress in the form of bulldozers and instant highrises.

Yesterdays

by Harold Sonny Ladoo

A bawdy, outrageously funny novel of West Indian life, involving a scheme to send a Hindu mission to Canada.

Breathing Space

by John Bruce

In this sinister, stylishly witty fable, guests come together for a winter weekend and find their lives transformed by a criminal in the house.

Poems selected and new

by P.K. Page

P.K. Page's dazzling style, wit, and acutely original sense of society and self have established her as one of Canada's leading poets. A comprehensive collection.

Beware the Months of Fire

by Patrick Lane

Lyrical, intense poems, ranging from Toronto streets to Calgary jails, from South America to Canada's Indian Reservations. Lane's reputation is confirmed in this fine collection.

Cities

by George Jonas

In this long awaited third book, Jonas combines personal experience and candid insight to focus on five of the world's great cities.

THE IMPORTANT
NAME IN CANADIAN
PUBLISHING



reckoning with a private world that is dead and gone. The 13 stories are a reminder of a simpler, Canadian country way of life that exists only in the recollections of her characters. There are outhouses, people frozen outside barns and idyllic summer days. The collection has a reminiscent, bitter-sweet tone that nostalgically recreates a Depression atmosphere. The stories would seem real for Canadians over 35; my generation might too hastily dismiss them as plots for G-rated family movies.

The characters are a reflective, chatty assortment of mainly middle-aged and older persons who have paused midway in their lives and stopped to take stock. They have been a hard-working lot, not overly ambitious or successful, and satisfied or resigned to their positions in life. They have led quiet lives in small, unsophisticated communities that have always stuck to the old-fashioned virtues. In amazement, and as if whiling away a slow afternoon, they tell how their lives have brought them to loneliness or to rented rooms or to disappointment with the younger generation.

Munro's people are average, decent wage-earners. Twenty or 30 years ago they ran the buses and did everything else that was necessary to keep the country running. Today, they're the sort of people one sees in Vancouver walking up and down Granville Street with shopping bags looking for bargains. Their distinctive feature is a definite sense of right and wrong that complicates their adjustment to the present day.

The stories concentrate on the past or on comparisons between the past and the present. Munro is distressed with North American solutions to generational conflict. She has little compassion for the self-righteousness of long-haired youths who are ignorant of anything that happened before 1960. There is the implied suggestion that the past, despite all its faults, has a moral edge on the present.

Munro rarely ventures far from "small subjects." Her achievement is investing small lives and small events with their proper significance. Her concern is with people who are on the outside of things, relegated to the fringes of activity and decision, and for the most part, these people are women.

Munro's characters include an extraordinary cast of casualties. Prominent among the ranks of the weak and the by-passed are a whole scrapbook of wasted women — women suffering

from strange flutters of the heart, Parkinson's Disease and lingering illnesses. They are a cast who seem to belong to another era when women were genteel creatures, aspired to starched collars and clean handkerchiefs, and paid for respectability with a kind of socially imposed, self-destructive virginity.

Munro is not a "woman's writer" (whatever that may be) and should not be tidily classified as "feminist," "female," or any other label linking a sexual bias to her writing. Her stories are not high-class versions, first-rate samples, of what is generally considered a fourth-rate and unmentionable market — the women's magazine. Munro is simply too good, too disciplined and too catholic to be labelled anything other than an accomplished story-teller. □

FUTURE SCHLOCK

Agency, by Paul Gottlieb, Munson, 221 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By FRASER SUTHERLAND

SINCE THE author of *Agency* is a Montreal-based advertising man one wonders if he wrote his own jacket copy, which asks:

Is *Agency* a suspense novel with satirical overtones or a sendup full of underlying terror?

Only the reader will know for sure after a rollercoaster ride of twists, turns and chills during which the author exposes a sophisticated, valid and menacing picture of today's society, its shock, schlock and morals.

This reader still doesn't know and neither, I suspect, does the author. *Agency* is a glib pseudo-thriller that starts out as spy-fi, a technological fairy tale in the manner of Ian Fleming, and ends up as a 1984-style fable. The opening, in which copywriter Philip Morgan becomes suddenly involved in the machinations of those who control the agency, is pure James Bond: "How attractive my killer," Philip mused. The flat, small, stainless-steel Bonetti Femina 32 aimed at his crotch at point-blank range, zeroed in, unwavering."

Even here the satire, some of it not too subtle, begins to creep in. Morgan, who works for the agency — Doolittle

& Bragg — unwittingly aborts his employers' plan to sabotage a rocket launching with an electronically rigged commercial. As well, Morgan learns that the Forces of Evil are using the agency to reduce society to an infantile level (one would not have thought it were necessary), thus softening it up for an authoritarian to take command.

Morgan can't fight the conspiracy — government intelligence doesn't believe his story — and he is co-opted into becoming the agency's vice-president and creative director. He finishes in a remote mansion under the "care" of a psychiatrist bent on making absolute the agency's control of his mind.

Since the plot is based on an Eric Ambler-type device — something goes wrong inside an organization — *Agency* continually threatens to become a genuine thriller and not a satirical pastiche.

The brisk narrative pace is coupled with a stylistic slickness that is sometimes self-defeating. Take, for example, Morgan's reactions to coffee: "... his stomach rebelled against the bitter, inhuman liquid." Later in the novel: "The bitter liquid shocked his guts, sending tremors of nervous energy throughout his body." They're making coffee stronger these days.

What bothers me most about *Agency* is the cloud of phoniness that seems to hang over it. I would have felt better if Gottlieb had written a straight commercial thriller. Certainly the jacket seems to promise that: the flap shows a photo of a bearded, grim author hiding behind the upturned collar of a trenchcoat. If *Agency* is a fable predicting that glib, vacuous advertising men are the ideal shock troops for Big Brother, I might have guessed by myself.

One further detail bothers me, but doubtless would not have if *Agency* had been a better novel. Gottlieb, described on the flap as "an enthusiastic Canadian," sets his story in an unidentified but U.S.-oriented city. I'm getting tired of enthusiastic Canadians setting their spy stories anywhere but Canada. Facile talk about Canada's being a bad locale because it's on the international sidelines, etc., is no excuse. International sidelines are the traditional battlefield for global combatants.

In any case the best thriller writers have not snobbishly rejected Canada as suitable background. Ian Fleming set at least one of his stories here, and the best of them all, Eric Ambler, made the anti-hero of his *Intercom Conspiracy* a Canadian, a native of — ironically enough — Montreal. □

GRAND LARCENY, PETTY LECHERY

Fool's Gold, by Simon Marawille, Pagurian Press, 206 pages, \$6.95 cloth.

By PHILIP MATHIAS

THERE'S THIS immigrant straight off the boat, see, who has come to Canada to make a pile. He's a WASP but with a difference — his skin is "tinged with the Orient." He left home in Ceylon because his father was a lush and, after working in an English bank, comes to Toronto. He makes a million dollars (it's easy, really), loses it again and, on the last page discovers THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE.

That's the tale of Michael de Shane, the anti-hero of *Fool's Gold*, a first novel by "Simon Marawille." The author has chosen to write under a pseudonym presumably because he hasn't the courage to have his real name associated with this barrel of literary crude. The blurb says Marawille is a "senior partner of an international investment firm based in Toronto." I suspect he's really a frustrated United Church minister fantacizing gleefully and anonymously about all forbidden fruits.

De Shane's first job in Canada is in the cage of a Toronto brokerage firm where he invests in a penny-mining stock and loses money he doesn't own.

His only friend is a jazz musician he knew in London, who takes him around the party circuit. One evening de Shane meets a fat broad who likes the way he plays guitar and who signals she wants it between the legs. So he takes her up to a bedroom. While he's doing up his flies he turns to the reader and says: "I felt a vague disgust. Not with Dora. With myself." (Oh, you incorrigible moralist, de Shane.)

He travels to Montreal where he gets a job selling space for *The Financial Post* and picks up with another chick who's a Westmount socialite. She tumbles the first night and so he finds her easy to be with.

De Shane screws around with her for a while, making his entrée into West-

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mount society, but in the end cannot stomach her any longer and throws her over, seeing in a flash of unusual philosophical insight all their relationship had been:

How consistently I had abused her, not just tonight but ever since we had met. Abused — used her. I had taken all she had given and given nothing in return. Even in sex I had strummed on her like a guitar, bringing on her tepid orgasms, without joy, without love. And she had put up with all my surly moods, my casual cruelties.

"Judy, I—"

She scrambled out of the car, turning with a desolate look to face me. "It always ends this way," she said, brokenly, "always like this."

The jacket blurb says: "Mike is an attractive rascal . . . the Toronto WASP equivalent of Mordecai Richler's Duddy Kravitz." Don't believe it. Mike de Shane is just a dull, money-loving lecher. The only possible laugh in this book is when, at a party at a cottage, so much pressure builds up in the sewage tank it explodes, sending a

shower of wet shit down over the guests and into their drinks. Even then I found myself morbidly wondering whether they went on drinking or not.

Back to money. De Shane makes his first million (by borrowing about \$500,000 and investing it in the right stock) and becomes a partner in a Toronto brokerage firm. Money becomes so important to him he starts having a recurring dream about being suspended over dark water full of writhing monsters (this could, of course, symbolize his fear that he will fall back into penury). At about this time his sister telephones from Ceylon to tell Mike his father is ill and would like to see him before he dies. Mike is too busy with his finances to leave Canada, but the guilt of turning down his father's dying request helps turn his nightmares into daytime hallucinations.

Then the market breaks and wipes de Shane out. He can't raise enough money to pay off the bank so he goes to Wellesley subway station to throw

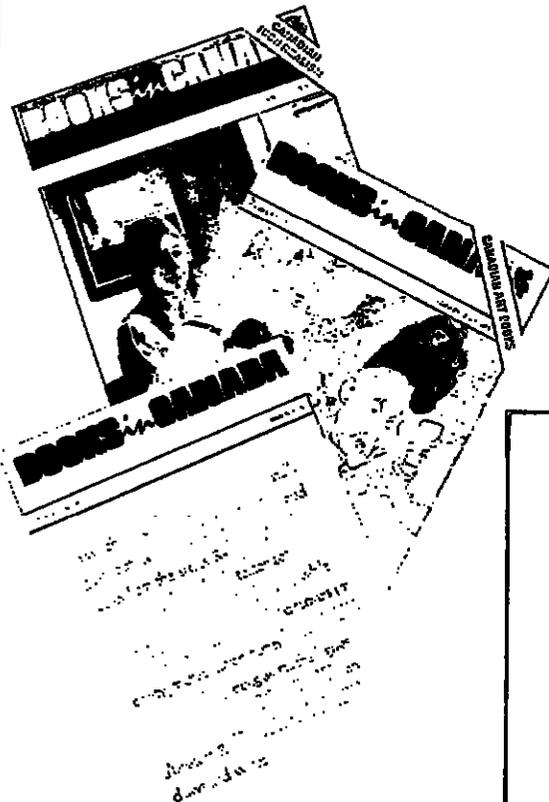
himself in front of a train. Fortunately, he suffers a total nervous and physical collapse before reaching the edge of the platform.

Mike wakes up in hospital and tells the psychiatrist that money to him was "everything, self-esteem, power, everything. The money was, you know, my whole being. Without it I was nothing, nothing. . . ." But at last he has discovered there is something more important in life (it's on page 205, line nine, in case you don't want to read the whole book).

Ah, sweet mystery! "There's a bit more to life than being a wheel on the street," Mike is able to say to a friend when he has left hospital, facing his debts manfully. "And there's a hell of a lot more to being a Canadian than just making a million dollars." □

Philip Mathias, an investigative reporter for The Financial Post, is the author of Forced Growth (James Lewis & Samuel).

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BLACK BURN

Riverlisp, Black Memories by
Frederick Ward, Tundra Books, 153
pages, \$5.95 cloth.

By JUAN BUTLER

Riverlisp gets its name from its stream:
people'd slapa knee and say it were in want
to speak but lips cause of the MANure
which flowd.

IN RIVERLISP, a Black community
comparable to Africville that once nes-
tled, poor, grimy and proud, on the
fringe of Halifax, the stream flows slow
and steady in spite of (or perhaps be-
cause of) the débris that has accumu-
lated in it.

The débris of restlessness: "I ain't
satisfied. Ain't never gonna be neither.
Even not when I was young . . . always
on the streets. But I needs them streets.
They be like salvation itselfs."

Of violence: "Pee Dee were shot the
other night only seventeen years old.
Seems he and Mr. Jacobs, the door
rattler, got into a arguring and Pee Dee
resisted being rested and started run-
ning."

Of hatred: "'Git outta my town,
nigger!' Was the first time I'd heard a
white boy say it. I looked back hard at
him, cause now I had to be a 'bad nig-
ger'. So I took my time and lefted."

Of sorrow: "Sometimes she'd sit in a
dark corner thinking think bout all the
shit she be into — bills, mens, chil-
drens — talk to herself pray and cuss
laugh ask questions dry herself with her
fist and miss love loving."

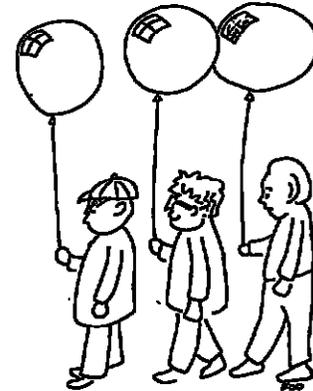
Of love: "And then too, her beauty
were the loviess of all things. All them
in the neighbourhood paid attention
even praise. . . . Yeah when she were
on the street even the dogs were at a
shush!"

And good times: "O hold me hold
me! This was Street's Blue Room and
the dancing was heavy. My name was
Young Blood and the fat women loved
me. Me and a big mama was a whole
floor show most any night in the
week."

And especially religion: "Let the
magnification and the immaculatship of
divine supervision guide us today as we
seeks to enter the 'OUT' in the bigger
than us. Amen!"

*What a pity the
Lord must have on us
When He sees just
What we sees*

And all the other emotions, observa-
tions and just plain shouts of joy that,
accumulated and intermingled, go into
making *Riverlisp* what it is: a life, an
experience, a song. Frederick Ward, a
man to watch for. □



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EXPLORING RAY SMITH'S LABYRINTH

But it was not long before Gould had to pause; it was in the moment he straightened up that a 'phht' sounded off to one side and the woodpecker shot past, missing Gould by inches. It disappeared into a bed of moss. Gould said, "Huh?" and looked about.

'You bloody numbskull!'
'Shut up and pass me another woodpecker.'

—from "Smoke"

TOO LITTLE HAS been written about Ray Smith's first collection of stories, *Cape Breton Is The Thought Control Centre Of Canada* (1969); and it may remain a relatively neglected work because somehow such dark terms as Black Humour, The Absurd, Fantasist, have been fated a bad press in this country, registering on the Richter Scale of critical horrors somewhere between absentee speculators and curved hockey sticks. "Moral bankruptcy!" "Squandered talent!" "Quick, call a doctor!" are the usual condemnatory outcries whenever (yet) another absurdist emerges on all fours from his subterranean lair to savage our healthy expectations with a few more formless droppings. What CanLit needs more of, apparently, are sets of well-plotted Mosaic laws, or messages of hope that sing baritonically of the Land, or — at the least — urban tragedies with the hero flawed, preferably, in the Core Area. The recoil from Absurdist literature is often accompanied, too, by prim, oblique hints that, say, Kafka's "The Hunger Artist" might have been spiritually redeemed by a *deus ex machina* in the form of a rush take-out order from Shopsy's Delicatessen.

It is not my intention here to do much more than declare for the aesthetic genuineness of the Absurdist movement in Canadian literature, and to observe that Ray Smith's first book was an organized, adventurous and skillful series of fictions, filled with the kinds of risks that good writers take.

Tony Tanner, in his *City of Words*, explored a peculiar paradox confronting the modern writer; one passage in particular applies, I think, with special force to some of Smith's initial experiments with language and form:

If he wants to write in any communicable form he must traffic in a language which may at every turn be limiting, directing and perhaps controlling his responses and formulations. If he feels that the given structuring of reality of the available language is imprisoning or iniquitous, he may abandon language altogether; or he may seek to use

Lord Nelson Tavern, by Ray Smith, McClelland & Stewart, 160 pages, \$6.95 cloth.

By LAWRENCE GARBER

the existing language in such a way that he demonstrates to himself and other people that he does not accept nor wholly conform to the structures built into the common tongue, that he has the power to resist and perhaps disturb the particular 'rubricizing' tendency of the language he has inherited. Such an author will go out of his way to show that he is using language as it has never been used before, leaving the visible marks of his idiosyncracies on every formulation. The desire or compulsion (is) to project the shape of one's own unique consciousness against the imprisoning shapes of the external world.

CBITCCOC was very much into all of this, manipulating language and thus our experience of language, liberating us from the usual procedures of passion and quest, and exploding genres as if the author had mapped out a kind of literary mine field through which there was no way we could ever get home again. Observe, for instance, this excerpt from "Passion":

Watermelon.

Watermelon!?

Yes, watermelon. You see....

How can you argue with a man who replies watermelon? Yes, yes, I Heathcliff know you must make sybils of syllables but Sensitivity, Imagination ... err ... Feeling excetera dont count anymore or Cathy would....

I dont understand.

You dont unders....

Watermelon? No, I....

Its you see less; Mungo Rappaport, my oldest and closest friend is, has always been repre appre and incompre hensible.

.... Cathy dreamangle, open your door to waandering....

Hi Heathcliff.

With an h please. He-thuh-cliff.

In *Lord Nelson Tavern*, Smith has adjusted his focus somewhat. Not that the experiment is over, but rather that it has discovered a broader, more dimensioned field, a larger structure, and is now funded with greater scope and continuity. The glittering play with language, the enfolding traps of "Ah! Irony!" and the sharp parodies that moved so easily over the surfaces of convention have all given way to a more interior sympathy with life styles. And Smith's characters have somehow graduated from objects to subjects,

complete with new built-in reserves of feeling and energy.

In any case, a writer like Ray Smith defies easy categories. There is no critical vocabulary precise enough to describe the forms and functions of his new work. It isn't a novel; it isn't a collection of short stories; it isn't a series of tales; it has no large sustaining metaphor to shape it into redoubling fictions. Smith even employs a multitude of narrative techniques appropriate to the image of the moment. And yet the form of *Lord Nelson Tavern* is, perhaps, its most essential feature; for, despite its seemingly random collectiveness, it has been arranged — through elaborate time shifts and modulated points of view — into an order that seems highly controlled. As a result, its vision of the intricacy and richness and strategems of human relationships resonates directly from the *structural* manipulation of its materials.

The book contains seven sections or panels, each focussing centrally upon one or two characters, but containing, too, a larger sense of other lives being lived: a simultaneous operation of foreground, background and middle distance. These sections exist autonomously (and a couple have been published separately), but their larger significance depends upon the total, cumulative effect of characters being played off against one another, each in turn reduced to scale in a continuing history of relationships. The book's construct offers us not a total view, then, but multiplying points of view as each life touches curiously, comically and even surprisingly upon another in rapid, interlocking associations. The design achieved has about it the layout of a well-furnished labyrinth: a patterned dance among friends to the music of time which suggests that Smith's structural master is no longer Borges but Anthony Powell.

We begin in a tavern, presumably the tavern of the Lord Nelson Hotel in Halifax, where the initial arrangements of the book are set up. This opening tavern scene becomes an introductory image of their collectivity as Gould and Paleologue (English), Naseby (Philosophy), Grilse (Economics) and Ti-Paulo (Art School) — all later to have their own sections — worry through their university interludes. Smith begins with a common object for them to contemplate — the beautiful

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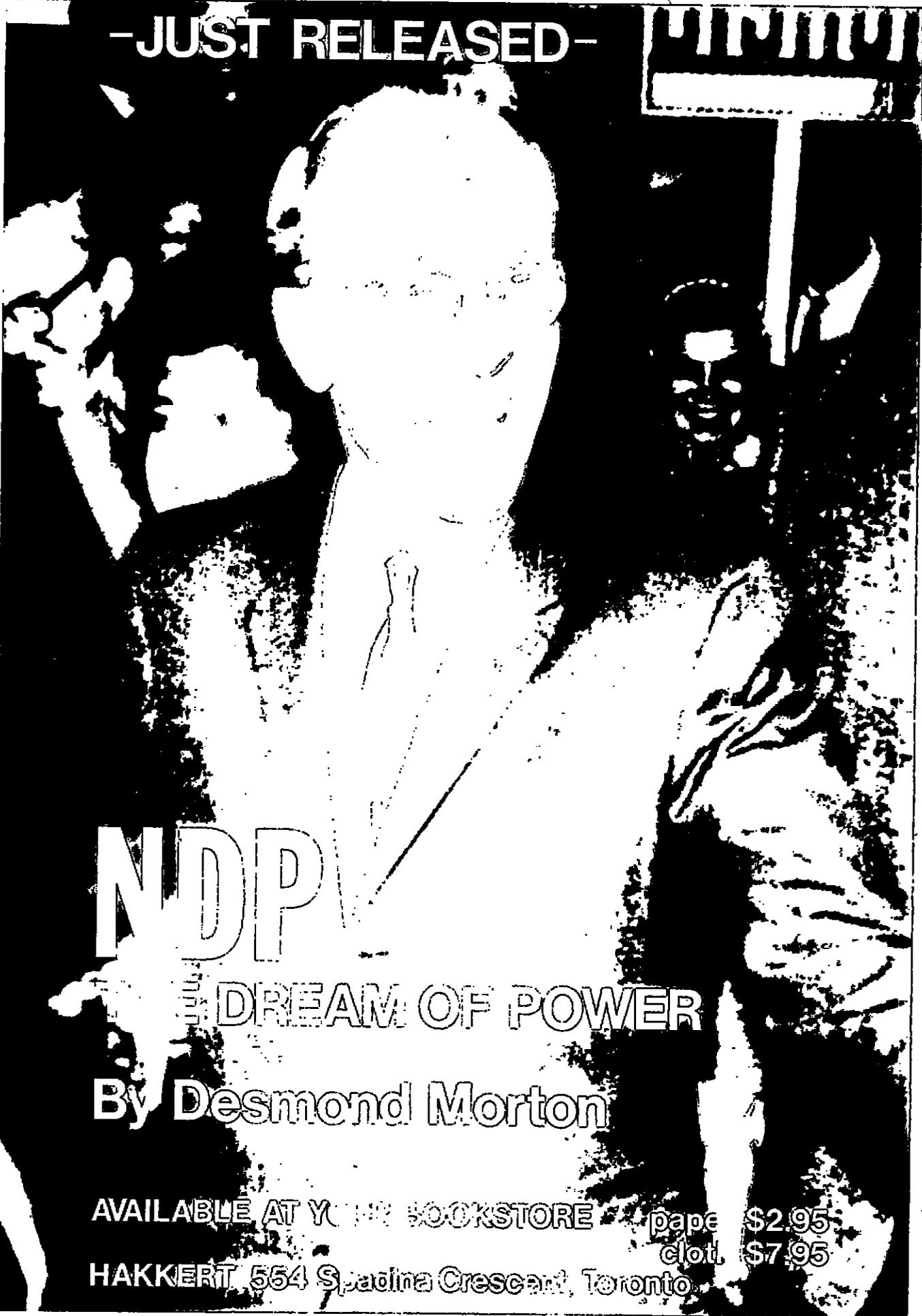
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and mysterious Francesca — who sends them all off on their marvellously divergent myths:

Everyone was in love with Francesca. Afternoons they would skip classes to sit around the tavern talking about her, her beauty.

'Her eyes, now, her eyes are the mystery of the universe, the light of day, the movement of music, the . . . the . . .'

'Her legs, Gould, her legs have the elegant curves of an eagle's flight, of a beach shimmering in the sun, of . . .'

'For Christ's sake,' from Naseby, 'the important thing is how good a lay she is.'

No one knew this, for none of them had ever spoken to her. . .

Francesca remains a mystery to them all, not because (despite their investments in her) she is so complex, but because she is no more than a shiny surface; she and her perfect lover Dimitri — rich and easy they are in their jet-propelled leisure — surface from time to time through the book, a tangle of sunny, cardboard gestures. They seem to serve as unreal foils and false graces to the truly anguished experiences of those, like Paleologue's Lucy and Gould's Rachael and the younger Sarah, who pay a real emotional price for who they are and what they know. Francesca's dreamy vacancy — the myth of perfect contentment made flesh, as advertised — explodes against the real-life traumas of the light, airy Lucy and the great buxom Rachael:

So I borrowed my brother Sonny's car and said I was just going to get some cigarettes and started over to Dianne's place, boy I was shaking like a leaf, I was so nervous, you know, not wanting to be right, but wanting to know and so on, so anyway, I'm coming up to her place and there's the car out front and sure enough it's Jackie's car and the two of them in the front seat . . . so anyway, I had him and I didn't know what to do about it. . .

Like hair, for example. You think maybe it doesn't matter if fashion says everybody has to have curly hair, the girl just does it a different way. But you wouldn't believe the hell I went through for years trying to put waves in my hair, years when I had to lie on my face to go to sleep, when not just rain but mere dampness in the air was a total disaster and in the john before classes the kinky-haired ones would stand in front of the mirrors smirking and patting their curls and perhaps condescend to pretend to feel sorry for me because the curl fell out if someone so much as turned on a tap ten feet away.

.. "Nothing makes a goddess human like seeing her tipping back a bottle of beer," we're told quite early in the book; and this statement seems to be a key to the differences in approach as natures develop in a number of direc-

tions, careering towards middle age in the guises of agents or victims, wise ones and fools, coming up empty or fulfilled as each expectation is played out to its compromise in time. For instance, of the dozen odd characters — from Gould the English Professor to Naseby the pornographer — Smith endows some with full, rich inner lives and others with merely read surfaces. There is a kind of narrative system to this. Those who are privileged to possess complete interiors are usually allowed personal forms within which to declare themselves: Lucy and Rachael indulge in long, confessional monologues, Ti-Paulo the artist keeps elaborate journals, Sarah records her experiences (specifically, her deflowering) in a diary. Even Paleologue the poet and his actress wife Gussie, who are never directly internalized, are ultimately set in a lovely quiet landscape that serves to objectify their own personal separate peace. On the other hand, those who remain shadowy and are contained inside narratives as catalytic objects are dealt with ironi-



Ray Smith

cally, with severe detachment, as if they had stepped from the pages of a previous parodic experiment to be judged in a newer and tougher context where their survival is now by no means certain. It is fitting, then, that both the obnoxious, debauched Naseby and the secret international adventurer Grilse should be finally murdered, exorcised from the book at last like gross, literary demons.

But the relationships themselves, those anxious associations of blood and feeling among the fuller and lesser characters, are the very heart of the book: Lucy and Jackie, Lucy and Paleologue, Ti-Paulo and Odile, Naseby and Nora — the combinations seem endless. To take what is, for me,

the most vital round of figures is to discover all kinds of permeating touchstones: Gould and Rachael, Rachael and Ti-Paulo, Sarah and Paleologue, Naseby and Sarah, Paleologue and Gussie. It works as follows in the final three sections of the book:

a) In "Sarah's Summer Holidays," we approach the middle-aged Gould and Rachael through the consciousness of their daughter Sarah who, in the severity of her adolescent brightness, has found them to be dull, predictable, sterile and unimaginative. "I think my system is a very good one for putting fools in their places. Whoever comes out of it is usually a reasonable excuse for *homo sapiens*." At 13, Sarah is invited to spend the summer with Paleologue and Gussie whose freedom and energy she immediately contrasts to the bankrupt intuitions of her own family. So attractive is the easy confidence and low-key wisdom of Paleologue that Sarah finds herself the agent in her own seduction. "Anyway, it might just be interesting (stop kidding yourself, Sarah, it would be a stroke of genius) to seduce Paleologue." Partially through means of a wonderfully comic exhibitionism, Sarah succeeds in being taken by this poet of her ambitions, and immediately shapes from the experience a myth as fragile as a coupling on water. She concocts an elaborate romance complete with a letter to her future self: "Sweet Sarah, 33, I hope you're happy. Goodbye, wherever you are." The seduction and its subsequent transformation into myth accomplishes two powerfully negative results: first, it creates an even greater distance between herself and Rachael whom she sees as a bourgeois, maternal trap; secondly, it arrests her emotional development as she searches vainly for some further romantic experience to satisfy the mythology of the first.

b) In "Family Lives," we immediately move back in time to be confronted with Gould and Rachael just before and just after their marriage. Ultimately, we are meant to discover in this section Rachael herself through a richly personal monologue; and it is a version of Rachael that serves abruptly to contradict Sarah's Rachael: one imagination cutting across time to school another. More than that, however, is the revelation that Sarah bears associations with two artists: her first lover Paleologue, of course, but also her real father who is not Gould but Ti-Paulo. For just as "Sarah's Summer Holidays" traced the evolution of Sarah's deflowering by the poet Paleologue, the

opening chords of "Family Lives" explores Rachael's first adulterous affair with the artist Ti-Paulo (by which Sarah was conceived).

c) We cut to Sarah at 19:

Boden Rastuble was a poet only for the sake of his pursuit of Sarah which lasted a day and a half. The poetry he recited to her in the Finnish was in fact nothing but long pieces inaccurately quoted from the *Kalevala* which he had been made to memorize as a schoolboy. Sarah's weakness for poets was notorious around the university and Rastuble managed to take her from 'Hi there' to honeymoon in just over the statutory minimum time period.

The marriage collapses in three months, but its very nature as a failed exercise touches immediately upon the distinction Smith has been exploring all through the book between false mythologies and real possibilities, between the Francescas and the Rachael's. To survive, Sarah must come to understand exactly what her legacy from Rachael and Ti-Paulo consists of.

d) It is for Naseby, of all people, to resolve the dilemma. Appropriately wearing a jacket given to him by the unreal Dimitri, Naseby gratuitously violates Sarah's most cherished illusions concerning Paleologue and herself and Ti-Paulo and her mother.

Yes, that's why you're here, come to look the place over, see where your slut of a mother spread her legs for you, heh, but no, it wasn't Ti-Paulo who gave me the real goods on you, it must have been, yes, that arrogant, conceited bastard Paleologue, yes, by God, that's who it was, old P., sitting in the tavern back home, sitting there and smirking and telling me about Rachel's bitchy little daughter...

Sarah's scream began with a startled, strangled gasp. It rose slowly in tone and volume, rose through the air as her face turned up to the sky... The scream had an oddly hypnotic effect on Naseby... He had always been able to get people, to wound them with words; but he had never managed such an effect. It gave him something beyond mere satisfaction, something much closer to ecstasy... such purity that the performance was the sum of his life, all his art in one perfect act.

As Naseby attempts to violate her further, Sarah pushes him to his death down the bank of a dam. Purged of shadows, she returns home, showers, puts on clean clothes, and enters the kitchen to embrace her mother.

e) "Walk" is presented as an idyllic coda: a summing up in which Paleologue and Gussie are discovered walking west across fields covered with snow. Paleologue has found in himself that balance that others, like Sarah,

have been struggling to acquire and that the book as a whole has been measuring against the dangerous extremes of its vision. "It had something to do with balance. Paleologue the acrobat. He could see the good and the bad in all things and was neither impressed with the one nor disgusted by the other." Paleologue and Gussie have achieved a relationship too that possesses a hard, uncompromising honesty: "Where Paleologue was, he was in many costumes; Gussie was always and all ways Gussie. Together, he was the landscape in which she walked and all the people she met there. They had managed by knowing the way through." Gone are the Nasebys and the Grises, those fictions of the way things are, those creatures of the conditional mood. And whereas the book had begun with an image of the insubstantial loves of Francesca, it ends with an image of Gussie in heat, enjoying her coital moment beneath the dining car table:

Gussie glanced about to see if anyone was paying them any attention, then shifted forward in her chair.

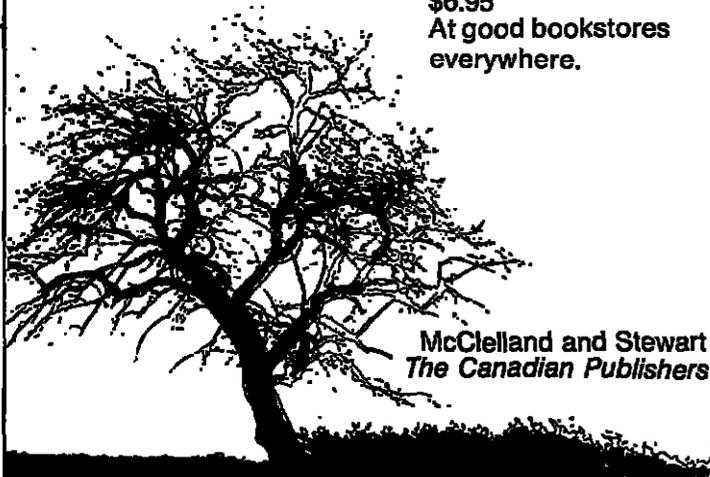
'Higher,' she purred. 'Yes, higher.'

A reviewer can do no more than suggest the kinds of circling and reverberating riches of *Lord Nelson Tavern*.

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One can, I suppose, criticize it for what it isn't; but why bother? Ray Smith is a writer absolutely without conceit, one of the very few I know who doesn't confuse self-consciousness with self-knowledge. And it shows not only in what he creates, but in what he rejects. Enough to say then that he's an assembler of worlds miraculously complete in their private, insular shapes; that he's an explorer of shadows and substances, of hard realities and fabulous conducts. □

Lawrence Garber, an assistant professor of English at the University of Western Ontario, is the author of two works of fiction — Tales From the Quarter and Circuit — and now is at work on a third novel.



ATLANTIC LETTER

By ALDEN NOWLAN

THE INDEFATIGABLE Fred Cogswell of Fredericton will suspend his one-man publishing operation this summer after issuing 15 more titles. That will bring to 185 the number of poetry collections, ranging in size from 16-page pamphlets to full-length books and in quality from embarrassing to excellent, that he has brought out under his Fiddlehead Books imprint.

Cogswell prints some of his publications on a press that he brought home from Montreal on the roof of his car and installed in his basement. His wife, Pat, helps him fold, collate and staple the pages. The bulk of his work he farms out to printers in Canada and England.

The suspension is unlikely to outlast his upcoming sabbatical year from the University of New Brunswick, where he teaches English.

For a generation Cogswell has been the self-effacing and often self-

depreciating mentor, patron and confessor of writers throughout Canada and in the United States. And he is a better poet than many of those he has published. His selected poems, *Like Bird of Life*, edited by Peter Thomas, another Fredericton teacher and writer, will soon be in print. A collection of his translations from the French, *17 Quebec Poets*, will be released shortly by Harvest House. And in collaboration with Gerald Ferris he is working on an English anthology of Quebec short stories to be published by Macmillan.

Desmond Pacey's short stories deserve more attention than they've received, having been over-shadowed somewhat by his work as a teacher, scholar and editor; they will appear soon in a selected edition, *Waken Lords and Ladies Gay*, under the University of Ottawa Press imprint. His edition of the letters of Frederick Philip Grove will be published in the fall by the University of Toronto Press, and he is working on an edition of the letters of Sir Charles G.D. Roberts.

Among the novels to be published this fall is *The Coming of Winter* (Oberon) by David Adams Richards, a native of Newcastle, N.B., and until

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recently an undergraduate at St. Thomas University. He is possibly the most exciting young writer to surface in Atlantic Canada since Cape Breton's Ray Smith, Sackville's John Thompson and Halifax's Bill Howell. Richards has worked his way from fervent and occasionally febrile imitations of Dylan Thomas to solid, perceptive and moving fiction set among the working-class inhabitants of New Brunswick's Miramichi country.

Kent Thompson, whose infectious enthusiasm does for the Fredericton literary community what the grinning confidence of a colonel of irregulars does for the troops, has resumed the editorship of *The Fiddlehead*, which incidentally has no connection with Fiddlehead Books. (The fiddlehead, an ostrich fern at its early, edible stage, is a popular symbol in New Brunswick. There is a Fiddlehead Tavern, for instance, which has no direct connection with either the magazine or the books.) Thompson's second novel, *Across From the Floral Park*, will be published in New York. Also publishing a second novel is Anthony Brennan, of St. Thomas University, whose *The Crazy House* (McClelland and Stewart) will appear in January, 1975.

The Fourth Estate, a Halifax weekly, published an interesting if not very exciting supplement devoted to fiction and verse by writers in the Atlantic provinces; it was edited by Don Cameron. *The Atlantic Advocate*, which for a while was the only Canadian commercial magazine that published both stories and poems, could resume that policy under its new editor-in-chief, James D. Morrison. Morrison is also managing editor of the Fredericton *Daily Gleaner* and has been responsible for a notable improvement in the number and quality of the book reviews in that newspaper.

For the first time in at least a generation, Saint John has some book stores that are worthy of the name.

There was an abortive attempt to form a New Brunswick branch of the Canadian Authors Association. Whatever the weaknesses of the national organization, it seemed, on the strength of some preliminary meetings, that the local branch might be useful in bringing together "literary" and "commercial" writers for joint action in areas of common interest. Presiding over the Fredericton organizational meeting was Dan Ross who, as the author of 220-odd Gothic, Western, mystery and nurse books has probably pounded out more words than all the other writers in

Canada combined. He works 10½ hours a day in the basement of his house in Rothesay, N.B., with his portable typewriter perched on his lap.

As for me, I have a new book of poems, *I'm A Stranger Here Myself* (Clarke Irwin) coming out in the fall; I've just finished *The Outer Island*, a history of Campobello, that will also be published by Clarke Irwin; and I'm currently working, in collaboration with Walter Learning, artistic director of Theatre New Brunswick, on a stage adaptation of *Frankenstein*, that will open at The Playhouse in Fredericton in mid-July. □

ONE WAY TO SPLIT

The River Gets Wider, by R.L. Gordon, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 234 pages, \$8 cloth.

By MORRIS WOLFE

LIKE EDMUND WILSON, I understand that to enjoy murder mysteries (and other thrillers) one ought to be "able to suspend the demands of . . . literary taste and take the thing as an intellectual problem." Unfortunately, like Wilson, I'm rarely able to do that. I find most such books a bore. R.L. Gordon's first novel, *The River Gets Wider*, I'm afraid, is no exception.

The wife of the Chief Justice of the Canadian Supreme Court dies of an overdose of sleeping pills. Her husband, John Andrews, is charged with murder. Following his acquittal, Andrews commits suicide. "The reader of this book," we're told, "is in the judge's chair." It's up to us to decide whether Andrews is guilty or innocent, whether he is a good man or a bad one. One of Andrews' attorneys trots out the story for us — all its details neatly balanced, suitably elliptical, and, like most such puzzles, not worth solving.

John Andrews' boyhood acquaintances found him distant. His hockey coach admired him: "Any penalties he got were from trying too hard. He never got any mean penalties." The headmaster at the private school he attended thought him a fake. He won a Rhodes scholarship, but rejected it. When he marries Beatrice, we're not sure

whether he does so for love or money. His subordinates in the Navy described him as "a cold bloody bastard." (Here, as elsewhere, there are parallels between Andrews and the Kennedys.) He's a D-Day hero who asks his CO, "Do you think I'll get a decoration for today's work?" After the war he becomes a brilliant lawyer and political organizer for the Liberals. At age 34 he's elected to Parliament. In his first term, as a result of a scandal he may have stirred up, he replaces the Minister of Justice. He does a brilliant job. When he loses his seat in the next election, the new Conservative government appoints him to the Supreme Court. People mutter that he's "too lucky." There's talk of his becoming Secretary-General of the UN. His wife starts hitting the bottle. Her bastard son, the result of an affair while Andrews was at war, arrives on the scene. Andrews takes a mistress. Mrs. Andrews dies under strange circumstances. John Andrews tells the court a story reminiscent in its implausibility of Teddy Kennedy after Chappaquidick. (But my favourite implausibility in *The River Gets Wider*, however, occurs at John Andrews' wedding. His parents are uncomfortable and want to leave early. Their excuse? His father, who's a university professor, remembers that he's missing a faculty meeting.)

The novel frequently lapses into banalities that would be hard to take even in soap opera. We're introduced to Tom Collis, Mrs. Andrews' bastard son: "He was a pretty sturdy boy, both physically and emotionally, but twelve years are not a great many, and no matter how many years a human being accumulates, the experiences of life can still at times become almost unbearable." Mrs. Andrews is drunk and moans, "Isn't life hell!" Her housekeeper shakes her roughly and cries, "No it *isn't* hell. We make our own lives what they are."

There are two scenes that I quite liked. Both suggested a capacity for subtlety on Gordon's part that I wish there had been more of. In the first, Andrews takes his son to meet the other woman in his life. In the second, we're given a sense of what it must be like to be someone of remarkable talent to whom almost everything comes — or at least seems to come — easily. "You know," Andrews says to one of his lawyers, "all my life people have been jealous of me — of my success — and they've tried to explain it away as some kind of trick. There will be people watching this trial now who won't be

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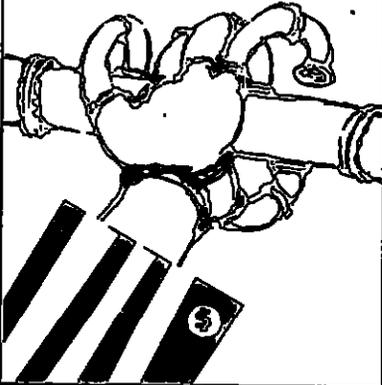
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too unhappy if I'm found guilty, and there will be a lot of others who will think it's the old trickery at work again if I'm found innocent."

The River Gets Wider will, undoubtedly, do well. It's the kind of book usually described as "a good read" or as "entertaining." What that means for me, though, is that 24 hours after I've finished it, it's all but faded from my head. Further proof that one man's kitsch is another man's coup. □

WHO GOES THERE?

Bayonets in the Streets, by John Gellner, Collier-Macmillan, 196 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By MARK SARNER

SINCE JOHN GELLNER is a self-proclaimed small-c conservative "wanting to conserve what is worthwhile," and believes that the maintaining of law and order is most worthwhile of all, he is understandably concerned about the threat posed by urban guerillas both in Canada and around the world. Out of that concern comes *Bayonets in the Streets*, Gellner's interpretation of the FLQ guerilla (the primary meaning of "guerilla" describes the war rather than the fighter) in the autumn of 1970 and of similar actions in other countries.

Evaluating the FLQ action in the context of what Gellner might call an international "epidemic" is both a worthwhile and a potentially important undertaking. Unfortunately, he manages to disappoint us by committing the all-too-common error of coming up with an important subject only to do it a tremendous disservice by refusing to understand it.

Gellner does manage to establish himself as a reasonably good student of military strategy. He appears quite well-versed in the tactics of such groups as the IRA and he does a solid job of reporting the events of the Quebec fiasco. (As serious as the October crisis was, Gellner's description sounds like a cops-and-robbers comedy, with bungling galore on both sides.) However, this book is not sim-

ply a discussion of how better to combat guerillas; it is also an attempt to describe and evaluate the revolutionaries who design and implement what Gellner considers to be wholly unnecessary and invariably unjustified terrorism. And here it is a dismal, even an embarrassing failure.

Revolutionaries living outside the law are clearly Gellner's enemies. As such, they are reprehensible. And their motives, the potential legitimacy of their concerns, have no place in Gellner's thinking. He marshalls what intellect is not paralyzed by anger to dismiss these radicals as spoiled rich kids acting out of boredom, nihilists hiding behind "revolutionary twaddle," and people with psychological problems resulting in anti-social behaviour.

All in all then, the typical armed urban revolutionary group is a mixed bag of individuals with a political aim, however vague, drop-outs from society working off their frustration in violence, and hangers-on of all kind, from the hedonistic to the plain criminal.

Gellner goes to some trouble to support such analysis as this with the veneer of professional scholarship, but the veneer is imperfectly made and the lack of rigorous thought it conceals is obvious throughout the book. Consequently, Gellner ends up compromising whatever integrity the book might otherwise have won for itself.

It seems highly unlikely that by titling his closing chapter "What is to be Done?" Gellner wanted to call our attention to Lenin's book on revolutionary strategy by the same name. But if he is making a joke, then Gellner may have an interesting sense of humour. Never mind. Though FLQ efforts were unsuccessful in the past, they do telegraph future actions in Canada, either in Quebec or elsewhere. What the October crisis proved was that the government is unprepared for such outbreaks of terrorism. Over-reaction in the form of the War Measures Act, and the mistake of using the army to do what is, according to Gellner, police work, are mistakes not to be made again. Gellner proposes increased undercover police intelligence operations and the training of special divisions capable of launching a counter-attack effectively and economically. The trick is to eliminate the enemy within without alienating the law-abiding citizenry.

Given his clearly stated allegiance to the prevailing order, it is not difficult to see why Gellner passes lightly over

such mistakes as the suspension of civil liberties by the government and the intimidation often practiced by the police. Authorities do, after all, make a few mistakes in their efforts to preserve what is worthwhile. One of the big questions left conspicuously unanswered is exactly what hides behind such vagueness.

If *Bayonets in the Streets* succeeds at all, it does not do so in the way Gellner intended. Instead, it reminds us that the events of that October have been swallowed whole by our past; many of the issues remain important and unresolved. We should look to someone other than Gellner for some answers. □

Mark Sarner is a free-lance writer living in Toronto.

FOOLS AND SMALL BEER

Designing Freedom: the 1973 Massey Lectures, by Stafford Beer, CBC Learning Systems, 100 pages, \$2.50 paper.

By RICHARD LUBBOCK

ONE OF THE commonest misbeliefs among our intellectual elites is the delusion that radio and TV are conduits down which edifying information may be funnelled into the unwashed ears of the ignorant masses. The grandest exponent of this nonsense was sere Lord Reith, who served as the J. Edgar Hoover of the British Broadcasting Corporation during its stupefyingly dreary heyday, an era of unmitigated gloom for the British people, the like of which Canadian intellectual snobs, who have never experienced non-commercial radio, lust to impose on the Canadian people, so very sure are they that it will do them good.

When Lord Reith departed, the BBC, in order to commemorate the grievous wounds inflicted by him upon the British psyche, erected a monument in the form of a series of uplifting preachments chiselled into tablets of radio granite, entitled "The Reith Lectures." Once a year this stony nutri-

ment was dropped from a great height upon the British public, who had to endure it without redress until commercial television came to the rescue, whereupon they stopped listening to the radio altogether. The Reith Lectures are still broadcast by the BBC, but they no longer do harm, since the British are now free to listen to radio with commercials. (Too late. Britain's decline continues.)

Aching to ape their cousins in The Old Country, the 1960 wizards of the CBC set up a series of high-minded discourses, similarly inappropriate to the medium, called "The Massey Lectures." The 1973 Massey Lectures, *Designing Freedom* by Professor Stafford Beer, have now been issued in the form of a book, which is where they belonged in the first place.

Stafford Beer is a management consultant of the greatest brilliance and distinction, who has won international renown for his work. He is clearly a man of passionate heart, outraged by the injustices imposed on humanity by "The System." Being a systems man himself, he thinks he knows how to change it. A careful study of his lectures shows that he does not.

The 1973 Massey Lectures are virtually incomprehensible, even when honoured with the most intense scrutiny in book form. They must have been incomprehensible squared when delivered on radio, without diagrams (which are added in the book).

However, his high-flown abstract propositions, and an absence of concrete examples usefully disguise Beer's purpose, which seems to be to publish an incitement to overthrow the civilized rule of law, and constitutional government. Revolutionary diatribes of this kidney deserve the smallest possible audience, so it is indeed fortunate that Beer's effusions were aired on the CBC.

To summarize briefly (and I hope justly), Beer contends that the regulatory mechanisms of our society are in imminent danger of engulfment by the overwhelming variety of perturbations that are springing out from the woodwork in ever-increasing numbers. The laws and institutions are organized for a slower age, and simply cannot cope quickly enough with events. As a result, wild instabilities occur. The system is ungovernable, and must soon spin to pieces.

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the system is organized on its head, enriching variety where it is not wanted, and impoverishing the variety of life at the individual level.

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None of this is very new. Something of the sort has been propounded more eloquently by Buckminster Fuller many times over the years. What's more, Beer's remedy for the disease seems to resemble Fuller's "World Game." No one can dispute that some such scheme is urgently needed. But . . . tread softly.

Social engineering has to be sensitive to the needs and peculiarities of the human animal. Beer has fallen into a trap that frequently confounds the plans of Utopian radicals. Emulating that earlier philosopher-king, Plato, Beer hitched his wagon to the star of a tyrant, in order to see his theoretical schemes realized, and like Plato, Beer was sent packing by an enraged populace.

Beer's patron was Dr. Salvador Allende, of Chile. How naive can a gifted thinker get? While Beer was spinning his anti-entropic Utopian dreams, his host was preparing for the great social experiment by importing guns labelled as art objects, and training terrorists in the presidential home. The gospel of class hatred became orthodoxy, and to slop the milk of Marxist humankindness around a bit, armed goon squads pulped the heads of those who dared question Allende's beneficence.

Of course, the guinea-pigs rebelled, the tyrant was thrown down and his suicide's corpse became a thrilling new love-object for the troupe of weeping martyr-kissers who control the CBC.

Prof. Beer, like so many elitists, has failed to learn that politics is the art of the possible. And because Allende refused to accept that truth he was deservedly awarded the Order of the Wooden Pajamas.

Beer's revolutionary impatience is well-disguised, but it peeks out of nooks and crannies in his prose. There is no Fabian gradualness for Beer. He asserts that the stability problems must be solved "... by redesigning the whole system (and it is the only way)

...'' (Beer's italics). Elsewhere he says: "Science makes bold use of experiment . . . I advocate the bold experiment."

It is a great pity that the many profound and interesting observations in this work are flawed by association with Beer's predilection for holus-bolus social "experiments," and sad that a thinker so perceptive does not know that freedom cannot be built within a vicious prison-house.

Like politicians, broadcasters too should realize that you cannot force noxious nostrums down the public throat. Commercial broadcasters, who work under the benign discipline of the cash register, understand this, but it is airily ignored by CBC-Radio officials, secure in their subsidized irresponsibility.

Since the CBC programmers will never have to pass any exams at the box office, we can confidently expect an unending sequence of bleak brain-crushers like the 1973 Massey Lectures, most of them composed of lawless propaganda masquerading as science. The only comfort I can take from it all is that no one of significance will bother to listen. □

CBC scriptwriter Richard Lubbock is a Canadian citizen of British descent with a penchant for photography and biting the hand that feeds him.

CRYING FOWL

To Ride the Wind, by H. Albert Hochbaum, foreword by Sir Peter Scott, Richard Bonycastle Books (Harlequin), illustrated, 120 pages, \$35 cloth.

By MOLLY STEWART

CALLING HIMSELF simply a "wild-fowler," Dr. H. Albert Hochbaum invites us to step with him into the hushed sanctity of the world's finest reed marsh at Delta, Man. Here, where he has spent 35 years of extensive research, we await together the return of the Canvasback and other marshfowl from their wintering grounds in the United States. The author's understanding of these birds and his sensitivity toward the shifting variables of the marshland become increasingly evident as he follows the marshfowl through their vari-

ous stages — chaperoning the courtship, viewing the mating, watching over the nesting and sharing the wonder of hearing a tiny beak tapping open its fragile doorway to life.

Dr. Hochbaum stays with the ducklings during their first summer and follows their parents through the annual molting period. As the leaves change colour and the north winds carry the initial hint of winter, he describes how the wildfowl systematically begin their departure for the south.

Hochbaum's intense concern over the rapidly declining wildfowl population will make even the most casual reader aware of man's importance in the survival of all marsh wildfowl. He writes of poor game laws that go virtually unenforced because they are relatively unenforceable. He cites governments that suggest, when the Redhead duck population becomes threatened, that "it is illegal to bag Redhead ducks but all other species in the marsh may still be shot." Consequently hunters cannot identify the forbidden birds under hunting conditions and even long-time native guides make mistakes and hurriedly dispose of their illegal bag. He tells about an official government film, made and distributed to educate hunters, and about a narrator who wrongly identified some of the birds during his lecture on the film.

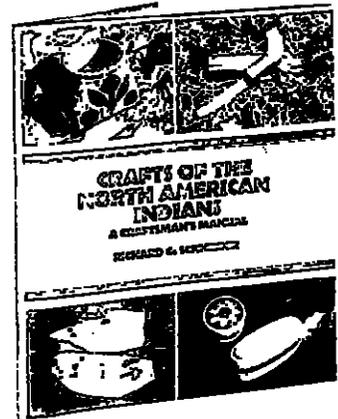
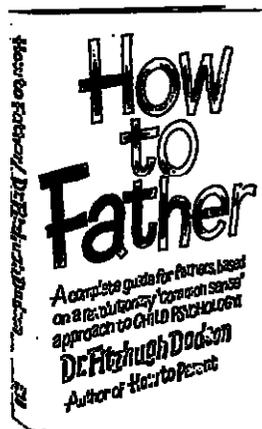
Hochbaum uses these examples to illustrate the need to close the waterways and passes of threatened species to all hunters until such time as nature remedies the situation. He writes not only with the wisdom of a scientist and ornithologist, but also with the concern of a parent over the welfare of an endangered child. For such is this man's relationship with his beloved marshfowl.

A bonus of 30 original paintings by the author, as well as 40 of his pen and ink drawings, interpret the narrative and enhance the value of this beautifully bound volume. By using simple language and painting realistically, Dr. Hochbaum ensures that young and old — male and female — will find *To Ride the Wind* enjoyable to read, invaluable for research. □

Molly Stewart is a free-lance writer based in High Bluff, Man.



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THE DEVIL AND BARRY BROADFOOT

I am not saying that I beat the Devil—
But I drank his beer for nothing,
And then I stole his song. —Kris Kristofferson

By KASPARS DZEGUZE

AT A TIME when the exorcism of devils and mean spirits is sweeping the offices of the mighty and the popcorn littered, back-row mating grounds of theatres with all the energy and excitement of public hangings, one of the ugliest demons that had almost casually been suppressed in the Canadian consciousness has come tumbling out in the form of a best-seller, *Ten Lost Years*.

At a time when the store of dirty words and unspeakable topics seems therefore nearing bankruptcy, with only death, babies and poverty still sailing under the four-letter flag, the nature of this particular demon seems especially surprising. Still, veteran Vancouver reporter Barry Broadfoot, in chronicling the personal experiences of those who lived, who survived through the years 1929 to 1939, has discovered that for most older Canadians the dirtiest word will always be the Depression.

By his book, Broadfoot has lifted the skirts that long draped the Depression — a time when the flesh was a little lean, we have been told, but entirely wholesome — and revealed the open sores that have never been aired, much less healed, and therefore have scarred the Canadian psyche all the more. "Nobody has really recognized that Canada went through a debilitating, traumatic experience," he says with proseletyzing zeal. "The academics don't; the PhD's don't. Saskatchewan was the hardest hit of any place in the

world, but we hear about the Oklahoma Dust Bowl instead. Hell, that was nothing — only seven per cent of the state — nothing compared to Saskatchewan. But they had Steinbeck and the *Grapes of Wrath*, while we hadn't poets, writers or film-makers."

But already, Broadfoot's technique — "I never called it oral history, that catch-all term. I guess social history's as good a name as I can give it" — is pointing to the creation of a store of raw materials from which the artists that we have and are developing can mould their scripts and the country's ideas of itself without nervously looking over their shoulder. In time, the Canadian experience may mean more than the American one, diluted with three parts water, crested with a beaver, rampant, and a Metis, drunken. Jack Winter has already made a successful adaptation of *Ten Lost Years* for the Toronto Workshop Productions stage, which has been further adapted for television and will be aired in the fall or early winter by the CBC.

Broadfoot's chronicle is by turns agonized, tender, brutal, loutish or funny — anything but dull. Hardly less exciting were the eight months of 1972 in which Broadfoot literally raced death across Canada in a Volkswagen — a vehicle that proved unequal to the metaphorical strain, and had to be replaced with a Datsun. Death, arteriosclerosis, alcoholism, despair, terminal poverty and just plain failing memory is felling the last survivors, and Broadfoot had to hustle to snatch from oblivion the oral testimony — more than





ON KILBOY,
STUDS TERKEL,
& BICKERSTAFF
WERE HERE

250,000 words for just the first book — of who Depression Canadians were, and what the decade did to make Canadians what they are now. Canadians are the most money-saving people in the world; the Depression did that. Canadian businessmen are among the most obtuse and reluctant to invest in new enterprise: Did the Depression make them cede the country to foreign investors?

Broadfoot gazes deep into his beer glass for a cue to explain the genesis of his book. "The Depression has always fascinated me, if only for the very valid reason that nothing's been written about it. There's next to nothing in the history books: a line, two paragraphs, half a page. At most, three or four. And always from the academic's point of view, the politician's, or the economist's. Everyone's done that. But it's never been written from the survivor's point of view.

"Nobody ever went around and asked the guy in the street, the cafe, the Legion hall, the train, plane, ferry boat — nobody ever went up and said, 'What did you do in the Depression?' This is what I did. I would find these

people everywhere, the people from the other side of the generation gap. See, the generation gap has nothing to do with long hair, drugs or Alpha Romeos — the only gap is between those who survived the Depression and those who weren't there to see it.

"On radio hot-line shows, the moment I mentioned the Depression, the board would just go 'Boom!' I would get their names, phone numbers; I got some of these stories right off the air. I'd visit local historical societies and ask, 'Who's been around this area since Christ left Medicine Hat?' Or, I'd talk with the person sitting next to me, on train, plane, ferry-boat.

"I carry a Legion card; I go to the Legion. It's closer than you think, this matter of floating across the country on a tide of beer; there were many hung-over mornings. I'd pick up hitch-hikers too, especially Indians. One guy I picked up was just released from a prison farm. He'd spent his money on booze and was forced to hitch-hike, half-cut; so I drove him along the road, 50 miles or so."

Broadfoot pauses and takes another sip. A trim fellow this, looking as if

he'd stepped from the board room in his sleek grey suit whose fine cut almost hides a belly with the slightest hint of pot. Broadfoot hardly looks like a man to shake Canadian history until the myths, the blackguards and the heroes come tumbling from the long corn, the tundra, the Northern woods. But Broadfoot has the undeniable, immediate intimacy of one who truly likes people. His speech has the easy rhythms of a natural story-teller; the phrases long but simple, the syntax clear in the close embrace of subject and its verb, the only punctuation commas and fond, lower-case expletives worn smooth by use in newsrooms across the West.

"Now they tell me I've created a fashion, a new style — an art form. Let's call it an art form. That's a rather sophisticated way of saying that I use my goddam common sense. But it's not oral history: that would mean chronology, talking to maybe 18 members of the Eaton family, from the guy who opened the store on the corner, to the ones running it in 1974.

"What I'm doing is freezing the moment, putting people in their proper place in history, which they never had

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before. Up until now, the survivors have felt it as a sense of shame. In 1970s' affluence, poverty isn't fashionable. So, they're glad to tell these stories. I came along with the receptacle and they dropped them in.

"They are proud of having gone through the Depression. If you're in battle and survive, you get medals. The medals these people have is that they survived.

"I'm the only guy who's gone to the Survivors to ask, 'Did you starve? Did you con people? Did you sell your soul to the Devil — the Faust bit?' It's an incredible sensation, that I could ask anybody and they'd tell me, regardless of whether I had the tape recorder out, or was just sitting in a bar, talking to a guy and filing it away in my head. As soon as he'd finished, I'd run to the can and scribble it down as fast as I could."

Some people ascribe the origins of Broadfoot's work to the volume by Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*. But in exercising the Depression era for future generations, Broadfoot has ridded himself of a personal obsession of long standing, far longer than his memory of Terkel's book. "I think I got my first

notion for the book in 1948, from a collection of *New Yorker* short stories called *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*. There was included an essay by Jay Gould, who did nothing but ride the subways recording people's conversations. Gould almost literally lived on the subways. He even got William Saroyan and others interested in the project — it certainly fascinated me.

"So, Studs' book was a poor second for me. I admire Terkel, but I don't think *Hard Times* carried out the intent I felt the book should carry out. First of all, he confined himself to Chicago. Secondly, 90 per cent of his material was from government people, looking back on the way the Administration — the Roosevelt New Deal and all those agencies — were fighting the Depression. As far as I'm concerned, any government official or politician who looks back is bound to be self-serving; it's the nature of the beast."

There's little personal motivation for Broadfoot's interest in the era: it's not a grudge match for him. "I can't say I was scarred by the Depression. I'd like to say I was scarred, but I can't. My dad made \$110 a month as an accountant,

and we paid \$40 or \$50 on the mortgage, so we lived on about \$50 or \$60 a month. Hell, 99 per cent of the interviews are with people who were making less than \$2,000 a year, and probably the majority were making less than \$500 a year.

"In relation to the people in the book, we were well off. I had shoes to go to school with; I had clothes. We ate spaghetti, and hot dogs, chicken, hamburger. Hamburger used to be seven cents a pound. Lots of fish in the creeks. It was a pretty good life for a boy."

But the obsession remained, through 28 years in newspapers. During the last few years in particular, he felt that newspapers were no longer for him. "I had the best newspaper job in Western Canada, as a roving correspondent for the *Vancouver Sun*. I could go anywhere I wanted, write what I wanted. It happened so suddenly, when I decided to quit — at exactly 9:15, the morning of Feb. 28, 1972. I was in the City Room looking around at the people I was working with, when it struck me: 'Who are these people?' This is where I

continued on page 42

THE PICK OF THE BUNCH FOR SUMMER

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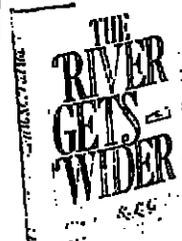
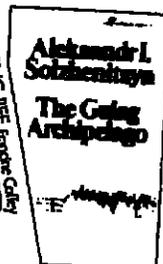
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REVISIONIST REVIVED

Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People, by Joseph Howard, James Lewis and Samuel, 601 pages, \$5.95 paper.

By MICHAEL S. CROSS

"THE GOD damned son of a bitch is gone at last." So said a bystander at the execution of Louis Riel in 1885. His bitter judgment would be an accurate reflection of English-Canadian opinion on the Métis leader. In the last quarter century that opinion has shifted dramatically; the traitor-patriot dichotomy has been resolved decisively in favour of the latter interpretation. One of those who had a good deal to do with this shift was Joseph Kinsey Howard.

Howard was a Montana journalist who had been fascinated with Riel and the Northwest Rebellion since childhood, when he had spent eight years living in Alberta. He died at the age of 45 in 1951, but he left behind a rich bequest in his book *Strange Empire*, published the following year. A book written by a little-known American writer, published in the United States, it attracted little attention in Canada. Its influence was felt on professional historians, however, and helped move their interpretation of Riel and the Métis. Now all Canadians can become familiar with this excitingly good book in its new edition.

Howard was not the first to write favourably of Riel and his cause. French Canadian historians had always been sympathetic. And in 1936, George Stanley had published a comprehensive history of the resistance of 1869 and the rebellion of 1885, *The Birth of Western Canada*. Stanley, did not deal in depth with Riel the man (although he would do so in 1963 in his biography of Riel), but he did show strong sympathy for the Métis and the injustices they suffered at Canadian hands. It was true, nevertheless, that the preponderance of English-Canadian literature was hostile to Riel. Rev. George Bryce, in his *Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (1900), fairly well summed up the opinion. Riel, he said, "was a young man of fair ability, but proud, vain, and assertive, and had the ambition to be a Caesar or Napoleon." Canada, fulfilling its manifest destiny to engross

the Prairies, could not have oppressed the Métis. Therefore the Métis could have had no legitimate grievances, and must have been led into rebellion by an ambitious demagogue. This was the thrust of the traditional view, a view that still has echoes in the work of some historians such as Donald Creighton.

Stanley and Howard altered that perception; or rather they expressed in their history the new sensitivity that had prepared Canadians to look differently at Riel and his people. It was Stanley who would hold the most influence. He viewed the risings of 1869 and 1885 as case studies in the frontier thesis. The basic conflict at Red River and on the Saskatchewan was not, as some earlier writers had contended, a westward extension of the old ethnic and religious conflicts of Ontario and Quebec. It was the clash of the civilized society of the eastern metropolis with the primitive society of the frontier. Later historians have substantially accepted this view, although W.L. Morton, in *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal* (1956), offered a substantial revision. The Northwest Rebellion probably fitted this generalization, Morton contended, but the Métis at Red River had a settled, orderly society that could not be described as primitive. So Morton developed an interpretation that combined earlier ones, seeing the Métis as a people shaped by the frontier into a new



kind of society, unlike either English or French Canadians. Their struggle in 1869 was to protect that unique society, to protect what Riel called the "New Nation."

Howard had accepted the general outlines of the Stanley thesis. But his interpretation was in fact both more dramatic and more interesting. As Mar-

tin Robin points out in a useful introduction to the new edition, Howard went beyond the concept of a clash between civilized and primitive. For Howard saw little meaning in those terms. He admired the Métis society, and described in detail how it interwove elements of both the civilized and the primitive, white and Indian. The conflict surely was, as Morton saw, a defensive one, as the Métis struggled to avoid the destruction of their life-style. Yet it was more. In Howard's reconstruction, it was also an economic war, as Robin's writes, "the clash of destinies between natural communities based upon the fur trade and the new capitalism of railways, technology and high finance."

More, for Howard it was a dramatic morality play. The issue was never in doubt, the admirable society of the Métis and that of their Indian cousins were doomed. These good people were inevitably ground down by the machines of another society, a society rich and strong but lacking the eternal values of the societies it destroyed. The moral of Howard's tale is clear; we must look seriously at the values, or lack of values, of our society of dominance, we must learn what the Métis and Indians could have taught us, if only we had listened instead of destroying.

Howard saw it as a tragedy that the Métis were defeated in 1869-1870. If they had triumphed, a better West might well have resulted:

The Métis state might have been a nucleus and unifying force which would have united such native defenders of the West as the Cree and the Blackfeet. Such a native alliance would at least have postponed for many years the subjugation of the Western Indians, and it might have enabled some of them to establish semiprimitive but independent tribal societies capable of maintaining a finer way of life and developing in a better direction than in the actual outcome they were permitted.

To speak of interpretations and morality is to make Howard sound academic dull. Nothing could be further from the experience of reading this book. Howard was a natural storyteller, and he had a sweeping, exciting story to tell. The characters were flamboyant, often bizarre: the cunning John A. Macdonald; bumbling General Middleton, commander of the Canadian forces in 1885; the scheming, legless American lawyer, Enos Stutsman; and Riel himself, brilliant and brooding, filled with religious evangelism and love of his people, driven gradually into magnificent madness. Howard

drew them all in clear, fascinating portraits. Indeed, the very brilliance of characterization is one of the weaknesses in interpretation in the book. Howard at times grew so intrigued with his own characters that he reduced causation to simplistic personality conflicts. Riel's decision to execute the unruly Canadian, Thomas Scott, in 1870, a decision of enormous future importance, was explained by Scott's refusal to accept prison discipline, his persistent insults to the Métis and to Riel. Undoubtedly Riel was irritated by the bumptious Canadian, but the execution was a tactical decision, taken to prove to the Canadian government that the Métis meant business. Yet Howard can be forgiven over-zealousness in his drawing of characters, for he did it so exceedingly well.

He was equally good in portraying societies, at any rate traditional societies — his picture of eastern Canadian society was overdrawn, far too black in contrast to the Métis. Among the very best parts of the book are Howard's reconstructions of native life. In the process, he threw out a number of interpretative hints that his-

torians could follow up with good results. The importance of Indian religions in making the western tribes resist the government's reservations policy, for instance, was made clear by Howard, but the idea has received disappointingly little attention from subsequent historians. Howard had a rare sensitivity for the essence of Indian life, and an equally rare gift for capturing the tragedy of its destruction. His description of the coming of smallpox:

The Manito Stone was a large meteorite which rested on the crest of a hill in the southern prairies in what is now eastern Alberta. It was sacred to most of the Plains tribes, for obviously it was no ordinary boulder . . . Centuries of erosion and later reverent rubbing by the hands of pilgrims had polished the stone's metallic surface.

In 1869 white men removed the Manito Stone, carted it off to Fort Victoria (Pakan, Alberta) and left it in the yard of the Wesleyan Mission.

The missionary wrote friends that the Indian medicine men were furious; they predicted that war, disease and famine would be visited upon the region by Manito in retaliation for the vandalism. Fortunately, his letter concluded, none of the promised evils had materialized.

A few months later the missionary sadly read graveside services in his little churchyard for three members of his family, dead of smallpox. . . . Day after day the disease-crazed tribesmen fled past the little fur trade post, shrieking in delirium or dully chanting their interminable death songs. As these sounds at last receded, the croaking of carrion crows and the breathless, eager bark of the prairie wolves caught up the dirge of a race; and for the second time in a generation even the wind-scoured grasses stank of death.

James Lewis and Samuel has performed a significant service in making this book available to the Canadian public (although one cannot be as enthusiastic about the physical production; pages began to fall out of my copy before I had finished reading it). That public surely must exist for a book so well and wittily written, a book that gives the best picture available of a crucial period in our history, a book that speaks to central truths in our national existence. Read it. □

Michael S. Cross is the managing editor The Canadian Forum.



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By CLYDE HOSEIN

THIS COLLECTION is a diary of part of the recent life of Sid Marty, 30-year-old Banff National Park ranger. Stationed at Lake Minniwaka, witness to the glory of the Rockies, he declares his belief in the saga of life. He has a natural rhythm with nature and a deep relationship with wild animals. The interplay between those two produce a sometimes haunting melody, as in "The Death of Mustahyah." The bear who left his claw marks white on the bleeding spruce by the windswept water, whose scent was a presence on the wind, is dead, writes Marty:

*His terrible hide is a rag
in a rich man's fist...
He was sold to the highest bidder
as a fixture in this sold out land.*

Materialism, technology, and their side-effects, the vice and conundrums that have infected the human soul with the ugliness of the city, stand contrasted against the absolute purity of the priceless and unbartered, like the mountain in "Saskatchewan Crossing":

*Mountains are unmoved by music
everything that money can buy
fails, where they lean in the window.*

*The jangling steel guitar
The radio bonging away
are stifled out here
in the sound of
of falling water...*

Diary? Yes, despite his strivings, Marty falls short of the vastness and meaning of creation. It is not that another man could have done the matter greater justice. Good God, poets who went before said all this and more, and they went out. Pushkin, Wordsworth, Keats and Whitman tried and died, leaving great ironies and anger. But the

grandeur of things seems to stay alive only in visions whose high potential for justice stands equal to the planet and the surrounding.

Leaving the cities of the broken mind to gaze one-track on open spaces and the rescuing of animals and mountain climbers is not necessarily qualification for such an enormous enterprise.

Yet Marty's poetry has its merit, and its place. It belongs to that part of human striving that longs for the return of meaning, to human dignity and sincerity. Marty sometimes articulates this longing finely, as in "Coyote Again" when he states the survival of the hunted is for a dignity much greater than the hate we ascribe to them, transferring our ugliness to "inferiors."

The poem sings of freedom and contempt. It is an example of how the city-dweller, blessed with an awareness, protests the tyranny of living in the underground of all our disappointments.

But sickness is not going to change just because we love the physical earth. True, many like the poet are deciding to leave the world because "Dogs and

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Foreword by Vine Deloria, Jr.

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"With this book... I believe that George Manuel has opened a whole new chapter in the experiences of mankind. He has told the story of the Canadian Indian in brilliant fashion without the harsh clamour of militant rhetoric, but with the wisdom and compassion that typifies the North American Indian at his best..." Vine Deloria, Jr.

men have the world/ and they worry it to death/ running, grinning."

Hitting the trail is simply not the right track, and many movements based on the belief have failed. Pencil in hand in the Albertan Heights Sid Marty's mind might carry the unexpected truth all natural churchgoers have known through time.

Poems, like hymns, are not big enough a medium to contain the vastness and awfulness of what surrounds us. □

ORIGINAL SURVIVOR

I Once Knew an Indian Woman,
by Ebbitt Cutler, Tundra Books, illustrated, 69 pages, \$3.95 cloth.

By KAY BURKMAN

IN A LAURENTIAN village where the nightly arrival of the train carrying mail and Montreal newspapers was a pas-time in itself, an old Indian woman, named Madame Dey, persisted:

Not only did she survive into the twentieth century by her ancient Indian skills and values, but she shamed that world, showing up the hollowness of many of its most dearly held pretensions about itself.

I Once Knew An Indian Woman is a story told by Ebbitt Cutler with warmth and humour. Here is an author who can be at once sophisticated and whimsical, offering such flavourful medleys as this description of Madame Dey:

A giant of a woman in a Mother Hubbard skirt with men's socks and shoes (her huge feet could be contained in nothing less), short straight black hair clipped tightly to the side of her head . . . great black half-moon eyes . . . and a single large front tooth emphasizing the absence of its companion.

Madame Dey's first language was Iroquois and she was referred to with contempt by the villagers as "la vieille sauvage" or "the old squaw." Other prominent figures in the village's year-round population were the Catholic priest and one Englishman (known as "the king").

In a way, I suppose, they resembled the triple forces that formed Canada itself: the religion of the French, the economic strength of the English, and the prior existence of the Indians.



The years were 1927 to 1937. Ebbitt Cutler recalls them with the eloquence that graces a story too long untold. Allegory echoes gently throughout the book, but never disrupts or sacrifices the narrative. We need only surrender to the authority of Cutler, the storyteller, to appreciate with her a rare harmony of history and legend.

At the time of the story's events, Madame Dey was a widow. She had been married to Georges, a French-Canadian and a rowdy drinker; too often he had left her alone to feed and care for their children. But always she forgave him and took him back until once she bolted the doors against him, and that time it was too late.

Madame Dey was a woman who put conscientious care into every task she performed. She was gifted with memory and intelligence, but was illiterate and also unyielding as far as conventional religion went. "When you have many gods," she once said, "at least you can choose among them."

I Once Knew An Indian Woman is the unforgettable tale of "the old

squaw" who faced tragedy with reserves of faith. Written with nostalgia for a truth that seemed more accessible in the past, Cutler's book sustains the precision of good, crystalline imagery. The story could easily be read in an hour; but the gently haunting atmosphere of its passages and the skillful line-drawings by Bruce Johnson compel one to linger and savour each page.

As a postscript, I have a question to put to the vast, unpredictable audience of Canadian readers: How many years does it take for a Canadian book to make it? This book was first published seven years ago under the title *The Last Noble Savage* and won first prize in the Canadian Centennial Literary Competition. But the reaction from buyers was sluggish — and remained so until it was picked up by an American publisher and given an "outstanding book" award by the *New York Times*.

The book appeals to both adult and juvenile readers, and it's to be hoped that the present edition will bring it the success it has long deserved. □

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computers in the States). You'll save some money. And you'll keep up to the minute on Canadian writing and publishing. What's more, you get an Introductory Bonus. Just choose one or more of the good Canadian books from the list below as your first Selection(s) — then choose any other as your free Introductory Bonus. You'll get your books promptly. And you'll also get a free subscription to *Canadian Reader*, the Club's lively journal of news and reviews. And mail your enrollment coupon today (or tomorrow . . . we're not pushy!)

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URBANE OUTLOOK

The Future of Canadian Cities, by Boyce Richardson, new press, 259 pages, \$3.95 paper.

By **DAVID T. GROSKind**

WHILE EACH OF the cities in North America has a unique set of virtues, they all share a common set of problems. This melancholy similarity suggests that urban problems originate in some malevolent process within the whole society out of control of local citizens. Thus journalist Boyce Richardson contends that the nation must adopt a new unifying "egalitarian ethic" before citizens can successfully fight these problems. In his informal introduction to urbanology, *The Future of Canadian Cities*, he argues that Canadians "have to differentiate more firmly than ever before, the prevailing Canadian ethic from the American."

In surveying different approaches to urban management employed by various countries, Richardson observes that a vital, if rudimentary difference already exists between Canada and the United States. Canadian experiments in metropolitan and regional government indicate an official understanding of urban problems clearly in advance of the U.S. He writes:

Regional government presupposes a modification of individualism, a merging of interests, and a sharing of costs. These are values that are built into the Canadian fabric, but they seem to have been forgotten in the last disastrous twenty-five years of *laissez-faire* Liberal sellout to the American military-industrial machine.

However, he adds that Sweden and Holland are significantly ahead of Canada in realizing that the way to control development lies in public ownership of municipal land. Richardson sees uncontrolled speculation determining the price of land and thus the use to which an owner must put his land to make a profit.

Although the relation of speculation to patterns of development is an important concept, Richardson's exposition

commits a common mistake of writers of popular introductory books. He over-simplifies a problem by over-emphasizing one easily understood facet. Moreover, public ownership of land might have worked well when Saskatoon and Stockholm had the foresight to purchase land in the early part of this century but a city would quickly run out of money buying just a few acres at modern prices. In spite of a vehement denunciation of capitalism, Richardson advocates working within the system to solve the problems — which explains, perhaps, why he favours buying land rather than simply nationalizing it.

Richardson argues that "unless we can regain control of our nation, we are unlikely to be able to control our cities." This insistence on a high-level approach ignores plausible interim solutions for which citizen groups can fight. For instance, changing zoning by-laws from high density to low can swiftly reverse the trends established by speculators and even bankrupt a few of them. Such involvement in local issues gives citizens a concrete understanding of the political process that

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TRADE & UNION

By MARIAN ENGEL

The narrow line between private reveries and political happenings threads its way throughout the book. Yet the novel grows out of character, not plot or theme, and becomes the story of an extraordinary friendship between Matt Striker (a pun?), the young, embittered protagonist and his protégé, Eddy, a large man who suffers, is beaten about the head by a club-wielding policeman. Matt protects him and the two hold on to each other within the frustration of an environment that appears to hold little hope for them to clutch on to.

Like Lennie and George in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* the two characters just co-exist. Eddy the half-wit clings to Matt; and Matt, though less obviously, and though he constantly considers the other man no more than a cross to bear, grasps just as desperately for Eddy. The dialogue between them, recurring in almost identical language whenever either of them feels despondent, is like the chant of a priest and the response of his congregation. Their relationship is a treatise on the tragedy of human loneliness and inarticulation.

For Matt and Eddy and all the other migratory workers, the road is really an escape route; yet the endless macadam stretching cross-country is nothing less than a lifeline. The other characters in *Waste Heritage* are little more than one-dimensional. They blend into the parched land and into the roads they travel until they become an imperceptible part of it. Their effect on Matt is like that of the sun on the land — seductive, somehow sinister, sapping life instead of giving it. Although often repetitious, and melodramatic in spots, *Waste Heritage* is funny and crazy, bitter and tragic. It articulates an important period and clearly bares the hopelessness of the particular human and social condition that Irene Baird has effectively chronicled.



I USED TO think becoming a published writer would do something wonderful for me — turn me into a boy, curl my hair, put me in the Hockey Hall of Fame, get me off library fines. My first book was already out when the kids had chicken pox, and I had 10 library books out. I phoned the Toronto library to see what I could do about them. Nothing. No renewal by telephone. I should have wheeled up all spotty and given the librarians the pox. Instead, I bowed my head to The System, waited until quarantine was over and had a loud tantrum over having to pay six bucks' fine. Writers are, after all, ordinary citizens.

Well, in fact, they're less than ordinary citizens. They don't cut any ice in this country; the better they are known, the less they are liked. Overweening pride is not allowed. If you name's printed on the spine of a book that's reward enough. You don't expect to be paid and praised as well, do you?

Printers are paid, editors are paid, publishers survive according to acumen and cash flow. A CanLit industry has grown up that means Canadian writers now feed professors and graduate students. If a writer demands to be fed he is declared NOT ARTISTIC.

I don't think I'll be a big-money-making writer ever. I don't aim to be. My field of vision is too narrow. And I work in a country where most people get their novels out of libraries (my only satisfaction is waiting for them to be socked by fines).

Still, I want to be fairly paid for my work, and I want the other writers to be too. Publishers who pay me 8% royalty on a \$7.95 book don't satisfy me any more; neither do \$500 advances on paperback rights, or people who offer \$1 for film options after asking me to go to see them (\$2 for the taxi).

I've become a mercenary creature; I've got the meanness of the purse-poor. Writing books is not a therapeutic hobby, it's work; it'll never be paid for before it's done but it ought to be paid for soon after.

That's why we formed The Writers' Union of Canada. Writers are treated as public servants, but not paid as such.

When times get tough, something's got to give. The Canadian writer seems at the moment to be expected to offer himself up as a kind of public sacrifice — Atwood and Berton are slandered all over for doing well, others are laughed at for not being well known. Those of us who, at 10, were earning 50 cents a month for our work for the Sunday School papers expected more of our society than this, and we formed the writers' union to make sure we got it.

Right now, public-lending fees from library circulation and standard contracts are our aim. Later, we'll tackle other problems. I wonder, though, whether we'll be able to conquer the peculiar Canadian problem: Canadians don't like their cohorts to step out of line and distinguish themselves, except perhaps in medicine. Once you become well known, you are out there, a target.

Ah well, a fair contract and a small income from library books might well be a shield. Remember being pelted with frozen horsebuns on the way home from school? Suppose you'd had enough money to go home on the bus? You wouldn't be as tough, but is comfort really corrupting? Some of us would like to find out. □

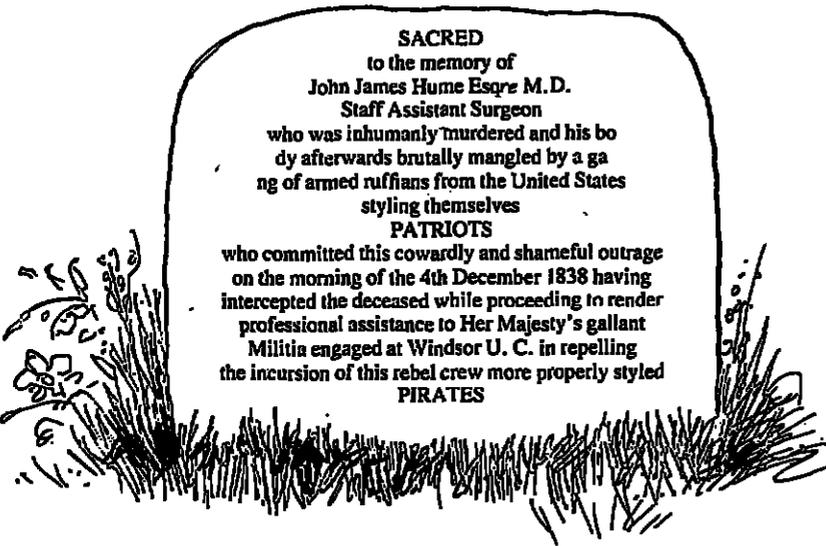
Toronto novelist Marian Engel (Monodromos, Anansi) is the chairman of The Writers' Union of Canada. This is the first of a regular series of articles contributed by various union members and by representatives of the publishing industry as a whole.

TOMB ESSENCE

Early Ontario Gravestones, by Carole Hanks, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, illustrated, 96 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

ON BOOK-STORE shelves, a clear plastic winding sheet encondoms fresh copies of *Early Ontario Gravestones*, prohibiting inspection. Strip it off — only to uncover an earnest, earthbound tome that, like the Ancient Mariner, seems kissed by Life-In-Death.

Lamentably, the author, though not a native, approaches her subject with a stiff Upper Canadian lip. From an almost-scholarly perspective and in thin and stilted prose, she dispenses



shovelfuls of empirical findings, dollops of safe conjecture, too little consequential information and nothing for even the most avid necrophiliac to get excited about. As for graveyard humour, there isn't any.

Not the author's fault, of course, but idiosyncratic epitaphs have never caught on here on the old Ontario strand. There is nothing to match this one, for instance:

HERE LIE I
MARTIN ELGINBRODDE
 Hae mercy o' my soul
 Lord God
 A I wad do were I
 Lord God
 And ye were
 Martin Elginbrodde

Or this one (also from *A Small Book of Grave Humour*, Pan Books, \$1.25):

Here lies the body of
LADY O'LOONEY
 Great niece of **BURKE**
 Commonly called the Sublime
 She was Bland, Passionate
 and deeply Religious, also
 she painted in water colours
 and sent several pictures
 to the Exhibition
 She was first Cousin to
LADY JONES
 and of such is the
 Kingdom of Heaven

No, in Ontario, conformity has ever been the order of the day and of the night. Minor variations on standard themes like this one were made to serve the purpose:

Kind friends beware as you pass by,
 As you now are so once was I,
 As I am now so you must be,
 Prepare, therefore, to follow me.

In the last century, whole cemeteries were full of such formulaic stuff (above ground), perhaps on the supposition that most visitors couldn't read anyway.

Of the few exceptions cited by the author, one is a 15-line cryptogram, another is invective of the most impassioned kind (see drawing). Alas, those are by far the most interesting words in the book.

Some 35 pages of introductory prose are followed by 60 of black-and-white-and-grey photographs of grave-stones. These captioned pictures certainly serve as a reliable record of a minor art form fast crumbling away under the merciless hooves of the Ontario elements and of chemical pollutants and of time. However, both the reader and the warm, muted tones of the stones would have been better served by colour shots.

As the author suggests, and as those who haunt Ontario graveyards know, in this century standardization of sentiments and of tablet design has continued apace. Every so often, though, you still stumble across a chiselled cry of defiance, as in the short encomium, patterned upon the province's Expo anthem, I happened upon in a suburban Toronto yard:

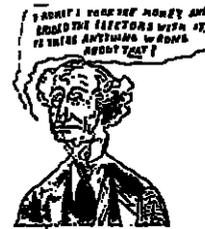
Give me a place to rot down here below
 And call this place Underio.

ISAAC BICKERSTAFF

NEW from **PMA**

A CARICATURE HISTORY OF CANADIAN POLITICS

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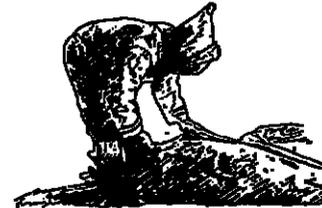


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CRAFT BOOKS, or making it here

By GWEN P. SANDS

THIS IS CRAFT year in Canada and the crafts are receiving more public attention than they have ever had before. Exhibitions, workshops, posters, films, special editions of magazines, all honour the 10th Anniversary Conference of the World Crafts Council at York University, Toronto, in June, and the First World Crafts Exhibition, entitled, "In Praise of Hands," on view at the Ontario Science Centre throughout the summer.

Canadian craftspeople should see an impetus given to their area of the visual arts that has been long overdue. The crafts have arrived — but not in all areas.

I was asked to write about Canadian craft books. Books are one of the areas where there still isn't much home-grown activity. Craft books do abound in Canada. The publisher's catalogues list many titles. You can find a how-to-make-it selection in most urban and suburban bookstores. Some have better selections than others. The one thing they all have in common — publisher's catalogues, stores, and libraries too — is that the books usually aren't Canadian. Almost all are American or British. A book written by a non-Canadian author, with photos of the work of foreign artists, manufactured out of this country and published by the

Canadian branch or representative of an international publisher, does not qualify, in my terms of reference, as a Canadian craft book.

It's useful that these books are on the Canadian market, but it would be better to have more craft books that relate to specifically Canadian work. I don't know the mechanics of the problem in a business sense. Maybe the real reason is that the potential authors, in true Canadian fashion, have been discouraged by what is being done elsewhere. Canadians have long suffered from the syndrome that if it's done at home it's not as good as if it comes from Europe or the United States. We also share a common Western outlook that there is a dichotomy between the "fine arts," painting and sculpture, and the crafts. So Canadian craftspeople have two problems to overcome.

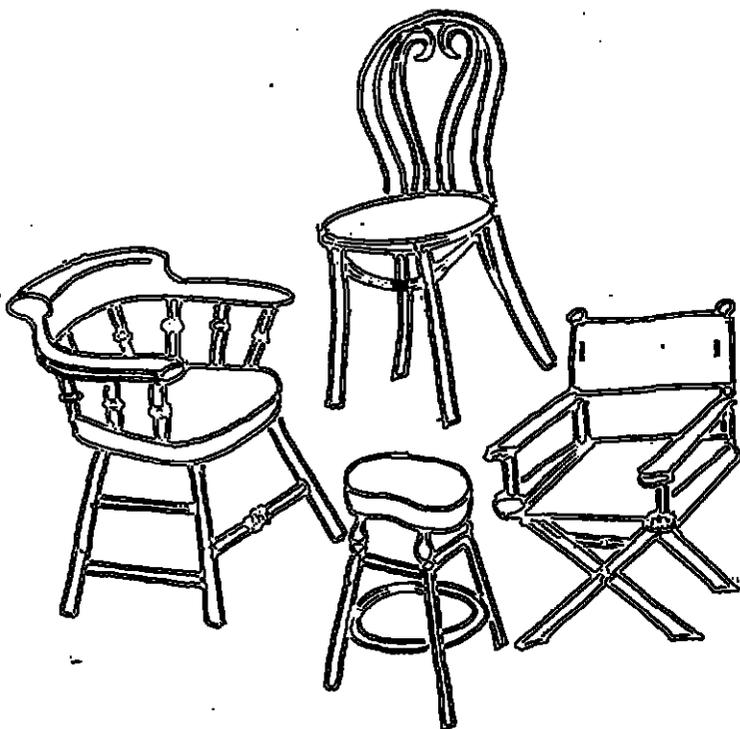
Craft books generally fall into three categories. First, there are books on contemporary craft as fine art. These publications are similar to the coffee-table books on painting and sculpture, but deal with objects created from materials such as fibres, metal, clay and wood that are commonly categorized as craft. There is only one totally Canadian book in this category that I know of: *Crafts Canada, the Useful Arts* by Una Abrahamson (116 illustrations, Clarke Irwin, \$19.95). It's to be published in June. I have seen some of the

illustrations and the chapter on glass. *Crafts Canada* promises to be informative and beautiful and could be a start for Canadian craft publishing.

Another book to be published in June is *In Praise of Hands* by Octavio Paz and James Plaut with Betty Child (256 pages, 300 colour and black-and-white photos, McClelland & Stewart, \$17.50). *In Praise of Hands* will be published internationally to commemorate the First World Crafts Exhibition. The essay by Octavio Paz, the Mexican poet, is a stirring homage to the crafts. This book, which contains the photographs of the 14 Canadian objects in this exhibition, forms the show catalogue in the soft-cover edition. But it's also an excellent portrayal of what is happening in craft work throughout the world. Both editions will be published in English and French.

There are, of course, many titles available from Canadian publishing houses that fall into the coffee-table category. One I consider particularly worthwhile is *Beyond Craft: the Art Fabric*, by Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen (Van Nostrand Reinhold, \$35.00). *Beyond Craft* is 294 pages of colour and black-and-white photographs and text on the important fabric artists of the world. There are chapters on 28 internationally renowned fabric artists, including one Canadian, Mariette Rousseau-Vermette. It is a visually impressive and informative book.

Another category of craft books deals with antique and pioneer crafts. There are two excellent Canadian books on this subject: *Keep Me Warm One Night* by Dorothy and Harold Burnham (384 pages, University of Toronto Press (1972) \$27.50) and *Early Canadian Pottery* by Donald Webster (256 pages, McClelland & Stewart \$12.95). The authors in both cases are Royal Ontario Museum curators, and the books are profusely illustrated and are full of interesting historical information on early craft work in Canada. I would recommend them to anyone interested in learning about the craft traditions in our country. The Burnham book has received international recognition as a definitive work on pioneer weaving. Techniques, looms, tools, designs and materials are discussed as well as the historical background of the times of nineteenth-century weavers.



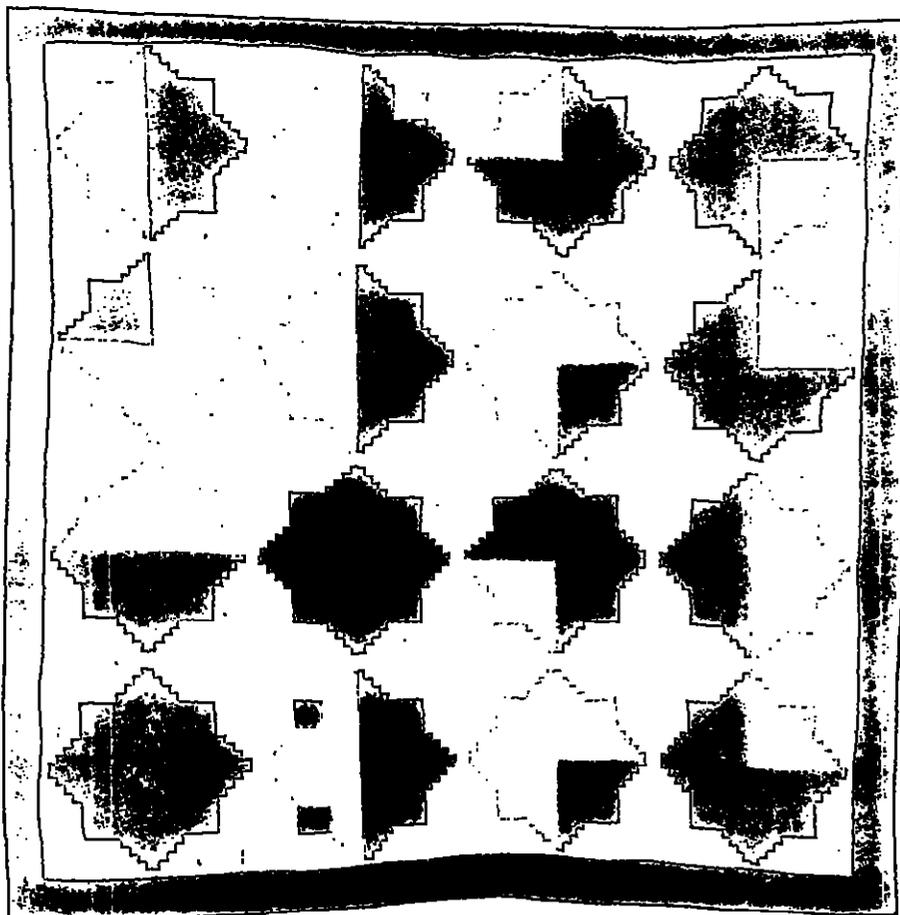
Many books are available on pioneer craft traditions and although they are not specifically Canadian, they are often North American. Quilts are a good example. *The Pieced Quilt* by Jonathan Holstein (192 pages, McClelland & Stewart, \$19.95) was published in April. Quilting has been a tradition from the times of the early settlers and this book will interest Canadians as much as Americans. Many of the patterns were used in Canada and sometimes slight regional variations can be seen. This book shows the quilts as powerful graphic expressions; to my eyes there are many similarities between the quilts and some American painters of the 1960s.

The last category, and the one in which there are the most titles available, is how-to-do-it craft books. These range from the sophisticated to the simple. The physical quality and price of the books also varies widely. Everything is available; one can find easy-to-follow instructions for every conceivable craft or craft project, for beginners to advanced students. Although most books in this category were written outside Canada, there are some exceptions. One is the *Canadian Homes Craft Book* published by Canadian Homes Magazine (64 pages, \$3.95). It contains 25 how-to-do-it projects that are simple and satisfying for the novice craft worker — and all are useful.

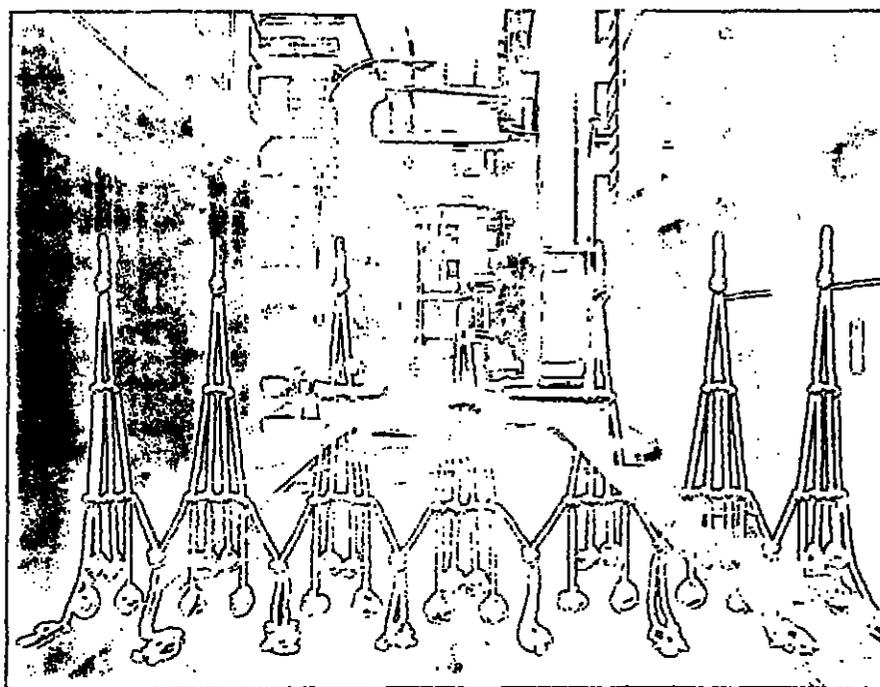
Home Weaving by Oscar Bereau, was published in 1939 by the Quebec Department of Agriculture. I was unable to find out if it is still in print, but it has been used as a handbook by Canadian weaving students since it was published. Also, there are a series of manuals on crafts published by the Sport and Recreation Bureau of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. These manuals — two on metal, one on sculpture, and four on weaving — are available to craft instructors. The bureau, incidentally, maintains a library in Toronto that has one of the finest selections of books on crafts in Canada.

Some of the publishing houses carry only a few simple craft instruction books; others have complete catalogues devoted to the titles they carry on art and craft. I am sure any Canadian can find a craft book to suit his or her particular need or interest. As a staunch nationalist, I just wish that more of these books were really Canadian. □

Gwen Sands is the editor of Craft Dimensions, a bi-monthly magazine devoted to multi-craft subjects.



Pennsylvanian "log cabin" design from The Pieced Quilt (above) and macramé composition by Françoise Grossen from Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric.



Summer Pot-Pourri



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WHERE DID I COME FROM?
 by Peter Mayle

A marvellous book for parents. It tells the facts in a way which interests the child and doesn't embarrass you. A must for all parents with young children.

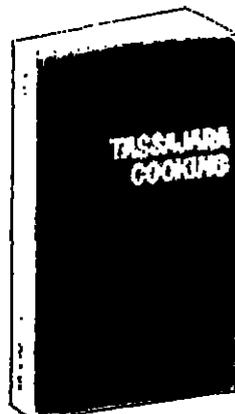
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CAUSES LOST AND WON

1837: Revolution in the Canadas — as told by William Lyon Mackenzie, edited by Greg Keilty, NC Press, 236 pages, \$2.25 paper.

Sweat and Struggle: Working Class Struggles in Canada, Vol. I: 1789-1899, by Jack Scott, New Star Books, 209 pages, \$2 paper.

By NIGEL SPENCER

IN THE NEARLY five years since Leandre Bergeron first published his *Petit manuel d'histoire du Québec*, Canadians and Québécois have been treated to a steady flow of "people's history books." From comics and plays to tabloids and textbooks, we have been given bits of our "untold" history in ways that the school system would never dream of encouraging. We have all heard of the Riel Rebellion, but what about international support for the Quebec working class in 1837? What about warnings from British unions that the Patriots of Upper Canada would be misled by their preoccupation with liberal, middle-class democracy? What about the "wild west" strike at the Lachine Canal (1843) that looks a lot like the James Bay rampage of 1974?

These and a host of other skeletons are uncloseted in these two books. Keilty's useful, popular edition combines many large chunks of Mackenzie's own writing with concise editorial "bridges" for continuity and perspective. This combination is more than a little awkward at first. We are introduced to Mackenzie's foibles as well as his political morality, and here Keilty's editorializing smacks a little too much of shallow pamphleteering. However, 20 pages into the book, a better balance is struck and maintained right to the end. The most astonishing thing about this work, as well as Scott's, is how familiar it all seems: no really fundamental change has occurred in Canadian and Québécois politics for over 130 years. Trudeau is busy applying the Durham Report, and Canada is still ruled by the "Family Compact" and a "Foreign Power." The most vocal protest nowadays seems to come from the Committee for an Independent Canada and other

nationalistic elements who want to favour the "FC" over the "FP."

It is on this issue that Mackenzie and Keilty both show their weaknesses. Try as he may, Keilty cannot disguise the fact that Mackenzie was a middle-class reformer, hence basically anti-labour. Two vague references are made to the use of Dutcher's Foundrymen and Armstrong's Axemakers as shock troops, and it is clear that farmers and workers bore the brunt of the government's terroristic reprisals, but little else is forthcoming. Mackenzie (and Keilty) claim massive grass-roots support for the rebellion, but fail to face the question of how the vacillation or betrayals of a handful of middle-class individuals led to the downfall of a "sure thing."

Similarly, Mackenzie (and Keilty) refer to frequent "failures of communications" with the more advanced Quebec rebellion, but do not explain that the Upper Canada Patriots were relying on Lower Canada to decoy the army and solve their problems for them. Does this sound familiar? Despite Keilty's rather uncritical attempt to vindicate Mackenzie's shortcomings, the book remains a very useful and surprising piece of reading.

Jack Scott's book provides an equally refreshing antidote to many of these ailments. His approach is to select major areas, movements or issues (the 1837 rebellion in Lower Canada, the nine-hour-day battle, the CPR, etc.) in which the character of Canadian labour struggles can best be perceived. The only serious fault is that Scott pays little or no attention to Canada's oldest, poorest colonies, the Maritime provinces, and a great deal to British Columbia.

He combines a wealth of original materials (newspaper articles, proclamations, labour tracts, etc.) with his own economical, lucid and understated comments. What emerges is an astonishing portrait of movements, conflicts and organizations that few of us ever dreamed of. Scott does not over- or under-value them; he simply exposes them to our view with unusual deftness, and we must judge for ourselves. This is the book's second great virtue; its relative freedom from editorial colouring.

Sweat and Struggle is an invaluable book for educational purposes precisely because it blends well-chosen primary and secondary material so neatly that it sheds a maximum amount of light without either confusing or over-simplifying the issues. □

UMBRAGE & UNCTION

GOETSCH DEFENDED

Sir,
The March issue of your journal which contains Fraser Sutherland's review of Paul Goetsch's anthology of MacLennan criticism ("Herr Hugh") has only just reached the country of the potato dumpling eaters. Both as a student of MacLennan and an occasional reader of *Books in Canada* I think that Mr. Sutherland's comment is misleading and unjust.

Whatever the shortcomings of Goetsch's collection of essays are, it is surely remarkable as an attempt to analyze MacLennan's ambiguous reputation by placing him in an international context. By pointing out the discrepancy between MacLennan's "major importance" for Canada and his status as "a good minor postmodernist writer" abroad, the editor not only helps us understand the author and his work, but also tries to link MacLennan criticism with literary criticism and critical views outside Canada. This, I think, might be particularly important at a time when Canadian literature is about to leave the provincial shelter.

Seen against that background, your reviewer's comment seems one-sided to say the least. Moreover, I suspect that quite a few students will tend to prefer "academic" criticism to the kind of "individual verdict" of which Mr. Sutherland's illuminating remark on German kitchen philosophy obviously provides an example.

Dr. Walter Pache
University of Cologne

SCOTT ATTACKED

Sir,
While it is not my habit to comment on reviews of my work (too time consuming), I am indeed sorry that booksellers and potential readers may be influenced by the inaccuracies of the review of *Jeremy's Dream* which appears in your April/May issue.

Flattered (?) though I am that your reviewer, Chris Scott, chose to quote a few phrases from my poems, albeit out of context, I do wish he had been able to read the phrases as they were printed. I challenge him to find in the poem entitled "Paul" the phrases with which he accredited me, i.e. "rough smoothness" and "penumbral darkness" lest on the Day of Judgment I be found guilty of his accusations of triteness and tautology. I challenge also his spelling of Secon.

If a reviewer can neither spell properly nor quote verbatim then the implications, I'm afraid, are obvious: that his comments are not worth the paper on which they are printed.

Unlike other reviewers of this book, Scott has entirely misinterpreted every poem on which he chose to comment. For example, his knowledge of the holocaust, as of recent atrocities in Israel, is severely limited. This merely means it would have helped if he had been able to criticize with some accurate foundation. No, Virginia Chris, 612197361H is neither a tatoo nor a concentration camp number.

Janis Rapoport,
Willowdale, Ont.

RECEIVED WITH THANKS

Sir:

The March issue left me with such a positive response to *Books in Canada* that I write to congratulate you on effectively doing what I think the magazine should have been doing all along — speaking to the reader's intelligence and national pride. I used to feel spanked and put in a corner for doing my duty in reading each issue. Now I open the magazine with pleasurable expectations of seeing reasoned opinions that I can respond to without anger. "Bestsellers, what are they?" was great in just this regard. June Callwood is a welcome reviewer. And please don't ever lose Isaac Bickerstaff.

Irma McDonough
Editor, *In Review*
Provincial Library Service
Toronto

HEARD & TOLD

HARD WORDS. Readers may be interested in — some may even be astonished by — the progress of an extraordinary dispute involving Margaret Atwood, John Glassco, the Writers' Union of Canada and the Ottawa-based magazine *Northern Journey*. When the third issue of the magazine appeared last December it carried a short story by William Wagle called "Slow Burn" in which Ms. Atwood appears as a character. She is quoted as describing a poetry reading she gave in Montreal, after which Mr. Glassco came up to her and said her reading had given him "a great big erection." Through her lawyer, Ms. Atwood complained that the reference reflected "an unfortunate lack of judgment" on the part of the magazine's editorial board and "a distasteful lack of judgment on the part of the author." She demanded that the editors recall all issues of the magazine and that the author apologize in the next issue or face "further legal proceedings." *Northern Journey* declined to meet these demands on the grounds that (a) the reference was not libelous and (b) Ms. Atwood had actually said the words she was quoted as saying. At that point the writers' union issued a bulletin recommending that union members boycott the magazine until an apology was forthcoming. Positions have since hardened and, at time of going to press, there was talk of asking George Woodcock to resolve the matter by bringing his respected judgment to bear as an arbiter of taste. Meanwhile, what did Mr. Glassco have to say about it all? When reached in Mexico, he replied

that the story was "too slight a literary effort to be taken seriously." But he agreed there was "absolutely nothing libelous in the legal sense either of Margaret Atwood or myself, in the story," upheld the right of little magazines "to do their thing," and declined to be a party to the dispute. A wise man.

SOUTHERN COMFORT. If or when Ms. Atwood wins an apology from *Northern Journey*, she might turn her attention to *The Best American Short Stories 1973* (Ballantine, \$1.65 paper). This publication slights not her reputation but her national identity by placing her name at the top of the "American Authors" list for her story "Under-glass" in *Harper's*. And although there is a "Foreign Authors" section, Hugh Hood also gets cited as a Yankee for his "A Near Miss" in *Fiddlehead*. Anthology editor Martha Foley seems under the impression that not only *Fiddlehead* but also *Prism International*, *University of Windsor Review* and *Canadian Fiction Magazine* are produced in the U.S. And that's carrying the American melting pot too damn far.

WRITE ON. In *Midnight Oil*, the second volume of his autobiography, Britain's V.S. Pritchett concludes with some thoughts that we think have peculiar relevance for contemporary Canadian writers and readers:

A writer is more fortunate than most people in being able to carry his work with him. He pays for this happy independence by having to work much harder than the mass of employed people and indeed, today, his profession is not only precarious, but seems to be vanishing. It has been my nature to work hard but hard work can lead to the idleness of the time-and-motion mind. When the profession dies out it may be possible for the writer to do better the few things he ought to do, instead of the hundred things that are a distraction from it. The cost of literature is far, far higher than the public who get it free in the libraries imagines, and it is getting higher. Once he has proved himself, a writer or any artist needs to be relatively rich, subsidized or in some way kept — think of Goya, Velasquez, El Greco, of Shaw — his leisure does not consist of lying on beaches in the Caribbean, but in a labour delightful because it is fanatical. Scott and Balzac desired wealth recklessly, acquired huge debts and debt is a kind of wealth to those who work furiously within it as these men did. I often wish I had the guts to get into debt.

STAR BOUND. Doug Fetherling, the associate editor of *Books in Canada* for

the last six months, has left us for the *Toronto Star*, where he replaces Kildare Dobbs as the book editor. With our next issue, Morris Wolfe will be joining us as assignments editor. His work has appeared frequently in these pages, in *Saturday Night*, and in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*.

BROADFOOT:

continued from page 27

did a 180-degree turn. I told the Managing Editor, 'I've had it,' and went to empty my desk and files, while the people around me muttered, 'What's that nut Broadfoot up to now?'

"Do you know, when I walked out of there, the things I wanted to keep after 28 years would not have filled half a shoe-box? I drove home, phoned my wife and told her I had quit my job. She said, 'Good.' She knew I was pretty well pissed off anyway.

"I didn't collect a pension from the *Sun* to take with me, no. I never belonged to the pension fund: I don't hold with pensions. Everybody else in the paper, all 800 employees, subscribed. I think there were three of us who didn't. To me, they're just a bore. We're a frontier nation, still; I believe that Canadians and all people should stand on their own two feet." Broadfoot mellows his tough ideology with a grin that resembles Tommy Douglas' in form but not substance. The two have a facial similarity best revealed in their animated and emphatic but smooth style of speaking; both are slight men of that certain size who have found wit and charm are levers more powerful than the taciturn might of a strong, large man.

"So, the very next day I started. I had been collecting anecdotes and the names of old-timers for years, but I was feeling my way with the material. I had no pre-arranged plan, though I visualized it like the New York *Sunday Times* crossword puzzle, which is a great bejzus thing about a foot square. I wanted to achieve a balance, so when I put in a minister here, I'd put eight hoboes there; four housewives here, a whore (he pronounces it, 'hoer') there. Right — a horizontal mosaic is the exact term I wanted. I wanted that blend to be so good, that if I rolled it in my hand into a ball, I could throw it against a wall and it would come back true, without being deformed.

"At first, I fought the stories I heard, tried to make them fit my own ideas.

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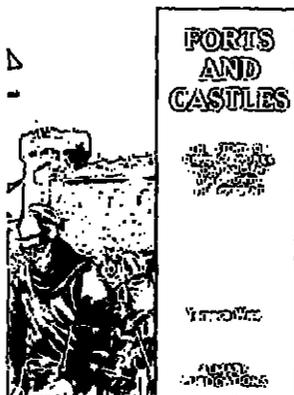
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The first four interviews never got into the book. I went out to old-timers in Fraser Valley, but because of my preconceived notion of what I wanted to hear, I forced the stories into my own mould. Destroyed them.

"You've got to let it flow as they talk, let it come at you. You've got to be ready to take anything that comes. I have a pretty intuitive feeling towards people, and that helps. The best reporter is the best listener, and I was a fucking good listener. To be a journalist, first of all you have to be interested in people. Then you have to be a listener.

"I'm only interested in people: I want to know what makes them tick. I want to take them apart and put them together again like a two-dollar watch. People are interested in people — we all have so many parts: a heart, brain, penis — so there's no saturation point for this kind of book. Who reads the editorial page of a newspaper, for Chrissake? People are the important thing."

The important thing for Barry Broadfoot is that his beer money is assured and his audience rapt, as he extends his technique into a Canadian trilogy. This fall, a second volume will be published, dealing with the period 1939 to 1945 and titled, aptly enough, *The War Years*. And in September, Broadfoot hits the road again to start research on the third — chronologically, the first — book, which he calls *The Pioneers* and the publisher, Doubleday, wants known as *We Made Canada*. In any event, both are agreed that the time span of the book will be 1900 to 1929.

Broadfoot will again preserve the memories of the common citizen in the two new books: "I'm not interested in economics, or politics, and I'm not an intellectual so I won't discuss with you whether Margaret Atwood is saying the same things in *Survival* as these people are, though probably she is.

"Now, Peter Newman can write a book about the financiers of Canada. He's got his milieu. I'm with these guys here," he says tapping the queue of men photographed on *Lost Years*' dust jacket — a queue that still hasn't begun to move, after so many beers. "I'm with the common people. They say 'God must have hated the common people because he made them so goddamn common.' I don't believe that. There's a majesty about common people — in this book, there's poetry. These people are eloquent, a lot of them. They have a dignity of their own, a style of their own, a grace of their

own, a sense of their own importance and a sense of decency.

"That's why I don't like the New Journalism and its writers, like Tom Wolfe. I'd call it clever writing, all right — I'd also call it using people. Wolfe writes of common people for uncommon people; I write of common people for common people, and that's the difference. I don't use clever phrases. I let them tell their stories. I don't go into wild, long prefaces — like this preface to *Lost Years*: 2½ pages! I don't bullshit and I'm not pompous. I'm the greatest down-putter of bullshit in the country, and that's the first grandiloquent statement I've made today.

"I'm just Barry Broadfoot. Writer. Reporter. In fact, I don't like the term writer in this instance either. If I want to write, I'll sit down and write. I've always gotten tremendous satisfaction from writing — I wrote my first-book when I was nine, a book about horses. I was nuts about horses.

"I don't like the term journalist here, either. I'm a chronicler, a reporter. It's an honourable title; it's an honourable trade. Somebody else could come along and probably do a better Depression book, now that its fashionable. I don't mind: I'm willing to pass on the technique to anybody. But you have to work hard — this is hard work.

"Get up in Moose Jaw and drive 150 miles. Arrive in some goddamn town that Jesus wouldn't live in. Go in and start looking. Even if the local editor isn't around or the Legion hall isn't there, and there's only two people in the pub, you still feel you have to do a day's work. You must do a day's work every day, except Saturday and Sunday.

"The physical strain is tremendous. After the VW, I drove a Datsun, which is a bitch of a thing to drive: every time it goes over a pebble, the shock goes up your spine. And then, you've got your typewriter and your gear; you've got a hang-over, or you're pissed off about something or you've got the trots. And all the stuff has to be lugged up the the third floor of some country hotel. The first time, I went out on the road for three months, May to July; it was wicked, believe me."

Between May and November, Broadfoot scoured the ground between British Columbia and the Atlantic, with occasional trips back home, where he found he could pick up just about as many stories as he did on the road. "There's this thing I call the Western Tilt, which makes a book like *War Years* a beauty to do, almost in my own

back yard. If you take Canada and push it up from the Maritimes, all the nuts, loonies, and the crazies roll down over the mountains and end up at the Pacific coast, or wash up against the foothills in Alberta.

"We're a moving nation, continually in transit. Suppose you need somebody from P.E.I.? You don't have to go there, because you'll find 10 from P.E.I. have rolled into your own goddamn neighbourhood."

The problems of distance overcome, Broadfoot could plunge all the more readily into the mammoth job of transcribing his tapes — so many tapes, in fact, that he's pretty well demolished two Sony recorders. "I edited as I went along on the tape, automatically. I'd flip the switch, run the sentence through. If it had relevance to the preceding sentence, if it had relevance to the context, it would stay; if not, I'd discard it. When I had the manuscript of one article, I'd edit that again, till I had it down to what I wanted. Then Doug Gibson, my editor, would come along and say, 'This particular article has no place in the totality of the book,' and out it would go.

"Doug Gibson is responsible for 20, maybe 25 per cent of the book because of his editing. For one thing, he's got this goddamn enthusiasm: he loves books; he loves authors, writers, reporters; he loves Canada. Another thing, he knows a writer's ego has to be soothed, propped up, or whatever. Once in a while, when I was feeling lower than whale shit, he'd come along with a letter and say, 'That was a terrific story about such and such,' and I'd be set up for the rest of the week."

Broadfoot himself was the sole judge of the authenticity or reliability of the stories. "I didn't filter the bullshit because there wasn't that much came through. I was a reporter for 28 years and I think I can recognize bullshit from fact.

"I will say one thing; there are mistakes in this book. If a man said something happened in '34 but I knew it happened in '35, I left in '34. I suspect there are three or four stories that aren't true, but I can't really say which.

"But I'll give you one example, the only one I know, of how an honest error can happen. That story, about the railroad bull who was crucified on the side of a box car by hoboes? It's wrong. It was told to me by three or four different guys, in different parts of the country: it became sort of a myth. Yet, one man later wrote and said he'd heard it too, in the form I wrote it, but he knew it was

The Writing on the Wall

Hilda Glynn-Ward

Hilda Glynn-Ward attempted to shock her readers into greater vigilance against the 'yellow peril' (the Chinese and Japanese) with tales of a gruesome murder, a typhoid epidemic, corrupt politicians, and a Japanese invasion. The novel is rabidly racist by our standards, but simply reiterates the standard anti-oriental clichés of the time and is a vivid illustration of the fear and prejudice with which immigrants were regarded in all parts of Canada in the early twentieth century. Introduction by Patricia E. Roy. (Social History of Canada 20). \$4.95 paper \$12.50 cloth



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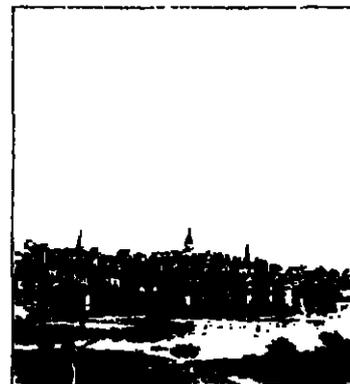
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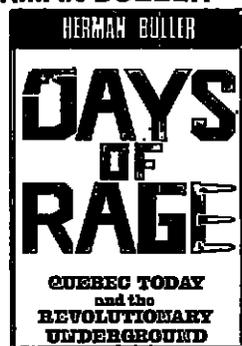
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wrong. What actually happened, he said, was a bunch of guys made an effigy — clothing filled with straw — put a bowler hat on it, because it was supposed to R.B. Bennett, and crucified him against the box car. That box car went right across the Prairies, and the legend that grew became greater than the fact."

Having developed his technique on the first book, it's not surprising that Broadfoot expects *War Years* will be "a far better book than this one." It too is being published by Doubleday (which has an option on the third book as well) for reasons that are very clear in Broadfoot's mind.

"When I first came down to Toronto, after doing about one third of *Ten Lost Years*, I was emotionally drained. I'd been writing too much, I'd been drinking too much. I never even thought of *Lost Years* as a trade book — I would have been most happy if the University of Toronto, or McGill, or UBC or some college press had taken it up and published it. But I left six or eight of the stories with Jack McLelland and Doug Gibson, both of whom I knew personally. Both said they wanted the book."

Did Broadfoot therefore seize this opportunity to play the two publishers off, one against the other? He looks up, horrified: "Oh no: that's not my style. I told them to send me contracts, if they were still interested, to my mother's place in Winnipeg, where I was going to recharge my batteries."

Both publishers sent contracts, which happened to reach Broadfoot on the same day. In a personal sense "it was a tough decision: I wrote Jack later to tell him it was. I'd known him for 15 years, after all." But the terms of the contracts were so different that Broadfoot had little trouble choosing Doubleday, "for a variety of reasons. One was that they offered simultaneous publication in the U.S." (where *Lost Years*' hard-cover sales are projected at 5,000) "and for another, they wanted an option on just one book, while M&S wanted options on two. In fact, I felt the M&S offer was the closest thing to an indentured servant contract I'd ever seen in my life.

"I guess I also chose Doubleday because of stability. I knew Jack would do a better promotion job because he has the machinery set up across Canada. But I wasn't looking for big sales then — I thought in terms of 5,000 copies.

"Another thing. I was book reviewer for the Vancouver *Sun* for about four years, and never a month went by when

somebody didn't bring a hairy story back from Toronto about what was going on at M&S. Eighty-dollars-a-week Ryerson graduates as editors, things like that.

"Finally, when Jack replied to my letter, he said he wouldn't 'chastize' me too much. I thought 'chastize' was a bit much," Broadfoot says with a grin, while his tongue cleaves the offending word into brittle syllables, broken M&S dreams. "You don't 'chastize' a man of 46; you chastize a child of 12. I think that one fucking word was just enough to turn me off."

Broadfoot glows for a moment, happy, not with the put-down of his old friend but with that sudden coursing of hot blood that is otherwise missing from the success story of *Ten Lost Years*. Barry Broadfoot has about him a dormant underdog cockiness that makes you feel he's sorry there hasn't been more of a fight about this whole thing. He's somewhat dazed, like a prophet who returns after 40 years in the wilderness with his dream of telling the Depression story as it was, and finds instead of fights, scorn and calumny, that people are falling at his feet, honouring him in his own land.

"I think the thing that pleased me most was not the national acclaim, not the alleged celebrity status. That's all crap. It was the people who'd been through it, the old-timers, who wrote me, phoned me at my home to say, 'You were writing about me! That's the way it was!' Old people's letters, written in an arthritic, crabbed hand, almost an unreadable script, going on for 16, 18 pages. That's what pleased me about this book."

But more than any other single thing, Barry Broadfoot, vox populi, prides himself on his honesty — never a lawsuit in 28 years! The honesty makes him add, therefore, that "if I don't make a lot of money on this, there's something awful goddamn wrong." It's the devil, of course, who adds his broad grin. □

Kaspars Dzeguze is a free-lance journalist living and working in Toronto and an authority on, among other things, cab driving and the Latvian community in Canada.



AUTHOR'S TALE:

continued from page 4

Tingle and The Ladies' Home Journal. The flotsam of the jetsam set. *How To Grow Healthy Gourds*, that kind of thing. Victorian novels smelling of cats. *Terrors of the Night*, or, *They Laughed When I Sat Down at the Virginal*. He obviously doesn't like books. Bertrand Russell nestling against Xavier Hollander. Consequently he is not too successful, and in desperation is now starting to offer in addition genuine original oil paintings (*Venice 1907*, painted by Mathilde Amburst Gogharty in rich dung colours).

—2—

You can tell this one loves old books, because he becomes irritable whenever he has to part with the books he most cherishes, the old tomes in leather bindings. To help him keep his cool he overprices them. The genuine reader co-operates by having no interest in fine old leather bindings anyway. Or in fine new leather bindings, for that matter. That kind of stuff is for the book collector, whose interest in the contents is in inverse ratio to his adoration of the package.

—3—

The bookseller I perceive most clearly through the dust of memory is the one in the shop next to the St. Gudule Cathedral in Brussels. The 1940s. He tried to sell me some Chinese pornography. Unfortunately, in spite of a healthy interest I was unable to raise the capital, 800 francs. Still, a small, literary memory. The good old inhibited days. It's colourless, now. Dirty books are OK. Those who can, do; those who can't, watch. That Brussels proprietor must be seething if he's still alive, because, suffused with the pleasures of the furtive, he spent a fortune over 30 years collecting the classic erotica that is now available by the ton in cheap paperbacks. Lady Chatterley ruined him overnight.

—4—

I didn't know this one, I just heard about him. He judged books by their appearance, literally. He would sight along the top of a new issue, as if it were a billiard cut, to make sure that the edges were good and level. "Ah," he'd say, "that's a nice straight book. I'll take a dozen of these." If the edges were rough and uneven he wouldn't accept a single copy, however much the publisher might protest that the rough cut edge was quite deliberate.

The relationship between the author and the bookseller is one of mutual antipathy.

—Douglas Gibson,
Tirades and Other Poems.

The most dastardly thing about booksellers is the way they look upon the author as being as much use as a gadget for cutting up beer bottles.

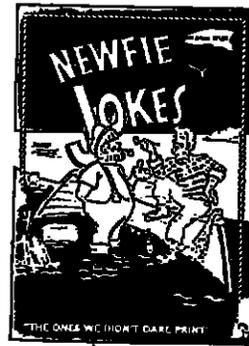
THE AUTHOR AS PEST THE BOOKSELLER AS FLIT GUN

The author, the bookseller feels, should be heard but not seen. In Toronto they still snort almost audibly at the memory of the writer who rampaged through the bookstores, looking for his newly published novel, and the uproar he kicked up when he finally found it in a suburban bookstore, at ankle height, upside down, crushed between two volumes on Arctic navigation. When an author comes in the booksellers know they can't win, for they either have a large pile of his books, indicating that they're not selling him, or none, indicating that they've sold out and have failed to reorder—or haven't ordered him at all. Worst of all they dread book-autographing parties. In one recent case the public failed to turn up. In another, the author failed to turn up. In yet another, the bookseller failed to turn up. He'd lost his front-door key, so he went to Frankfurt instead. These are all true stories. Only the names have changed.

* * * * *

Well, there you are. I guess I love books so much I can't help being fair even to the people who sell them. □

Donald Jack, onlie begetter of the two volumes of The Bandy Papers (Double-day), is currently at work on a third volume.



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